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Brown's Bios

Degree Type

Open Access Senior Honors Thesis

Department

English Language and Literature

Keywords

Eastern Michigan University Interviews, Interviewing in journalism

Jared Clayton Brown

Brown's Bios

**Honor's Thesis
In
English Language & Literature**

May 1, 2007

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Introduction

I have always had a love of reading question and answer style interviews because I have always believed those types of interviews are where people are always the most candid. When somebody asks a straightforward question, most times people provide straightforward answers. The 2006-07 year was an extraordinarily turbulent one for EMU, and I for one was in search of answers to many of the questions that members of the EMU community had.

No time soon will any one forget the death of Laura Dickinson or the faculty strike, arguably two of the biggest news stories on campus this year. In putting together this series, one of my main goals was to compose a snapshot of sorts of the people who were here making their own marks in the EMU community during this very hectic time. I had conversations with several of our campus leaders, including EMU-AAUP president Howard Bunsis, EMU president John Fallon, and Vice President of Student Affairs Jim Vick.

Each person I spoke with gave answers that reflected their own views on a variety of subject matters. I have compiled the series of interviews that I conducted over the course of this past school year. I hope that as time goes by, this series will serve as a definitive portrait of the status of the EMU community for the academic year of 2006-2007. To all who read the following words, I hope each of you enjoys the snapshot.

Getting to know President Fallon
Short interview lets students into psyche of PJF

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2006

President John A. Fallon sits comfortably in an office that is filled with clowns. He explained the unorthodox decorations by saying that early on in his career, he was told he needed to feel comfortable in rooms where he would be surrounded by clowns. Talk soon went from frivolous to fair to more serious-minded issues.

Jared Clayton Brown - What would you be doing if you were not working in higher education?

President John A. Fallon III - I would be in business of some sort with my three sons. Or I would be in politics. As a former lobbyist, I am familiar and intrigued by it.

JCB - What is the greatest lesson you have ever learned?

PJF - The virtue of honesty and ethics. What you are made of is the extent of your honesty and ethics. That is the most important thing to me professionally. Humility is a virtue. I have no respect for arrogance or people who think they are better than others.

JCB - What is your greatest wish for the world?

PJF - That the world would be prejudice free in every way.

JCB - If you could relive one time in your life what would it be?

PJF - It would probably be my undergraduate years. I would be more active politically and I would have read more classical literature. The secrets to life and work are embedded in the classics.

JCB - What is one thing you want to do before you die?

PJF - One thing I would like to accomplish is to be assessed as a good husband and father.

JCB - What do you count as your greatest achievement?

PJF - I represent my family in a positive and constructive manner.

JCB - What is your greatest hope for the students of EMU?

PJF - I would hope that people who come through here would be better for having had

this experience. I want our students to be successful on their own terms. I want them to be in a position to make a difference.

JCB - Who or what has inspired you most in life?

PJF - My mother and my wife inspire me because of their strength, and also because of their commitment to family and their contributions to make the world a better place.

JCB - Where is the best place you have ever been?

PJF - When we used to live in upstate New York, we used to own a cottage. I was a regular person despite the fact that I as the president of the nearby university. I was just another guy who couldn't fix a broken appliance.

JCB - What brings you peace?

PJF - The knowledge that the people most important to me are secure and on a path that is consequential. Everybody in my life is headed in a good, solid, proper direction.

EMU veteran speaks
Speech professor Dr. Gary Evans opens up to Echo

By [Jared Brown](#) / Staff Writer
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2006

Dr. Gary Evans, affectionately referred to as Doc Evans by his students, recently sat down to reminisce about his life and career. Doc Evans is also known for his trademark rose, which he always wears in the lapel of his suit jacket. Wearing the rose is his way of reminding students to stop and smell the flowers. "Life is happening now. You have to enjoy it while you can," he says.



Courtesy photo

JCB: What attracted you to teach speech?

DGE: I said I would do it for a semester to help out. When I started out, I loved it. I get to hear lots of different ideas.

JCB: What lessons do you hope students take with them when they leave your class?

Dr. Evans always wears a rose in the lapel of his suit jacket as his way of reminding his students to stop and smell the flowers.

DGE: That it's possible to live in peace with each other, if we are working to understand one another.

JCB: What accomplishment are you most proud of?

DGE: I think receiving the Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award in 2004.

JCB: What did that honor mean to you?

DGE: I try very hard to get people to accept each other in spite of differences. It was an acknowledgement of my struggle to get people to understand each other. It's what life is all about as far as I'm concerned.

JCB: What's your biggest regret in life?

DGE: That I did not get to start traveling the world until I was almost 50.

JCB: What's the greatest place you've been?

DGE: Tanzania. I loved it there. I loved the people and I loved the children.

JCB: What is your favorite aspect of EMU?

DGE: The diversity of the student population. I love the students. I learn so much from students because of the diversity.

JCB: What is your greatest wish for the world?

DGE: That people would try to understand each other. If they did, then we would not have all the wars that are going on. The older I get, the less I feel that war solves anything.

JCB: What's the greatest lesson you have learned in your life?

DGE: That love always wins.

JCB: Why do you feel that way?

DGE: I look at Dr. King and I tell my students how do you stop someone who refuses to hate. Love changes people. Love is the strongest thing in the world. With it, there is hope for humanity.

JCB: If you could go back and relive one time in your life what would it be?

DGE: Probably when I was an undergraduate. My dad passed away when I was a senior in high school. I spent a lot of time grinding it out.

JCB: Why do you feel speech is so important?

DGE: We live in an oral culture. We are a culture where so much of our work is done orally. Speech is not a performance; it's the communication of ideas to a group of people.

JCB: Who or what has most inspired you?

DGE: Ghandi and King. I think their orientation towards nonviolence and commitment to living a life filled with peaceful courage is inspiring.

Michelle Owens

Learning to live every life to the fullest, not take life for granted

By [Jared Brown](#) / Staff Writer

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2006

Michelle Owens, assistant director of student personnel, has a very colorful personality. Owens' personality shone when she sat down to reflect on her career at Eastern Michigan, dressed in an all-pink pirate outfit she wore in honor of EMU's Pirate Week. Owens shared her thoughts about EMU, being wealthy, and... Disneyworld.



Courtesy photo

JCB: What made you choose EMU?

MO: A lot of my friends were going to MAC (Middle American Conference) schools, so I wanted to come somewhere where I would have a fresh start. When I visited here, I fell in love with the school and decided this is the place I wanted to be.

Learning to live every life to the fullest, not take life for granted

JCB: What made you want to stay?

MO: I actually left for a year to work for the State of Michigan. Dr. Gary Evans inspired me to come back and get my Master's Degree. The professors in the student personnel program were also a big influence in my decision.

JCB: What aspect of student development do you see as being most important?

MO: I think trying to provide an environment for students to feel free to be who they want to be. It's a new beginning for them. What I like about the Rec, is we can challenge them and help them be who they want to be.

JCB: What keeps you motivated personally?

MO: The students and my colleagues. The students at the Rec have an amazing work ethic.

JCB: What do you love most about working at the Rec?

MO: I love working at the Rec-IM. We are fortunate to have great bosses. Our bosses allow us a lot of autonomy and they allow us to have input. Also, being alumnus makes me even more proud and I want to give back the great experience I had.

JCB: If you met someone who has never heard of EMU, what do you want them to learn from you?

MO: I would want them to see our campus life and to get involved. I would want them to see the people, because the faculty, staff and students are who keep students here.

JCB: What do you want to do most that you have not done?

MO: Work at Disneyworld.

JCB: Why Disney world?

MO: I love Disney. If I could do Disney characters. I like that people can go there and they are happy. If I retire from here, I'll go check out Florida.

JCB: If you had a million dollars, you would...

MO: I would build the brick walkway out in the University Park. I would buy a whole Melrose Place type of community living for all my good friends so we could all live beside each other other.

JCB: What has been the most rewarding experience you have ever had?

MO: The one thing that happened to me is I became really sick. I took my life for granted and the experience of being sick taught me who my friends were and made me appreciate life more. Also working with students in the Summer Institute. It was a two-week program where high school students would come in and they would learn about college life. They would take classes and live in the residence halls. The kids come from all backgrounds and you just learned so much.

JCB: Why do you feel that fitness and wellness is so important?

MO: As far as being mentally healthy, it helps keep you mentally strong if you are stressed. You can work off the negative energy that you might have. It does a body good.

MO: As far as being mentally healthy, it helps keep you mentally strong if you are stressed. You can work off the negative energy that you might have. It does a body good.

Heather Neff teaches more than literature
Professor speaks highly of world travels

By [Jared Brown](#) / Staff Writer
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2006

Professor Heather Neff is a woman who is well traveled and well learned. After graduating in 1978 from the University of Michigan with a bachelor's in English Literature, Neff moved to Paris where she studied at the Sorbonne from 1979-81. She then lived in Switzerland from 1983 to 1990.

While in Switzerland, Neff studied at the University of Basel and the University of Zurich. In 1987, she took a "License" in English literature and linguistics, comparative literature and French linguistics.



Courtesy photo

In 1990, she earned her doctorate from the University of Switzerland in English Literature. Neff then moved to the Virgin Islands, where she taught English literature at the University of the Virgin Islands. In 1993, Neff came to Eastern Michigan University, where she has specialized in literatures of the African diaspora. Neff recently sat down to reflect on her life, education and travels.

JCB: What was life like living in Europe?

HN: The economy in Switzerland was fantastic. There were lots of job opportunities. There was also a very liberal environment. The people there were very happy.

JCB: Which place did you enjoy living the most?

HN: I love Paris. I doubt there is any place like it on Earth. If you go there with a desire and a hunger to learn, you learn and grow so much.

JCB: What struck your interest in becoming a professor?

HN: During my junior year at U of M, I had a professor who taught medieval literature. She was passionate about what she taught. I loved being in school. I never thought I would get hired and I never planned on doing this. I stumbled into it when I went to the Virgin Islands. I followed my heart and I found my passion, and I have lived it.

JCB: What aspect do you enjoy most about teaching?

HN: I love the sense of community that develops when a group of strangers become

peers and often friends, through the process of learning. There are moments when an entire classroom "vibrates" with a moment of shared awakening. I feel myself learning right along with my students and it's an intensely motivating experience.

JCB: What do you hope students learn from taking your classes?

HN: I primarily hope that students learn something about themselves and their responsibility to others in this world. I want my students to think critically about our society and to gain a willingness to actively work to improve life for those who are less privileged. Most importantly, I want my students to consciously refrain from racist, sexist and homophobic behavior. Education's true purpose is to teach us to be engaged humanitarians and to become committed stewards of the Earth.

JCB: What one thing do you hope to accomplish before you die?

HN: There are so many things I want to do! I want to publish a well-researched, powerfully written historical novel. I want to have a gallery exhibition of my paintings. I want to play my viola in a symphony orchestra. I want to write a screenplay that becomes a film. And I want to return to Egypt, one of the most fascinating places on Earth.

JCB: Why is Egypt so fascinating?

HN: Egypt is a place of extraordinary cultural heritage. The archeological sites are architectural wonders. The science and engineering abilities of the ancient Egyptians still captivate leading experts today. And the Nile River and the Sahara are truly beautiful. It is difficult to describe how moving it is to stand before the Sphinx and the Great Pyramid of Giza.

JCB: What has been your greatest life lesson?

HN: As a child I was the only black student in an all-white school in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement. I learned first-hand about the dangers of discrimination and I've spent my professional life trying to help people from different races and cultures to understand and accept each other.

JCB: What power do you believe lies in literature?

HN: My advisor in college, a wise old gentleman who knew a great deal about life (and a lot about me, too), told me that most human relationships are chronicled in books. He promised me that if I read books I'd know a great deal about the world. As it turned out, a love of literature usually leads us to a desire to know more about other peoples, other cultures and other historical periods. In other words, literature is a true gateway to life.

JCB: How do you think literature changes people?

HN: Reading can be an intensely personal experience. Literature shows us that,

throughout human history, people have struggled with the same essential challenges that face us today. We grow intellectually and emotionally from reading about their struggles and ideally, we avoid making the same mistakes.

JCB: In your novels, you seem to enjoy focusing in on issues of race and class. Why are these themes so resonant in your writing?

HN: As I explained earlier, my small role in integrating a segregated community in the 1960s defined my life. My parents, who were both activists in the Civil Rights Movement (my father actually attended the march on Washington and heard Dr. King deliver his "I Have A Dream" speech), were my role models. Throughout my travels, I have seen examples of racism and other forms of prejudice and I try to do my part in helping to eradicate them.

JCB: Can you talk a bit about your latest novel, "Harlem" (published July, 2005 by Harlem Moon/Broadway)?

HN: The novel is my statement on the dangers of addiction and the success of

Twelve-Step recovery programs. The novel is based on two Bible stories (the Old Testament story of Cain and Abel and the New Testament story of the Prodigal Son) and is set in the Netherlands. I enjoy writing about the way that we grow when we leave our comfortable environments and experience life from a different cultural perspective. Harlem has been particularly popular with readers who have experienced an addiction or have close friends or family members who have faced the challenges of addiction. I have received fan-mail from all over the world about the book. It was even reviewed in the newspaper in the city of Harlem, in the Netherlands!

JCB: What has been your biggest regret in life?

HN: As a young person, I truly believed that there were things I couldn't learn, such as foreign languages and math. Later I learned to speak French and German and even worked as a financial planner! My only real regret is the time I wasted with negative ideas about my intellectual potential. I really love to learn and wish I could instill this desire in all of my students.

JCB: What makes you the most happy in life?

HN: The happiest extended period of my life was my ten years of study in Paris, France, and Zurich, Switzerland. I really enjoyed living abroad and strongly encourage everyone to make a serious effort to experience life in some other part of the world. Becoming a mother is the greatest gift that life has given me and watching my daughter grow up has been a source of endless joy in my life. It may sound corny, but the truth is that she makes life worth living every day.

Bunsis tells all
AAUP president talks about life, faculty strike

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2006

Howard Bunsis, president of Eastern Michigan's Association of American Union Professors, assumed the task of leading the university's faculty in a strike demanding better salaries. The past few months have been rather challenging for the accounting professor.

This much is obvious after meeting him. The first thing that captures my attention when I walk in his office is his very noticeable black eye (he got it during an accident in a game of basketball). As he began to answer questions, he found it a bit challenging to look back. He said he is always looking forward and never behind him.



Courtesy photo

"I just go and do things and never really reflect on them," he says. Bunsis shared his thoughts about what really matters to him, as well as his views about EMU's administration. Howard Bunsis said he wouldn't be able to live without his wife or two kids, Sam (left), 10 and Josh, 7.

JCB: Who or what has motivated you most in your life?

HB: My parents. My father is a lawyer. My mother was a teacher. Education was a large part of our family.

JCB: What do you see as your greatest success?

HB: Getting my Ph.D. in Accounting from the University of Chicago.

JCB: What do you view as your biggest failure?

HB: I have two autistic children so I do not have the time to really reflect. If I spent more time reflecting, then I would not have the time needed to care for my children.

JCB: If you were not a professor, you would be... ?

HB: Either a basketball coach or sports agent. I love sports. I have been coaching since I was 16. Since that time, I have always been a coach of something. Two of my closest friends are sports agents so the money is a little bit different than teaching. But I would not trade what I am doing for anything.

JCB: Why is that?

HB: There is no better job in the world. This is what I was born to do.

JCB: Where is the best place you have ever lived?

HB: I've enjoyed every place I've been. We've lived in Chicago, Dallas and here in Southeast Michigan. We have also traveled to Europe several times as well.

JCB: You cannot live without...?

HB: I cannot live without my wife and children. I would feel pretty empty without them.

JCB: Where do you see yourself in the next 10 years?

HB: I hope to be here at EMU teaching students, being a faculty member and helping to make EMU a better place.

JCB: Why did you become president of the EMU-AAUP?

HB: I did not have any experience with unions. Being from Long Island, my parents were not involved in unions. My involvement began in 2003. I became treasurer of the union. There were financial problems at that time and the union needed someone who would be able to help with the financial issues. As an accounting professor, I thought I could serve the faculty well. I became president of the union in January of 2005.

JCB: What do you believe the union accomplished by going on strike?

HB: We demonstrated unity. I think the faculty is more united than we have been since I have been here. I've also heard this is the most united the faculty has been in the history of the university. We united to help make this a better place. In terms of the nuts and bolts of the strike, we did not sign a contract we did not agree with and that was a major accomplishment. We did not gain the respect of the administration. They did not respect us and they do not respect us.

JCB: Why don't they respect you?

HB: They view the university as a corporate model. They do not appreciate public education as a way to make society better. We are viewed as mere cogs in a machine by the board and the administration. We should be viewed as people who create and disseminate knowledge to our students. We help our students to be better citizens.

JCB: What do you say in response to critics who say faculty should not behave like labor and unionize?

HB: We are a labor union for a lot of good reasons. We are a union because we work

collectively to make this a better place. By being a union, we talk across disciplines and design plans to make this a better place.

JCB: What do you view as the biggest challenge for EMU faculty?

HB: At the top of the list is substandard conditions. Trying to teach and do research in substandard conditions is the biggest challenge the faculty faces.

Adventures of Jim Vick
Vice president of student affairs shares his stories

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2006

Jim Vick, Eastern Michigan's vice president of student affairs, loves great adventures. Whether he is scaling an icy, snow-capped mountain or fighting against the rapids of a raging river, he is a man who is determined to overcome any challenge that lies before him. He recently spoke with me about some of his greatest adventures, his true thoughts about EMU's faculty and how a childhood trip to the circus changed his life.



Courtesy photo

JCB: What are your plans for Halloween?

JV: I'm going to the Halloween concert put on by EMU's Symphony orchestra.

JCB: You are a man known for going on great adventures. What would you say is the greatest adventure you have ever been on?

JV: I suppose the first time we, my two sons and I, climbed Mount Ranier in Washington State.

JCB: What made you do it?

JV: It was there. It was a challenge. It is beautiful. I was 49 at the time. My sons were 24 and 18. The weather was difficult. It was cold and windy. Twenty people started and only five people, including my sons and myself, finished.

JCB: What do you see as the most dangerous adventure you have ever embarked upon?

JV: Probably kayaking in the Gauley River.

JCB: Why was it so dangerous?

JV: You can get killed in those rapids. I really pushed against my skill level (in kayaking).

JCB: Where do you get your sense of adventure from?

JV: I'm not sure where it comes from. I've had it most of my life. I went to the circus when I was seven and saw this guy do an amazing high-wire act. I turned to my dad in

Climbing Mount Rainer in Washington State was Jim Vick's (middle) greatest adventure. Although twenty people started the journey, only five, three being Vick and his two sons, finished.

awe, and my dad was unimpressed. He said anybody could do anything with a bit of practice.

JCB: When you come home from an adventure, how are you different from when you started out?

JV: From my perspective, these adventures create a much deeper appreciation for life and the world around you. If there is some risk involved, you appreciate that you were able to surmount the obstacle. Being at the top of a place like Mount Ranier gives you an appreciation for the vastness of the universe.

JCB: Why did you go into student affairs?

JV: For a long time, I had an interest in working in education. It's one of the most important professions you can be a part of. I like working in student affairs because it's a nice balance between administration and contact with the students.

JCB: How do you believe you make a difference?

JV: You make a difference by being honest, your behavior, what you stand for, your values, how you live your life. You make a difference by treating people with respect and a certain amount of care and recognizing that everyone who works or goes to school here is valued.

JCB: What lessons do you hope students take away from EMU?

JV: The importance of continuing to learn. That it is a lifelong process. Ernest Hemingway titled one of the chapters in one of his books "Pursuit As Happiness." It's not having that makes you happy. It's the pursuit and I hope students see that.

JCB: The Board of Regents unanimously voted in favor of the College Place renovation project. Were you in support of this initiative?

JV: Yes. It's not the best timing in that we have a lot of other needs, but one has to be ready to take action when it is appropriate. I understand why there would be some reaction against it. Overall, it's a win-win project for everyone.

JCB: Eastern Michigan's Association of American University Professors President Howard Bunsis has stated he believes the administration does not care about faculty members and they are viewed as "cogs in a machine." What do you say in response to that?

JV: It's a totally inaccurate and disrespectful comment. Anybody who knows me knows that is the furthest thing from the truth. I know Howard and I like Howard. He and I play basketball together. There are about 30 administrators working in student affairs and I can say that is not true about any of them.

JCB: What do you see as a possible solution to the differences between the faculty and the administration?

JV: I think we need to get back to negotiating and agree on a contract for faculty. There has to be a better understanding on both sides of the issues.

Glenna Miller talks about new student center, students
Admins reveals why she's excited for grand opening

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2006

Glenna Frank Miller, Executive Director of Leadership and Involvement, is a woman who knows what she wants. From the time she became a resident advisor during her junior year of college, Miller always knew she wanted to work in collegiate student affairs.

The kind and warm Miller, who offered me candy during our interview, discussed her strong love of EMU, as well as some of her all-time favorite things.

JCB: How does it feel to have the new student center completed and ready for opening?

GM: It is just a thrill. I think it is an example of what people working together can do. It's a testament to the student leaders on campus and their perseverance.



Courtesy photo

JCB: Did you ever think you work in collegiate student affairs?

GM: Yes, when I was a resident advisor, I was a chemistry/pre-med major and I switched to psychology. When I became a resident advisor my junior year, and someone told me that I could do this (student affairs) as a career.

JCB: What do you enjoy most about working at EMU?

GM: It would have to be the students. I love the students. They work hard. They have so much going on, but they still come to school and they are involved and they are able to graduate.

JCB: If you were not here, where would you be working?

GM: It's hard for me to imagine not being here. I have not figured that out yet.

JCB: What has been your greatest life lesson?

GM: You have to work in the context of a community to achieve your goals. To accomplish your goals, it is within a collaborative group. I'm getting a new life lesson and that is that it is important to experience different cultures in different places.

JCB: Who has most inspired you in your life?

GM: I've had some incredible teachers. I've had some amazing college professors. There have been so many people who have supported me and helped me to grow.

JCB: What is your favorite book?

GM: Lately, I love the book "Prodigal Summer" by Barbara King Solver. I love the book "The Secret Life of Bees" by Sue Monk Kidd. It's a difficult book because of the issues it addresses, but at the same time that makes it so wonderful. It's from the perspective of a woman's voice.

JCB: What is your favorite television show?

GM: I'm not a big television fan, although I've watched a lot of Tigers baseball over the past several months.

JCB: What is your favorite movie?

GM: My favorite movie is "To Kill a Mockingbird." I love Meryl Streep movies. "Out of Africa" is my favorite Meryl Streep movie. You also have to see "The Devil Wears Prada." Meryl Streep is a trip in that movie.

JCB: What do you think students will like most about the new student center?

GM: They are going to like the 24-hour computer lab. They are going to like the dining room. I think they are going to like having a place to be. They are going to like the comfortable lounges. I hope students will feel like this is a place they want to be.

JCB: What is your favorite part of the new student center?

GM: I like walking in the west door. It's a great hallway. You go past the information center and there is the view. I think that experience of walking in the building is cool. (The ability) to look at EMU.

Figura opens up her doors
 Eastern Michigan Director of Housing talks about her job, her dreams, her fondest memories

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
 FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2006

All of her life, Rebecca Figura, who works as EMU's Director of Housing, has known it was her destiny to attend college. She stated: "It was a given for me ever since I was four years old. Growing up, that's all me and my friends ever talked about." Figura recently took time out of her schedule to talk with me about her life, happiness and what she views as truly important.



Courtesy photo

JCB: What drew you to want to make your career in housing for college students?

RF: I started out as a resident advisor. When I was getting ready to graduate, like so many people, I did not know what I was going to do. My boss told me of an opportunity to go to grad school for student personnel. I never looked back.

Rebecca Figura (right) hopes students grow, gain maturity and open themselves up to new experiences in the residence halls.

JCB: What do you like most about your work?

RF: (I like) student contact and the variety of work. I like the unpredictability of it all as well. I can come to work expecting to do one set of things, but I might end up doing something completely different.

JCB: What do you believe students can gain by living in residence halls?

RF: I'm hoping they grow, gain maturity and open themselves to different experiences and people. I hope they are fully engaged in the collegiate experience.

JCB: What is the hardest challenge you have ever had to face?

RF: When I finished my master's, I moved to Illinois away from all of my family and friends. Setting out on my own to establish myself away from my family.

JCB: What is the greatest thing that has ever happened to you?

RF: I would have to say going away to college and the doors it has opened for me.

JCB: What is one thing you want to accomplish before you die?

RF: I would like to travel more. I'd like to go back to Australia. I'd like to go to Germany. I took German for several years while I was in school and I'd like to practice my German a little more.

JCB: What is your biggest wish for the world?

RF: I would do anything to have war ended.

JCB: Living or dead, if you could meet one person, who would it be?

RF: Mother Teresa. She did great works as an individual.

JCB: What do you believe is most important in life?

RF: To be happy with what you do and to give to others. And eating M&Ms on the side.

JCB: What is your biggest regret in life?

RF: I don't think I really have any regrets. It's not healthy to have regrets. If you have regrets, you cannot focus on the present and look toward the future.

JCB: What is your fondest memory?

RF: The holidays with the family. All those gathering helped solidify our relationships so that we would be close as adults. It was birthdays, Christmas, Fourth of July, Easter. I have lots of good memories.

A day in the life of an ACD
Abe Sargent talks about life, games, lying

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2006

As Abe Sargent sits in his office for our interview, he treats the area more like his living room. He sits in a reclined position in his chair with his feet propped up on another one of the chairs. As the area complex director of Walton/Putnam hall, Sargent has proved himself to be quite multi-faceted, as he opened up about his work, game and the lie he wishes he could take back.

JCB: What was life like growing up in West Virginia?

AS: I grew up in rural West Virginia. My town was all about coal mining. I did not realize I was poor because everyone was on the same level economically.

JCB: As a minister and political science professor, what do you think of the idea of separation of church and state?

AS: I am comfortable with half of the idea. I agree that the State should keep its nose out of the church, however I do not think we should keep the church out of the state although we sometimes have a tendency to do that in some circles. There is a tendency in some political circles to view people with a religious affiliation with trepidation. What I mean is someone, such as a minister, can sometimes be viewed with trepidation. I would like to see us be more comfortable with allowing the church into the state.

JCB: What has been your toughest experience?

AS: When I was in eighth grade, we moved from Boone County to Kanawha County. While it was only one county over, I had to basically leave behind everything I knew and start over.

JCB: How did you fit in?

AS: I was with the jocks for a while and bounced around from group to group until I found my place with the nerds.

JCB: What is your favorite game?

AS: My favorite game is Battletech. It is a war game that incorporates a lot of maps and math. I think it's the best-designed war game of all time.

JCB: What do you think students can gain by working as resident advisors?

AS: There is so much that you do not understand. It was a life changing experience. You learn everything from teamwork to how to deal with unexpected situations. I can't think

of any other position a student can have that would give a better set of general skills.

JCB: What is the craziest experience you have ever had working in housing?

AS: When I was at West Virginia University, one of our resident advisors committed suicide. It was deemed accidental and it hit everyone in housing really hard.

JCB: How did it affect you personally?

AS: I knew him as a resident before he was an RA and he lived in my building when he was still just a resident so we were acquaintances.

JCB: Which aspect do you enjoy most working as an area complex director?

AS: The thing I enjoy most about working as an ACD, is I get to do a variety of things in one day and I never end up bored.

JCB: What makes you happiest in life?

AS: Feeling God's love in my life and being able to share that with others.

JCB: If you could go back in time and redo one thing in your life, what would it be?

AS: I do not like to live life worrying about the past or the future. I do have a couple of regrets in my life. There was a woman in my freshman year of college that I said I liked when I really didn't, only so I could get my first kiss.

JCB: What is your favorite movie?

AS: My favorite movie is Donnie Darko. It is, in my opinion, one of the most authentic and screwed up movies of all time. I'm a sucker for really good teen angst.

Peoples is a people person
 EMU's ombudsman talks about his past, present and future
 By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
 FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2006

Gregory Peoples is a man with a tremendous passion for Eastern Michigan students. Throughout our hour-long conversation, he ceaselessly spoke about the pride that he takes in helping students overcome the challenges they face in working as EMU's ombudsman. He also talked about how his parents' influence shaped his career path and what he really values in his life.



Courtesy photo

JCB: How did you come to be the ombudsman?

GP: Several years ago, we were going through financial difficulties. I was the dean of students at that time. I had been dean of students for five years up to that point. I had seen a pattern that I felt needed to be addressed. I approached Jim Vick and suggested that we develop an office that was better able to handle specific student concerns. Jim Vick created the office and I was the logical person to fill the position because I had basically been in the position as the dean of students.

Gregory Peoples was the former Dean of Students and the natural pick for EMU's ombudsman.

JCB: Do you feel any pressure in your job?

GP: The pressure I feel has to deal with serving as a neutral party. When a student comes to me with a complaint, I have to take their concern into consideration, but I have to also listen to the other side, that the student is challenging. I am a student advocate, but I have to make my decisions based on what is fair for all parties involved.

JCB: What is your most memorable experience in your position as ombudsman?

GP: I have many memorable moments. Those have been when I, through advocating, have been able to successfully help a student resolve an issue.

JCB: What gives you inspiration?

GP: There was a letter that was in the echo last week. The letter was written by Casey Wooley. The letter talked about how EMU had been a positive influence in his life. That was inspiring because it let me know that those of us who work here really do have a positive impact on the students who attend school here. Another thing inspires me as well. There was a song that was sung at Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral by Mahalia Jackson. The song was called "If I Can Help Someone As I Travel Along My Way, Then

My Living Will Not Be In Vain." I think about that everyday. When I was growing up, I saw my parents as role models. They, and other people in my town, used to be the hosts for many of the minority students who attended Kent State. My family would have these students over for dinner and mentor them. I am making a living doing things professionally that my parents did for free. One of the things that has motivated me to stay in student affairs is the fact that I can help not only students of color, but all students in general.

JCB: What do you think is most important in life?

GP: To make the world better than when you first came into it. In other words, make a contribution. It is also important to do something to make yourself happy.

JCB: What is the greatest lesson you have learned?

GP: This is something I have instilled in my children. I think Jesse Jackson said it. If in your mind you can conceive it and in your heart you believe it, then I know you can achieve it.

JCB: What is your favorite food?

GP: My favorite snack is pork skins. I love a nice glass of red wine. My favorite food is lasagna. I make my own red sauce.

JCB: What do you do to relax?

GP: I listen to jazz. I enjoy watching a good collegiate football or basketball game. I'm a big Buckeyes fan.

JCB: What are your plans for the holidays?

GP: To hopefully spend time with my family and friends; especially my daughters as they come home from college. Just a quiet holiday at home with family and friends.

JCB: What is your favorite holiday memory?

GP: My favorite memory was our first Christmas in our new home in Ypsilanti Township in 1994. We had a huge nine-foot tree in our living room that took up the entire front window. We spent hours and hours decorating it. It was really pretty.

Jeff Bernstein, Political Science professor
EMU professor talks about life, faith, baseball

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2007

One of the first things I noticed about Jeff Bernstein, a political science professor at Eastern Michigan, was his genuinely warm and inviting personality. Over the course of our 45-minute interview, he opened up to me about the importance of his faith (Bernstein is an observant Jew) and his love of the New York Mets, among other things.



Photo by [Jeff Bernstein](#)

JCB: What is it that first attracted you to political science?

JB: I grew up with it. My father was a high school government teacher. I've always been fascinated by how people can come together and govern themselves. There have always been questions that have fascinated me. The question of how we could come together and govern ourselves has always interested me.

Jeff Bernstein is from Long Island, New York and came to EMU in 1996.

JCB: What do you hope students take away from your classes?

JB: I hope they take away a greater conception of their ability to be active participating citizens. In an American government class, it's about learning how [to do this]. It's really about the conception of being an active and involved citizen.

JCB: What impact do you think Saddam Hussein's assassination will have in the long run?

JB: Frankly, not much. He was toppled. He was imprisoned. The execution is really anti-climactic. The actual execution did relatively little to affect anything.

JCB: With the possibility of Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama running for the Democratic presidential nomination, what does this signify in terms of America's political future?

JB: I think it's a sign of progress in that being a female and African-American is not an automatic disqualification. It's a free for all. This is the first time since 1952 that an incumbent president or vice president is not in the running. It's a fight for the soul of both parties.

JCB: Why is your faith so important to you?

JB: It's very much a part of who I am and what I do. My religious faith, more than anything, is the force that tells me what is expected of me and what I am supposed to do and how I'm supposed to try to leave the world when I am done. That's what drives me.

JCB: How did your parents' work as teachers influence you?

JB: I saw from them the power a teacher can have in shaping someone's life and I saw from them how meaningful it is to do that.

JCB: If you could relive one time in your life, what would it be?

JB: Game 6 of the 1986 World Series, bottom of the 10th inning.

JCB: Who played?

JB: That was the New York Mets and Boston Red Sox. Mets were down by two runs in the bottom of the 10th inning. With three singles, a wild pitch and an error, we [New York Mets] had taken the game. I'll never forget that.

JCB: What is your greatest wish for the world?

JB: I could say world peace, but that makes it sound like I'm in a beauty pageant. I'd like to see the spread of individual rights and individual power. I'd also like to see the Mets win the World Series again.

JCB: What is the biggest lesson you have learned?

JB: You only go around once. You've only got one opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the world and you've got to seize it.

JCB: What do you know for sure?

JB: I know there's no better way to spend a summer afternoon than watching a baseball game. I know Gil Hodges belongs in the Baseball Hall of Fame. I know nobody sings better than the Oak Ridge Boys. I know that answers are important but it's the pursuit of the answers that makes this job and life interesting.

Barber talks about career
Best/Wise director shares experiences of job, life

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2007

Carin Barber is a person who stays on the go. Whether she is running or working at her job as the area complex director of the Best/Wise complex, Barber cannot seem to stay still, (she got no less than five phone calls during the course of our interview). Barber did manage to stay still long enough to talk to me about her work and why being at sea is where she is happiest.



Photo by [Carin Barber](#)

Jared Clayton Brown: How did you come to decide that you wanted to pursue a career in student affairs?

Carin Barber: It was because of some great role models I had at Virginia Tech. It was the pan-Hellenic sorority adviser. I also had a great housing director. I remember being a resident adviser. There was a feeling of empowerment that the housing director took time to talk with an RA.

Carin Barber (bottom right in green) is the founding adviser for the Road Running EMUs, a group of student who run together.

JCB: What has been the most memorable experience you have had working in professional housing?

CB: It's always neat to see freshman come in and if you stay at a university long enough, you get to see them graduate and finish the journey they started.

JCB: How does it feel to work where you live?

CB: It's a lifestyle, because you can be called any hour of the day or night.

JCB: What aspect do you most enjoy about your work?

CB: One of my favorite things to do is make presentations for new staff coming in.

JCB: Why is that?

CB: Everyone is so energized at that point.

JCB: What do you feel you accomplish by running?

CB: One thing is physical fitness. Also it gives you a piece of mind. It's a time where you are outside with the fresh air.

JCB: How did you start running?

CB: I was a swimmer all my life, and I was a cross-country racer in high school. The best thing about running is you can do it anywhere.

JCB: What is it that makes you happier more than anything?

CB: Spending time on the Semester at Sea ship. It's a study abroad program. Students from universities all over the country travel to 10 countries and study each country.

JCB: Which country was your favorite?

CB: Poland.

JCB: Why was Poland your favorite?

CB: I saw a mountain bike race. Poland has beautiful beaches. We took the train from Gdansk to Sopot, a beach village, and the highlight was hearing these girls singing their hearts out on the train.

JCB: What has been the most difficult experience you have had to face?

CB: I think it can be difficult to work with students who have significant mental health issues and connect them with the right professional help. It's hard to do what's necessary to give one person the help they need, and find the right balance for the other 300 people in the residence hall community.

JCB: What do you define as good student leadership?

CB: I think an individual who represents the university in a positive light. I think good student leaders are those who can balance their academic and leadership responsibilities and excel at both. I think good student leaders are the ones who make the most of their college years; they work hard and they play hard.

JCB: What has been the greatest moment of your life?

CB: I set the pool record in the 50 butterfly at the neighborhood pool where I'm from when I was 10.

JCB: What has been your greatest life lesson?

CB: You do things one step at a time.

JCB: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

CB: In a warmer, sunnier place and that is the truth.

Student talks about college, views on diversity
Walker reveals his inspirations, struggles in life

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2007

Victor Walker is one of the most candid personalities I have encountered over the course of this series. During our hour and a half interview, he told me he was an open book and I could ask him absolutely anything I wanted.

One of the interesting tidbits I found out is Walker, 31, one of EMU's biggest champions for diversity and equal treatment, initially had no interest in the subject that has become of such importance to him. He also shared with me what he says is his purpose for living.



Photo by [Victor Walker](#)

Jared Clayton Brown: How old were you when you first started college?

Victor Walker: I first started college in 1996. I went to college because society said you had to. I had no desire to be a student. I wanted to be a rock star.

Victor Walker said diversity became important to him when he started working for the Center of Multicultural Affairs.

JCB: What made you want to attend college?

VW: My sister is younger than I but was the first to attend college. It was through her example that I decided to go to college. My sister being my mentor made me want to attend college.

JCB: Why is diversity so important to you?

VW: Originally, diversity wasn't important to me. The black experience was important to me. I got involved in diversity when I became the Student of Color Fellow [for the Center of Multicultural Affairs]. That's when I put together that the black experience was no different than the LGBT, women, Native American or anyone else. I realize I am African American and I became the student I am, but not to the exception of anyone else.

JCB: What do you believe can be gained from diversity?

VW: It gives us an opportunity to have an experience that will enhance our lives. This is the training ground that allows us to go outside this institution into the world to make change.

JCB: Did you experience any difficulties in coming out as a gay black man?

VW: Yes. The difficulty came from other black men. In our society, black men are invisible. Black men tend to be homophobic and have difficulty having meaningful relationships with one another. I think they are also threatened that I can be comfortable being black, gay, from a single-parent home and an impoverished family.

JCB: What has been your greatest life lesson?

VW: It's OK not to be the best. You don't have to kill yourself to be the best. You have to do your best. It would have saved me so much stress if I had learned this at 18.

JCB: What do you view as your greatest triumph?

VW: Being an uncle in my greatest triumph. [Walker's nephew, Koro Sekou is 3.] When you are an uncle, you are almost a father. I look at myself as a father figure to my nephew. My sister made me an uncle. My nephew made me a better person. I love KJ. He is the reason I am alive. He gave me purpose.

JCB: What is your idea of paradise?

VW: Love. Anything to do with love. Love is paradise. Love is it. Whether you are in a two-bedroom bungalow in the Bronx or on a beach in Santa Cruz, love is love. True love is paradise.

JCB: Living or dead, if you could have a conversation with one person, who would it be?

VW: My ancestral mother. I don't mean my birth mother, I mean the woman who is my connection to Africa. My one dream is to know where I came from. If I could know her, I could reconcile the person I am today.

JCB: What is your greatest wish for the world?

VW: My greatest wish for the world is that we stop hurting each other because of how we self-identify, because of our socioeconomic status, religion, gender. [There are] all these things we think separate us. No matter who we are in that [those identities], we don't lose anything.

Student speaks about passions
Abraham talks about major, views on love

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2007

LaToya Abraham strikes any who meets her as a woman who is filled with passion. In fact, passion is a word she uses several time over the course of our interview. Her passion for what she believes is so strong, I could feel it traveling through the phone lines. (We intended to meet in person but the snow storm kept Abraham sequestered in her apartment.) Here are some of the things Abraham said she is passionate about.

Jared Clayton Brown: What made you want to attend Eastern?

LaToya Abraham: One, my sister went here and we do everything together. And it was close. I'm from Ann Arbor.

JCB: Was Eastern what you expected it to be?

LA: I don't know what I expected. I guess I have to say no. It turned out a lot better. The African American Studies Department, especially Heather Neff, who is my mentor, is why it went beyond my expectations.

JCB: What impact do you want to have on other people?

LA: I've dedicated my whole life to teaching people about what I have learned about black people, conditions and diversity. I feel like our social structure keeps us busy, and we don't have time to realize what is being done to us in a social context.

JCB: How did you begin your involvement with the Society of African American Studies?

LA: My friend Ahmed Logan got me involved. The society houses the Teresa Green Mentor Program. He got me involved in everything. He helped me get my job in the African American Studies Department. I met a lot of the professors and I took a class with Dr. Peters and I immediately changed my major.

JCB: What are your plans for after graduation?

LA: If I don't get [the] Teach For America program, I'm thinking of going to the University of Chicago or Northwestern.

JCB: What do you believe has been your biggest mistake?

LA: Taking 20th century history at EMU. It was such a joke. It was the worst history class in the history of time. It was the absolute worst.

JCB: Since Valentine's Day was this week, what do you define as love?

LA: willing to put everything you have into it, whether it is a person or passion, and not expect anything in return. Also it is about not trying to change that person and accept them for who they are. That's the best I can tell you.

JCB: What value do you believe African-American Studies possesses?

LA: The value of African-American Studies is you get to look at the world from a non-European male perspective. African-American Studies gives you a different way to look at things and it helps you know who you are back to ancient times.

JCB: What do you believe the future has in store for the African-American generation of tomorrow?

LA: I think history has a cycle and continues to go through phases. I think we are going to see another movement. We are already seeing it with blacks in France. I think there's going to be a turnaround at some point everywhere in the world.

JCB: What do you believe needs to be done to address the issues facing society today?

LA: Where we need to start is the K-12 education system. It's where we begin molding people into who they are. We have a very oppressive school system. It would behoove everyone to read "The Miseducation of the Negro" by Carter G. Woodson. It talks about the corruption of the public school system and how it keeps people ignorant. Part of the problem is religious fragmentation. Until we become more inclusive, then people will remain divided. Until we can understand, people will continue to argue.

Senior talks about volunteer work
Feldkamp shares spring break experience

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2007

Recently, I spent my spring break in Florida as a participant in the Honors College Alternative Spring Break. I have to say it was one of the best experiences I have ever had. Our days were spent out in the sun chopping, digging and planting shrubs all in an effort to preserve the endangered species that call the Disney Wilderness Preserve (the place where we worked) home.

It only seemed proper to talk to someone else who also took one of the several possible alternative spring breaks. Senior John Feldkamp acted as one of the site leaders for his group's trip to the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind. I listened as he shared his experiences.

Jared Clayton Brown: What inspired your involvement with Alternative Spring Break?

John Feldkamp: I thought it would be a good way to get involved on campus. I heard it was a powerful experience and I wanted to meet some great people.

JCB: Was it a powerful experience?

JF: I went to Alternative Spring Break thinking I could help a lot of people, but I came away with a lot of lessons. I had the chance to learn sign language. The trip humbles you because when you do something like this you see that you had the opportunity to provide somebody a chance to really make it in the world.

JCB: What value do you believe volunteering one's time possesses?

JF: Volunteering shouldn't be viewed as extra-curricular but as co-curricular in a student's academic experience. It's a chance to realize the world is bigger than you. If we have the opportunity to volunteer, then it is our civic duty to assist those who need it.

JCB: What was your favorite part of your trip?

JF: The teachers and the students that I met. As a perspective teacher, I talked with the teachers and they welcomed me and shared with me their knowledge. The students at that school showed a strong sense of motivation to learn.

JCB: What insights did you gain into teaching through your trip?

JF: Don't take anything for granted. Don't assume students possess any sort of pre-requisite knowledge. It made me evaluate how many different spins I can put on teaching one thing. Very few careers provide the experiences teaching does. Helping a young person learn is a way to have a direct positive impact.

JCB: Describe the experience of working as a site leader during your trip.

JF: My job as a site leader was smooth sailing because the responsible people I was with made it easy for me. Also, my co-site leader Robert Frank Mason was very organized.

JCB: What was the biggest challenge you faced while on this trip?

JF: It's frustrating when you spend all day working with a student teaching them one thing and coming the next day and they don't remember.

JCB: What would you say to students who are considering becoming involved with Alternative Spring Break?

JF: This is the kind of spring break you can't do unless you are in college. Going out and making a positive change is something you should want to do. You meet a lot of passionate students, and when you work with people like that it's a really good time.

JCB: Do you feel like your life is different because of this experience?

JF: It is because I never worked with these types of students before. The experience made me want to learn and help more.

JCB: If you could relive one moment of your trip, what would that be?

JF: I gave a couple of lessons down there. I taught [the students] how math could be applied to everyday life. Their enthusiasm made me feel well appreciated. The teacher's having confidence in me made me feel honored. Having a positive impact made me want to continue to volunteer.

Student speaks
Sheppard talks about RHA role

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 2007

Alli Sheppard is a woman on a mission. Her mission, as she sees it, is to help make a difference in other people's lives. She certainly makes a difference in the lives of Eastern Michigan campus residents as the president of EMU's Residence Hall Association. Her tireless dedication has had a positive impact in the midst of some very recent rough times for EMU's Housing Department. I caught up with Sheppard and was able to find out just what it is that drives her.



Courtesy photo

Jared Clayton Brown: Could you tell me a little about what the Residence Hall Association is?

Alli Sheppard is the president of the Resident Hall Association. She is going into the Peace Corps. and would like to serve her time in Africa.

Alli Sheppard: The RHA is the governing body for the residence halls. There are eight representatives; one from each hall and one from the National Residence Hall Honorary. In RHA, we collaborate on tackling campus issues and projects.

JCB: Why is working with RHA of such importance to you?

AS: The mission of the RHA is to make the residence halls more like home for residents. We help address issues facing residents. The chance to play a part in something that can influence someone's life positively is very powerful.

JCB: What have you been doing to reassure campus residents in the face of so much negative publicity?

AS: I'm making it a personal goal to go to all the hall government meetings. I'm also encouraging hall governments to encourage their residents to be safe in their halls. We are working to let residents know their voices are being heard. We want residents to feel safe in their halls.

JCB: What do you like most about living on campus?

AS: I love the community of living in the hall. I know everyone in my hallway. I love that if I ever need anything I can turn to them. I just love it here. It's fun.

JCB: What has been your best experience at EMU?

AS: Working with Carrie Hauser [RHA Vice-President] on RHA's executive board. She's

become my best friend and it's good to work with such an inspiring person.

JCB: What is the biggest dream you have for your life?

AS: To be able to make a difference in people's lives.

JCB: What do you see as your biggest triumph?

AS: Staying true to who I am and not letting outside influences dictate my actions.

JCB: What is your greatest wish for the world?

AS: For everyone to find it in their hearts to appreciate themselves and one another.

JCB: If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?

AS: Either South Africa or Greece. I'm going to the Peace Corps and I would love to serve in Africa. As for Greece, I think it's really beautiful.

JCB: Where do you want to be in five years?

AS: I'll be just getting back from the Peace Corps. I want to see myself in a position in student affairs, possibly housing in a position where I can better students' experience on campus. I also want to be very, very happy.

Head librarian shares dreams
Cheng talks about interests in books, EMU

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 2007

Rachel Cheng is living her dream. As far back as she could remember her dream has been to read as many books as she could. Her passion for books has carried her globally from her home country of Taiwan, to here in the United States where she is working as the head librarian of the Halle Library.

Jared Clayton Brown: How did you first become interested in library science?

Rachel Cheng: I grew up in Taiwan. The process of going to college and selecting your major is very integrated there. I had always enjoyed reading. My dream was to read as many books as I could. Reading is a way that leads you to learn and explore more.

JCB: What aspect is most fascinating about this field of work to you?

RC: The freedom for us [as librarians] to explore anything and everything. You have a license to be nosy 'bout anything. The downside is that you don't always have the time to learn as much as you'd like about a subject you might have an interest in.

JCB: What is your best memory about working at EMU?

RC: My second year here we worked with an interior design class. We asked them to imagine that if they could design the main area, what would they do. I was surprised and happy with what they did. I like to make the library more than a study space and as a place where students can apply their academic knowledge.

JCB: Living or dead, if you could have a conversation with anyone, who would it be?

RC: I would want to have a conversation with President Reagan. I would want to know if the current state of the U.S. is the way he envisioned America to be because he was always seen as the ideal Republican. I would also want to know how hands on he was as president.

JCB: What has been your biggest life lesson?

RC: Be very careful about the assumptions you have in your mind. Take the time to learn before passing judgment. We may think we are talking about the same things when in reality we are talking about different things.

JCB: If you could relive one time in your life, when would that be?

RC: Probably the first few years after I moved to the United States. It's so easy to live in an environment and not go out to explore what is outside of your campus. I would have

gone out beyond the immediate environment and explored the outside a bit more.

JCB: If you only had 24 hours left to live, what would you do?

RC: I would want to talk to everyone I care about and say goodbye. That's what I would do.

JCB: What is your favorite book?

RC: I like science fiction a lot. It tests some kind of hypothesis. The book I like a lot is "First, Break All the Rules" by Marcus Buckingham. In some way, he was trying to say you have to have the right person to do a certain job the right way. [The book] gets you to start seeing people differently.

JCB: Who is your favorite author?

RC: I do not have a favorite author. My favorite author tends to change based on what I am trying to learn about.

JCB: What words do you live by?

RC: Always do the best you can no matter what. There's no way to make everything perfect, but there's always opportunity to do things better. If you always try to be better, you can always improve.

I can't believe it's my last Brown's Bio
Author gives final thoughts on column

By [Jared Clayton Brown](#) / Assistant News Editor
FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 2007

When I first began my Brown's Bios series in September of 2006, my intention was to shed light on various campus figures who helped to mold Eastern Michigan into the place it is today.

I truly learned a great deal about the art of journalism through the experience of putting this series together. I would like to take this time to thank all those people who have worked so diligently behind the scenes to make every word that was printed possible.

First off, I have to thank the Eastern Echo's features editor Andrew Cipolla for making space for my pieces every week. I also have to recognize our amazing Editor-in-Chief Amanda Hamon and our adviser Kevin Devine for allowing me the chance to make my vision a reality.

I must also give a special thanks to Carol Schlagheck because I could never have done any of this work without her tremendous guidance and to our news editor Christine Laughren, who in countless ways became my best friend on the job. I also have to give major thanks to the rest of the staff at the Echo for making this year and project such a great experience for me.

I must also give thanks to all the people who spoke with me over the course of this school year. Without each and every one of you donating your time and truths, there would have been no series to begin with.

Finally, to all the readers around the EMU community, I hope you have all enjoyed reading the profiles as much as I enjoyed putting them together. Thank you to all those people who told me they enjoyed the work I presented.

Thank you all very much.

Brown's turn to talk
 Writer gets chance to speak about his life, motivations

By [Andrew Cipolla](#) / Features Editor
 FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 2007

"Brown's Bios" first began printing on September 1, 2006 spotlighting President John Fallon. Since that time everyone from campus administrators, professors, to simple Eastern Michigan students have been interviewed.

The personal and in depth interview style of Jared Clayton Brown has enlightened the campus community into the hearts and minds of the university's most dedicated individuals. As a close to the "Brown's Bios" series, Brown placed himself in the interviewee seat.

The following is an interview conducted by Andrew Cipolla using many of the questions Brown used himself during his interviews.

Andrew Cipolla: Who is Jared Brown in five words or less?

Jared Clayton Brown: Loyal, honest, caring and spiritual.

AC: Where did you grow up?

JCB: In the Motor city Detroit, in a lower working class neighborhood. Everyone worked hard, very family oriented. It was all about families. My mom was the strongest person I have ever met in my entire life. In growing up where I grew up I got a real sense of what it means to work hard to achieve your goals.

AC: Do you have a profound memory as a child that you would like to share? Perhaps something that really affected your aim in life?

JCB: This is somewhat profound... I can remember music from as far back as I can remember. My mom, back when she would work days and back when vinyl was a thing to listen to and it doesn't matter what it was. I remember my mother listing to Aretha Franklin. I am in love with music now and I still love to sing and I think that really the memories of being introduced to music are so profound for me.

AC: Who is your hero and why?

JCB: I hate that you're making me narrow it down to one.

AC: You can have more than one.

JCB: Well, definitely my mom. My mom is the strongest, toughest as nails human being I have ever met, but at the same time she is the kindest and most gentle person — I am very blessed to be her son. My heroes are also all of the resident advisors on the

Walton/Putnam staff. The things we have gone through this year have really bonded us together just so much. A special thanks to Abe Sargent and Nafisa Naik.

AC: What is it that makes you happier more than anything?

JCB: What makes me happiest, next to music, is real understanding between two people. And what I mean is that when I feel like I am being understood and that I am understanding where they are coming from.

AC: What brought you to EMU?

JCB: Seriously. I actually had a scholarship to another college down south and apparently there was a piece of a paper that I didn't turn in and the scholarship fell through. I never really had any intention of coming here, but coming here was one of the greatest things I have ever done. And I will never have a bad thing to say about EMU.

AC: What has been the most memorable experience you have had while at EMU?

JCB: I know this — falling into the university lake. It was the day it was really warm and everyone came outside. And the lake was still frozen over and I got the bright idea to try and walk on the lake. My right leg fell through the ice and I just got up and ran like hell cause I was shocked that I fell through.

AC: Tell me about working for housing. What has that meant to you?

JCB: It's been one of the gifts that I have had while at Eastern. Really, what I've learned there is that when people really come together and you know they leave their assumptions at the door, just greatness can really be achieved. And I think that you learn so much just about people. The biggest gift that you can take away is when you see just how much in common people really have.

AC: Do you feel that you've made a difference in the lives of your residence?

JCB: I feel like they've made a difference in mine more so. Just my heart really feels like it has been opened so much by the people I have been so lucky to meet. A lot of the people I became close to were the people that were most different from me. It has been a really great two years.

AC: What about working for the Echo. What has that meant to you?

JCB: I definitely learned I am capable of more than I ever thought I could be. I kind of stumbled into journalism by taking one of Carol Schlagheck's writing classes and it's something that I really didn't understand. I have kind of made my way working through here and I have learned the power we have as journalists when we perform our job with a genuine sense of integrity. Not to mention it is just a really great staff to work with.

AC: What are some valuable life lessons that you have learned while at EMU?

JCB: Truly, I would have to say always be true to yourself no matter what; don't ever be afraid to stand up for what you believe in because no one else will. You have to always be able to love yourself in order to be able to give other people love and encouragement.

AC: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

JCB: I see myself out in the world to make a difference or working to make a change.

AC: What kind of difference and change do you hope to make?

JCB: I think, just helping to break down the walls of intolerance in some way. I don't really know through what means yet, but really encouraging people to look past the external and inside of someone's heart to see who they are before trying to judge their merit as a person.

AC: What about next year?

JCB: I'll be in Massachusetts working for AmeriCorps.

AC: How did that come about?

JCB: I heard about it from Chris Beyer who is the Assistant Hall Director of Buell and Downing. I heard about it from him my sophomore year because he had done it the year before he came to Eastern and he really explained the difference he was able to make. I definitely believe in the power of community service to improve whatever community you find yourself in or apart of.

AC: Living or dead, if you could have a conversation with anyone, who would it be?

JCB: I know exactly who this is, my grandmother Luegenia Walker. She died when I was 14 and I really miss her. I feel like she died before she could really see me start to bloom as a person.

AC: What is your biggest regret in life?

JCB: Any time I do something that I know goes against my personal constitution and than you have to live with yourself afterwards. Anytime I do something that I know is generally in my heart wrong. I try not to consciously think that was a mistake or bad.

AC: What is your greatest wish for the world?

JCB: That every body on earth has the chance to experience pure happiness, without strings attached.

AC: Have you experienced that?

JCB: Everyday of my life.

Jared Clayton Brown
Honors Thesis Reflection

When I started thinking about my honors thesis, I had no real idea of what it was that I wanted to do to complete what felt like a gargantuan task. I knew that the project would be associated with what had become a passion of mine: journalism. I began to ask myself questions based on what I had learned in the three journalism-writing classes I had taken up to the beginning time of my thesis. I first asked myself what type of project I would be able to put together where it would be substantial, yet still manageable.

In asking myself all of these questions, what I came to see was that I had a desire for answers and that got me to thinking about journalism in the sense that what it is we want and are in a constant search for are answers. I thought that the project should somehow be related to the search for answers. I eventually with the guidance of my advisor, Carol Schlagheck, settled on the idea of doing a series that would somehow allow me to ask people questions and see what type of answers they would come up with. In getting the people's responses, people would be exposing themselves in a way that would allow the university community as a whole to see who it is that they were on a deeper level and not just on the surface.

The next step, which was suggested by my advisor, was to find an outlet for the question and answer segments I was hoping to produce. The first place I turned to was the University Communications office. I asked them if they felt they could use this series in a way that would benefit the university. The response I received was that the department felt they had enough press releases on these various figures and that my work would only add to the already large number of documents possessed by the department.

The next department Dr. Schlagheck told me to set my eyes on was where I had developed my initial interest in pursuing journalism from: The Eastern Echo. I went and spoke with the director of Student Media, Kevin Devine. I made a long spill about how neat I thought it would be for the paper to run the series that I had conceived. Luckily, Kevin Devine agreed with my assessment. The next step in the line of red tape was to get the Echo's editor-in-chief, Amanda Hamon, on my side. I made the same speech to her explaining what it was that I had hoped to accomplish as a result of doing this project. Ms. Hamon also felt there was merit in my undertaking the project.

Now that I had the all clear to get started, I had to figure out exactly whom I wanted to talk to. The first person I went after to start off my series was the man at the top of the university ladder, our president John Fallon. I honestly did not think that I was going to be able to secure his time and commitment, because obviously a man of his stature is extraordinarily busy.

I learned a few techniques about how to pursue President Fallon's participation from the book, Interviewing: A Guide for Journalists and Writers. According to the book, there are several key things a reporter needs to do in order to get past his "gatekeeper," or secretary. Some of the techniques mentioned in the book included being persistent in trying to get to your subject, drop off your list of questions if it is appropriate for who you want to talk to, always try to find the mobile phone number of your desired interviewee if it is at all possible, and tell your "gatekeeper" that it is in the public's interest that you speak with the official you are tracking down. Many times secretaries do function in the way of protecting important officials' time from being wasted with situations they may deem as trivial matters. However, I was really fortunate that

President Fallon's gatekeeper was on my side and was more than willing to help me get to him. She told me that all I needed to do to get a hold of him was to send him an email. In sending the email, I got a pleasant surprise that he did in fact want to talk. His willingness to help me helped shape my confidence in asking for others to talk with me.

There are so many lessons that I have learned as a result of having taken on this project. The lessons began immediately from that first interview. The first major lesson I'd have to say I learned is that preparation is key. It is my job as a journalist to keep the interview on its legs and moving forward. The best way to do this is through proper preparation. When profiling a subject I felt it was necessary, when possible, to do research on whom it was I would be speaking with. I found this was necessary in order to make the person "come alive on paper," as suggested by author Ken Metzler in his book Creative Interviewing (113). The way I tried to bring a person to life on paper was by describing them with actions. This is where the use of the introductory paragraphs in each of the pieces became useful. I was able to use them as a device that I thought would entice readers to read the articles.

A technique I gained regarding preparation was that if I had the chance, it was always best to talk with people who are in some way familiar with the subject who I would be talking to. This proved useful because it would often times help to spawn other questions that I would not have thought to ask. One prime example of this was when I interviewed Jim Vick, EMU's Vice-President for Student Affairs. I spoke to several people who worked with him on various committees and was able to find out a great amount about what he liked to do outside of his professional life. I found out that he enjoys climbing mountains with his sons. This allowed me to form several questions for

his interview having to do with mountain climbing that proved to make for a very fascinating interview.

From the book The Art of the Interview, I was able to learn about how to pose difficult questions without turning my subject against me or making them want to prematurely conclude the interview. Author Lawrence Grobel used a previous interview with Dylan McDermott as an example. In the book, Grobel wrote about he was able to ask McDermott about the death of his mother when he was only five years old. Grobel wrote, “I wasn’t sure how I was going to bring it up, knowing from reading clips about him that he didn’t like to talk about it” (199). Grobel suggests that an interviewer needs to look for an opening where they can insert a key question they may not otherwise get the opportunity to ask. With McDermott, Grobel said he found his opening when McDermott when he began to talk about his acting studies with legendary acting teacher, Sanford Meisner. McDermott said that Meisner always told students to go to “a very deep place” (199). Grobel took that response and asked McDermott if there was any place deeper for him than his mother’s death. In posing his question this way, Grobel was able to get McDermott to open up to him.

One instance where I was able to use this technique to my advantage was with Jim Vick. During our interview, we had gotten to a place where we were discussing university affairs, specifically the College Place renovation project, which had been voted on by the university officials the week we spoke. Since we were discussing matters surrounding the university, I found my opening to ask Mr. Vick about a comment that was said by Howard Bunsis, the president of the EMU chapter of the American Association of University Professors. While for a moment, it had appeared that I had

caught him off guard with my question; Vick still provided a very thoughtful and honest answer.

Another lesson I came away from the interview with is that depending on the situation, sometimes your interview will get away from you. What this means is that if not careful, the person you are talking to will sometimes take the interview over from you and give you really long answers that are not necessarily related to what you initially inquired about. In the book The Craft of Interviewing, this is referred to as going on a “tangent.” The book suggests, although some might refute this, that an interviewer should follow the tangent and ask questions that are related to whatever the subject begins to talk about. Author John Brady says this is a good technique because good, solid quotes may come from going down the unexpected path.

Another key lesson I learned is that it is crucial to plan for whom it is you want to talk to. I sometimes would make the error of contacting an interviewee only maybe two to three days prior to my desired meeting period. While at certain times, I was lucky enough to get the person, there would be other times when I was not so lucky and would miss out for that week on having a biography for my project.

One of the most interesting insights I found is just how varied some of the answers would be depending on who was responding to a particular question. One of my favorite questions to ask my subjects was “What is your greatest wish for the world?” I was given answers ranging from world peace to everybody accepting one another.

One of the other great things I was able to take away from this project was that I often times had a chance to talk to people who were involved and at the forefront of the happenings on EMU’s campus. Among some of the notables were EMU-AAUP President

Howard Bunsis, the aforementioned President Fallon and Jim Vick. I also had the chance to talk with several of our campus students, such as Victor Walker who is very involved in campus activities and is known by many of the students on our campus.

The big lesson I would say I learned is that interviewing is simply the interaction between two human beings, in which one is trying to get into the mind of the other. How the person being interviewed responds is representative of how well the reporter has done his/her job in terms of connecting. Interviewing is all about making the connection to another person, and I feel confident that because of my work this past academic year that I am ready and able to connect with just about anyone.

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