Carlton Jackson Feature

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A WKU History professor, now in his 50th year at the University, continues to have success in the world of publishing.

In this week’s View from the Hill, Amy Bingham introduces us to Carlton Jackson who says his background as a journalist has served him well as an author and a professor.

His book topics range from a sinking ship in World War II to the Singing Hilltoppers and everything in between. But Carlton Jackson says his research, writing and teaching have always gone hand in hand.

Carlton Jackson has been walking these halls at WKU for the past fifty years. The Alabama native was hired as a history professor in 1961, when Kelly Thompson was president.

“I could have been career military, I was tempted to re-up in the Air Force. I could have stayed a newspaper reporter in Birmingham.”

But instead he chose the world of Academics.

“It has given me the opportunity to do the three things I love the most.”

“I love to teach if the students are responding, I also love to research and write and I love to travel.”

Jackson has published dozens of books including the biography of Hattie McDaniel who played Mame in “Gone with the Wind.” The New York Times named it one of it’s 50 most noteable books of 1989.

“After the New York Times gave such a favorable review, nobody would dare give it an unfavorable review.”

He says lots of his ideas for books have come from reading the newspaper.

“I write journalistically some reviews have said of my books and that pleases me. I means people can read the book and actually understand it. They don’t have to put up with the gobbledygook to which people in my profession seem to be addicted.”

Jackson’s career longevity can be seen in the yellowing letters that still dot his bulletin board. He says he’s most proud of the way his career as an author made him even more effective in the classroom.

“Every book I’ve ever written ultimately worked its way into my history class. I’m definitely not one of those who say you are a good teacher or good researcher but not both.”

Jackson’s latest book is called “Bittersweet Journey: Andrew Jackson’s 1829 Inaugural Trip.” That idea came to Jackson while attending a conference in Clarksville Tennessee, seeing the Cumberland River, and realizing that was the way Jackson must have traveled to get to D.C.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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