

4-29-2013

Tribute to Gary Marotta

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Recommended Citation

Carson, David A. (2013) "Tribute to Gary Marotta," *The Exposition*: Vol. 1: Iss. 2, Article 1.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/exposition/vol1/iss2/1>

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Professor Gary Marotta officially retired from teaching at SUNY Buffalo State, effective December 31, 2012.

I write that sentence with decidedly mixed emotions.

On the one hand, I am profoundly happy for my friend, my colleague, my next-door-neighbor on the second floor of the Classroom Building. He has had a long, storied and productive career: He served as Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at both Buffalo State and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. He was Dean of the School of Communications, Visual and Performing Arts at Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus, where he was also Dean of Instructional Resources. He has also served as Special Assistant to the Chancellor, Associate Dean, Assistant Dean, and Journalist. We know him best as Professor of History and Social Studies Education at Buffalo State, where—since 2000—he has served as teacher, mentor, friend and scholar. He has been involved in higher education for almost fifty years. So he has earned retirement. He deserves to travel, to spend more time with his lovely wife Joan and his talented son Josh. He deserves *la dolce vita*.

But I am going to miss him. So will all of his colleagues and students.

When Gary joined our department full time in 2003, he brought with him incredible energy and enthusiasm. Anybody who has know Gary for more than five minutes knows that he brims over with passion and animation—a love of life, a love of learning, and a love of books, of good food and fine drink. Gary hit our department like a tidal wave. Department meetings crackled, sometimes with spirited debate, sometimes with humor. Through his initiative, we began a series of brownbag lunches where members of the department would meet several times a year to share work that they were doing, or information on a books that they had read. These sessions raised the level of scholarship within the department, but they also offered a time for socializing. They helped draw the department closer. He helped us be friends as well as colleagues.

I will miss our frequent bull sessions. He would often drop in for a simple hello and it would turn into an hour-long discussion on any number of wide-ranging topics. (My memory of most of those sessions is of him expounding on the subject of the moment and me responding mostly with “Really? I didn’t know that.” But I hope I’m mistaken on that score.) He is brilliant (and knows it) and I never failed to learn something from him. From John Calvin to John Brown, from the causes of the Civil War to the political legacy of Sarah Palin, we covered the globe. Gary is never at a loss for an opinion, and he has had a profound effect in shaping my own.

Many others have had the same experience. Rarely could you find Gary alone in his office. Often there would be other faculty members with him, sharing ideas and opinions. But more frequently you would find him with students. He went to great lengths to work with students—to go over exams or papers to point out areas that needed work or areas that were worthy of praise. Gary’s own education had been hands on, and I have always seen him as a master craftsman, hand tooling each and every student. He could be tough on them, but it was a toughness born of the love of teaching.

Gary's plan now is to travel, and he has told me on several occasions that his goal is to live for a time in Tuscany and to take cooking lessons. To me, that sounds just about perfect, especially for Gary. He will no doubt continue feeding the mind. But now he will feed the body as well.

We will miss you Gary, for you have been the department's intellectual guide and inspiration. You have been the one who summons us to reach higher and to dream bigger. You have encouraged us and informed us. You have made us laugh and made us think. And in all of it, you have been our *bella figura*. We will eagerly await what I hope will be frequent visits to the campus and to Campus House in the years to come. Go into this next phase of your life knowing that you have made a difference in ours. I can think of no higher praise.

David A. Carson
Distinguished Service Professor