

# Ratherview



Harold and Pat  
Booher –  
Caring for Books  
and People  
*page two*



# Harold and Pat

## Harold and Pat – the consistent heart of ETSS

*Editor's note:* As Harold and Pat Booher began their last semester in the ETSS library prior to retirement, the Reverend Will Spong, Professor of Pastoral Theology, reflected on their gifts in the following sermon at the beginning of the spring semester.

It was a typical Austin February. The students were back from their various courses ... Hebrew had been endured ... the usual crowd in mystical and ascetical theology ... another round of GOEs had consumed the senior class ... there was a hint of rain in the air ... and Harold and Pat Booher parked in their familiar space, gathered the *New York Times*, turned on the lights in the library, and without much fanfare began their last semester, after 30 years at this seminary. ...

This meditation is in the nature of personal privilege. ...

Many years ago, Ray Bradbury wrote a futuristic book entitled *Fahrenheit 451*. I am told that 451 degrees is how hot it must get in order to burn a piece of paper. ... It seemed that in this mythical society, which was clean and efficient, the leaders had decided that in order to perpetuate the tranquility of the people, that books had to be destroyed ... all books: magazines, periodicals, nursery rhymes, Aesop's fables, philosophy, war and peace, and all scripture and theology ... books of all types ... gathered books or private collections, all had to be destroyed. Every neighborhood had a phone on the street corner and if you suspected

that anyone was reading, you would report them. The fire station would come not to put out fires, but to burn books. Books were evil because they moved people to think.

The radicals in the neighborhood hid their books in TV cabinets, inside mattresses, in wine cellars with trap doors ... and when the fire department came, everyone would look sadly as the books were destroyed and the

*Heights*, this child was *Tom Sawyer*, this person was *Catcher in the Rye*, Plato, or Augustine ... and when the old got sick and approached death, you would see them reciting their book to a child so the child became the book ... less the book would be forgotten ... destroyed forever by death.

Have you ever just thought about books ... a written or printed work ... as a treatise or a novel ... or a literary

composition ... perhaps bound together in a volume ... a number of sheets of blank or ruled paper bound together for writing ... the Bible ... books ... the text or libretto of an opera ... the repertoire of an idea ... the script of a story or play ... music ... signs and symbols of retained material ... a journal to present a focus at the end of a period of history. ...

Now think about a librarian ... an officer in charge of books ... a person who collects the body of literature in

order to preserve its many parts and to preserve it from harm ... or misuse ... or bugs and other varmints ... in order that it not be lost ... and this librarian works in a place set aside to contain and preserve books ... to inspire study ... to render ideas to others through lending ... so that people can read and grow. ... You might say that this librarian more than any other ... guards the tradition of ideas ... like those exiled on the island ... and therefore preserves our very existence and our memory.

Now consider this librarian to be a bashful, retiring person ... a little timid ... modestly reluctant to speak, quiet,



*Harold and Pat*

perpetrators arrested: Hamlet, Dostoevsky, Jeremiah, the Koran, the Mystics, Shakespeare, poetry, journals ... and as the books were burned, the chronicling of ideas and history vanished in smoke, never to be replaced until they were completely outside the memory of everyone. ... Those who were caught reading or thinking, were exiled into a lonely place, guilty of reading and retaining, learning or remembering, and there was no escaping ... and yet a wonderful thing happened: every exiled person became a book, committed it to memory, so that the book would be preserved: This woman was *Wuthering*



often drawing back, yet consistently noticed when words come forth. ...

Harold Booher is in his last semester with us ... along with Pat, he has been the consistent heart of this institution for the last 30 years ... and my fear is that he will simply pick up his things one day and leave ... and a hole will appear in the infrastructure of this institution and we will find ourselves stumbling over the things that Harold has done, that we never knew ... because he never told us.

It's the little things:

By collection and photograph and exhibit, he helps us to recall our history ... He remembers what we have been and what has been done ... He is the E. F. Hutton of the faculty: and when he speaks, believe me, everyone listens.

To sit at his feet when he exegetes a piece of scripture is to watch him pick up the pebbles on a beach and arrange



*Harold and Pat with son Doug, 1966*

them in a tight and remarkable and orderly form. ...

To watch his eyes interpret his feelings is to be in the presence of safety ... and he can say more with a shrug than most of us can with our words.

Along with Pat and Rob, Mikail and Lucille, he has put together a library (young in comparison) that is clearly the envy of others who come here ... and when have any of us asked for something that was not provided ... even when we grouse when he insists that our coffee and doughnuts do infect the integrity of the books. ...

I don't know why we are surprised by Harold's mind or his brilliance, but who can forget his epic piece when he dialogued in the pulpit with the writer of the fourth gospel ... It was like the Jekyll and Hyde of theological inquiry. ...

Or I remember when he taught us all about what was at stake before Christians could talk with Jews ... imploring us to begin with what we had in common, before the outright debate over the proper messiah began. ...

He has kept minutes for the faculty for so long and so accurately that the

minutes are always passed with no question ... I would imagine that we never read them ... we only assume that they are accurate because Harold is always accurate and trustworthy.

I recall in the early 80's when the students did a skit lampooning the faculty ... the impersonated faculty sat on a stage and each faculty member had a large key in their backs ... and when you would wind up the key, the faculty member would do what they do ... It was all in fun ... When they wound up Charlie Cook, he began a 20 minute walk from his office to the classroom ... very

slowly ... "a veritable Maalox moment" ... They wound up Dusty and he attempted to recast how the key process was understood ... I remember, I simply became unavailable ... Bill Green would purse his lips and become



*Pat hosted several Black Room receptions*



*Harold enters Black Room with Burton Hodges, son of Lisa and David, Class of 1996*





*Pat in 1979 photo*

obscure and go find a Heineken, and Frank Sugeno would become inscrutable ... It was clever ... but when they wound up Harold, he simply sat there ... with a slight shrug of his shoulders ... and everyone laughed with affection.

In the early days, Pat was the Pearl Mesta of the faculty ... providing the home base for most of our time together ... replete with wonderful food and an endless supply of Harvey Wallbangers ... everyone felt the warmth and ambience of their home ... They have been a rare gift. ...

These African Missionaries, these advocates for the marginalized

... Pat and Nancy Bose anchoring the Meals on Wheels for longer than most of us can recall ... these exceptional friends ... have meant more to this place in their quiet way than we can imagine ... and they will not be replaced, nor can they be properly thanked ... nor would they expect it.

Harold was and is the guardian of our tradition ... and while he guards it, he is so much a part of it. He will call no attention to himself ... He will ask for nothing ... It is his way ... and no

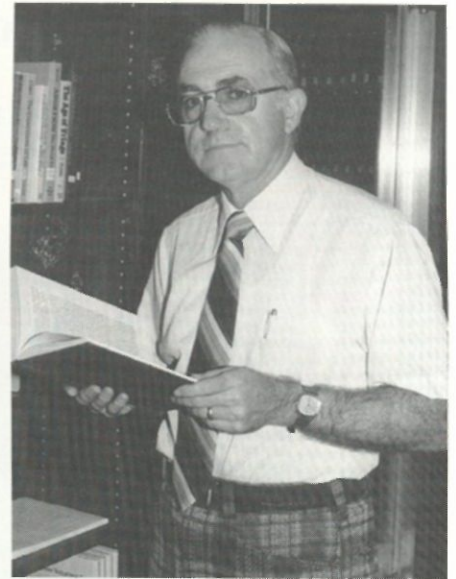
one should be so lucky as to have shared this place with him. ...

There is a tradition in the world of professional athletics that seems to apply here ... When Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, or Wayne Gretsky, or Magic Johnson retired, they were celebrated in each city as they made their last rotation of games ... They did this because the levels of appreciation that was felt in every town along the way were simply immense ... and so it is with us ... and them. Let's don't let Harold and Pat simply disappear – let's dedicate this last semester to them.

Mikail has composed a piece about Harold and Pat for this issue of *Ratherview* ... Let me close with her quote: "And what will we do when they leave? I asked the Boohers. In response to my question ... Pat smiled, and Harold? Harold shrugged."

February came along in Austin ... and the GOEs were done ... and the semester began ... and it rained a little ... and Pat and Harold Booher drove in, picked up the *New York Times*, turned on the lights, and began their day.

Well done ... good and faithful ones ... and thank you.



*Harold in late 1970s*



*Harold reading at home with Mange the cat*



# Memories of Pat and Harold Booher

by Mikail McIntosh-Doty,  
Assistant Librarian for Circulation  
and Technical Services

Pat and Harold Booher will retire this spring after more than a third of a century of service to this library and to this seminary. The legacy of two such incredibly open-hearted people cannot be effectively or easily compressed into a short article. Here, instead is a pastiche, an impressionistic collage of memories and stories I value from having worked with them and known them for a time:

Pat's laughter. The first time I heard Pat laugh, I knew she laughed like a Texan, but with a bit of the Irish thrown in, a full rich laugh full of wide open spaces and stars the size of Magnolia blossoms. Harold does laugh out loud at times, especially when Jill Essbaum or one of his grandsons is around, but mostly he laughs with his eyes.

Harold preaching each semester in chapel. In particular I remember the time he re-enacted an Internet "chat" between himself and the writer of the gospel of John. In order to help the audience understand that there was a change in speaker, Harold made the slightest shift in body weight from his left, if he was questioning as Harold, to his right, if he was responding as John.

Harold and Pat dutifully attending every, and I mean *every*, in-town game of softball, t-ball and soccer played by one of their three grandsons. The piles of soda cans stacked in the back of the library for the school's recycling projects.

Pat driving for Meals on Wheels. Her

favorite partner for such excursions was always Nancy Bose, but others would do in a pinch. Her laughter when telling of one of the MOW celebrity drivers who refused to crumple himself into Nancy's tiny car and instead insisted on driving all three of them in his Lincoln towncar. "We never even felt a pothole," she exclaimed.

Harold retelling stories of their London trip and explaining why the

Harold working with me to re-allocate books in the West Room of Collection B. He shelved the ones on the bottom shelves; I did the top shelves. Working together we accomplished in an hour a day over a month what it would have taken us separately over five times as long. There is a wonderful rhythm of working side by side with someone you respect. We often worked in

companionable silence.

Pat getting up at four a.m. to make scones, not just any scones, but low fat Welsh scones from a recipe received from Gareth Lloyd Jones' wife Gwyneth. I've eaten those fragrant, melt-in-your-mouth, oven-fresh scones more times than I can count – for every "special" occasion, no matter how seemingly unimportant.

Harold remembering aloud his African missionary days when he was courting Pat by

airmail: the heat, the friendships he had with the Africans and with the other missionaries, the old station wagon/jeep contraption that served all their transportation needs.

Rob Cogswell telling me of the time Pat single-handedly integrated a major hotel restaurant in Africa. She and her native driver and some companions went in for a meal after a particularly long, hot and tiresome journey. The maitre d'hôtel informed her that they did not serve blacks in the restaurant. "Oh but you will," Pat replied and pointed out that the missionaries were their best clients, clients that would no longer come if the restaurant did not serve her and her companions. They did.



*On the sidelines of an ETSS flag football game, late 1980s*

fortress in Edinburgh shoots off a cannon daily at one p.m. rather than 12 noon (the Scots figured out it saves gunpowder). Harold laughing with us as we "got it."

Pat telling me how once she shot a lion in Africa. If she hadn't been such a good shot, she might have never become Mrs. Booher. Her dad trained her well. When he took her with him visiting oil sites during her West Texas childhood, he'd have to go off and leave his young daughter by herself while he was up to miles away. He taught a young Pat as early as nine years old how to recognize and shoot snakes so that she was still there when he returned. (You doubt my word? She has pictures.)





*Harold and former provost William Bennett hawking "B&B Sacramental Wine Coolers" at late 1980s Last Gathering*

Harold and Pat bemoaning a "wretched" Longhorn performance, i.e., UT had lost. Or reluctantly acknowledging a Longhorn victory, claiming that it had been "pure luck." Or rehashing a particularly interesting golf match – I never realized golf was such a spectator sport.

Pat never forgetting a birthday or anniversary of a staff member. Her delight in seeing a former student or seminary spouse returning for one of the lecture series or just to drop in. (Pat kept records when anyone came and talked with her and counted this time against her vacation time. Despite that she had over 120 days of vacation time she "earned" and never used.)

Harold and Pat's empathy when learning of the pain or troubles of a faculty member, or student, or staff member, or an animal.

Harold and Pat buying every new car with cash. The following day they would start putting money into savings for their next car purchase. They budgeted to such a fine level that Harold generated a personalized shopping list for Pat that detailed their regularly purchased items – in the order they would be found on the shelves of their local grocery store. And bless the store employees who moved

things without warning.

Pat and Harold complaining regularly of the stray cat their eldest son, Doug, dropped on them when he graduated from college. Ten years later, they still complained and Mange still ruled the household.

Pat and Harold walking out midday when they got the call that Mange had to be put to sleep. Pat typed me a note and handed it to me as they walked out

the door hand in hand. In the note she wrote that she was afraid that if she tried to say something, she'd "break down." They took the rest of the day off, one of the few they did not try to make up.

Harold and Pat opening their house to so many: to Lucille Hager when she had open heart surgery; to Harold's mother, Honey, when she couldn't live alone anymore; to son Doug and his cat before he got married; to son James before he went to law school, after he graduated from law school, until he found a job, and after he found a new job; to years of hungry students, faculty, seminary visitors, even a trustee or two who needed a place for an evening, a night, or longer.

Maybe my memories and stories will awaken yours. I hope so. I have been watching for six years and know that Harold has been carrying this library for thirty-six years; Pat has been sharing that load daily at his side for the last twenty-eight. Together they have done amazing things, always as acts of love.

And what will we do when they leave? I asked the Boohers. In response to my question: Pat smiled, and Harold, Harold shrugged.



*Mid 1990s photo of Pat and Harold with current librarians Rob, Mikail and Lucille*