

Doc Shaw: home at last

by Matt Jacobs
Clarion Reporter

Fate. Where will it take us and how will it take us there? Seldom are the answers to these questions evident to us, much less directly in front of us. Such was the case for Dr. Jean Shaw, professor of biology at Brevard College.

Dr. Shaw, originally from a rural area between Spartanburg and Greenville called Motlow Creek Community, has finally returned to the part of the country that she proudly calls home after nearly a 30-year absence.

The events of Dr. Shaw's life have carried her from Motlow Creek to Tennessee, Kansas, Mississippi, and even Mexico and parts of Central America, but ultimately life has carried her here to Brevard College.

Dr. Shaw graduated from Robinsville High School in Motlow Creek in 1950 at the age of 17. Directly after high school, she went to Winthrop College. There she majored in zoology and chemistry. From Winthrop, she moved on to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and obtained her master's degree in zoology with a minor in bacteriology.

After earning her master's degree, her education was temporarily interrupted. She married and moved to Kansas with her husband who had taken a teaching position at the University of Kansas. She had three children there (with whom she is still very close), but has since divorced her husband.

While at the University of Kansas she reached another important milestone in her life. In 1972, Jean Shaw became Dr. Jean Shaw after obtaining her doctorate in microbiology.

Dr. Shaw recalls how, at the age of 13, she had a burning desire to spend her life in Africa as a doctor, helping the sick and poor. But as she continued her education she was exposed to the impact that malaria was having on the people there. At that point she changed her

focus of study to the more scientific end of the medical spectrum in order to study malaria and find a cure.

She studied malaria for nearly 10 years, and after her divorce in 1980, she took a two-year post-doctoral scholarship to study the disease with some of the leading professionals in the field at the University of Massachusetts.

Unfortunately, due to a family emergency, she could only use one year of her scholarship before she was forced to return home to Kansas.

In the early to mid '80s, Dr. Shaw took many teaching jobs at schools such as Tougaloo, 1978-1979, a black liberal arts college in Madison County in Jackson, Mississippi. She then taught at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas ('79-'80), then University of Massachusetts in Field Research ('80-'81), and then Rock Hurst in Kansas City, Missouri ('81-'82).

Following Rock Hurst, she also taught at Cleveland College for four years ('82-'86). Though on the surface this period seemed to be a very successful time in her life, it was one of the most emotionally trying periods due to several deaths of family members and others very close to her. It was this period in her life that ultimately led her to a three-year trip to Mexico to examine the events of her life and basically recharge herself.

Upon her return to the U.S., Dr. Shaw felt it was time to go back to her true home, the Southern Appalachians. She returned to her parents' farm, which she is currently restoring to self-sufficiency, and decided to start teaching again. She contacted many schools in the area and coincidentally enough, BC needed someone to teach biology and anatomy/physiology which is Dr. Shaw's specialty. In the fall of 1989, she began her first semester at Brevard College.

Now, well into her second year at BC, she seems very content with her surroundings. She says that "the people



Biology Instructor Dr. Geneva Shaw working with BC students during a lab. (Clarion photo by Rachel Moore)

here are the nicest and the easiest to work with that I've ever met."

She expressed an interest in seeing the students take a more active role in their own education and in seeing them become more excited about learning in general. She also said, "I'd like to see people here love the land and nurture it back to health." Dr. Shaw is an avid lover of nature and when asked about what she likes most about being in Brevard, she said, "I love being back at home in the mountains. Whenever I get down, all I have to do is look up and see a mountain."

Dr. Shaw enjoys activities such as hiking and says, "I hike every available moment; I love to get out on the trail, it does me more good than anything."

Teaching was not Dr. Shaw's first choice, but out of necessity it became her profession and evolved into what is now one of her greatest loves. She began to teach as a graduate student in order to pay for her education and has been teaching off and on ever since.

The two people who have most influenced her life and teaching career are Dr. Margaret Hess, the chairperson of the biology department at Winthrop

College, and Dr. Arthur Jones, her biology professor at the University of Tennessee. Both helped her bridge the gap in between the biological approach to life, and creationism. Of Jones she says, "he first made me think about biology."

As a professor today, her primary goal is to leave each student with not only knowledge but an appreciation for the subject and the environment in general. When asked if she has any advice for her students, she says "They should learn to read with understanding and learn to explore that knowledge, using it daily and not disposing of it."

In the future she wants to return to her grandparents' farm to a self-sufficient state and a more natural state than before. She wants to continue to learn. She also wants to visit Africa and return to Mexico and parts of South and Central America, but most importantly she says, "I'd like to survive with minimal money and maximal participation in life."

Through Dr. Shaw, fate has afforded Brevard College with a gift that will undoubtedly keep on giving.

Student of the Month: Beth Wood

by Charles Marks
Clarion Reporter

"Have a good time, but take your studying seriously." This is a piece of advice Beth Wood offers to Brevard College students.

The 1989 Lubbock, Texas, High School graduate decided to come to Brevard for the music program here and to live in a small, pretty area.

Beth, whose family has since moved to Dallas, enjoys horseback riding, poetry, writing and playing pool. To relieve stress, Beth takes long drives on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Beth admires animal rights activist Richard O'Barry who was a dolphin trainer in the '70s. O'Barry now runs a dolphin project to keep dolphins safe and alive.

She says, "If I could change anything in the world right now I would make people treat living things as if

they are precious," and that she believes all living things are equal.

This year Beth serves as a student marshal. She is also the poetry editor of the Clarion and the co-editor of the Chiaroscuro, the Brevard College literary magazine.

Beth, who has been involved in music since she was in kindergarten, plays the piano, harp and guitar, and is a member of the Collegiate Singers and Chamber Chorale.

Beth is switching her major from music to English. "I just reached a decision where I thought singing would be better as a hobby than as a career goal," she said. "It seems to me that when you're a professional musician, that's all you do, and I want to have time to do lots of things instead of just one."

She would like to transfer to University of Texas in Austin, or the University of Colorado in Boulder.



Soprano Beth Wood performs a solo, accompanied by Greg Morris, during Parent's Weekend. (Clarion photo by Jock Lauterer)