

A Mission of *Mind & heart*

by Terry Rayburn Mitchell, '93

Shop Manager Bob Baker says), and Mailing Services takes care of getting it out the door. A few days later, it arrives at *your* door.

Why does Bill write *Mind & Heart*? "Because people claim to read it," he says. "I've written about 130 newsletters since I began doing it at Manchester. It's a discipline. You dread it, you know you have to do it, and it isn't so bad when you get into it – except when my brain goes just vacant." From what I see each month, that doesn't happen too often. And even during a tough month, there's a reward at the end of the process. "When I hit 'send' after my last look, my second thought is one of accomplishment," Bill says. "My first thought is that it's 30 more days before I have to do this again!"

Every once in a while I hear from the president of another institution about *M&H*, and s/he always wants to know, "How does he DO that?" Phil Eaton, '64, the president of Seattle Pacific University, is one of Bill's colleagues who's wowed by the magnitude of the task Bill has set for himself. "I am intimidated every time I receive an issue," he says. "I've told him many times that I can't believe he pulls this off. I have always suspected he has a team of eight or so people who do this writing, only to find out that he does most of it himself. In any case, I think *M&H* is a major publication for Whitworth and an extraordinary part of Bill's outstanding leadership. Communication is the name of the game for any leader, and this piece is a connector, bigtime." Father Robert Spitzer, Gonzaga University's president, concurs. "I may not be an alumnus of Whitworth College," he says, "but I thoroughly enjoy reading *Of Mind & Heart*. Bill's passion and vision for Whitworth are so evident that after each read you cannot help but come away inspired – plus, he is just so darn funny."

We often receive copies of other college newsletters, and each time we do I'm reminded all over again how good Bill is at what he does. Even the best ones run him a poor second when it comes to "voice." Somehow, I always hear Bill. The guy's good.

But why do I keep telling you what a great and inspirational writer and storyteller Bill is? Bill can tell you himself in the excerpts that appear on the facing page. These passages – both poignant and funny – provide just a taste of the best of Bill Robinson.



The Best of Bill Selections from *Of Mind & Heart*

I have my head in the clouds again. The good news is that one of my United Airlines friends made a last-minute move and slid me from coach to first class. The bad news is the guy snoring next to me is making more noise than a jackhammer. I'd flip him over onto his stomach, but his back might not bend in that direction. I'm on my way to Cleveland, a fine city not at all deserving of the tag "the mistake by the lake," where the presidents of the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities (headed by Whitworthian Duncan Ferguson) are meeting at the College of Wooster. College presidents are an interesting breed. We turn into bragging machines in each other's presence. Sometimes I'm tempted to lead with, "I already know that your school is better than my school, that you're a better president than I am, and that your dad could whip my dad, so let's talk about the weather."



*Here's my situation. I'm not on a plane. I'm sitting on the deck at our cabin. Before me a perfectly still river reflects tree-topped mountains as a rising sun provides warmth in the cool, early morning air. As I'm surrounded by the splendor of God's creation, one thing dominates my thoughts: "I wonder how we're doing on the general education curriculum." I need professional help. Actually, before I started fussing, the beauty of the earth did seem to enrich my morning prayers. Among those prayers was intercession on behalf of a wonderful friend in Portland battling the return of a virulent cancer. Please pray for her. Life is at once so good and so hard. I find that its joys and sorrows seem to be intensifying. Maybe I'm getting more emotional as I age, or maybe Bonnie's wonderful sensitivity is rubbing off on me. I heard that she cried at the grand opening of Alton's Tire Center. Well, I hope you are having a renewing summer season. Even when we're working hard, the change of rhythm in the academic calendar refreshes us at Whitworth. If you're getting this newsletter for the first time, you're probably the parent of a new student. I write *M&H* monthly and send it to alumni, donors, parents of students and others. My objective is to keep you informed; my format is bragging and complaining. I can't help myself. I love this school, and I hope you will, too.*



Parents, you and your children are in our prayers. The emptiness catches us off guard, doesn't it? After the orientation program last Saturday night, I was chatting with a parent in the foyer of Cowles Auditorium. In the background I heard returning students cheering wildly as new students left the auditorium and entered the gauntlet of support that our student leaders had formed outside the exit. Out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of the left sleeve of my late father's tattered old jacket, where my mother had sewn on his hundred-mile swimming patches. Proudly wearing his grandfather's jacket was our freshman son. A big smile crossed his face, and he reached over and shook my hand. We walked a few steps together until we reached the exit. I didn't really know what to do, so I stepped to the side, leaned my head against the window and watched him walk through the tunnel of cheers by himself. My eyes filled with tears as the symbolism of him walking alone completely blindsided me. I didn't fully recover until the next night after I stopped by his room. As I was leaving, I overheard a warm and enthusiastic exchange of greetings between him and a couple of his new friends who had just wandered in. Somehow, it was the salve I needed. So let me assure all of you who left your sons and daughters here over Labor Day weekend, I heard them in the hallway and they are doing fine. And may the arms that lift, protect, nudge, and hold our students be wrapped around us as well during this academic year.

As the editor of Bill Robinson's *Of Mind & Heart* newsletter, I'm asked time and again if he really sits down every single month (okay, okay – 10 months each year) and pounds out this compendium of vital information, trenchant self-deprecation, and wholehearted exhortation. Usually, the people who ask me about this adopt a "nod, nod, wink, wink" attitude that intimates their skepticism that one person, no matter how accomplished, could really write something that smart, touching, and clever every month.

Well, they're wrong. Dead, flat wrong. Bill would be the first to say, "I can't do it alone," and certainly he can't gather and sift through the news of every event and accomplishment throughout the Whitworth community and write the newsletter each month. But he comes frighteningly close. Just to prove it to you, let me walk you through the process from Bill's computer to your mailbox.

Here's how it works: In the middle of each month, Bill's assistant, Sylvia Hedrick, sends out reminder notices about getting *M&H* info in to the President's Office. Faculty and staff members compile info about their areas, the Alumni Office lists upcoming events, and the folks in Student Life and Academic Affairs provide news that includes on- and off-campus programs, faculty and student accomplishments, and pending visits by speakers and artists. The Athletics reporters gather scores, search out stats re: our outstanding student-athletes, tote up pre-season prognostications and post-season honors, and pull together information highlighting Whitworth's athletics successes.

Then Bill uses as much of this information as he possibly can within the 2,450-word parameters of our format. He "Billierizes" the material, making it his own and ordering it in such a way that it's both logical and appealing. The opening and the close are where he probably spends most of his time. It shows. See in the selections on the following page some examples of his eloquence as he greets and then says farewell to his readers.

After he finishes his first draft, Bill sends it along to me and I get going on my task, which is to act as a sounding board for some of the items, to clean up any stray mistakes (he doesn't make many), to provide missing pieces, and, on occasions when Bill's up to his ears in running the college, maybe to write a few items for the Athletics section (Sports Information Director Steve Flegel does this, too). Even when Steve and/or I provide the bare-bones info, Bill usually spends some time adding a personal anecdote about attending a soccer game or cheering for our volleyball squad or having a group of football players over to his house to consume a cow or two. If you live in Spokane and attend Whitworth events, you know that he's at nearly every one. And he has a story – a good story – to tell about each of those events.

After Bill and I send the drafts back and forth a few times, he's usually ready to sign off. So I read it carefully one more time, ask Public Information Specialist Julie Riddle and maybe one or two others to do the same, and I send it on to Graphic Designer Su Chism. She formats the much-fussed-over text, the print shop crew "lays the ink on the paper" (as Print