

## The night before the test



Cindy (Linnert) Chapman and Anna Grant study for their Humanities test at Perkins two years ago. This tradition still exists today for many Humanities students. Photo by Becky Saunders.

By Dana Rippy  
Co-Editor

A group of Milligan College students walks into Perkins Family Restaurant at about 10 p.m., toting several pounds of books.

Six hours, dozens of cups of coffee, gallons of iced tea and numerous plates of cheese fries later, they leave, literally shaking in their shoes at the thought of Milligan's most dreaded, cursed, caffeinated, prayed over, crammed for, stressed out rite of passage — a Humanities exam.

"I'd rather be in Alaska, in one of those six months of darkness — anywhere but school," said Freshman Matt Kayser. "Humanities seems like that six months of darkness."

But, said senior Kristen West, Humanities lasts two years.

By the time students finish Humanities in, hopefully, their sophomore year, they have the process worked out to a science — even the all-nighters which are as much an institution here as Humanities itself.

In fact, if a line were drawn between the

favorite studying spots, it would connect at the Grind, Perkins and most surprisingly the Milligan Post Office. Ask any student and they'll recite the routine.

About once a month, students make their rounds starting at the Grind which closes at midnight. The main problem is that a cup of coffee is a dollar and each and every refill after is 25 cents. At the rate of 35 cups of coffee a night that is going to run up a tab of \$9.50. That is one expensive night of studying.

Perkins, beside Wal-Mart in Johnson City, is a cheaper alternative, and it is open for 24 hours. They can go, have a bottomless pot of coffee or glass of tea and study until they are bouncing off the walls — the bathroom walls, to be specific.

"We all used to gather at Perkins, three to a booth and fan the books out on the table," said senior Becky Saunders. "We would go table hopping to find notes for lectures that we didn't go to. Then if there was a person in the booth beside us, we would just slide the notes back and forth between the divider until we collected all the information

Continued on Page 5

## Dennis Helsabeck's enthusiasm for Humanities is contagious

By Becky Saunders  
Co-Editor

"Lawsy, Lawsy, Lawsy," its 9 a.m. on a Monday and a familiar figure is trotting across campus with his green jacket flapping in the wind. "Heaven to Mergratroid," now it's 9:01.

These little ditties and many more can be quoted verbatim by many Milligan College students who have learned more than their lessons from the Humanities crusader in the green jacket — history professor W. Dennis Helsabeck, Jr.

The margins of Beth Phillips' (Arts and Ideas) book have been lined with

Helsabeckisms scribbled down during lectures.

Katrina Keifer's spiral notebook has "Helsabeckisms" framing her notes on the Reformation. Clint Holloway knows more than his share, as well, with the added bonus that he has mastered the facial expressions to go with each and every one of them.

Helsabeck has been challenging minds at Milligan nine years and students say that his greatest strength is his ability to make subjects come alive.

"He just gets so excited about what he is teaching," said senior Tabra Woolbright. Helsabeck said he thrives on teaching

Humanities from Page 1

At Milligan, the program was well received. After a period of adjustment for students, Humanities soon became an accepted part of campus life.

"Once we got through a generation of students who knew only the Humanities program, that instability was gone," said Wetzal. "I'm very glad we persevered."

To this day, generations of students have completed the Humanities program. These students share another tradition as well — complaining.

Students do not often consider that the program is more difficult on the Humanities faculty, who have to be able to teach enormous amounts of material, most of which is not in their specific field.

"You always feel like you're drowning in Humanities material...but for the teacher it's magnified," said Dr. Tim Dillon who went through the Humanities program as a student and now teaches sophomore Humanities. "Every new professor has to come to terms with how to deal with it."

His first year teaching Humanities, Dillon spent 90-100 hours a week reading and studying.

"I had a hotline to Terry Dibble's house," he said. "I don't think there was a night that went by that I did not call him and ask, 'What is going on here?'"

The newest member of the sophomore Humanities staff, Dr. Craig Farmer, also had daily discussions about the material with the other professors his first year, noted Dillon. It was kind of like passing the baton.

"In many ways it's a crash course," said Dillon.

Despite the daunting task of assimilating huge amounts of material, Dillon thinks the integrated approach is the best way. He has experience teaching American History at the University of Wisconsin, where all coursework is broken down into separate disciplines. Students had to connect all the material from their classes by themselves.

"It's the assumption of college that when you have a mature student, they will be able to put the material together," said Dillon. "I think that's a wonderful ideal, but only the extraordinary student will be able to do that."

Humanities because "it is one big soap opera all about people."

Humanities allows Helsabeck to do what he loves best — teach history.

Humanities, he said, "integrates the history of literature, philosophy along with the history of politics, economics, religion, etc., and I tend to think of history as all these things anyway."

Students are always welcome to his office — a combination of a library and a mother's sitting room. There is a rocking chair, throw rugs on the floor and books stacked on top of books, as well as many on shelves. A lamp fashioned out of what looks like a moonshine jug sits on the

Students agree with this assessment.

"In Humanities, you're studying all aspects of a culture, and it's not confusing because you're not going from one class to another and studying the same thing all over again," said junior Kathy Hobbs looking back on her Humanities experience.

Students who go through Humanities come out with a better education, said Dr. Jack Knowles, who served as director of the freshman Humanities program from 1973-80, and director of the entire program from 1980-92.

"If a student is willing to do the assignment and read, then they will succeed," said Knowles. "Much of the complaining about Humanities comes from an unwillingness to read and study."

There have been changes to the program since its conception. It used to be organized with lectures on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and class on Tuesday and Thursday.

"We felt the 80 minute discussion periods were not as effective," said Knowles.

Despite a few changes throughout the years, the original intent of the program has remained the same.

"Philosophically, we're convinced that it works well," said Knowles.

The current director of the Humanities program, Dr. Pat Magness, hopes to integrate even more into the current program.

"I'd like to see the integration of the Humanities program involve the fine arts more," said Magness.

Magness is also optimistic about the rising number of students who opt to go on the Humanities tour. This summer trip to Europe can also count for six hours of sophomore Humanities credit. This year there are 40 people going, while there were only 18 last summer.

The Humanities program continues to be a defining tradition at Milligan. It has become a rite of passage for upperclassmen to warn the freshmen about the agonies of the program.

There are just certain things that are "lightning rods" for criticism, said Dillon.

"Twenty years ago, I complained about cafeteria food, convocation and Humanities. ... So when people complain about it now, I don't take it personally" said Dillon. "I, too came to love the thing."

complete works of Michelangelo. Humanities books that are used this semester are, for convenience, located in the book shelves next to the door.

Helsabeck can relate to the frustrations of his Humanities students. Helsabeck was involved in the integrated studies program at the University of Wisconsin.

"I didn't fully realize how valuable this (the integrated studies program) was," said Helsabeck.

The program involved groups of 12 people that stayed together for the entire semester and went to all their classes to-

Continued on Page 5