

Inside This Issue:

JoAnne Sweeny	1-3
Randy Robinson	1, 4
Heather Baxter	1, 5-6
Upcoming Legal Writing Events	7
LWI Lives Committee	7

LWI Lives is a regular electronic publication of the “Faces of LWI” Committee, which explores and communicates the emerging identity of LWI and its members. We have in common the commitment to being the best legal writing professors that we can be. But we are multi-dimensional people with different strengths, interests, curiosities, and gifts. By profiling individuals in our community, we hope to expand and develop our understanding of who we are and what we aspire to be.

Flaming Feminist



JoAnne Sweeny

By Jody Marcucci

Meet JoAnne Sweeny! Find out how this self-proclaimed “flaming feminist” from the Los Angeles area ties together her love for teaching, community theatre, and the intersection of technology and feminism to accomplish her “favorite thing” about this profession: Writing about what she cares about!

Moving to the Midwest



Randy Robinson

By Maureen Collins

Randy Robinson loves his family, the outdoors, and the classroom. Randy has been teaching legal writing at the University of Denver School of Law for several years but is headed to the Midwest as he joins the tenure-track faculty at The John Marshall Law School in Chicago this fall.

Breaking Stereotypes



Heather Baxter

By Allison Ortlieb

“People have an idea about who you are when you say you’re a law professor – but those ideas don’t always fit,” says Heather Baxter, a legal writing professor from Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad College of Law. Heather is breaking stereotypes with her profession in her personal life, and she’d like to break some of the stereotypes you might have in mind about one of her personal pas-

Contributors to this issue

Maureen Collins
Jody Marcucci
Allison Ortlieb
Nancy Soonpaa



JoAnne Sweeny, continued

Dr. Sweeny (she has a PhD in Law from Queen Mary, University of London) is an Associate Professor at the University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law in Kentucky. Her path to Louisville started on the west coast. JoAnne grew up in the Los Angeles area and attended



Pirate Family!

college at the University of California at Irvine before going to law school at the University of Southern California. After law school, she clerked for Judge Ferdinand F. Fernandez at the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in Pasadena.

After her clerkship and a stint in private practice, JoAnne decided to hop the pond and obtain her PhD. While in London, she taught British constitutional law (“public law” as the Brits call it). She also had some fun in London, where she met her husband, Martin French, who hails from Ireland.

JoAnne and Martin now live in Kentucky with their four-year-old son, Redmond. Redmond loves to play soccer, and JoAnne, Martin, and Redmond staunchly support their local professional soccer team, Louisville City FC. (Martin was active in bringing the team to Louisville, but that’s a story for a different profile.) The family enjoys traveling, both to Ireland to visit relatives and to places where JoAnne has taught, including Finland. The family intends to return to Ireland this summer for a visit, and they will accompany JoAnne back to Finland when she

teaches there next spring.

One of JoAnne’s personal passions is theatre. She was a “theatre kid” growing up in L.A., and she has become active in the local theatre scene in Louisville, which she describes as “robust.” That scene is also a family affair, as Martin freelances in the theatre field. He directs, designs lighting for shows, and even volunteers his time to teach local high schoolers the tricks of the trade.

JoAnne notes that being a successful performer and a successful attorney are related. According to JoAnne, the key to both is “the ability to read a room.” JoAnne has showcased that ability several times recently in the theatre context. JoAnne’s first



JoAnne performing!

LegalWriting
INSTITUTE

JoAnne Sweeny, continued

show in Louisville was an improv show about President Obama's election; she was called to the task to fill in for an absent performer. She has also auditioned for shows, a process she describes as "nerve-wrecking." She enjoys performing in cabaret-style shows. Her favorites include a show involving love songs from Broadway—the twist being that the characters' genders were switched. Another favorite show involved Disney songs: each performer dressed as a character (JoAnne was Sleeping Beauty) and spun a wheel to determine which Disney song the performer would sing. Thus, each performer needed to be prepared to sing each of the show's 28 songs at a moment's notice. JoAnne, aka Sleeping Beauty, nailed her performances of "Bippity Boppity Boo!" from *Cinderella*, "In Summer" from *Frozen*, and "Down in New Orleans" from *The Princess and the Frog*.

JoAnne's professional passion is writing about the intersection of feminism and technology, particularly in the midst of the #MeToo movement. She is particularly interested in social media vigilantism and the rise in defamation suits against those who have been vocal in #MeToo. She is also interested in President Trump's habit of blocking commentators on Twitter and whether this action violates the right to petition. In her free time, JoAnne likes to vent her frustration with our current political climate and "rage write" for various publications, including *salon.com*.

Thus, Professor JoAnne Sweeny truly writes (and performs!) about what she cares about. Bravo!

JoAnne can be reached at j.sweeny@louisville.edu.



JoAnne and her family visiting Legoland!



Randy Robinson, continued

Randy tells a wonderful story about how he was inspired to go to law school. He was working long hours managing a retail store and volunteering for Barack Obama's unlikely presidential campaign. On election day 2008, Randy served as an election judge at the polls in St. Louis. Returning home exhausted from a full day managing a polling place, he fell asleep on the couch before the results were announced. He awoke to Obama's victory speech and was struck by the thought that he too could forge a different course for himself. In President Obama Randy saw shades of himself. Like President Obama, Randy was raised by a hard-working sin-



The Robinson family celebrating the Fourth of July in 2017.

gle mother. Like Obama, he believed in a new vision of America that extended equal opportunities to all Americans. And, like Obama, he was searching for a course that would allow him to put his talents and abilities to work in support of this vision. But for Randy, law school had always been an abstract concept, a possibility that seemed beyond his reach. No one in his family was a lawyer, and in fact he did not even know any lawyers. Seeing Obama win the presidency gave him the feeling that "if he can do it, so can I." So, like Obama, he went to law school.

During law school, he was a senior editor on the law review and was recognized with numerous academic awards. Upon graduation, he clerked for the Honorable Monica Marquez of the Colorado Supreme Court. Later, he practiced in the field of complex civil litigation and served as general counsel for a healthcare company. Later, Randy returned to the classroom at Denver, his alma mater, but this time in front of the podium.

When asked what he loves most about teaching, Randy is

quick to answer that it is the opportunity to make an impact on future lawyers by underscoring the importance of skills and ethics in practice. He had the opportunity to build relationships with his own professors while in law school and wants to provide those same mentoring opportunities to his own students. He likes the fact that legal writing courses give him the chance to build trust and credibility by working one-on-one with students.

Randy describes his life as "family-centric" and that is just how he wants it. Randy, his wife Alicia, and his three children have made the most of living in the Colorado. They are "outdoors people" who love to hike and camp. They love the zoo, the botanic gardens, art festivals, and other outdoor amenities that Denver has to offer. So why the move to Chicago?

Randy's children have lived all of their lives in Denver, and he is looking forward to bringing his family to a diverse, cosmopolitan city that offers new and different cultural and entertainment opportunities. At John Marshall, he will also be broadening his horizons a bit as he teaches doctrinal courses. That the school has a mission of providing opportunity for often under-served populations, including many first-generation law students, was important to him in making the difficult decision to leave Denver.

Randy is a self-confessed "news junkie." He absorbs his news in any format he can—digital, print, television. He researches in the area of law and technology (and was able to explain the concept of blockchain to me with clarity and ease!). Randy can be reached at rrobins@JMLS.edu.



Randy on a hike through the Rocky Mountains with his family.



LegalWriting
institute

Heather Baxter, continued

sions: the world of competitive cheerleading.

“Cheer mom” doesn’t have the same cool-factor that soccer mom, hockey mom, or lacrosse mom does (though Heather can also claim the title lacrosse mom). Mention that you’re a cheer mom to someone and it can conjure up less-than-flattering images of dance show reality stars. Mention cheerleading to most people, and they may think of *Mean Girls* or *Bring It On* – a world of “spirit fingers” and popularity contests. That’s not the cheerleading that Heather knows. The cheerleading world she has come to know is all about dedication, athleticism, and an unrivaled sense of teamwork that places the cheerleaders center stage, not relegated to the sidelines.

Heather’s 11-year-old daughter, Grace, began cheerleading when she was 5. She started off with Pee Wee Cheerleading,



Heather with her daughter Grace after a cheerleading tournament.

standing on the sidelines to cheer on and support the main event: Pee Wee Football. It didn’t take long for Grace to realize that she didn’t want to be on the sidelines – she wanted to be the focus of the fans. Heather enrolled Grace in a competitive cheerleading program, and they both entered a sport that has given them more than they could have imagined.

In Heather’s words, “competitive cheer is a whole different animal.” It is a sport unto itself. The cheerleaders are not there to support other athletes – they ARE the athletes. The girls have to have the flexibility of a gymnast, the rhythm of a dancer, the physical strength of a football player, and the

stamina of a cross-country harrier. They’re doing all the strenuous things you find in any other team sport, and they’ve got to do it with a smile.

Heather has found that competitive cheerleading is also the ultimate team sport. Unlike traditional team sports, where every starter has a backup, there’s no bench in cheerleading. Every member is needed at every practice and every competition. Teams sometimes practice five to six days per week to attain perfect timing and synchronization in their two-and-a-half-minute routines. They practice the whole year in order to be ready for the main competition season, which runs from January to May. During those months, you’ll find Heather and her family at competitions from Orlando to Dallas.

This year, Heather’s daughter’s team competed at The D2 Summit: a national championship invitational competition. The team had been doing well... really well. In the final round, one of the girls had a bobble – an error that could be costly to their results. The girl was devastated. Despite the disappointment, the team rallied around their teammate. The girls were sad, but there was no finger-pointing or blame, just support and love. The team took the floor for awards much humbler than they had been. Despite the error, the team won the championship. More important than that championship, though, was the teamwork, dedication, and support each of the members showed for one another in the much darker moments earlier in the day. It made the victory that much sweeter.

Entering the world of competitive cheer broke down some of the perceptions of cheerleading that Heather had. At the same time, her presence as a cheer mom has broken down some perceptions her fellow cheer moms have about law professors. When meeting her fellow cheer moms, Heather introduced herself as a teacher. As they’ve discovered that she’s a law professor, her friends have been surprised. Apparently, they had their own preconceived notions of what type of person would be a law professor and “cheer mom” did not fit those assumptions.

With a cheer competition season that runs from January to May, and a semester that runs during that same time frame, saying that Heather is busy during the spring is an understatement. It’s not unheard of for Heather to go for several weeks without a weekend at home. At one point, between travelling with her moot court team and her daughter’s cheerleading team, Heather didn’t spend a weekend at home for

LegalWriting
institute

Heather Baxter, continued

over two months. She doesn't mind the travel, though. It gives her time for another pastime: reading.

Like many legal writing professors, Heather is an avid reader. What may make her unique in her reading habits is her choice of genre: urban fantasy. A few years ago, she was introduced to the series of books upon which the television series *True Blood* was based. Since then, books about vampires, witches, and fairies have been the download of choice on her well-traveled Kindle. Her love of this genre has taken her on the road, too. She's travelled to a number of reader's conventions to meet her favorite authors.



Heather with her 2018 ABA National Appellate Advocacy Competition team.

Heather admits that when she likes something, she can

get a little obsessed with it. Prior obsessions have included University of Kentucky basketball and Bon Jovi. Kentucky basketball is less of an obsession now because it's hard to get attached to players that spend just a year with the team before turning pro. But her love of Bon Jovi has been more long-term. She has seen the rock band perform around 20 times, travelling to Tampa, Orlando, New Jersey, and New York to catch their concerts.

Heather's professional life keeps her on the road as well. She coaches two moot court teams a year. During 2017-18, her team was a national semifinalist in the ABA's National Appellate Advocacy Moot Court competition, which took her to Washington, D.C., and Boston. The team received accolades for both their brief and their oral advocacy skills. In case you haven't been keeping track, Heather has the travel schedule of a management consultant and the hotel points to match.

June through December is Heather's recovery period. That's when she's focused on gearing up for the school year and breaking in a new set of ILs. She makes sure she has plenty of time for her new students every fall. After all, it takes a while to orient them to the study and practice of law, and she always works to "change their minds about what legal research and writing is all about." By the time January rolls around, they need less one-on-one attention, and Heather can return to balancing her ILs with her moot court team, Criminal Procedure class, judicial field placement clinic, and cheerleading competition schedule. It's an exhausting but supremely rewarding schedule.

If you would like to contact Heather Baxter, you can reach her at hbaxter@nova.edu.

UPCOMING LEGAL WRITING EVENTS

September 28-29, 2018

Western Regional Legal
Writing Conference
University of Colorado
Law School

July 9-11, 2019

Seventh Annual Applied
Legal Storytelling
Conference
University of Colorado
Law School

July 15-18, 2020

2020 LWI Biennial
Conference
Georgetown University
Law Center

The **Faces of the LWI** Committee exists to allow us to learn about the interesting lives of our colleagues. For that to happen, we want and need a diverse selection of legal writing professors to profile. If you have someone in mind that we should put on the list for a future newsletter, please feel free to contact any of our members at the email addresses below. If you could include a note on why you think the individual's profile would be particularly interesting, it will help us in developing priorities.

Selection and Presentation Process: We believe it is important for the members of LWI to know our process for creating the newsletter. The Committee is organized into three teams, and each is responsible for selecting, proposing, and writing the three profiles for a particular issue of the newsletter. To ensure a diverse newsletter, the teams propose the names of the selected individuals to the Co-Chairs to ensure that there is a breadth of coverage for each issue. Additionally, the Co-Chairs are keeping a master list of all the profiles, so that we can ensure a wide range of coverage over time.

Writing is thinking in ink.

Faces of LWI Committee Members



Maureen Collins
co-chair, JMLS
7collins@jmls.edu



Grace Hum
co-chair, USF
ghum@usfca.edu



Joan Rocklin
co-chair, Oregon
jrocklin@uoregon.edu



Alexa Chew
UNC
achew@email.unc.edu



Iselin Gambert
George Washington
igambert@law.gwu.edu



Nancy Soonpaa
Texas Tech
nancy.soonpaa@ttu.edu



Janis Kirkland
Regent
janikir@regent.edu



Elizabeth Berenguer
Campbell
berenguer@campbell.edu



Jody Marcucci
DePaul
jmarcucc@depaul.edu



Tracy McGaugh Norton
Touro
tnorton@tourolaw.edu



Allison Ortlieb
DePaul
aortlieb@depaul.edu



Rebecca Rich
Duke
rich@law.duke.edu



Byron Wardlaw
JMLS
bwardlaw@sbcglobe.net

Check out these websites for more information on what's happening!

<http://www.aals.org/aals-events/>
<http://www.lwionline.org/>
<http://www.alwd.org/>

