

"Celebration of Life": Memorials for Linda S. Bergmann (1950-2014)

Professor Linda Shell Bergmann died unexpectedly on January 11, 2014. Director of the Writing Lab at Purdue University at the time of her death, Professor Bergmann's current work addressed transfer of writing skills in several arenas—writing centers, writing across the curriculum initiatives, community-university engagement, and high school to college transitions. Her scholarly career began with a study of American humor. After completing her dissertation *American Historical Humor: The Tradition and the Contemporary Novel* at the University of Chicago, Linda turned to the writings of 19th century educator, biographer, traveler, and amateur naturalist Elizabeth Agassiz. These early works prepared her for lifelong publishing in cross-disciplinary venues as she often studied varied topics (and even disciplines) simultaneously, deftly assembling issues of science, education, literature, rhetoric, and writing in a common space (see bibliography). Linda's professional journey included Director of Writing at Hiram College (1989-1991), Director of Writing Across the Curriculum at Illinois Institute of Technology (1991-1996), Director of Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing Center at University of Missouri-Rolla (1996-2001), and first Associate Director and then Director of the Writing Lab at Purdue University (2001-2014). While at Purdue, Linda was promoted to the rank of Professor (2010), won several grants including a two-year project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and directed eight completed dissertations, with three more underway (see list in bibliography). In addition to extensive participation in professional conferences, Linda was active in writing center professional organizations worldwide, and traveled extensively on behalf of writing centers.

We at *Peitho* and the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition celebrate Linda Bergmann’s contributions to scholarship, Writing Center administration, feminist mentoring, nineteenth century women’s rhetoric, and the study of how composing reflects and extends critical thought as well as its communication. In the memorials that follow we see some of the sides of Linda Bergmann that made her such a treasured teacher, colleague, and friend. For us at *Peitho*, it is particularly important to note how her students celebrated her life, for it shows us feminist mentoring at work: generous and supportive without relaxing scholarly standards, intent on making the graduate experience for young women (and men) more humane than it was in the past, collaborative, extending beyond the classroom and becoming lifelong friendship, funny, inclusive, and the sort of support that builds trust and affection.

What follows are the memorials read in Linda’s honor at the Celebration of Life service held on January 17, 2014. At the invitation of Linda’s husband Professor Bernard Bergmann, III, and her son Bernard (Bernie) Bergmann, IV, speakers were colleagues, friends, and past students in this order:

- Patricia Sullivan (speaking for the Rhetoric and Composition program and the Department of English)
- Irwin Weiser (speaking as colleague and friend; remarks read by Jon Wallin)
- Shirley Rose (speaking as colleague and friend; remarks read by Jon Wallin)
- Liz Angeli (speaking as former student; including remarks by Morgan Reitmeyer)
- Dana Driscoll (speaking as former student; including remarks by Danielle Cordaro and Jaci Wells)
- Judith Yaross Lee (speaking as longtime friend, colleague, and fellow traveler)

Patricia Sullivan’s Reading

Before 2001, I knew Linda Bergmann primarily through her particularly canny and sensitive examination of the writings of Elizabeth Agassiz, a 19th century biographer, author, educator, wife, and budding naturalist. This scholarly investigation of a complex figure who co-founded and was first president of Radcliffe prefigured the scholarly demeanor I would come to recognize in Linda herself. It revealed what I would and have come to know as Linda’s habit of dwelling in a knowledge space, somewhat uncomfortably—a bit like perching on two chairs simultaneously.

Then, in early 2001, Linda visited as a candidate for a position that would become Director of Purdue’s Writing Lab and be a member of the Rhetoric and Composition faculty in English.

I remember a sketchy, winter dinner at the New Pub and a response she offered to a question posed about why Purdue: “I want to teach graduate students,” she simply and quietly said. When Linda arrived in the fall, she began to greatly enrich the graduate study of Writing Across the Curriculum as well as carry on the Writing Lab’s strong tradition of service built by its founder, Mickey Harris and the dedicated staff, such as Tammy Conard-Salvo (current Asst. Director) and many more. Linda immediately reached out to others on the campus to promote the Writing Lab’s potential to sponsor research into how writing works within its various disciplinary cubby holes and also across them. A scholar of Writing Across the Curriculum, Linda set out to build bridges among departments and groups, to enhance the Writing Lab as a center for research about learning to write, and to empower people to speak their minds through the texts they produced. Yes, she was busy. And that work has born fruit, most obviously in an Online Writing Lab that is the premiere writing resource in world, and in, I think, more important but less documentable ways as well.

Linda’s work has enriched our scholarly community by reaching out to colleagues in writing centers, both here and abroad. She has traveled widely, hardly ever passing up a trip, and using that travel to learn from other writing programs in the world and also to impart her gathered wisdom. In November, in what marks her last international consulting, Linda visited Colombia to meet university partners who wanted to join

with us in building a Spanish-language OWL (Online Writing Lab). Linda had been ambivalent about the project before the trip, but she returned with stories of the country’s hilly beauty, its people’s needs, and their wonderful character . . . and she began to plan and look forward to this spring’s seminar in Writing Center Theory. The class project would begin the on-the-ground planning for this Spanish Language OWL.

Of course, there were to be many more dimensions to the course . . . she admitted it was over-packed for the time allotted. So over the break, in addition to opera and museum trips, Linda was busy pruning, revising the syllabus. All through that process, Linda was adamant that the core of the course must hold: “For writing center faculty to reach their full potential,” she would say, “they need to be researchers.” Often after that statement she would pause and twist her glasses and add, “While there is more research than before, so much more is needed . . . we just need more research.”

Of course, Linda herself helped fill that gap, with her highly regarded work on disciplinarity and transfer. In a study of that same name she and Janet Zepernick interviewed students about their perceptions of what they were learning in their tutoring sessions and detailed a paradox: these students believed that writing skills **did** transfer to their home disciplines but they also thought that **if** the writing in English classes focuses on personal expression what is learned **does not** transfer. This finding operated as a touchstone, and Linda the scholar and researcher and teacher worked to diminish gaps in transfer on three fronts—

First, through learning partnerships with other departments in the university (e.g., mechanical engineering and animal science);

Second, through further research on transfer (e.g., with involvement in the Elon Initiative on Transfer, and often through her students’ dissertations); and also

Third, through a number of Writing Lab projects that aimed to develop and provide new kinds of resources to writers and writing teachers [e.g., QWEST (community outreach materials developed with Lafayette Adult Resource Academy and WorkOne West Central for GED preparation and job skills, see Bergmann,

Wells, and Brizee), new visions of and components for the Purdue OWL (including partnering with Pearson Education to ensure the sustainability of the OWL), and TOWN, a writing environment that addresses transitions between high school and college (funded by a Gates grant codirected with Professor Janet Alsup)].

As in her earlier work on Agassiz, Linda’s more recent projects have recognized the knots and gnarls of the in-between, have addressed the spaces that demand our attention (or would if they could speak), and along the way have reminded us that well-crafted writing helps us conquer communication’s complexities.

If she were standing here today, she would say to us and to her students, both assembled and listening in, that . . . **more** is needed. Writing holds one of the keys to real citizenship because it seeks to bridge gaps between groups . . . and writing centers play two critical roles: they **assist** those particular people who need encouragement (or instruction) along their path to that real citizenship . . . at the same time as they provide a **place** for the study of those ways and struggles we need to understand in order to deliver the needed encouragement and instruction. If this message sounds sure of its mission it is because it channels Linda’s spirit, which has consistently been a civic-minded and idealistic one, alert to and striving to achieve the possibilities for good that are ignited by the achievement of an educated populace.

We will hear from friends and students, she loves her students, and they will deliver powerful personal messages. As a long time member of the faculty of Purdue and a scholarly colleague, I speak for our Department of English and our CLA faculty, in delivering this one note: Purdue is a better university because Linda Bergmann has worked here. She has helped us care deeply about how writing . . . and rewriting . . . matter . . . how these acts of reflection and communication transform us and those we encounter in our journeys.

Thank you, Linda.

Irwin Weiser's Reading

Sometimes, you just get a feeling.

That's how it was in spring 2001 when we interviewed Linda Bergmann for the newly created position of Associate Director of the Writing Lab. We had a terrific telephone interview, and as chair of the search committee, I drove to the airport in Indianapolis to pick up Linda for her campus visit. I'm not sure why it happened—we didn't know one another well at all—but we hugged when we saw each other. It was at once both awkward and natural. And it was for me, at least, a foreshadowing of the friendship that developed between us when she joined our faculty the following August.

As a colleague, Linda's contributions are too many to enumerate, but as I think about them, those that stand out in my mind include her commitment to the professional development of graduate students. She developed and taught a much needed seminar in Writing Center Administration, a valuable addition to our WPA secondary area, and she and I shared responsibility for teaching the seminar in Writing Across the Curriculum. She directed dissertations—at least 8 of them—and served on over a dozen more dissertation committees, providing doctoral students with insightful guidance and helping launch their careers as rhetoric scholars and administrators. And those of us who had the opportunity to work with her on those committees know first-hand how her perceptive comments helped students, but even more, how she offered encouragement and support when, as almost inevitably happens, the dissertation suddenly seems impossible.

Under Linda's leadership, our already internationally respected Writing Lab earned more accolades, including the Conference on College Composition and Communication Certificate of Excellence, and became even more valuable as a resource, leading to its being solicited to participate in a \$1.5 million dollar grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. She also recognized the opportunity provided when Pearson Higher Education came to her to talk about making Purdue's OWL part of its Pearson Writer. That collaboration assured that Purdue's Writing Lab and OWL would continue to be everyone's go-to and trusted source for writing support.

There is much, much more that could be said about Linda's professional accomplishments as a scholar and national leader, but for those of us privileged to count her as friend, what overshadows all of that is the charming, funny, and sometimes disarmingly ditzy person we grew to know. Linda shared her passions with us—for fashion, for opera, for travel. Especially for international travel, which I always found at least somewhat surprising and perhaps a little alarming, given that she needed detailed directions to get across town and once realized when we were half-way to Indianapolis for a flight that she had forgotten her ID. But she went to France, and Poland, and Guatemala, and Beirut, and Colombia—and to Istanbul, which she loved. And of course, she had a passion for—or at least a very quirky interest in—salt and pepper shakers, the stranger and more risqué the better. Those of us who had the privilege to be guests at her home got to see that collection and got to experience another side of Linda—the gracious, thoughtful, generous host.

I'll mention one more passion of Linda's—or at least something that often led to passionate lunch table conversations: politics. Linda had a fine sense of the outrageous, which as she saw and the rest of the similarly aligned group in the Union agreed, was the province of the Republicans.

Of course, she was especially delighted and proud when Bernie, like her an Oberlin graduate, got involved in political campaigning for Democratic candidates. She loved talking about where he was and what he was doing.

Linda's intelligence, wit, compassion, and generosity made her a very special friend to me and to all of us. We'll feel her absence, but we'll know how lucky we have been to have her in our lives. She'll be with us always in our good memories of her.

Remembering Linda Bergmann by Shirley Rose, February 2014

When I remember Linda, I will remember our walks.

Linda and I started taking walks together when she came to West Lafayette to look for a house in the summer of 2001. I invited her to take a walk with me in my neighborhood and we happened to be going up Miami Trail when a realtor came out of one of the houses and put up a For Sale sign at the curb. Linda fell in love with that house at first sight and within 24 hours her offer on the house had been accepted. She never

fell out of love with the house, where she felt at home and safe, even when the air conditioner wasn't working or the dishwasher quit or her beloved crabapple tree had to be cut down. For the next eight years, until I moved away, she and I regularly took walks in the neighborhood. I'd call her when I was ready to head out the door and she would start out from her house and we would meet in somewhere in between, then go back and forth along the meandering streets that surround Happy Hollow Park while we talked about everything from the courses we were teaching and papers we each were writing to what our children were doing as they grew into to young adulthood. Looking over a list of Linda's publications since she came to Purdue, there are few that weren't at some point the subject of conversations on our walks, and the same is true of my list of publications. That off-the-record collaboration is a feature, I think, of feminist scholarship, and I know I am one of many beneficiaries of Linda's generosity in that regard.

I will remember other walks on trips we took together, like the one to a conference in the UK, where we traipsed all over London. Linda had visited London multiple times before, so I let her do the most of the navigating. When I would ask “how far a walk is it?” or “how much further?” she would say “just a couple of blocks,” which I eventually learned was not intended to provide an accurate measure but rather to encourage me to keep going. Back then, Linda seemed tireless in everything she did—not just walking all over London, but her teaching of the graduate seminars in writing center theory and with the students whose dissertations she directed, her development of the content and the global reach of the Purdue OWL, her work on her research on transfer and her Elizabeth Agassiz project. The example she set was an inspiration to not just me but many others and her encouragement helped us to thrive.

These acts of listening, encouraging, and leading others took strength and courage. They are what made Linda a woman warrior. Linda was not just an academic feminist. She was a feminist academic, a warrior who had the courage to challenge dogma and who taught her students to do the same and helped them build the intellectual muscles that would give them the strength to do the research that would overcome dogma's influence.

Last summer, Linda and I took what has turned out to be our last walk together. When we were in Savannah, Georgia for the WPA conference, we took a walk together through Lafayette Square, Madison Square, Pulaski Square and other Squares in the Historic District. Our pace was slow and Linda's breathing was labored and we stopped frequently, but the conversation ranged as widely and easily as ever. We talked about her new research on the humor of playwright George Ade and her ongoing involvement in the writing transfer research projects launched at the Elon seminars. Linda tired quickly, but she insisted she needed the exercise, and we pushed on.

A couple of times in the past few years Linda told me she felt at odds with her body, that her body would no longer do what she willed it to. To accommodate its limits, she found ways to manage her diminished energies, and that meant setting priorities, cutting out the nonessentials, staying focused on directing her energies to the things we recognize as her legacy: her family and especially her son Bernie, who, she said, gave meaning to her life; the work of the Purdue graduate students and others she mentored in writing center research; and her impact on colleagues around the world, who looked to her to help set the direction of writing centers for the future.

Yet, despite her careful management of her energies, she was often tired. Now, finally, that uncooperative body is at rest.

The WPA conference in Savannah was the last time I saw her; but we corresponded by emails and talked by phone over the last few months as we planned a trip to Paris for the 2014 Writing Research Across Borders conference. We had found an apartment to rent near the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, and in our last email exchange she sent the itinerary for her flight to Paris and discussed our plans for the week we would be there. Linda wrote:

“I have permission to travel and have registered for the conference and lunches. The two operas in Paris when we will be there are *Madama Butterfly* and *La Fanciulla del West*. I don't know whether tickets are available. If you haven't seen much opera, you should see *Butterfly*. I can't see it too much. Otherwise, La F—because I have always wanted to go to the Paris opera.” She continued, “Of course, I will be there for the conference. Have you been to Paris before?”

I answered, “Not since the summer after my high school graduation.”

Linda replied, "Then let's plan to see great art and eat great food; I have not been there enough."

I thought about cancelling my trip, now that Linda would not be coming along. But if I had done that, she would have been disappointed with my decision. So I decided to take the trip, just two weeks away as I write this, and to make the trip a tribute to Linda. I'll miss her as I attend the conference, miss debriefing with her about my conference presentation, which she would most certainly have attended as a loyal friend, debating the merits of talks we've both heard, filling each other in on the highlights of sessions we'd each attended separately. I will miss her as I visit the Louvre and recall the pleasure of sharing reactions and reflections on exhibits during the many other museum visits we shared; and as I see Madama Butterfly at the Paris Opera I will remember how Linda's face would break into a wide grin and her eyes would light up at the mere mention of an opera. And as I walk along the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, I will think of Linda and remember how she could craft a less than optimal experience into an interesting, if not amusing, anecdote, and I will be glad again for having had the gift of her friendship.

Liz Angeli's Reading

Hi, everyone. Thank you for being here today. I would like to thank Bernie, Jr., Linda's son, for inviting Linda's students to speak. Thanks, too, to Pat Sullivan and Lisa Hartman for asking us to remember Linda. It's an honor to memorialize Linda in this way.

My name is Liz Angeli, and I was one of Linda's students here at Purdue. I was also the Purdue OWL Coordinator for two years, a position that really should have in its job description, "You will create a close relationship with Linda Bergmann during your tenure as coordinator."

My words today are a collection of reflections that Linda's students have shared on and offline. I'm also speaking on behalf of Morgan Reitmeyer, who was one of Linda's beloved students who wanted me to convey how completely and thoroughly Linda supported her and that Linda "had a depth of love and compassion that I was blessed to be taken in by. I miss her already" (Morgan Reitmeyer, personal communication, 1/16/2014).

Here are my reflections:

Linda was a storyteller. She told her students stories so that we could learn how to be good teachers, administrators, researchers, and people. Eager to remember all the wisdom Linda offered, I kept a running list of what I called "Linda-isms." I started this list in a graduate seminar that I and others here today were fortunate enough to take, Writing Across the Curriculum, or more commonly known as WAC. WAC was one of Linda's specialties; this field demands that its practitioners develop relationships with professionals from all disciplines. She was a natural, and we loved to watch her work. In this class, Linda taught us the skills we'd need through stories. As we listened intently, we realized common threads throughout her stories. So, as a class, we decided to make a list of what you should do as a WAC director: the first set of Linda-isms.

1. Don't be a jerk (and if you do have to be a jerk, don't be a discouraged jerk).
2. Bring food to all meetings.
3. Build trust.

This list reflects Linda's approach to her work, her humility, and her humor, all of which permeated her stories. She told us it was important to "have the humility to listen" and that "humility makes you friends faster." As part of her humble approach to life, she often used humor. One day in class, Linda was telling us about one particularly trying experience about the challenges of doing WAC work. In mid-thought, she paused, grinned, and humbly said in a reflective moment, "I think it's my despair showing."

The stories we've shared of Linda this week through email listservs, phone conversations, and social media show that other people had Linda-isms, too. People have shared that she taught them that "writing is hard." And I know many of us keep an extra blazer on the back of our doors or an extra pair of earrings in our desks because Linda told us, "Keep an extra blazer in your office in case you have a last minute meeting with the Provost or Dean, and always keep extra earrings in your drawer in case you leave the house without putting some on." And, perhaps of most practical value, she would share with us the color of car we might consider owning and the types of adult beverages we should enjoy, which brings me to my personal favorite Linda-ism: "If I were Queen of the Universe, all cars would be red and all margaritas salty, never sweet."

Fittingly, I’ll close with a story. It’s a story of how Linda’s legacy lives on through her students and work, which she loved so much. When I was at a job interview, I was asked, “Is there a professor or other teacher you’ve had whom you hope to emulate?” I answered, “One person whom I hope to be like is Linda Bergmann. She knows how to be an effective administrator, leader, counselor, and person. She values relationships. She knows how to work with administration to support initiatives that have worldwide effects. And she gives her students opportunities to grow and practice their skills on their own while she offers quiet guidance to ensure a student’s success and learning. She’s more than a teacher; she’s a friend to her students, and she loves them.” And now, we have the honor of carrying on her legacy with humility, humor, and good stories.

Dana Driscoll’s Reading (including remarks by Danielle Cordaro and Jaci Wells)

Hello everyone. Thank you to Pat, Lisa, and Bernie Jr. for allowing us this time to speak and share in Linda’s memory. I’m Dana Lynn Driscoll, one of Linda’s students. Like Liz, I worked on the Purdue OWL for two years. Linda was also my dissertation advisor, mentor, greatest supporter, and dear friend. In fact, Linda was the dissertation advisor, mentor, greatest supporter, and dear friend of just about my whole cohort, who I’m speaking for today, and I don’t think that the words “advisor” or “mentor” do any kind of justice to the interactions we had with Linda. Linda nurtured and encouraged us, she kept us going when we were willing to give up, she lit our paths when we were lost and confused, and she shared her own story to help us better understand our own. She was a true mentor to us, in every sense of the word.

I’d like to share a statement from **Jaci Wells**, a member of my cohort, who wasn’t able to be here. Jaci writes, “I could write 100 pages and speak for 100 hours and still not manage to share everything Linda has taught me. The most important lesson, the one that has most influenced my career and my life, is one that she taught by example constantly. Linda taught me that it is possible to be intensely dedicated to one’s career while still being a whole person with passions that have nothing to do with work. She loved red wine, a good steak (medium rare—do not burn it!), NPR, travel, and the opera. I knew Linda for nearly ten years and every time I talked to her, I learned about another of her interests.

That someone could be such a successful academic and such fascinating person, with so many interests, was a revelation to me. Had I not learned, through her, that such a thing was possible, I’m not sure I would have stuck with my plans to get a Ph.D. Without Linda’s influence, I might have managed to become an academic. But, I would not have become a happy one, one who knows that riding a camel in Turkey is as important to have on one’s bucket list as publishing in the most prestigious journal in the field. For that, I will always be grateful.”

I’m grateful to everyone here for sharing their memories of Linda. These reflections on our past, our shared narratives of the meaningful experiences, mentoring, and support we had from Linda will forever shape our lives. And it is this shaping, and what we do now and in the future, that I’d like to spend a few moments considering.

I remember a conversation Linda and I had a year and a half ago, at the Elon Research Seminar on Critical Transitions, which Linda and I had both attended for several years. We were sitting on a bench at Elon University, basking in the warmth of the summer, surrounded by magnolias and ancient oaks. Linda spoke to me of her work on the Gates Foundation Grant, and how it had required her to push aside some of her other projects that she highly valued. She looked at me and said, “I still have so much more to say, Dana. Where am I going to find the time?” I laughed and said, “There’s always more time, Linda. You’ll find it.” I think if Linda were here today to speak on her own behalf, she would say that her work wasn’t finished, that it was cut short, that she had a lot of things she still wanted to say and do in our field.

But my response would be, we her students, are her living legacy. Her work isn’t done as long as we continue to do it. We can take these lessons we learned from Linda, so many of the lessons that Liz, Morgan, and Jaci already shared: about balancing life and work, about having fun, about asking the hard questions, about being nurturing and encouraging, about being dedicated, and about approaching everything with a sense of humor.

When I graduated with my Ph.D. in 2009, I remember sitting with Linda in auditorium, waiting to go up to the stage and be hooded. She was all smiles, and gave me this look, and leaned in close and said, “Dana, I hope you go do some rabble rousing. Stir things up a bit. But before you send out anything controversial, make sure I see it.”

All that we can do now is the do the best work we can, perhaps engage in some rabble rousing like Linda would. It is now up to us continue in her footsteps. Her careful nurturing can become our careful nurturing. I know that all of us already do this work—but now, we can do it with more purpose and determination because we know we are Linda’s living legacy. Whatever paths we take, I know we can work and live in a way that honors Linda’s memory, and holds her always in our hearts.

I’ll close with the words of **Danielle Cordaro**, another member of my cohort, who recently said, “Sometimes it takes a while to come up with New Year’s resolution. This year I resolve to take on challenges like my mentor and friend Linda—often, and with aplomb.”

Thank you.

Judith Yaross Lee’s Reading A Friend in Full: Linda S. Bergmann, 1950-2014

Linda Bergmann was my dear friend for 40 years—across the whole length of my adult life—so it’s hard to think of her except in the ways that she was there, with me and for me, at so many key points. I feel awkward speaking about my own life along with hers when we are gathered in her honor, but what is the meaning of any life except its impact on others? Linda was the familiar Oberlin face sitting across from me at Regenstein Library almost daily from the time I entered the MA program in English at the University of Chicago in 1973 (“the U of C”), a year behind her, until I left for New York five years later, when she feted me at a fabulous farewell dinner featuring the Bergmann family lasagna—an act of love you’ll understand when I explain that the recipe from her Italian mother-in-law fills six index cards and begins, “Roast the bones from a leg of lamb.” In 1975, we were the only two students in Hamlin Hill’s contemporary humor seminar (doubtless because we were the only students who trudged over to the English office to see the topic); there we found our dissertations in our efforts to prepare so thoroughly for class that he wouldn’t learn how little we knew. In 1976, she was the confidant who shared the unspeakable news of my first husband’s betrayal, and later that year she was my companion in divorce court. Soon after that we went to New York for the first of many MLAs together, wondering whether our mistakes on the subway, which took us uptown to Harlem instead

of downtown to the Village, augured ill for our abilities to navigate the profession as we embarked far too many years of dissertation writing and adjunct teaching. In 1978, she was the only friend of mine at my wedding to Joe Slade in New York. In 1983, she finally triumphed over the Darwinian Ph.D. system at the U of C, which at the time consisted of letting students flounder until they either figured out how to write their dissertations or gave up trying—a system at its worst for the women, whom the mostly male faculty mostly ignored—and when she sent me her graduation photo, she inspired me to do the same. In 1986, she waited in the Gates-Blake conference room while I defended my dissertation across the hall.

By then, she had already written her spectacular paper for the 1983 Conference on Science, Technology, and Literature that Joe & I hosted at Long Island University. Her essay “Reshaping the Roles of Man, God, and Nature: Darwin’s Rhetoric in *On the Origin of Species*” then became a cornerstone of my first book, *Beyond the Two Cultures*, and led Linda toward her first real job as an assistant professor at Hiram College. And for the next thirty years, we each shared our knowledge at each new step in life—as scholars and teachers, daughters, wives, and mothers—helping each other move forward, and celebrating each milestone along the way. We marveled at our good luck as we climbed through the ranks from adjunct slots to full professorships at major universities, moves that we saw as both unlikely and hard-earned.

We routinely exchanged syllabi, assignments, job letters, and manuscripts. Linda taught me how to use in-class writing time more effectively when she visited my composition classes at LaGuardia Community College/CUNY in the late ’80s during a trip to New York City for a CCCC meeting that also meant a four-day reunion at my house in Brooklyn; I was honored when a few of my historical research assignments ended up in her 2010 textbook *Academic Research and Writing*. In the mid-’90s we spent much of a year collaborating on a monograph proposal, *Sites of Science in American Popular Writing, 1865-1914*, which we submitted to one university press and then abandoned as we became absorbed in independent projects more engaging or more professionally useful. But we continued to read each other’s work—sometimes in manuscript, always after publication—and to at least imagine other projects together. Last winter, when illness in my

family derailed our Chicago visit, we compensated by phone with a long conversation whose topics included George Ade’s *Fables in Slang* and other early 20th century humor with one eye toward Linda’s paper, “Literary Comedians and Social Cartoonists,” for the 2013 Feminisms & Rhetorics Conference last September and another toward my possible participation in Shirley Rose’s archival project on John T. McCutcheon’s suffrage cartoons, of which Linda’s paper was a part. In October, she reviewed a draft of my editorial manifesto for *Studies in American Humor*, “Enter Laughing: American Humor Studies in the Spirit of Our Times,” just now published. I will miss her feedback of course for its honesty and affirmation, but also, and more deeply, for its sincerity as friendship.

A few scenes stand out across time. Among the strongest is a kind of montage of Linda rehearsing conference papers in various generic hotel rooms as I critiqued her performance. Those of you who have known Linda only since she came to Purdue and admired her roster of international residencies and keynote addresses in places as far away as Poland and Lebanon would be stunned to know that early in her career she struggled so severely with public speaking that the wise men of the University of Chicago who conducted her 75-book exam—our prelims, an entirely oral exam covering 75 representative works of English and American poetry, drama, prose fiction, and non-fiction chosen by each student from Chaucer to the present—advised her to consider a career outside of teaching. So her success in this arena not only testifies to her grit but also cautions us about presuming to gauge students’ futures. But other scenes capture other dimensions of her nature. I can still see Linda, whose two-year-old stoically let her wipe the jelly off his face, telling me as I chased my three-year-old all over the sand at the beach in the Rockaways to do likewise, “You have every right to expect his cooperation.” I can still see her, young and slim and glamorous in new blonde highlights, leaning toward me as my snarky divorce lawyer looked at us, dressed to the nines to cover our nervousness as we walked to court, and asked, “Are you ladies really doctoral students at the U of C?” to which Linda whispered, “Are you really a Michigan Avenue lawyer?” I still see her, turning a grim day of testimony, in that world before no-fault divorce, into a celebration by booking a table for us later at a long-gone cheap Armenian restaurant, where we sat in a kind of fake white cave as she presented me with a new address book in a gold chinoiserie print

from the Art Institute—one of her favorite places to visit and shop, and always one of our favorite places to meet—with the remark, “Now you can literally write him out of your life.” I can still hear her on the phone, when I worried how she was doing after her son’s premature birth: “The great thing about having a baby spend weeks in intensive care is that you get a lot of help with nursing and a full night’s sleep at home.” I can hear her joking about the medical bills that came after: “I just say they’re too high, and they cut them some more.” And I can still feel her hand on my arm, holding tight as we crossed a traffic overpass during an ALA in San Diego (she hated bridges) talking about how she might pack in one carry-on for an upcoming trip to Utrecht with her son; and pulling me from the convention hotel another year in Baltimore for a boat ride across the Inner Harbor to the Museum of Outsider Art, where we gawked in one room after the next until we reached the highlight of the show, an Elvis-type car completely studded with plastic jewels and bottle caps that captivated us both.

The same creativity, incisiveness, practicality, and delight sparked her research. Having taken on the Darwin paper after I unimaginatively suggested his most famous book, with its voluminous body of scholarship, as a central text in literature and science, she decided that her next project in the field would be on Elizabeth and Louis Agassiz’s *A Journey in Brazil*—which she chose not so much because she already had a strong interest in the Agassizes, singly or jointly, as because she had rummaged through Regenstein Library until she was sure that she had found a book that no one had written on—and hardly anyone had even checked out of the stacks—since it came out in 1867. Yet that study, along with the body of letters from a former U of C student that she edited for a woman in her apartment building, led to Linda’s distinguished research program in women’s private writings, rhetorical history, and writing pedagogy—and eventually led her, after her years in Rolla and fellowships at Radcliffe, to Purdue, where she led the Writing Lab to new heights and satellite operations, online and off.

With all this focus on her work and our friendship, I don’t wish to minimize the importance of Linda’s family life, although—except for two weekends when our families gathered—I knew it mainly from outside. And that knowledge was tinged with guilt, since I knew that in her house, as in mine, the phone calls that delighted and absorbed us

were not always so popular with our husbands and kids, who knew that they might be topics of the conversations that made us MIA for hours. But we also shared backgrounds in religiously conservative, eastern-European households with old-fashioned ideas about the centrality of domestic life, and these values grounded us both. Through her many dislocations around the Midwest, Linda stayed connected to her husband Bernie, maintaining for 45 years her promise of loyalty "in sickness and in health." Some of those moves aimed at better arrangements for her son Bernie, for whom she felt great love and great pride. She often marveled that he was, as she put it, "so charming," and wondered where he'd acquired such grace. When we spoke in December, she expressed particular delight at his successes in Washington and her high hopes for his future. Her relationships with graduate students here at Purdue also had something of the maternal to them, I think, in that she felt determined to give them the professional guidance she had wished for from her own advisors to position the next generation for maximum success. But some of that guidance was also the overflow of the loving and generous self that both Bernies knew well.

I look back at Linda's life with gratitude for what she gave to me and with admiration for what she gave to others. And I'm conscious that those others included close friends in every community she lived in, because friendship was one of her great gifts. Two of the oldest friends are here today, Linda Barassa from her years at Hiram College and Marsha Gilliland-Roberts from the University of Chicago. I feel lucky to have 40 years of memories, because a deep and life-long friendship across hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles is no small thing in our world. But her death leaves a hole in my life, and I grieve at her loss.

Thank you for coming today to honor her memory with those of us who loved her so long.

Selected Bibliography of Works by Linda S. Bergmann

While not exhaustive, this bibliography seeks to represent major publications taken from different phases of Linda's scholarly career. Notice that she moves from humor to science & literature, and adds in extensive archival work on Elizabeth Agassiz (whose work was difficult to shoehorn into a traditional category). Then, by 1994, she starts

evidencing an interest in Writing Across the Curriculum. As her work progresses, Linda begins to collaborate, and one of her final publications is co-authored with two of her dissertation advisees as the three of them discuss collaboration during dissertation work.

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Direction of Graduate Student Work at Purdue

Linda was a mentor to graduate and undergraduate students in the writing centers she directed, and when she moved to Purdue she added formal mentoring as thesis and dissertation advisor and as committee member.

Director, Completed Dissertations

- Brizee, H. Allen. (2010). *College-Community Partnerships: Designing a Sustainable and Participatory Literacy Program*. Dissertation Number: 3417966.
- Clark, Jessica. (2005). *An Investigation of the Quantity and Quality of Collaboration in Writing Center Tutorials*. Dissertation Number: 3191443.
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- Driscoll, Dana Lynn. (2009). *Pedagogy of Transfer: Impacts of Student and Instructor Attitudes*. Dissertation Number: 3378733.
- Morris, Margaret Shepard. (2012). *That Third Hybrid Thing: Locating a Disciplinary View of Collaboration and a Conceptual Model for Exigency-based Collaborative Research*. Dissertation Number: 3556552.
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Reitmeyer, Morgan. (2011). *From Glass Flowers to Computer Games: Examining the Emergent Media Practices of Plant Biologists*. Dissertation Number: 3477739.

Wells, Jaclyn Michelle. (2010). *Online Writing Labs as Sites for Community Engagement*. Dissertation Number: 3444790.

Director, Dissertations in Progress

Koppelman, Zachary. *Understanding the Rhetorical Engineer*. Defense set for May, 2014.

Rankin, Deborah. *Tutor Decision-Making in Tutorials with L2 Writers*. Prospectus defended.

Mike, Gracemarie. *Women Teachers of Immigrants in 19th Century America*. Prospectus underway.

Thesis Chair

Dorn, Christopher. (2013). *An Ecological Approach to Writing Center Studies*. Thesis Number: 1549339.

Kenzie, Daniel. (2012). *Transfer and the Writing Center: A Qualitative Study of Tutoring Sessions*. Thesis Number: 1529701.

PhD Committee Member

Elizabeth L. Angeli, PhD, 2012

Cristyn L. Elder, PhD, 2012

Mary Gitzen, PhD, 2002

Tarez S. Graban, PhD, 2006

John Hitz, PhD, 2012

Debra Huffman, PhD, 2007

Jaisree Jayaraman, PhD, 2011

Karen Kaiser Lee, PhD, 2011

Laurie A. Pinkert, PhD, 2013

Patti Poblete, ABD, 2012

Laurel Reinking, PhD, 2012

Amy Ferdinandt Stolley, PhD, 2007

Virginia Taylor, PhD, 2007

Jessica Frances Woodruff, PhD, 2009

About the Contributors to this Memorial

Elizabeth Angeli is Assistant Professor of English at Towson University.

Danielle Cordaro is Assistant Professor and Director of the Center for Writing and Oral Communication at Mount Union University.

Dana Driscoll is Assistant Professor in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric at Oakland University.

Judith Yaross Lee is Professor of Communication at Ohio University where she edits *Studies in American Humor* and co-directs the Central Region Humanities Center.

Shirley K Rose is Professor and Director of Writing Programs at Arizona State University and Professor Emerita, Purdue University.

Patricia Sullivan is Director of the Graduate Program in Rhetoric and Composition and Professor of English at Purdue University.

Jaclyn Wells is Assistant Professor and Director of the Writing Center at University of Alabama, Birmingham.

Irwin Weiser is Justin S. Morrill Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Professor of English at Purdue University.



Figure 1: Memory Board from Linda Bergmann's Celebration of Life Ceremony, 2014 (Photo courtesy of Freddie DeBoer)



Figure 3: Linda and others celebrating at the Bistro (Photo courtesy of Liz Angeli)



Figure 2: Linda celebrating Allen Brizee's wedding with Jaci Wells, Allen, Danielle Cordaro, 2013 (Photo courtesy of Jaci Wells)



Figure 4: Linda in Class, 2013 (Photo courtesy of Liz Angeli)



Figure 5: Linda with Allen and Liz at Khana Kazana, 2011 (Photo courtesy of Liz Angeli)



Figure 7: Professor Bergmann talking with students about their research, 2006 (Photo courtesy of Patricia Sullivan)



Figure 6: Linda and Judith, 2009 (Photo courtesy of Judith Lee)



Figure 8: Linda as a younger woman