

Gray days

Gary Gray retires

GARY GRAY FIRST CAME TO ANDREWS IN the fall of 1977 and enrolled in the Master of Divinity program. He considers himself deeply blessed to have studied with a stellar group of theologians—Fritz Guy, James Cox, Larry Geraty, Ivan Blazen, Walter Douglas, Daniel Augsburg, Abraham Terian, Steve Vitrano—who taught him how to think theologically, read the text carefully and evaluate theological ideas responsibly.

When Gary left in December of 1979, pulling a trailer behind his car because he had acquired too many books, he had no idea he would be returning in the fall of 1990 to teach in the English department. Or that he would acquire so many more books. Gary had attended the University of Massachusetts/Boston to study literature because one of his college English teachers had inspired him. He says, “I wasn’t looking for a teaching job. I was shocked and pleasantly surprised to learn that Andrews provided a stunning job benefit: a wife who was also an English teacher!”

Not long into his Andrews tenure, Gary offhandedly joked that he and his wife, Meredith Jones Gray, should teach a course on the literature of love. After Stella Greig (then chair of the Department of English) stopped laughing, she urged the development of just such a class. Over the years, Gary and Meredith have taught some of the major texts in western literature on the topic of love.

“Team teaching seemed to work for us,” says Gary, “so we also developed a course



“I was shocked and pleasantly surprised to learn that Andrews provided a stunning job benefit: a wife who was also an English teacher!”

on C.S. Lewis. We realized that my wife had read his literary works and I had read some of his theological essays. With our students, we read both and enjoyed making connections between the two.”

Gary quickly discovered that Gary Land, a colleague in the history department, shared his fascination with the American game of baseball. They conceived of creating a class in which they would read and analyze some of the literary texts that had grown up with the game over the years. One of their major objectives was to get

students interested in books, and they reasoned that baseball texts might just help students discover the pleasures of reading.

Gary’s background in both theology and literature suggested another obvious course: Biblical Literature. “Over the years of teaching this course, I have tried to connect the literary elements of the sacred text to theological and spiritual insights,” says Gary. “Hence, seeing the poetry as poetry, understanding how the imagery works, and probing the depths of similes and metaphors, etc., certainly helped to strengthen my faith; I hope it did for the students as well.”

Teaching at Andrews also gave Gary the opportunity to focus his initially vague interest in nature literature and its “founding father” Henry David Thoreau. Gary comments, “I have discovered that his (and many other nature writers’) profound commitment to our environment strongly connected with my SDA heritage of seeing nature as a gift from a benevolent Creator. I also came to appreciate why my biology major father was so fascinated by the world of nature. And why he took me on so many Sabbath afternoon walks in which he did not ‘preach’ to me about the beauty of nature; I guess he assumed I would eventually ‘get it.’ Finally, after way too many years, I am starting to ‘get it.’”

In retirement, Gary hopes to buy more books with all the extra money he will have and maybe even find time to read one or two.

World Changers Made Here.