

## Love affair with literature and life

by Bonnie McLean

It all seemed so surreal. My name was announced, I shook Dr. Andreasen's hand, and I received my faux diploma, while a photographer captured the moment. Six years, once seemingly endless and vague, had come to a close. Now, entering my first days as an Andrews University alumna, my mind floods with memories: dorm adventures, chapel talks, classes, field trips, friends and cafeteria cuisine. But I fondly reminisce on a moment three years ago, when my life changed and I didn't even realize it. It was in a newly-renovated classroom in Nethery Hall that I found my calling.

I had spent my childhood reading about exotic locales and exciting careers. My ambitions changed as I aged, from working with animals, to childcare, to President of the United States (inspired by my sixth-grade study in American Government) to journalism during my high school years. Ultimately, I decided to become an English teacher and change hundreds of young lives with my wit and wisdom.

With this eager, ambitious and cocky mindset, I entered the Andrews University campus ready to prove myself worthy of the Corpus, Mens, Spiritus motto. Of course, my collegiate life did not immediately reward me. Like many a young freshman, I learned that pure scholastic talent could not propel me to success, unless I worked for it. Classmates from around the planet showed me that my worldview and background were just one of hundreds of perspectives coming together on campus. My professors did not merely reward minor successes, but challenged me



to improve upon my progress. Gradually, that first difficult transition year passed, and I eagerly awaited the next years to come.

Even so, doubt lingered. I had no idea if my chosen career path was the one I should take. I had certainly been wrong before! Yet, as I took more English courses, I realized that though I did not know my ultimate destiny, I had chosen the right major. I loved the reading, the instructors, and the discussions with my classmates. I added a history major my second year, and enjoyed the different

kind of challenge that mirrored the English discipline, while also enlightening me in another field entirely.

Yet, it wasn't until my junior year, that my future beckoned me. In a British literature survey, co-taught by Drs. Monique Pittman and Scott Moncrieff, I discovered the joys of scholarship and academia. Pittman's enthusiastic discussions and Moncrieff's astute attention to detail piqued my interest. As we read Milton, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Austen, Keats, Byron, Wordsworth and many more, I began to feel a kinship with these authors and poets. I wondered, "Could I turn my simple enjoyment into a career?"

Three years later, after a series of advanced seminars, a successful Honors Project, and encouragement from friends, family and faculty, I can affirm that I was indeed meant to carry on my love affair with literature and life. I had thought, in coming to Andrews, I could change the world. Instead, it was I who was transformed. Through the example of other intelligent, godly people, I found the joy in seeking knowledge and glorifying God through my endeavors. Now, as I embark on a new adventure, I still look back to Andrews, remembering the place where I discovered the person I was meant to be.

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Bonnie McLean (BA '09) graduated summa cum laude as a J.N. Andrews Scholar with majors in both English/literature and history. She will be attending graduate school at Western Michigan University this fall.

### What's your story?

We'd love to hear your reflections on the time you spent at Andrews University. If you're interested in contributing, please e-mail [focus@andrews.edu](mailto:focus@andrews.edu).