

THE TWO RIVER TIMES

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THE WEEK OF MAY 31 - JUNE 7, 2018

## CARL CALENDAR

*All's Well That Ends Well*

On June 30, Brookdale Community College visitors may get the feeling that time is out of joint on the Lincroft campus.

And they'd be right, because it's the day popular professor and administrator Carl Calendar officially retires from the school that was founded in 1968, admitted its first students in 1969 and hired Calendar in 1970.

That event must have been similar, in spirit, to the 1995 film "Mr. Holland's Opus" in which Richard Dreyfuss takes a high school teaching job until he breaks into the music composing business and instead spends his career changing students' lives.

Just like Mr. Holland, Calendar became teacher because he needed a paying job.

He studied English and German, traveled Europe for a year, and earned a doctorate in comparative literature at the University of Oregon.

"I'd been in school until I was 25 and I thought I ought to do some work" he explained. "So I got a job at Brookdale thinking I'd stay a year. And I stayed 48."

It was in his blood. When Calendar was growing up in Middlesex County, his father taught at Rutgers University and his mother was a high school math teacher. His older brother went into the "family business" as a molecular biologist teaching at University of California-Berkeley.

"Most of the family was into science and

math," he said. "I'm the only one in the arts. I was just good at writing and literature."

Calendar reaches for a calculator when asked how many students he's taught, which include journalist Brian Williams and movie director/actor/comic Kevin Smith.

"I'd say between 9,000 and 10,000 students, definitely over 10,000 if you include the non-credit courses," Calendar said during a recent interview in his office in Larrison Hall.

The first 30 years he primarily taught and the next 18 years he took on more administrative duties. His current title: Institute Dean-Humanities.

In April, dozens of former students, colleagues and other well-wishers, including

one of the nine students in the school's first graduating class, attended Calendar's retirement party.

"Dr. Calendar was an incredible teacher," said Dara Evans, an associate professor and former student. "He was Virgil to my Dante."

Evans said she was not academically inclined and enrolled late at Brookdale because her parents insisted. Most classes were filled and by default she ended up in Calendar's 9 a.m. Shakespeare's Plays class.

"He did not stop calling on me, the quiet girl in the back, and saw something in me I certainly didn't see," she explained.

"My perception was I didn't have to have the same answers as everyone else," she said. "I could have confidence in my own voice. He has that gift."

Evans went from a job in sales and makeup to a career as a Brookdale literature professor. She still marvels at his technique.

"He knew what Shakespeare's characters ate for breakfast, what their favorite colors were and didn't use notes in his lectures," she said. "It's an honor to have learned from him and I'm not the only one who will say that."

She's right. Gilda Rogers was in her 30s when she decided to get a college degree.

"Dr. Calendar had such a profound impact on my life," she said, noting she still can't call him by his first name. "He's supportive of everything I've done. He's my No. 1 cheerleader."

An English/journalism major, she's now vice president of the T. Thomas Fortune Foundation, works in community relations at the Two River Theater Company and founded Frank Talk Multimedia Network online.

"He's authentic," she said of Calendar. "Very loose, open and funny in class. He just speaks the truth and encourages you to be yourself. I never missed a class."

And she followed in his footsteps as a teacher, working for him in the Poseidon Early College High School program, a collaboration between Neptune High School and Brookdale to enable students to earn their high school diploma and associate's degree simultaneously.

Now that he's retiring, Calendar's calendar is an open slate.

He knows he now wants to get back to visiting museums and attending lectures and the theater in New York City with his wife, Jody, a former managing editor of the Asbury Park Press and former executive editor of The Two River Times. They also have a five-month-old granddaughter to spoil.

He wants to travel and do a lot of walking, both in New York City and Europe. He's already walked 200 of the 500 miles of the Camino de Santiago and wants to finish the pilgrimage to the shrine of the apostle St. James the Great in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain.

He met his oldest friend, Steve Dummer, in college and they traveled Europe in 1963.

"The dollar was strong and it was cheap to live in Europe then," he said. "We went to Berlin, London, Paris. We were good at having fun."

Dummer, who lives in Tennessee, pursued a medical career and he, too, has taught and is retired.

"Carl's a good person, curious and gregarious, and we both have a lot of interest in books," he said. "People who share a formative part of life often make lifelong friends and can pick up where they left off."

And Calendar wants to get Netflix "and some of those channels with the shows everyone is talking about," he said.

"I actually bought 'Breaking Bad' because I got so tired of people telling me about it," he said. "I just never had time to watch much TV."



DANNY SANCHEZ

BY GRETCHEN C. VAN BENTHUYSEN