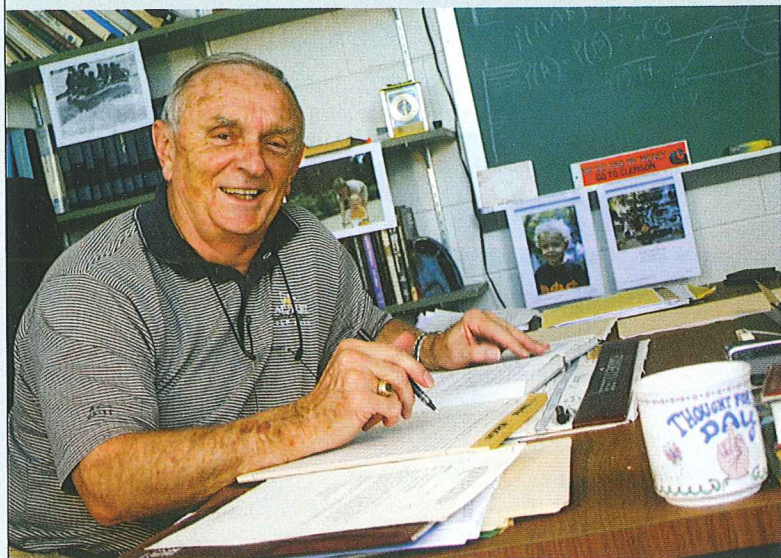


Dr. Ergle still chuckles as he says ‘Good-bye’



Though many lifelong academics are honored with campus buildings named for them, Dr. William Ergle was recognized on a slightly smaller scale. Several years ago, while the math and statistics professor was on sabbatical, his colleagues posted an official-looking sign above Trexler Hall’s second-floor men’s restroom, christening it “The William David Ergle Lavatory.”

“They dedicated the john to me,” Ergle says, flatly at first, and then punctuating the statement with his loud, almost trademark laugh.

Perhaps it’s a stereotype, but statistics professors don’t usually enjoy popularity on college campuses. Ergle, however, has been an exception. Former students and colleagues seem to agree that Ergle, who retired in June after 44 years on the faculty, has the ability to make statistics a lively class with his dry sense of humor.

“He’s a class act in every way,” says Roanoke College visiting instructor **Kathy Bauman ’73**, a former student and now Ergle’s colleague. “He’s the type of person who appreciates and inspires good humor, and he also is an excellent professor. You don’t get any better than that.”

Ergle came to Roanoke in 1963, after earning his bachelor’s de-

gree from Clemson University and a master’s degree from the University of South Carolina. After several years on the faculty, he earned his Ph.D. at Virginia Tech. While the College has grown significantly during his tenure, Ergle says the students academically are pretty much the same. “The good ones are still good; the lazy ones are still lazy,” he jokes. Over the years, he has especially enjoyed teaching the students who are not “quantitatively inspired,” but study hard and finally succeed.

“It’s always been the kids” who make teaching so enjoyable, Ergle says. “They’re always exceedingly interesting characters, and being around them tends to keep you young.”

As the longest-serving faculty member on campus when he retired, Ergle has a unique view of the College and how it has changed over the last four decades. He chuckles recalling that during the 1960s freshmen had to wear beanies to class; the women were required to wear dresses, and men wore ties. Residence halls were supervised by housemothers, and none were co-ed. “There was more structure to that sort of thing,” Ergle says. “That changed quite a bit. I don’t think it’s for the good personally, but I’m old-fashioned.”

In 1985, Ergle became chairman of the math, computer science and physics department and served in that post for 15 years. A leader in shaping the department’s academic offerings, he hired many of the faculty members who are there today.

“We’re a department that really gets along well, and I think he’s had a big role in that,” says Dr. Jane Ingram, who is current chair of the department.

Ergle and Dr. Benjamin Huddle, professor of chemistry, taught the College’s first computer course, called “Computer: Friend or Foe,” in the 1980s. When the College started its computer science major, Ergle was responsible for developing all of the courses — even though he had never actually taken a computer science class. And despite the fact that he now considers himself a “grumpy computer user,” Ergle served as director of the College’s Computing Center in its early years. In 1994, Ergle wrote the textbook, *Introductory Statistics*, which was used at the College for about five years.

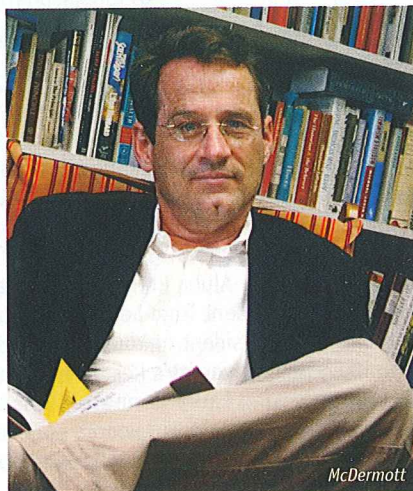
As the senior member of the faculty for the last decade, Ergle also has held the honor of serving as chief marshal for the College’s premier events, particularly opening convocation and commencement. “I got the job by being in the wrong place at the wrong time,” he says with his usual grin.

Serving God through print and pulpit

Dr. Gerald R. McDermott, professor of religion, believes theology should be accessible to all Christians, not just biblical scholars. The author of seven books, he tries to write prose that might appeal equally to his academic colleagues and “Christians sitting in the church pews.”

“If theology doesn’t help the church, what good is it?” he says. “The purpose of theology, finally, is to worship God. The better we know God, the better we can worship Him.”

McDermott’s latest book is *God’s*



Rivals: Why Has God Allowed Different Religions? Insights from the Bible and the Early Church, published in January by InterVarsity Press. It grapples with the question, “If God is the all-powerful Father of Jesus Christ, why did this God allow the rise and flourishing of non-Christian religions?” This is not just an issue examined by 21st-century Christians. The writers of the Bible and leading teachers of the early Christian church explored the question as well. They were convinced, McDermott says, that the non-Christian religions were “not just human constructs, but they are living, spiritual entities. They represent,