

# The Extension



## President's Message: David Garrison

As I write this, snow is piled about five feet high on Dayton roadsides and parking lots. In a strange way I find this exhilarating because the bad weather makes me feel like a survivor. No matter what Old Man Winter throws at me, this old man will live through it. I will walk the dog in the cold and come back to a warm house. I will make cornbread and chili for my wife and myself, and we will watch the new season of "Bridgerton" on Netflix.



As an association, WSURA is surviving too, and thriving.

On Friday, April 10, from 3- 4 p.m., we will celebrate National Poetry Month with a poetry reading in the Bill Shepard Room of the Foundation Building. I will read from my new book, *Tailfins*, and Cathryn Essinger, a Wright State graduate and retired Edison State professor, will read from the latest of her five books, *Wings or Does the Caterpillar Dream of Flight?* A wine and cheese reception will follow. The event is free and open to the public, so please come and bring a friend.

We will hold our Annual Spring Luncheon on Saturday, April 25 at the Nutter Center. Our speaker will be Bill Shepard, Wright State's Vice President of Advancement. We plan to work closely with Advancement from now on, so Bill's ideas and insights will be especially important to all of us. The doors will open at 11 a.m. and lunch will be served at noon. More details and registration information will be sent closer to the date. We hope to see you there.

We have a new membership directory coming out soon. If your email, mailing address, or phone number has changed, please send the corrected information to us at: [wsura@wright.edu](mailto:wsura@wright.edu).

Let's have a great year together.

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### Upcoming Events

**Poetry Reading**  
April 10, 3-4 p.m.,  
Foundation Building  
(more info Page 3)

**Annual Spring Luncheon**  
April 25, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.  
Berry Room, Nutter Center

### Directory Updates

**NOTE:** We are in the process of updating our database to publish a new members directory, so any changes to your address, email, or phone number (preferably cell phone) should be submitted to WSURA's email at [WSURA@wright.edu](mailto:WSURA@wright.edu). WSURA sponsored activities are announced by email, so make sure that we have yours on file!



## Cozy Books for Winter Days

WSURA is a cosponsor of the University Libraries Book Club, which suggested the first four books for the year and a few extra recommendations from Wright State librarians to choose from!

### **Help Wanted** by Adelle Waldman

The novel is a realistic depiction of the sad state of the world of late capitalist employment.

### **Girl at War** by Sara Novic

This is a poignant coming-of-age novel following ten-year-old Ana Jurić, whose idyllic life in 1991 Zagreb is destroyed by the Yugoslav civil war.

### **The Husbands** by Holly Gramazio

The novel explores the pressures of modern dating, the nature of matrimony, and the difficulty of settling down in a world of endless alternatives.

### **Martyr!** by Kaveh Akbar

The novel explores addiction, the search for meaning through artistic creation, the complexities of the Iranian diaspora, and the psychological impact of war. (One of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize finalists)

### **Mister Magic** by Kiersten White

This dark supernatural thriller takes an interesting look at religious cults and how they impact the children raised in these environments.

### **Kent State: An American Tragedy**

by Brian VanDeMark

After 50+ years one guardsman who was present on May 4, 1970, reveals how the firing that fateful day began.

### **Circle of Days** by Ken Follett

Great story set around the building of Stonehenge.

### **Major Labels: A History of Popular Music in Seven Genres** by Kelefa Sanneh

Fantastic overview of popular music full of fascinating insights, even within the sections about genres that you may not know much about.

## Retirees Obituaries

Normally, obituaries are posted on our web site, but we learned of these obituaries after the university closed down the WSURA website in mid-July.

Frances Eileen Hilderbrand, 87, February 7,  
Administrative Secretary, Office of Communications

Edward F. Haas Jr., 80, May 19,  
Professor, History

James Elbert Branch, 88, July 12, Custodian

Pam Wallace-Stroble, July 15, Academic Advisor

Charles Hathaway, 89, August 5,  
Vice President for Academic Affairs

Jan Durrough Austin, 66, August 13,  
Director, Department of Surgery

Richard Birt, 78, August 18,  
Building Services Worker, WSU-Lake Campus

Nabil Hassan, 92, September 19,  
Professor, Accountancy

Donald Beelick, 84, October 1,  
Professor, Philosophy

John Martin, 94, October 3,  
Professor, Physics

Mary Gromosiak, 82, October 22,  
Administrative Assistant, School of Medicine

James Kane, 96, October,  
Professor, Chemistry

Connie Bajek, 66, November 3, Administrative  
Support Coordinator, University Advancement

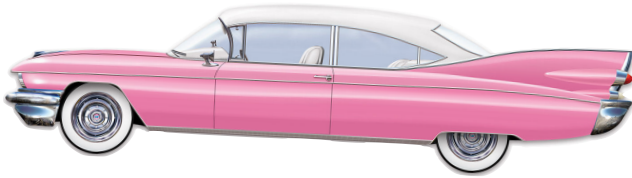
Barbara Murphy, 86, November 7,  
Nursing, Professor

Michael Ondrasek, 82, December 4,  
Instructor, Computer Sciences

Gloria J. Sickles, 78, December 22,  
Executive Secretary, Food Services

Wetona "Tony" Walchner, 76, December 24,  
Business Manager, Research and Sponsored  
Programs

## Poetry Corner



### Tailfins

by David Lee Garrison

It was the jet-winged look  
of the nineteen-fifties, tailfins  
waxing larger and pointier  
throughout the decade.  
They brought up the rear  
of two-toned cars  
with a glossy shine  
from headlights to taillights  
and showed the world  
that chrome was money.

They were admired by boys  
who wore ducktail haircuts  
that swept across their temples  
and by girls who turned sideways  
to pose for pictures.  
Cadillac erected the highest  
and longest fins,  
featuring women in tv ads  
with tailfins that men  
in wingtips lusted after.

This is the title poem from my new chapbook, which will be published by Finishing Line Press in the fall. It is a collection of poems mostly about American life in the fifties, sixties, and seventies. I will include information on how to order a copy in the next issue of *The Extension*.

Poetry Reading and Book Signing

by

Cathryn Essinger  
and  
David Lee Garrison

Wright State University  
Foundation Building  
3070 Presidential Drive, Fairborn, OH

Friday, April 10, 2026

3-4 p.m.

Free and open to the public  
Refreshments will be served

Cathryn Essinger received her M.A. in English from Wright State and taught at Edison State Community College for many years. Her work has appeared widely in literary magazines, and she has authored six poetry books, all of which are guaranteed to contain dogs, bees, and butterflies. She lives in Troy, Ohio.

David Lee Garrison, an emeritus Wright State professor, will read from his new book, *Tailfins*. His poems have been read by Garrison Keillor on "The Writer's Almanac" and on the BBC in London. He was named Ohio Poet of the Year in 2014.

## If You Haven't Read or Listened to Any of the WSURA Oral History Interviews, This is Why You Should

While you were working at Wright State, you might've thought you knew a lot about your colleagues from daily interactions, participation in meetings and special events. But did you *really* know them—their early life experiences, education, and other training? We thought we'd share an excerpt from a December 2022 interview with former faculty member, Dr. Bud Baker from the Department of Management in the Raj Soin College of Business. Finding out about his path to WSU is worth the read!



*Interview by Kathy Morris, Chair of Historical Preservation Committee*

**Bud Baker:** I grew in upstate New York in Rochester, which is a city very much like Dayton. And I had the good luck to be graduating in the mist of the Vietnam War. I had the bad luck to have a very, very low draft number, which meant that I was going to be drafted, and I thought that the Air Force sounded better than more slogging pursuits like the Army. So, I went in the Air Force. I was too blind to be a pilot. So, I become a navigator in cargo jets and spent a few years doing that through Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

**Kathy Morris:** Where did you get the training for that?

**Bud Baker:** There's only one school. There's a number of pilot training bases for the Air Force, but there's only one navigator base. And in those days it was Sacramento, California. So, I went there for a year and then went up to Tacoma, Washington, to those big cargo jets that I was referring to, and then from there out into the Pacific and basically as far as Vietnam, Southeast Asia, Thailand, Cambodia, places like that. And did that for a while, I then became a... eventually I was replaced by a machine that the addition of global positioning systems like inertial navigating systems meant that people who got airplanes around using the moon and the stars and the planets, which was what I did, were not very useful anymore.

So, they made me a strategic air command missile crew commander at a place called Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota. Did that, went out to California to a strategic air command headquarters and along the way I got introduced to a fellow who is probably the most famous man in the field of management. His name is Peter Drucker and he was my professor for three years at my doctoral program at the Claremont Graduate School.

While I was there, the professor I mentioned ran a group that had the general, the Air Force general, it was like, it was almost like a community group, they called it the "Monday Morning Group," because they met on Fridays. Peter Drucker asked, "Do you have anybody that you would nominate for my PhD program?" The general came back and said, "Is anybody interested?" Everybody else went, "Nah", I said "Hey, I'll do it." So, that's how I wound up doing that, and then from there that led to the Air Force Academy working as a deputy department head in teaching management. And then at the end of four years at the Air Force Academy they came to me, and I had written my dissertation—and it kind of made me famous in the 15 minutes of fame thing—on a canceled Air Force program called "The Flying Wing." There were a lot of allegations that the Northrop Corporation had gotten abused by the Air Force, and in particular, by the Secretary of the Air Force, that the Air Force had corruptly taken away Mr. Northrop's design and his business. And I came stumbling into that looking for a dissertation topic and saying, "Gee, that sounds kind of interesting."

So, you know it was going to be an ethics and government kind of study, and the next thing I knew, I was the world's greatest expert on this airplane, because I knew a lot of the old Air Force people, people who are all gone now. The Secretary of the Air Force from those days, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, which was the number one military leader, a guy named Curtis LeMay. I knew all these guys, and so I was able to do this dissertation. So, I finished my time with the academy and I got a call, "Would you like to come to Dayton, Ohio?", and I said, "Well, no, not really", but that's where I ended up. So, they said, "Where do you want to work?" Then they said, "We have a job for you if you want it," and I said, "Well, what would I be doing?", and they said, "We can't tell you." So, I said, "Who would I be working for?" and they said, "We can't tell you that, either," and I said, "Well, what does the job entail?"

**Kathy Morris:** We can't tell you that, either.

**Bud Baker** "We can't tell you anything. Do you want the job or don't you?" So, I said, "Sure, why not?" So, we came to Dayton.

**Kathy Morris:** Because you're a risk taker.

**Bud Baker:** Yeah, you know, by then I figured I had nothing to lose. So, we came to Dayton, and I ended up going into what they call "the black world,"



which was the secret world there, because that's when the stealth bombers were being built. And the stealth bomber it turned out, although nobody knew this at the time, certainly I didn't know it at the time, was building on the thing that I had become the world's greatest expert on, the original Northrop flying wing. The stealth bomber was another flying wing, being built by Northrop 40 years later, and people reasoned—probably not correctly—that I might have a leg up based on knowing something about the history.

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## WSURA Board 2025–2026

### Executive Committee

President: David Garrison  
 President Elect: Robin Suits  
 Past President: Barb Bullock  
 Secretary: Gail Whitaker  
 Treasurer: Carolyn Smith  
 Communications: Judi Engle  
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 Mary Beth Pringle  
 Bobby Rubin  
 Dick Williams

### Standing Committees

Activities: TBA  
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 Membership Development: Judi Engle  
 Remembrance: Robin Suits  
 Scholarship: Dan Abrahamowicz and  
 David Garrison  
 Ohio Council of Higher Education Retirees  
 (OCHER):  
 OPERS: Barbara Bullock  
 STRS: Dick Williams

### Liaisons

Friends of the Libraries: David Garrison  
 Raider Food Pantry: Kathy Morris

## Contact Us

E-mail: [wsura@wright.edu](mailto:wsura@wright.edu)

Website (coming soon): [wsuretirees.org](http://wsuretirees.org)

[Facebook.com/groups/WSURA](https://www.facebook.com/groups/WSURA)

**Kathy Morris:** So, did your dissertation end up getting passed around kind of like, like the novel, the story, not the true story. It was non-fiction, but it could have been a best seller.

**Bud Baker:** Well, that's exactly what happened, and the reason that it happened that way was the Secretary had cleared—Mr. Northrop gave a deathbed interview where he said that the Secretary of the Air Force, a man who went on to be senator for 24 years, a man named Stuart Symington, that Stuart Symington was a crook, and that he had tried to force Northrop to do something corrupt, and when Northrop didn't he canceled Northrop's airplane, he being the Secretary of the Air Force. So, I ended this ice stumble, and I write to Symington and say, "Hey, this guy says that you're a crook. What do you have to say?" Well, the next thing you know, I'm in trouble with everybody. The Air Force is mad at me because now this guy is a U.S. Senator and he's screaming about me.

**Kathy Morris:** Powerful, right.

**Bud Baker:** It all got kind of evened out, it all got worked out. Again, I knew all these guys, so I was in a position to do the dissertation and the dissertation ended up cleared and signed with him. So, the reason it got passed around was that he had hundreds of copies of it printed up and distributed all throughout the aerospace business, and it got to many people. But the Commander at Wright-Patterson got a copy of it and then contacted me and said, "Would you like to come work here?" and I said, "Sure."

**Kathy Morris:** That is a fabulous story, Bud.

*To read the rest of his story or those of other retirees, go to [corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/archives\\_retirees](http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/archives_retirees).*

## Crock Pot Chicken Tortilla Soup

### Ingredients

1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
 1 white onion, chopped  
 2 bell peppers, seeds and ribs removed, chopped  
 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
 1 (15-oz.) can black beans, rinsed  
 1 (15-oz.) can fire-roasted tomatoes  
 1 cup frozen corn  
 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus more for serving  
 1 Tbsp. chili powder  
 1 Tbsp. ground cumin  
 1 tsp. kosher salt  
 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth  
 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack  
 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil  
 3 small corn tortillas, cut into strips



Sliced avocados, sour cream, and lime wedges, for serving

### Step 1

In a large slow cooker, spread chicken in the bottom in an even layer. Add onion, bell peppers, garlic, beans, tomatoes, corn, cilantro, chili powder, cumin, and salt. Pour broth over. Cover and cook on low until chicken is cooked through and falling apart, 5 to 6 hours.

### Step 2

Shred chicken with 2 forks, then top with Monterey Jack. Cover and continue to cook on low until cheese is melted, about 5 minutes more.

### Step 3

Meanwhile, in a large skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add tortilla strips and cook, tossing occasionally, until crispy and golden, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate; season with salt.

### Step 4

Top soup with tortilla crisps, avocado, sour cream, and cilantro. Serve with lime wedges alongside.

## Notable News

### OPERS

The Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) has announced a 2.6% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for eligible retirees, effective in 2026. As of December 31, 2024, OPERS had total investment assets of \$117.5 billion, making it the largest state pension fund and the 14th largest state pension fund in the United States.

### STRS

As of early 2026, STRS has appointed Steve Toole as executive director and Chad Smith was elected to the board. STRS reported a 10.4% net investment return for fiscal 2025, which ended June 30, 2025, and its performance ranked in the top 11% of pension funds across the country. STRS introduced a 1.5% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) effective July 1, 2025. Recent changes also include lowered retirement eligibility to 32 years (down from 33) for unreduced benefits (effective June 1, 2025, to May 1, 2030).

### Senate Bill 1 and its Impact on Wright State

As reported in our last issue, Ohio Senate Bill 1 (SB 1), the "Advance Ohio Higher Education Act," took effect in June, bringing sweeping reforms to all public universities. It mandated the dismantling of DEI programs, limits faculty strikes, requires post-tenure reviews, and necessitates public posting of syllabi to ensure intellectual diversity. The law has faced opposition from organizations like the ACLU regarding its impact on academic freedom, particularly concerning the teaching of controversial topics.



For Wright State, this bill meant complying with the new law or losing federal funding. Thus, the Cultural Identity Centers (CICs) on campus lost both staff and funding. The closed, DEI-related units include the Asian and Native American Center, the Bolinga Black Cultural Resources Center, the Latino Center, the LGBTQA Center, and the Women's Center.

The current space for the centers in 023 Student Union will be given to the expansion of Student Involvement and Leadership.

Many of our membership regret the loss of these student inclusive hep centers.

### WSURA Web Site



We are still working on a new website that will be accessible at [WSURetirees.org](http://WSURetirees.org). Our plan is that much of the content that was on the old website will be transferred to our new one soon, including obituaries, university news, Our Stories and event photos. There, we plan to have an area where our retirees can register for program events and sign up to become members.

Meanwhile, please consider joining our Facebook group at [www.facebook.com/groups/WSURA](https://www.facebook.com/groups/WSURA). Some 157 Wright State retirees are already members. The page features media coverage of the university, event announcements and photos, and retiree obituaries. Any member can share news of interest to other retirees. You can join Facebook and make your account private so you will not be harassed by strangers or get unwanted ads. We'd love to see you there!

If you found the Bud Baker interview interesting, look up the more than 50 oral history interviews WSURA conducted with retired faculty and staff. They are still accessible in the University Library Archives here: [https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/archives\\_retirees/](https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/archives_retirees/)

Past issues of *The Extension* are posted here: [https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/wsura\\_newsletter/](https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/wsura_newsletter/)

### SAVE THE DATE

The Wright State Retirees Association will hold its annual luncheon on Saturday, April 25 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Berry Room, Nutter Center. This is always a great time to reconnect with colleagues so do bring your friends! Bill Shepard, Vice President for Advancement, will be our speaker. More details for registration will be sent by email closer to the date. Be sure we have the email address that you check frequently on file!



*The Extension* is published by the Wright State University Retirees Association (WSURA). Past issues can be found at [corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/wsura\\_newsletter](https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/wsura_newsletter).  
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Or email [wsura@wright.edu](mailto:wsura@wright.edu).

## Key 2025 Enrollment Highlights

- **Total Enrollment:** 11,924 (Dayton and Lake campuses)
- **Undergraduate Enrollment:** 7,963 (up 4.7% from 2024)
- **New Students:** 2,700 new undergraduate; 724 new graduate students
- **Transfer Students:** 740, representing a 5.5% increase since 2024
- **Residential Growth:** Nearly 2,400 students are living on the Dayton campus, the highest in over a decade.
- **Demographics:** 56% women, 44% men, 13% international students.

### 2025 Student Body Breakdown

- **Dayton Campus:** 10,501 students.
- **Lake Campus:** 1,261 students.
- **Graduate Students:** 2,218.
- **Full-time/Part-time:** 79% full-time, 21% part-time.

The growth is attributed to increased interest in nursing, engineering, and psychology and rising transfer numbers, particularly at the Lake Campus.