



*In  
Memoriam*

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**Danny L. Miller**  
**July 9, 1949 – November 9, 2008**

It is with great sadness that we must report the passing of Danny Miller—colleague, mentor and dear friend. Officially Danny was the editor of the *Journal of Kentucky Studies* from 1988 to 1999 and assistant editor from 1999 to the present—but the truth is that Danny was not only the brain and spine of this publication, but he was the heart and soul of it as well. His *joi de vivre* has informed every aspect of the journal for twenty years. Indeed, his love of literature and Appalachian culture as well as the considerable depth of his scholarship was the very foundation upon which each issue of the *Journal of Kentucky Studies* was built. His loss to us cannot be overstated.

Danny was deeply rooted in Appalachia. He had been born in West Virginia but he grew up in Ashe County, North Carolina. When he earned his Bachelor's degree in English from Berea College in Kentucky, an institution dedicated to teaching students of Appalachian background, he became the first member of his family to be graduated from college.

After Berea, Danny earned his Master's degree from Eastern Kentucky University in 1975 before enrolling in the Ph.D. program at the University of Cincinnati. He received his doctorate in 1985. Recognizing that the rich literary traditions of Appalachia were still little studied by scholars, Miller wrote a dissertation on women in Appalachian literature. A pioneering work in the field of Appalachian literary studies, the dissertation became the foundation for his first book, *Wingless Flights: Appalachian Women in Fiction*, published in 1996.

Thereafter, Danny devoted his life to the study and promotion of Appalachian literature and culture. In addition to *Wingless Flights*, he was the co-author of *An American Vein: Critical Readings in Appalachian Literature*, as well as numerous articles and presentations. He was a member of the Urban Appalachian Council of Greater Cincinnati and was involved in a wide variety of projects connected to Appalachian culture and advocacy. He was widely known and beloved throughout the extended community of scholars, writers, and activists in Appalachian studies. He was also an avid genealogist. He had completed numerous family histories and was often asked to speak on genealogy. Most recently, he was the special guest at the family reunion of the descendants of the original Siamese twins Chang and Eng Bunker, where he discussed his own Yates family who were related to the Bunkers by marriage.

Danny spent the bulk of his professional career at Northern Kentucky University, working his way up the ranks from part-time instructor (while still a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati) to full-time instructor, to assistant professor, to associate, then full professor, eventually becoming chair of the Department of Literature and Language in 2000. A passionate believer in the power of humanities education and in the mission of the university to provide an affordable and accessible college education to any student interested in pursuing the dream of a college degree, Danny was an enthusiastic promoter of Northern Kentucky University. His infectious laugh, warm and generous personality, and famous bear hugs became as much a part of the Northern Kentucky University experience as the buildings and classes. He never met a person on campus who didn't become a friend, and he was regarded with love and affection by students, faculty, and staff alike. He was passionate about the teaching of literature. Students knew that Dr. Miller's door was

always open for advice, help with a scheduling problem, or just a quick boost of encouragement and optimism.

—Gary Walton  
—John Alberti

*Note: Memorial donations may be made to the Danny L. Miller Memorial Fund,  
Department of English, Northern Kentucky University,  
Highland Heights, KY 41099.*