Savor the memories at Commencement

BY ANDY CLENDENNEN

T

day that more than 2,500

students — and even more
teachers — have been waiting

for it finally here. Nearly 10,000

people will share in the tradition

of the University’s 142nd Commencement today in

Brookings Quadrangle.

Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton

will award the degrees in the cer-

emonies, which start at 8:30 a.m.

Of the 2,902 candidates, 1,579 are

undergraduate and 1,123 are

graduate and professional.

There are 429 doctoral candi-
dates, including 71 for the doctor of

philosophy degree from the

Graduate School of Arts & Sci-

ences; nine for the doctor of sci-
cence degree from the Henry

Edwin Sever Graduate School of

Engineering & Applied Science;

242 for the juris doctoris degree

degree from the School of Law; and 107
degree from the School of

Medicine.

In the event of rain, Commen-
cement exercises will still take

place in the Quad. If the weather

turns threatening, the ceremony

for undergraduates will be moved
to the Athletic Complex, while

graduate and professional degrees

will be bestowed at each respec-
tive school’s Commencement

See Commencement, Page 10

Prenatt becomes human resources vice chancellor

BY ANDY CLENDENNEN

W

illiam H. Gass has won this

year’s PEN/Spielvogel-

Diamonstein Award in the art of

the essay category for his book

Tests of Time.

Gass, Ph.D., is the David May

Guare and Craig Lucas, mem-

bers of the PEN’s international

jury, praised Gass for his book.

“Astonishingly, his work is

satisfying to

have my work

supported by

any peers,” Gass

said. “It was also

recognized for

Tests of Time

in March, when

he won the

prestigious

National Book

Critics Circle Award in the cri-
r

cism category.

PEN’s art of the essay category

is for the best book of previously

uncollected essays on any subject

by an American writer, published

in the current calendar year, in

recognition of the dignity and

esteem the essay form imparts to

literature.

The PEN awards will be pre-
sented May 20. Other recipients

this year include playwrights John

Guare and Craig Lucas, mem-

ber Rick Moody, poet Dana

Lavin and scholar Donald Keene.

The PEN American Center, the

largest of nearly 130 centers

worldwide that constitute In-
ternational PEN, is a member

ship association of prominent lit-

erary writers and editors. "As a

Gass wins prestigious PEN award for Tests of Time

See Gass, Page 2

in political sci-
ence from Arts & Sciences and

also majored in

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Olin School of

Business.

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Edison Theatre 2003-04 OVATIONS! Series

Edison Theatre will celebrate its 31st year of exuberant dance, rich musical traditions and classic and cutting edge theater with the 2003-04 OVATIONS! Series. Founded in 1973, Edison Theatre focuses on the interdisciplinary, the multicultural and experimental new work and innovative interpretations of classic material by nationally and internationally known artists.

The 2003-04 season will include a range of established figures and emerging talents — both returning favorites and new talent. The season opens Nov. 2 with an eclectic mix of music, dance and theater,” said Charlie Robin, executive director. “Each year’s program is different, each year’s program is unique, but there’s always something for everyone, from the classical to the contemporary, from the cutting edge to family fare.

Closing the season is On Stage at the Edison Theatre Box Office at 393-5454.

Prenatt

‘Wonderful to have her commitment’

— From Page 1

Before moving to St. Louis, Prenatt served in human resources management positions with Soga Corp., ASK Computer Systems, Greenville Hospital System and Creative Bio- molecules Inc.

Prenatt earned a bachelor of science degree from the Rochester Institute of Technology and is certified as a senior professional in human resources.

She is active in a number of professional organizations, including the College and University Professional Organization for Human Resources, the Society for Human Resource Management and the Human Resources Management Association and the Human Resources Executive Round Table. She also serves on the board of directors of Edgar O. Mearns Center.

Gass

Winning PEN award is ‘especially grating’

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— From Page 1

The honored PEN award is considered one of the most prestigious honors in literature — an honor that takes winning that prize, an unprecedented feat. He was also nominated for the award in 1985 for Habitations of the Word and in 1997 for Forming a Forest.

Assistant coaches take national honors

Assistant women’s basketball coach Stine Cochran and assistant men’s and women’s swimming coach Arthur Wang are winners of the second annual AIAW National Assistant Coaches of the Year Award. Cochran and Wang are the second annual AIAW Awards coordinator.

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As part of the Edison Theatre 2003-04 OVATIONS! Series, Teatro Hugo & Ines will present Short Stories, a display of “body puppetry” of feet, elbows and belly buttons into extraordinary, affecting characters.

Every year, including 1907 (above), the University follows the pattern of degree granting established at the University of Paris, which was founded in about 1100. In the early days of the University of Paris, the discipline of students fell under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Paris, who was responsible for local educational matters. In 1229, Pope John XXII issued an edict prohibiting all other local educational authorities from interfering in the educational matters of the University of Paris.

The northern wilderness, especially the Adirondacks and Moosehead Lake region, is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts, offering opportunities for fishing, hunting, hiking, and camping. The region is also home to numerous small towns and villages, known for their charming architecture and historical significance. The Adirondack Mountains provide a picturesque backdrop for many of these communities, with mountains and scenic vistas that are popular with tourists and outdoor enthusiasts alike.

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Annual Cancer Wellness Fair offers programs and activities

By KidimFFE Leos

June is Cancer Survivor Month. And this June, the third annual Cancer Wellness Fair will introduce cancer patients, their families and medical professionals to nonprofit medical services available in the St. Louis area.

The free event, sponsored by the Alvin J. Siteman Cancer Center at the School of Medicine and the National Academy of Sciences, will be held from 12:30 to 4 p.m. June 7 at the A.G. Edwards Headquarters downtown. (Free, accessible parking is available.)

Local experts and professional practitioners will conduct breakout sessions on complementary therapies, stress and relaxation management, nutrition, gentle stretching exercises and other activities. Booths will provide the latest information on health and wellness for cancer patients and their families.

J. Kim Tucci of The Pasta House Co. will also host a live healthy cooking demonstration — with free samples. A keynote presentation titled "Laughter, A New Twist to the Old Illness of Cancer" will be given by Christine Clifford at 1 p.m. in the auditorium of the headquarters. She is a cancer survivor and the author of "Not Now... I'm Having a No Hair Day.

Seating is limited. To pre-register, call 314-362-4850.

Headbands provide additional protection for soccer players

By Gila Z. Reckless

Headbands intended to protect soccer players from head injuries are effective only at high speeds, according to a report released Thursday by the University of Virginia research. The team found that mice lacking beta3 that died on the high-fat diet had significantly more fatty buildup, or atherosclerosis, than those lacking only apoE.

The results suggest that a complex interaction between beta3 and high-fat diets may contribute to heart disease and other inflammatory diseases. Semenkovitch said.

"This uncovers an interesting role for beta3 as a potential mediator of inflammation and may help guide new drug development strategies." Clay F. Semenkovitch

Defective counterparts. For example, they had 3.3 times the amount of plaque buildup clogging the thoracic aorta (the artery that extends from the heart down to the diaphragm) and 3.6 times the amount of atherosclerosis in the abdominal aorta, the largest artery below the diaphragm. Even when fed a normal diet, these animals had up to three times the amount of athero
critis as those lacking only apoE.

"These results suggest that a complex interaction between beta3 and high-fat diets may contribute to heart disease and other inflammatory diseases," Semenkovitch said.

"This study begins to explain the interaction, but people shouldn't use this as a reason to stop taking anti-platelet drugs as a part of a strategy to prevent heart disease. Anti-platelet drugs are effective in the proper clinical context. Our findings are in mice, and we need to be cautious about extrapolating these results to people."
Tuesday, May 20
4 p.m. Anechoic Veterinary Research Seminar.

Wednesday, May 21
4 p.m. Electron-Microscopy & Molecular Biophysics Seminar.

Thursday, May 22
4 p.m. Genetics Seminar Series.

Friday, May 23
4 p.m. Anatomy & Neurobiology Seminar.

Tuesday, May 27
Noon. Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, University of Washington.

Friday, May 23
4 p.m. Call Biology Physics Seminar.

Monday, May 30
4 p.m. Health Administration Program.

Wednesday, May 28
2 p.m. Diastasis Research and Training Center Lecture.

Thursday, June 5
1-3 p.m. Wellness Connection Information Session.

Friday, June 6
4 p.m. College of Arts and Sciences Research Seminar.

Monday, May 19
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Changing lanes: Howlett leaves trucking for law school

BY NEIL SCHONHERR

It's not very often a person's resume includes working as a trucking dispatcher and as a lawyer, but that's exactly what the case will be with Tim Howlett.

Employed in the trucking industry for three years, Howlett will receive a law degree at today's Commencement.

"I wanted to go to law school when I was in college, but it was still a void he needed to fill," says Kathleen F. Brickey, director for Each One Teach One and Beyond, which helps students get on the right track.

"When I was in college, I knew I couldn’t go straight to law school," Howlett says.

"I wanted a law degree, but I wanted to learn some other skills, like administration and presentation skills," he adds. "I just wanted to be treated the same as everyone else."

Davis decided then and there that he would use his sharp mind and intelligence to rise up and make a difference in the world by helping others do the same.

"My parents always encouraged me to do the best that I can do."

So he accounts, Davis has certainly done his best.

He will graduate with honors from the University of Chicago with a law degree in 1990.

"By all accounts, Davis has a vision for Washington University's contributions to marginalized communities of African-American youth and families in north St. Louis."

"He is one of the most talented students I've met in all my years at the University. But he also is a person of warmth, intellect, humility and generosity. He is truly delightful to know." Davis is trying to decide between a law-yr one-year fellowships in urban and public policy, and a one-year fellowship in the University's Office of the Trouncer and as operations coordinator for Teach For America in the Bronx, N.Y., this past summer.

"As if that didn’t keep him busy enough, he also completed a seminar of study at the University of Carlos III de Madrid in Spain."

Stephanie Karrtman, coordinator for the law school program called "Beyond the Surface," which joins students from St. Louis city and county public schools with Washington University students through community service.

He also served as a resident adviser for the Office of Residential Life; was a committee chair and member on the Campus Week of Dialogue on Race Relations; and worked as a summer leader in the University’s Office of the Trouncer and as operations coordinator for Teach For America in the Bronx, N.Y., this past summer.

"As if that didn’t keep him busy enough, he also completed a seminar of study at the University of Carlos III de Madrid in Spain."

Stephanie Karrtman, coordinator for Each One Teach One, which helps students of the St. Louis Desegregation Program through a partnership between the University and the Interdistrict Choice Corporation—the organization that runs the desegregation program. Each One Teach One mostly serves disadvantaged African-American youth, kindergarten through 12th grade.

He then became coordinator of the program, and through service, he found his calling.

Davis also contributed countless hours to another program called "Beyond the Surface," which joins students from St. Louis city and county public schools with

Wayne, Ind.

"Every time she thought it might be good to move on, she was promoted, which made it tough to leave."

"Finally, I thought, ‘If I don’t move now, I never will.’ And that’s when I finally quit," she says.

Washington University was the second school to which Howlett applied to pursue her dream of getting a law education.

"I knew the University had a great academic reputation," she says.

"And I was incredibly impressed when I called the admissions office. They have terrific people working there. They promptly returned my phone calls, were incredibly friendly and took the time to explain things to me. I was very happy to get in."

Howlett studied several areas during her three years here, including international law and labor and employment law.

She plans to work for Bryan Cave LLP in St. Louis after she takes the bar exam this summer.

She enjoyed her studies in the different areas of law so much that she will work in whichever practice area suits the firm best.

She recently had her note on labor law published in the Washington University Quarterly, an accomplishment of which she was very proud.

She was also in the top 10 percent of her class, despite the time constraints of getting married during law school and working throughout her senior year.

She plans to work for Spencer Fane Britton & Brown LLP in Clayton.

"Pam is a model law student and a joy to teach and work with," says Kathleen F. Brickey, LL.B., the James Carr Professor of Criminal Jurisprudence in the School of Law. Not only did she excel academically, but she projected everything she does with boundless energy and enthusiasm."

"She is outstanding in every respect."

Howlett thoroughly enjoyed her experience at the University.
Cubbon seeks environmentally responsible architecture

By Liam Ottens

Buildings, in their construction, maintenance and operation, account for nearly half the energy consumed by developed countries. Many architects, particularly young architects, see green building as their profession's most important contribution to sustainability issues, in which they have seen a need for new environmentally responsible architecture that safeguards fraying links to the natural world.

As co-founder of the student group Green Givens, the School of Architecture's Erin O'Mahoney Cubbon has helped foster a greensward of campus interest in sustainable design. Over the past two years, Green Givens has sponsored several student-attended lectures and discussions, co-sponsored the national touring exhibition Ten Shades of Green, and launched what will hopefully become an annual series of events known as the Green Givens Week.

"We can all agree that sustainability is a good thing, the question is how to accomplish it," says Cubbon, who in addition to her arts degree has earned a minor in Environmental Studies in the School of Public Service. "But talk to students about green design isn't enough. It helps if you can show them that it looks like — specific, real-world examples of how you incorporate sustainability into your projects."

Cubbon's accomplishments are not merely organizational. Fluent in Spanish, she has twice traveled to Central America to meet with Dancing Rabbit, an "eco-village" in northern Mexico that medical students visit to change the world.

"Adit Ginde, here reviewing abdominal CT scans, loves the diversity of patients who come into the emergency department. "Emergency medicine not only requires a wide range of knowledge and an open mind," he says, "but also you must have the ability to make decisions rapidly."

By Kimberly Le dendig

Adit Ginde says, "Emergency medicine not only requires a wide range of knowledge and an open mind, but you also must have the ability to make decisions rapidly."

"I love the diversity of patients — everything comes our way," Ginde says. "Emergency medicine not only requires a wide range of knowledge and an open mind, but you also must have the ability to make decisions rapidly."

The emergency department of the hospital is labeled "high-stress," but Ginde's approach demonstrates that the field is only stressful for some, explains Eric D. Katz, M.D., assistant professor of medicine and assistant director of the Emergency Medicine Residency Program. "Adit keeps his head in tough situations. He is a rare breed that loves his work," Katz says. Ginde is one of over 50 American medical graduates who have insurance (41 million in 2002). reports the Census Bureau; many people use the ER as their primary source of care, which allows him to treat a wide range of patients.

But the ability to care for patients from all walks of life with diverse illnesses is only one reason Ginde thrives in the ER.

"He's also an excellent fit within academic emergency medicine," Katz says. "Adit has the drive to master the knowledge base easily and add to it with solid research, critical insight and an open-minded approach." As the medical field's newest specialty, emergency medicine also offers a great opportunity to affect change from an academic perspective.

The mobile army hospital was a professor in the wounded immediate care during the Korean War served as a template for the modern ER, but until as recently as 1970 there was still virtually no emergency-care training in the United States, let alone research on crop diversity with students from all walks of life with diverse illnesses is only one reason Ginde thrives in the ER.

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Lee excels at both artistic and scientific pursuits

By NEIL SCHONERER

He was a double major in two disciplines that prob-
ably didn’t seem so far apart, lived thousands of miles
from home and participated in five theater productions his
senior year.

Pretty impressive, especially considering Kevin Lee started
regularly speaking English just five years ago.

Lee has participated in 11 productions in high school, but
he is most proud of his role as producer of All Student
Pirates of Penzance.

"I don’t think I could have done that in college," he says.
"I have a whole different level of understanding about
taking on a lot of different roles."
Jeffery Giering plays his electric violin as a means of unwinding from his studies and research. "I rank Jeff among the best students I have known in my 13 years at Washington University," says mentor Craig S. Pikaard, Ph.D., professor of biology in Arts & Science. "He is clearly an exceptional student whom I've treated like a graduate student for several years. He's the only undergraduate student working in my lab, and I'd rank him as an excellent second- or third-year graduate student. He needs minimal supervision and has a mature, professional manner."

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"To top it all off, Jeff is a wonderful person with a great sense of humor and an unpretentious, easy-to-know personality." Giering's mother, Cheryl, is an elementary-school special-education teacher; his father, Ken, is an executive for Nike. His brother, James, is a student at Linfield College in Oregon.

At the University, Giering continued two of his high-school pastimes, swimming and playing the violin. He played club water polo his first two years, and brings out his white electric violin to unwind from academic rigor. His favorites are Celtic reels and jigs.

"One of the things that drives me is the desire to make breakthroughs in treating disease," says Giering. "There are promising gene therapy positions and exciting opportunities in developing anticancer drugs and vaccines. It's exciting to think that I might be able to play a role."
Munisamy, who received her bachelor's degree from the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at the University of Florida School of Medicine and spent about two years there.

"The faculty at GWB are very open and engaging," Munisamy says. "She hopes to begin the first gay youth services in Singapore. There is a definite need for such programs in my country."

By Andy Clendenen

Lawson melds experiences, economic theory

From the moment he answers the question of what he wants to do, Henry Lawson knew some people in the sciences, in general, and astronomy in particular. While in high school, he was part of several science competitions and workshops outside the classroom.

"But despite a love of the physical sciences, Lawson headed another way — math and computer science. With a Blue Key Scholarship and a full-ride scholarship to University College, he was quickly noticed as a student who could mathematically excel. He was a star in the sciences, in general, and astronomy in particular. While in high school, he was part of several science competitions and workshops outside the classroom.

"Henry Lawson is graduating with majors in international affairs and in political science, both from University College in Arts & Sciences, and in planning on attending graduate school in the near future. He is currently working at the F-18, and I was one of the few intermediate-level field service engineers on the team. That was a very interesting experience."

"Fla. law "up to the mark" on gay rights, marriage equality"

"The great thing about GWB is that he's a man with an easy personality. Going to school abroad was just not an option. Through GWB's Leo Trotsky Scholarship and support from the Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre, Munisamy was able to come to the University."

"It was a life-changing experience," says Elze, P.D.B. "And I was in the first group of field service engineers assigned to the F-18, and I was one of the few intermediate-level field service engineers on the team. That was a very interesting experience."

"A few years ago, he decided to further his education and looked into Washington University. But history repeated itself — Lawson was again unsure of what direction to take. Enter University College Registrar Maria Hunter.

"As an academic advisor, I noticed straightaway that Henry had a very broad range of interests, from astronomy to international trade," Hunter says. "Henry also impressed me as being an extremely insightful thinker, perhaps from constant grappling with the world from the heavens."

"He also made a name for himself as a student who could mathematically excel. He was a star in the sciences, in general, and astronomy in particular. While in high school, he was part of several science competitions and workshops outside the classroom.

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"I have a reputation as a thinker, perhaps from constant grappling with the world from the heavens."

"The excellent teaching at GWB helped me to make a decision that I wanted to continue with my studies in political science.

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"Social work empowers, strengthens, and encourages, and I am humbled by the kind of support that I received at GWB."
High-profile scholarships, fellowships won by University students, graduates

By GERRY EVERED

Students and recent graduates from Arts and Sciences have made an impressive showing in the competitive world of prestigious national scholarships and fellowships this year. Four recipients of the 2003 Andrew W. Mellon Fellowships in Humanities in Social Science are students who have received the high honor for one-year research, said Dirk M. Killen, Ph.D., assistant dean, academic community. In the world of human scholarship, Killen noted, "It's an honor for any institution to have a student in the Mellon program, and getting four of them is quite remarkable." "They are an amazing group," said Miriam L. Ballin, Ph.D., associate professor of English in Arts and Sciences and the University's faculty coordinator for the Mellon program.

One of the Mellon recipients is a good example of mild head trauma, and for her doctorate, Amanda Macias, Ph.D., executive vice chancellor, will lead the procession.

For the 23rd straight Commencement, the program will begin with music by The Mighty Mississippi Concert Band of Washington University.

Three students were named as recipients of the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship. The scholarship, which includes a stipend of $17,500, will be awarded to students pursuing careers in mathematics, science and engineering, covers up to $7,500 annually toward tuition, fees and books for the junior and senior year.

The University's Goldwater winners are junior Craig H. Mermel, a biochemistry and mathematics major who plans to explore new pathways for synthesis after earning a doctorate in physical organic chemistry.

"What they did not know — what a person's head undergoes physically when it strikes a soccer ball — is one radian (about 60 degrees, or one-sixth of a revolution) per second and radians per second.

These values are well below established thresholds for acute acceleration, following the physics of brain trauma. "They are still not known is whether repeated below-threshold impacts could result in cumulative brain damage. And several researchers suggests that players who defend themselves as "headers" do suffer from chronic sensory cognitive effects.

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Bender, Woolsey named Guggenheim fellows

BY SUSAN KILENBERG MCGINN AND GILA Z. RECKESS

M. Bender and Thomas A. Woolsey have been awarded Guggenheim fellowships at the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

Bender, Ph.D., is professor of physics in Arts & Sciences. He is the author of George H. and Ethel R. Bishop Scholar in Neuropsychology, director of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. He also is professor of biomolecular engineering in the School of Engineering & Applied Science.

Bender will be on sabbatical at Imperial College in London for his fellowship period, which runs from June 2003-May 2004. There he will conduct a research project on quantum field theory, a body of knowledge that is shaped the course of much of modern particle physics and quantum field theory.

Griggs pulled away from her proposal to compile a "living work" for researchers studying the brain.

When Griggs starts her doctoral work in hydrology and water resources project, she will be in possession of a Hertz Fellowship and a Fulbright Scholarship. She has an opportunity to do graduate work at Washington University in St. Louis.

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"Complex quantum mechanics is not just a mathematical breakthrough," said Bender. "I believe it to be a major advance in the basic understanding of quantum mechanics. The potential for research in this area is enormous. Complex quantum mechanics provides a framework for describing the nature of antiparticles. It offers the possibility that a particle and its corresponding antiparticle need not have identical masses, and thus it may provide insights into the puzzle of why there is so much more matter than antimatter in the universe. Moreover, complex quantum mechanics underlies nearly all modern science and technology; it governs the behavior of materials and particles and governs the behavior of the brain.

"A lot of researchers are investing in this part of the brain," Bender said. "They use the context the body map provides to help understand how the brain develops and functions as well as to understand the role of genes in these processes. "This planned work could place researchers from different parts of the world to compare their findings and evaluate new information diring the fellowship." Bender has been invited to lectures on his work at more than a dozen universities in Europe during the fellowship year. He will also present invited talks at many international conferences on theoretical physics, including giving the keynote address at a conference in Berlin. It is that devoted entirely to the field of complex quantum mechanics that he originated.

Bender earned a bachelor's degree, summa cum laude, in physics from Cor nell University in 1964 and both a master's and doctorate (1969) in physics from Harvard University. After seven years on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology faculty, he joined Washington University's Department of Physics in 1975.

Woolsey's fellowship is based on his proposal to compile a "living work" for researchers studying the brain.

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Always searching for solutions

Bob Thach loves solving problems – in his office, in his lab, and even for relaxation

BY ANDY CLENDENNEN

frontunner of the genome project. That was a very exciting time!

But a funny thing happened on the way to genome success: Thach became an administrator. Having risen through the ranks at Washington University, Thach, Ph.D., is dean of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences.

And he loves every minute of it.

"In 1993, I just realized that I was not as fascinated with new developments in research," Thach says. "I was still fascinated with some of the questions I had been working on for a number of years, but I was not turned on by new opportunities, new directions that research was taking. I realized that was a sign my career in research was approaching a natural terminus. And then the opportunity to move on to a deanship was presented, and I decided to try it out, try something new – and I loved it.

"I was very interested in the problems we face and how we solve those problems. I found that fascinating, and it was a challenge – to take data, determine meaning and data interpretation – so in some ways he's having fun.

And that aspect of it I particularly liked, and that's how I got to where I am today.

Of course, it's not as if he had planned to become a dean all along. In fact, when asked if he thought as a graduate student that he'd end up in administration, he's quick with a laugh.

"No way."

But here he is, 10 years after taking the deanship and still going strong.

"A great asset Bob has is his amazing memory," says Lisa Goessling, a research assistant who has collaborated with Thach on several research projects. "He can start discussing results of an experiment I did 10 years ago, and as I look at him with bleary stare, he'll tell me what month and year I did the experiment and commit it to memory.

"He is a thoughtful and respected administrator and contributor to our campus community. The enhancements to our graduate programs are now being implemented at other top research universities, a tribute to Bob's leadership and innovative work."

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Still a scientist

"Bob Thach is a great scientist out of the field, but you can never fully take the scientist out of the scientist and convert him. Thach still maintains a small lab on campus and is dedicated to churning out scientific data.

"I just love tackling problems," he says. "I do crossword puzzles and most of the cryptograms in the paper every night just for relaxation.

"I just like solving problems and puzzles."

By Robert E. Thach, Ph.D., (right), dean of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, chats with graduate student Robert Buschworth and Christina Lineinenpeter after the Faculty Mentor Awards ceremony in April. ("Thach has a great sense of humor," says Lisa Goessling, a research assistant who has worked with him for almost 18 years.

"I've worked with Bob for almost 18 years and am still impressed with not only his intelligence but also the quality of his character," Goessling says. "Bob has always shown concern for those who have worked for him, and on top of that he has a great sense of humor. Over the years, our weekly lab meetings have become an enjoyable mix of science and socializing."

And if the numbers, sciences, problems, budgets and policies ever become overwhelming, Thach can find respite from his work right outside his back door.

Very interested in Native American foods, Thach maintains a garden in his back yard.

"I've gone out into the woods and found persimmon trees and planted persimmons in my back yard," Thach says. "I have a grove now, and I harvest persimmons every fall and make persimmon cookies.

"I also planted a couple of paw paw trees and am waiting for them to grow and bear fruit. I am interested in some of oak trees of which the acorns are supposed to be healthy and "eco-friendly.""

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