Scott White (5.6.1967–8.31.2020)

*** This issue is devoted to our beloved Chief Librarian ***

Scott White with his wife Yola, 2019

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## Faculty and Staff Highlights

- **Professors Dianne Gordon Conyers, Christopher McHale, and Silvia Lin Hanick** received promotion and tenure, effective September 2021.


- **Professors Derek Stadler and Dianne Gordon Conyers** have had their article, "Advancing College Students’ Thesis Writing Ability: A Case Study of an Online Library Instruction Course," published in *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Innovative Pedagogy*, vol. 2, article 4, Fall 2020, pp. 39–53, https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/sotl_ip/vol2/iss1/4.
My Friend Scott White

By Steven Ovadia, Chief Librarian

My friend Scott White had many skills. An encyclopedic memory for just about anything, from criminal justice theory to minute library renovation details. The ability to instantly determine if he needed to yell at someone or to coddle them. And, of course, the personal charisma required to pull off a flat-top like no one since 1950s astronauts. But Scott's most impressive talent was his knowledge of outer borough bars.

Sports drove a lot of my outings with Scott. While we didn't agree on baseball (he was a devoted Yankee fan while I was unfortunately born into Mets fandom), we both loved hockey and the New York Rangers. We would occasionally go to live sporting events, but for the most part, we watched games on bar TVs. I never knew how Scott picked where we would go (he would graciously offer to let me pick, knowing I was incapable of deciding), but it was always the perfect place.

For a long time, we watched Rangers playoff games at Red Star, a Greenpoint bar with amazing wings and even better bartenders who could expertly work the wall of TVs so that every bar patron had perfect sightlines for their particular game. It was also down the block from his wife's pharmacy, which allowed us to pop in and bust her chops for 15 minutes, like we weren't adults, before the puck dropped.

He'd often pick places closer to where we lived in Queens. For some reason, he once took me to a German restaurant that served boot-shaped glasses of beer, like Cinderella meets Leaving Las Vegas at a Murray's Big and Tall. Those knock-out slippers are probably why I don't remember the rationale for our visit. Or how I got home.

Scott wasn't above chain restaurants. I remember sitting with him in the Forest Hills Buffalo Wild Wings when he asked me to be the department deputy, if he was hired as the permanent Library Chair. We sat beneath garish fluorescent lighting, surrounded by more TVs than anyone could ever look at in a lifetime, in a space that had once been a Staples. The two of us ate bad wings out of paper cartons, even though we sat inside the restaurant, where presumably they had real plates. Looking back now, I wonder if he wanted to foreshadow a sense of how unglamorous the deputy role—which he had held previously—would sometimes feel.

Scott loved Mugs, a bar in Williamsburg. When the weather was nice, we'd walk over the Greenpoint Avenue Bridge after work. Scott never liked to spend more than a drink or two in one place, but Mugs was always in his rotation. They had a great beer list and delicious bar food. The beauty of these visits was that after going someplace with Scott, I would take other friends back to the same bar, impressing them with my knowledge of hidden gems. Scott's picks powered a fair number of early dates with the woman I eventually married. I always credited him, but very quietly as she was getting up to use the restroom. She might have thought I was praying. In a way, I was subconsciously saying a form of grace.

Scott could still pick bars after he got sick. He lived around the corner from a charming Queens local a few blocks from a cemetery, as are most things in Queens.
For Me, Scott Is Still with Us

By Francine Egger-Sider, Head of Technical Services

Scott had two sides that were polar opposites – one oversize, macho, loud exterior, which he cultivated and of which he was extremely proud. He also put it to good use on many occasions. But, as I knew Scott before he became our Chief Librarian, I was well acquainted with his more hidden attributes – those of an extremely gentle and caring man. He embodied these qualities inside the carapace of a wolf! He used his two personas interchangeably, cleverly and judiciously depending on the circumstances. I can still hear his loud belly laugh and his quiet talks about his family in his office before we all got busy.

In the “old” Library, before the recent renovation, when all of the librarians’ offices were on the main floor, it was a rare day when I would not see Scott and pop my head into his office to exchange a few words. That changed in March 2017 when many librarians, including Scott, moved up to the faculty suite on the new second floor. My office remained on the first floor and my informal visits with Scott became fewer and farther between. But Scott’s influence and leadership still permeated the Library.

Scott was a great leader in that he never micro-managed but was always there should you need his input. I can still hear him say, “I got this, Francine.” He was fierce when it came to the role of the Library within the College and would not take “no” for an answer without a decent fight. He was extremely protective of “my faculty,” as he called us globally, and went to bat for us at College-wide P&B. He knew when to move us forward for promotion or tenure when he felt we were ready. I loved arguing with Scott and have to confess I had a hard time keeping up with his sharp rebuttals!

Because of the pandemic, I feel as if I never really said goodbye to Scott. Since the pandemic added another layer of distance among us all at the Library, it is not unusual not to actually “see” each other. So it feels as if Scott is still with us, although in the background. I still “see” him and am thankful for that.

Scott White is still in my head and in my heart and that is where he will stay.
A Remembrance of Scott White

By Louise Fluk, Collection Development Librarian

Scott White was the most courageous individual I have ever met. That quality was made completely clear by his return to work at the Library after a year and a half of pain, fear, uncertainty, and frustration. With every reason to avoid return, he came back determined to resume his leadership at the Library, support his family, and beat the odds stacked against him. I’m sure pain, fear, uncertainty, and frustration continued to pursue him in the two-plus years that he was able to give us, but rarely did they surface, at the Library at least.

But Scott’s courage was not limited to overcoming physical limitations. Long before his illness, he displayed the courage of his convictions as he led the Library in its mission to support LaGuardia students, faculty, and staff with a wide variety of information resources and with innovative library services. He fought for funding for the Library’s activities and staffing to implement them. He encouraged Library faculty and staff to broaden their vision of library service: undertake more library instruction sessions and training workshops, promote information literacy, welcome new students to the College and all students to the Library, connect with teaching faculty, participate in College-wide committees and activities, take the lead in making available Open Educational Resources (OER), search out grant opportunities to fund Library projects and purchase of materials and equipment. The Library’s visibility, its good name, and its impressive attendance statistics had much to do with the determination Scott brought to his work behind the scenes in the Chief Librarian’s office.

Scott knew when and how to be assertive and insistent, and when and how to be soft and caring and concerned – although he might have balked at being categorized as “soft and caring!” A personal example: Shortly after the pandemic began, in a routine professional email, I added a snarky comment about my frustration with working from home under less-than-ideal conditions. I received a swift emailed reply: “Are you okay? If anything gets too overwhelming for you, let me know and we’ll deal with it” – this from a man who, unlike his grumpy staff member, was dealing with truly overwhelming problems, both personal and professional.

As we deal with the new library interface, manage under budgetary limitations, and prepare to return to the physical library, we will thoroughly miss Scott White. But when we need an example of courage in the face of all odds, he will be right there.

Scott White: Larger-Than-Life Character

By Derek Stadler, Web Services Librarian

I wish I had gotten to know Scott White better. I began working at LaGuardia only in 2016 when he was out on medical leave. From my little experience with him, I learned to respect him, his vast knowledge of libraries, his humor, and his diligence in helping the department and its personnel. Even in his darkest moments, he chose humor to lighten the mood. Upon hearing from his doctor that he may have to undergo brain surgery again, Scott replied to the surgeon, “Hey Doc, can’t you just put a zipper in there to make it easier for the next time?” Having been at his funeral mass, I took note that he had a loving and caring family surrounding him.

I definitely miss him and thank him for working with me to become a better librarian at LaGuardia.

To donate to the Scott White LaGuardia Foundation Scholarship, please visit:

https://shortlib.org/s/scottwhite
His son worked there part-time and Scott was always talking up the Friday happy hour, so I went out with him one late afternoon. Scott held court from the moment we walked in, just about every person stopping by the table to talk to him, while we enjoyed delicious half-priced appetizers. He couldn't drink like he had before his cancer, but so few people could. He could, however, still command a room.

Some of these bars are gone and some are still around. Between parenthood and the pandemic, I have no idea anymore. But the locations weren't the only fun of the experience. It was the time with Scott. Not just talking about sports (although our scintillating takes would have made for a successful WFAN show), but the other stuff, too. Gossiping about colleagues. Plotting ways, practical and aspirational, to improve librarianship. Complaining about family members we also loved. As the oldest child in my family, I never got to experience a big brother, but I imagine that time with Scott is what it feels like to have one, a person dedicated to teasing you, but also teaching you, making you better and preparing you for an unknown world. He would jokingly call out 'Mentoring!' as he filled yet another glass for me, but he was right. So much of what I know about academia and leadership are because of that time with Scott.

I was too nervous about COVID to go to Scott's funeral service, but I went ahead to the crematory, so I could say goodbye. It was a sunny Saturday morning, right before noon, my wife and daughter with me for moral support. The two of them went for a walk while I waited for Scott. A worker flagged me down to let me know Scott had arrived and I stood alone on the sidewalk, peering through a wrought iron fence, watching them move him inside. It was perfect and comforting, Scott bringing me to a strange Queens neighborhood one final time.

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My First Impression of Scott White

By Jane Devine, Former LaGuardia Chief Librarian

My first impression of Scott White was that “the man can talk.” I had been part of the search committee that interviewed him. And the impression was positive. Scott discussed all issues with thoroughness, understanding why questions were asked and their implications. He was up on the technology that might apply. He gave very complete and sometimes lengthy answers. Everyone on the committee was impressed. He got the job.

Then I got to know Scott as we worked together. I was the Periodicals, Government Documents and Electronic Resources Librarian and he oversaw Circulation operations. We worked together on Library committees and it was always easy to talk with him even when I was disagreeing with him on an issue. He would always add something helpful to plans and discussions.

Later on, I became the Department Chair. By then, many people around the College had heard of and from Scott and he was being recognized for his accomplishments. He brought technology to the Library that enabled remote connection to the Library's database resource collections. He contributed to the Center for Teaching and Learning and the development of the Criminal Justice program. And he did so much more, including being involved in CUNY-wide library initiatives through the Office of Library Services and the CUNY Library Association. He earned his successes.

Scott eventually became the Deputy Library Department Chair and assisted me directly in the running of the busy library. I couldn’t have asked for a better Deputy. We would have long talks working out problems and planning for the Library’s future. We also talked on a personal level about our families, what was happening in our lives, the New York Giants, and the current news of the day. It was always easy to talk with Scott. He loved telling fun stories and making people laugh. He loved to laugh himself. I admired that he ended every family phone call with “love ya.”
When I retired, Scott became the Acting Chair and would go on to win the position of Library Chair for himself. He oversaw the Library well especially leading the expansion and building project. Then illness struck and he fought bravely to take back his life. The last time I talked with him I told him a funny story and made him laugh. Hearing him laugh made me feel good for the rest of the day.

Now I miss Scott and think how great it would be to just talk with him again.

Scott White

By Kenneth Schlesinger, Associate Dean and Chief Librarian, Lehman College

Scott White and I both started at LaGuardia in 2000 [we called ourselves Class of 2000]. Chief Librarian Ngozi Agbim mentored us to become future library leaders - which had a major impact on both of our careers.

Scott was a strong leader, an innovative thinker: fearless about advocating for increased support for his Library. He wasn’t afraid to knock heads if it resulted in more resources for student success. He was insistent - but always diplomatic.

I valued his glorious, irreverent, self-deprecating sense of humor. Even when we had a misunderstanding - I would leave his office laughing.

Scott was so courageous in the face of his illness. I’ve never seen anyone work so hard with physical therapy - and he never complained. His goal was to see his sons enter college (one at City Tech) - which he was able to achieve.

His loss leaves a gaping absence in LaGuardia’s Library - and in our lives - but he remains an inspiration as the Best of CUNY.

Scott White deserved better in his short life - but we are all enriched by his friendship, levity, and example.
My first conversation with Scott took place over the phone. He called to let me know that I was the successful candidate in the search. I took the opportunity to ask for two things: the option to bring my dog to work once a week, and a standing desk. After many years at LaGuardia and CUNY, I now know those two requests to be impossible and ridiculous. Scott told me as much, in the bluntest possible terms, and I ended the conversation thinking, “Well, I guess he will hate me forever.” Of course, Scott didn’t hate me forever. Instead, he was wildly supportive, assigning me to tasks far beyond my abilities and experience. He always believed in me more than I believed in myself, and always pushed me to do more, write more, be better. Scott may have been blunt, but he was also the Library’s best champion, and an unrelenting advocate for his faculty and staff.

When I think of Scott, I will remember him as the Grand Marshall for LaGuardia’s commencement ceremony in 2014. It was my first year (and first commencement) at LaGuardia and I was grateful to be at an institution where the Library faculty was not only respected and included as an important part of the College, but where it was a librarian leading the faculty onto the stage to celebrate our graduates. Decked out in regalia, wearing the lemon yellow of Library Science, and holding the gold ceremonial mace, surrounded by cheering students and proud colleagues -- that’s how I’ll always remember Scott.

Scott White as the Grand Marshall, Commencement 2014