



## Patrick J. White

Born: 10/23/1953

Died: 1/29/2012

Patrick J. White (affectionately known as “Whitey” by his many students and colleagues at the University of Delaware) died in intensive care in Christiana Hospital in Newark on Sunday morning, January 29, 2012, in the company of his wife Ellen Fox and his sister Tina Daniels. Readers of the Wilmington Journal may remember that Whitey was praised for his strength of character and his humor in an August 2008 Wilmington News Journal article about his loss of limbs after complications from a surgery in 2008. Recently, after injuring his shoulder in a fall at home, he had two more operations from which he did not recover.

Whitey was born in Lebanon, PA, on October 23, 1953, graduated magna cum laude with a B.S. in English from Millersville State College in 1975, and received his M.A. in English from the University of Delaware in 1988 and then his Ph.D. in English in 1993. His dissertation was on “John Berryman’s ‘Dream Songs’ and the America Long Verse Epic Tradition.” His diverse interests are reflected in his lecturing on the Johnstown Flood and publishing on Edgar Allan Poe’s “Ulalume.” He was a civil war enthusiast who belonged to the Civil War Preservation Trust and the Friends of the National Park at Gettysburg, which he frequently visited. He was also a Pittsburgh Steelers fan!

Whitey’s passion for learning was very much in evidence in his teaching at William Penn High School (1975-1984), the Chesapeake Corps Center in Port

Deposit, MD (1984-1986), Delaware Technical and Community College (1986-2005), and the Associate in Arts Degree Program at the Wilmington campus of the University of Delaware. His main teaching during the period of 1986 to the present was as a Supplemental Faculty member and most recently as an Assistant Professor in the English Department of the main campus of the University of Delaware, where he won Excellence in Teaching Awards in 1997 and 2003.

Whitey was beloved by his hundreds of students in courses in both English and American literature, ranging from freshman composition to sophomore surveys to advanced classes in Shakespeare and American Literature to the Civil War. Articles in The University of Delaware's student newspaper, *The Review*, reveal his many accomplishments, including being ranked No. 47 in a list of the top 50 highest-rated professors in the country. When once asked about a mediocre effort deserving a mediocre grade, Whitey quipped: "Try to train pilots with the 'show up and try' approach...Does anyone want to fly on a 747 with a pilot who got an A for effort?"

Whitey's lecturing abilities were never more evident than in his witty address to the many "Friends of Whitey" (including Newark mayor Vance Funk) who crowded Memorial Hall at the University of Delaware on Friday afternoon, November 7, 2008, in his honor. The occasion was a fund-raising event to help pay for his medical expenses following an allergic reaction to Heparin during his otherwise successful open-heart surgery in April 2008. As a result of that reaction, three months later, in June 2008, both of Whitey's legs had to be amputated below the knee, and he also lost part of his right hand. By November he came to the lectern, riding what he called his "new set of wheels," the new motorized wheelchair that had been donated to him through the efforts of the anonymous person he dubbed "a fellow coworker at the university." The event and Whitey's lecture and self-deprecating humour, with references to his hero Ulysses S. Grant, was summarized in *The Review* dated Monday, November 10, 2008.

Whitey is survived by his wife Ellen Fox, who also teaches in the English

Department of the University of Delaware; mother Joan Herman Wolfe; sisters Tina Daniels and her husband Brent and Kathy Gibson; nieces Allison, Ava, and Jennifer; nephews Jacob, Robert, and Michael; and brother-in-law Mark Martino. He was preceded in death by his father Harry White, stepfather Dale Wolfe, and sister Cynthia Martino.

Whitey was once quoted in The Review as follows: "As far as retirement or anything, I really enjoy my job and I'm one of those people that when I leave, I hope they carry me out, hopefully with a cheering crowd," he says, laughing. "And I hope they're cheering for the right reasons." We will be cheering for the right reasons to honor his memory at a memorial service to be held on Friday, February 3rd, at 4:30 pm in Room 127 Memorial Hall on S. College Avenue in Newark at the University of Delaware.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, donations may be made in memory of Patrick J. White to Unlimbited Independence, Inc., 1405 Veale Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810 or to the English Department of the University of Delaware, Memorial Hall, Newark, DE 19716.

# Tribute Wall

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“*Mr. White was my English teacher at William Penn. He taught me how to write poetry. He was the faculty advisor for the “Spectrum” the schools literary magazine . We worked closely together on the magazine since I was the editor. After graduating from William Penn I went on to graduate from the U of D with a B.A. in English Journalism which a give my love of English in part to Mr. White.He was a great teacher, great thinker, and a bit of a cynic. He was a “reformed” Catholic and was surprised by my faith because I was a depressed, emotional teenager. He stood up for his students with a passion. Today is the day I found out that you have left this earth and I know that they found you a place in heaven for everyone’s favorite teacher. RIP former alter boy.*

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**Coleen R Walls** - June 22, 2024 at 12:00 AM