Expert Educators

By D.A. Barsotti ’79

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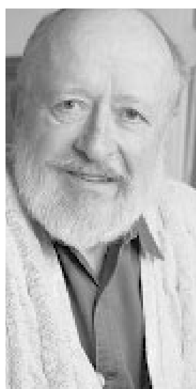
In Spring 1999, Rowan Magazine shadowed recent education graduates to see how rookie teachers handled their first few days in charge of a classroom. Here, we focus on four nationally recognized veteran educators whose decades-long commitment to teaching and learning influences classrooms all over the world.

Philip W. Jackson ’51



With long careers spent in classrooms, research and support of education, these seasoned professionals show not just minds, but hearts devoted to learning and teaching.

I became aware of Glassboro State College quite by accident,” confessed **Philip W. Jackson ’51**. On his way to serving his term in the Navy, Jackson hitched a ride with a high school classmate who wondered why he wasn’t heading off to college. “Up until then, the notion never entered my mind,” Jackson admitted. After taking the college’s entrance exam, he learned that he had been awarded a full scholarship. “I crammed in as much as I could, taking weekend, night and summer classes,” he said. “I never knew when I would be called back to active service.”

Jackson graduated as a middle school teacher in just two and a half years. His first job was in Newport. “I taught for one year. That was just long enough to convince me that I didn’t know very much—or at least that’s what I thought at the time,” he said. Instead, he became interested in psychology.

Fifty years after his graduation, Jackson, a University of Chicago professor and a noted developmental psychologist, quietly resists the notion that he has made an impression on the world of education. Yet he has authored a long list of scholarly articles and books that focus on aspects of education that are not part of the regular “planned” curriculum but have a powerful impact on students and teachers.

Jackson studies questions such as how do students come to realize that teachers are trustworthy, helpful and important? How do teachers become models for their students? He contends that these facets of schooling are communicated subtly through the ways teachers handle themselves and their classes. “Teachers are often oblivious to this side of their work,” Jackson said. “That’s why I called them unstudied lessons.” Jackson shed light on these aspects in four of his books: *Life in Classrooms, The Practice of Teaching, Untaught Lessons* and *The Moral Life of Schools.*

“My audience consists of practicing educators – teachers and administrators,” Jackson said, yet his research focuses less on everyday school life. His writings explore notions of human progress, definitions of knowledge, conceptions of childhood and the connection between theory and practice. “I am interested in the history of ideas, particularly those that have some bearing on the conduct of schools and teaching,” he said. “I am most intrigued by those ideas that bridge the humanities and the social sciences.”

He credits Nellie Campbell, a Rowan psychology professor, for planting those seeds. “She awakened my interest in psychology while I was at Glassboro,” Jackson said. “After I earned a master’s degree at Temple, she was instrumental in leading me to pursue my Ph.D. in developmental

psychology at Columbia University."

In 1955, Jackson joined the faculty at the University of Chicago. Now the David Lee Shillinglaw Distinguished Service Professor in the Departments of Education and Psychology, he lives with his wife in Hyde Park. He has also taught as visiting faculty at Harvard University, Queens College and New York University and abroad at universities in Canada and England. "These opportunities were always memorable, but it was during my term in England that I became a student of philosophy," Jackson said. Jackson's latest project, John Dewey and the Philosopher's Task, will be released this December.

Another book may be in the works. "Writing, though never easy, has been very satisfying," Jackson said. He hopes to explore a distinction he made some years ago between two different kinds of teaching: the "mimetic tradition" and the "transformative tradition." The mimetic theory focuses on the transmission of knowledge and skill from teacher to student. "The chief goal is to have students mirror or mime the skills the teacher already possesses," explained Jackson. The transformative theory seeks to transform students in a way that goes beyond skills and knowledge. Rather than expecting students to mirror their teachers, there is an attempt to help students "grow" or "develop" by cultivating a particular virtue, attitude or value. Although this method focuses on "transforming" the students, Jackson admitted that this theory is harder to define because the goals are more nebulous.

Jackson's career has been more definitive. His undergraduate alma mater laid the foundation for the broad and influential mark that he has made in the field of education. "I am very grateful to my formative years at Glassboro State College and I am proud to be an alumnus," Jackson said. The feeling is mutual. In1987, the college recognized Jackson's achievements with an honorary degree – Doctorate of Humanities.

Betty Castor '63

Once the president of the Future Teachers of America at Glassboro High School, today **Betty Castor '63** is in a position to influence the future of the nation's teachers and their students. Castor is the president and chief executive of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. She has traveled quite a journey since the days when she walked "the ridge" from her home on Swarthmore Road to Glassboro State College.

"My real education began at Glassboro State College," Castor said, recalling that she had participated in many activities. The most significant was an ambitious project called Operation Uganda, which she led. Her group sent books and supplies to the impoverished African nation. This experience made an impression on Castor, piquing her interest in what was going on in the rest of the world. It was the '60s, Castor reminisced. President Kennedy was just elected; the Peace Corps was born. "I was part of a wave of students all over the country who were interested in going abroad," she said. "We were very idealistic."

If Glassboro State College was her launching pad, it was Castor's mentor, Glassboro Professor Marius Livingston, who ignited her to act. Professor Livingston was one of several faculty members who worked closely with a small group of social studies majors. "Livingston convinced me to take off and go to Africa," Castor said. Soon after earning her teaching degree, she left her hometown and headed for East Africa.

It was her first professional teaching experience, and she was student as much as teacher. Living in Uganda, she learned about the complexities of other countries. "I gained a more realistic view of what education means," Castor said, "and a tremendous affection for the American system of free public schools."

Castor returned to the U.S. where she worked with other teachers in Florida to help integrate the schools in the Miami-Dade district. Later she moved to the Tampa Bay area and became more involved in civic affairs. Castor eventually ran for office in her county and at the state level, holding a seat in the state senate from 1976 to1986. Castor was then elected and served for seven years as Florida's Commissioner of Education.

As a legislator, Castor chaired the appropriations committee on education, advocating education reform and wider support for the education system. "I became, and continue to remain, a strong advocate for teachers' salaries," Castor said, adding that when we compare teacher salaries to that of other professionals, the wage gap seems to be widening. Castor was also a strong proponent for equitable financing, for services for challenged schools and for special education. "This was a chance of a lifetime—to take what I had learned and had observed and to try to do something about it in the policy arena," she said. "The lesson is that more teachers need to run for office."

During her influential career in public service, Castor became the favored candidate to fill a vacancy at the University of South Florida. She took the challenge, and for six years, served as its president. Under her tenure, the university was recognized as a Research I institution, putting it in the top tier of research schools.

In 1999, Castor was recruited for the top job at the National Board. In her new role, she has already seen an increase in the number of National Board certified teachers. This certification process is voluntary, Castor noted, but she believes that if a teacher becomes nationally certified, there should be some compensation, some reward. "The National Board is about building high standards for the teaching profession—and then being an

advocate among policy-makers and among the teachers themselves," she said.

Castor, who lives in Tallahassee with her husband, has received numerous recognitions for her work to improve America's system of public education. She has been inducted into Florida's Women's Hall of Fame. She continues to be involved in many aspects of education, including the executive committee of the National Council for Accreditation of Colleges of Education and the Southern Regional Education Board Distance Learning Laboratory.

"Teaching—and careers in teaching—are critically important," said Castor. Educators and policy makers must continue to find ways to build upon the profession, she said, to make it understood and respected by others outside the profession. "Teacher preparation and the continuing professional development must be the cornerstone for building the stature and credibility of American education," she added.

For Castor, serving as president of the National Board for Professional Teaching standards is almost a combination of all the positions she has previously held. "Today I work with state legislatures, governors, policy makers and institutions of higher education," Castor said. "I've come almost full circle."

Spencer Holland '65

Spencer Holland '65 grew up during a time when parents, community and church helped define a young person's life. In his hometown of Mizpah, a tiny village of just 300, Holland and other youngsters had neighbors and friends looking out for their welfare. They also had a connection to church, a creed, or "someone bigger than them." Today those elements are often missing from a child's life. "No matter how hard parents try, they don't have other people looking out for and helping raise those kids," he said. Holland has dedicated his career to demonstrating that mentoring and education can offer a safety net for "at-risk" children.

Holland, now the executive director of Project 2000, spent many years working in the trenches of inner city education, fighting to change the odds for the children who don't have the network of support he had. Young black students, particularly boys, he believes, benefit from extensive opportunities to see and work with adult males in the school setting, especially during the primary school years. Writing in The Journal of Negro Education, Holland said, "Failure in school remains a salient characteristic of inner city African-American boys."

In 1988, Holland began to help turn the tide by initiating Project 2000, a mentoring program that works to provide positive adult role models in the daily school life of students. That year the first participants entered first grade at the Stanton Elementary School in Washington, DC. Since then, hundreds of trained volunteers have spent time in the classrooms, tutoring students in basic skills and serving as role models.

Once the students completed sixth grade at Stanton Elementary, Holland knew they would face the pressures that could lead to academic failure or worse in middle or high school. Enlisting the help and resources of community leaders and organizations, Holland was able to continue the efforts by creating Project 2000, Inc., a non-profit, tax-exempt entity that provides alternative educational support such as mentoring, academic support and personal development services to students in grades 7 through 12. Mentors meet with program participants after school, on Saturdays and throughout the summer in the Project 2000 House. Last year, ten students from the Class of 2000 had remained with the Project 2000 through 12th grade. Six of them enrolled in full-time college programs; three were awarded scholarships and grants to cover four years of college. This year three "scholars" from the Class of 2001 are college freshmen.

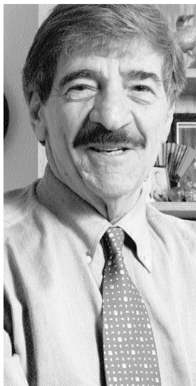
Forty years ago, Holland was a freshman—on Glassboro's campus. "I was one of 37 Negroes in a student body of 600. In fact, there was only one black professor on campus at the time," Holland said. "There weren't too many role models for black college students." He hadn't even planned to go to college. Much to his mother's disappointment, in 1957 Holland joined the Air Force. But it was his mother who ultimately forced the issue. Holland found himself in Glassboro's second class of secondary science majors. "I hated physics," Holland recalled, "but I got an A because my professor, Alexander Borowec, was such a great teacher."

Holland graduated cum laude with the science department's "Bronze Medallion" for highest GPA. But more than that, Holland credits Borowec and Elizabeth Duff, Glassboro professor of human behavior and development, for the direction his life took. "They moved me to go beyond Glassboro," he said. Not long after his first teaching position at Burnet Jr. High in Union, Holland continued his own education at Columbia University, earning a master's degree in developmental psychology in 1968. In 1976, he became the first African-American to receive a Ph.D. in human learning and cognition from Columbia's Education Psychology Department.

Holland moved to Washington, DC and spent 25 years in administrative positions in the public school system. In 1990, he was appointed the founding director of the Center for Educating African-American Males at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Md. During those years, Holland realized that he

never wanted to be an administrator. "I wanted to be a mentor," Holland said. "I realized that I never had a job where I didn't have a mentor. It was how well I listened to them that determined how far I could go."

Today Holland's program serves as a model for urban areas around the country. For Holland, Harriet Tubman symbolizes their approach to mentoring kids. "Tubman freed many people from slavery," he said. "Project 2000 frees many people from a slavery called prison—or from the cemetery. We're running our own underground railroad."



Joseph Renzulli '58

How can a teacher recognize the giftedness of a child who isn't a "model" student?

"If I had the answer to that...," said **Joseph Renzulli '58**. His voice became animated. "A spark in the child's personality, a glimmer in his eye, an excitement about things, ideas, issues..."

Renzulli has spent a lifetime trying to help educators recognize and develop the talents of their students. Today Renzulli is the Neag Professor of Gifted Education and Talent Development at the University of Connecticut where he also serves as the director of The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model and the Three Ring Conception of Giftedness have become significant models for educators as they help gifted students develop high levels of performance.

For all of the inroads Renzulli has made into gifted education and school improvement, he returns to an adage plastered around the GSC campus: Teaching is fun; Education is exciting. "We laughed about those stickers," he recalled, but through his experiences as a student teacher in the campus elementary school, he came to believe the slogan. "There were some really remarkable people at the Campus School," Renzulli said, "including the principal, Dr. Loriot Bozorth and Pat Konschak, one of the teachers I worked with. Through them, I found out that there was a great deal of excitement and satisfaction in teaching. Teaching was fun."

At one time in his life, Renzulli had no career plans. "I had no means and no direction," he said. His uncle, Ferrar Renzulli '33, told him he would help. Renzulli recalled, "He said 'go to Glassboro and you can be a teacher.'" And so he did.

Renzulli's first position was at a junior high school near his hometown in Ocean Township, where he taught math and science. Almost immediately he had a realization that set the course for his career. "There were many very bright kids that I was not prepared to deal with," Renzulli confessed. "I didn't know what kinds of things a teacher could do for kids who can learn faster and better—who were smarter and more creative than a teacher could ever imagine."

That realization prompted Renzulli to do research and take courses so that he could challenge those kinds of students. He was given an opportunity to design a science program for his students. "It was a remarkable challenge not to just march these kids through chapter, page and verse," Renzulli said, "but to do something that would make them excited about learning—and allow them to do something to bring out their creative talents."

His curiosity led him to earn a master's degree in educational psychology at Rutgers and an Ed.D. in educational psychology at the University of Virginia. He traveled the globe talking about his research and wrote books: The Total Talent Portfolio: A Systematic Plan to Identify and Nurture Gifts and Talents; The Multiple Menu Model for Developing Differentiated Curriculum; and Enriching Curriculum for All Students.

A resident of Storrs, Conn., Renzulli continues to search for ways to excite students. He founded UConn's Mentor Connection, a program that pairs high school students with experts in the fields of science, history, fine arts and other disciplines. And he established an annual summer Confratute Program, which brings educators from around the world to the University of Connecticut for a chance to expand their own teaching repertoire. He also collaborates frequently with his wife, Sally Reis, professor of educational psychology and lead researcher at the Neag Center.

For Renzulli, curiosity and creativity are the keys to our nation's success. "One of the things that made this country great, even with the diverse population of people who arrived here poor and unable to speak English, is the creativity, the inventiveness, the entrepreneurship and the motivation to go beyond what is already known," Renzulli said. "I think that creativity simply means that we're not going to stop with just what we know, but that we're going to keep pushing."

Renzulli's current research interest is exploring uncharted territory. "I want to see how much we can measure qualities like optimism, courage, vision, sense of destiny and the power to change things," he said. "There will be a lot of mushy variables. It's easy to measure reading or math proficiency… but go out and measure how much a child wants to change things." That's the challenge he's pursuing these days.

Some educators have dubbed Renzulli and his colleagues the "Creativity Crusaders." Renzulli believes that he is simply trying to lay out what he calls 'a whole lot of organized common sense.' "No one person can change all of education," he said, "but we are trying to do our part." ■