

BIOGRAPHY OF NANCY TOPPING BAZIN

Birth Year: 1934 Place of Birth: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; U.S.A.

I grew up in Oakmont, Pennsylvania, then a town of 10,000 people, on the Allegheny River, north of Pittsburgh.

Lower-middle class. My father, Frank W. Topping, was a tool designer for the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa). His father died when he was 13; therefore, he began working in the steel mill by day and went to high school and one year of college in the evenings. My mother took the business/secretarial curriculum in high school. She was the Secretary-Treasurer of the School Board in Pittsburgh before marriage and, shortly before my father died of cancer at age 56, she took a job as Secretary-Treasurer of the School Board in Oakmont, PA.

My father's parents were immigrants from Scotland. My mother's father was Pennsylvania Dutch (German), and her mother was an Irish immigrant.

My father was skeptical about Christianity; my mother tried the First Presbyterian Church but found the people there snobbish, so she too stopped attending. I attended Sunday School on my own through high school, was President of the Young People's Group, and had myself baptized at age 18 (which required courage). However, I learned in a course on the Bible at Ohio Wesleyan University that the miracles in the Bible were rituals (not miraculous events) and in a philosophy class, influenced by writings by John Dewey, was relieved to learn that Christ was a great man, not a supernatural being. I was selected to write an entry for a university booklet entitled Is Your God Too Small? and at the end of my statement, I challenged readers to enlarge their concept of God "to harmonize rather than conflict with science and democracy."

Sexual Identification: Heterosexual (Good for consciousness-raising. I never had anyone ask me that before!)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

B. A. Ohio Wesleyan University – French and English – 1956

M.A. Middlebury Graduate School of French in Paris – 1958

Ph.D. Stanford University – English – 1969

Many art classes in Norfolk area (Hampton Roads), VA – 2000-2010

3-8 art workshops per year with internationally-known artists -2006 on.

WORK EXPERIENCES:

Instructor, Freshman English Program – Stanford University – Part Time – 1957-60. Totally responsible for each class.

Assistant Professor of English - Rutgers College, Rutgers University – 1970-77. Taught their first undergraduate and graduate courses in women writers. Founder and coordinator of the Rutgers College Women’s Studies Program—with no released time, no budget, no permission, no extra pay, no secretary (1973-78). Gave many speeches in the community. Founder and director of the Women’s Studies Institute (1974) and on Executive Board (1975-76). Founder and chairperson, Rutgers University Women’s Series (33 programs 1972-73); Chairperson, Rutgers University Women’s Caucus (1974). Established the University Women’s Center; improved university daycare. Was organizer and leader of three days of pre-convention workshops on Women in Language and Literature – National Council of Teachers of English meeting (1974). I also published Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision (1993) and several articles while at Rutgers. But I did not get tenure, despite support from people like Adrienne Rich and Kate Stimpson.

Coordinator of Women’s Studies – University of Pittsburgh - 1977-78. Offered undergraduate Women’s Studies Certificate and individualized, interdisciplinary major. Work included curriculum development, budget management, advising, teaching, publicity, speaking, working with community organizations, personnel supervision, setting up film and lecture series.

Professor of English and Women’s Studies – Old Dominion University – Norfolk, VA – 1984-2000; Associate Professor 1978-84. For seven years (1978-1985), while teaching half-time in the English Department, I developed the university’s women’s studies program (the first in the commonwealth of Virginia). In addition to teaching interdisciplinary

women's studies courses, directing the program involved creating a lecture series of well-known feminists, a newsletter for the campus and community, and two faculty development conferences by well-known feminist scholars during each year. I also organized a faculty development day for the full Biology Department and a two-day faculty development conference in Williamsburg for the full History Department. I gave many talks in the community about the women's movement, the need for women's studies, etc. My interdisciplinary courses included: **Women in a Changing World, Women and Power, Women's Spiritual Quest, and Mothers and Daughters.** From 1992 to 1997, as Literature Coordinator, I organized six public programs a year and a 1991 Nadine Gordimer Film Festival (seven films based on the story collection Six Feet of the Country). During these years, I wrote some of the first articles written on black African women writers. I also wrote articles and taught seminars on three major women writers: Virginia Woolf, Nadine Gordimer, and Doris Lessing.

Chair, Department of English – Old Dominion University – Norfolk, VA – 1985-89. The department had thirty-five full-time faculty, eight teaching assistants, and approximately sixteen part-time instructors. Work included setting up a six-year program of faculty development credit courses (**Women Writers, Literature in the Developing World, African-American Literature**) for the public schools, creation of the first English Department alumni chapter and the first chapter at Old Dominion of Sigma Tau Delta (national English honorary society); creation of the annual **Perspective Series** (six faculty panels per year). Personnel decisions, budget planning and management, scheduling, department annual report, salary decisions were part of the job. I also supervised special events (literary festival, journalism lecture series, visiting writers series), implemented a new English major (which required a course in one of the following: literature of the developing world, women writers, or African-American literature, new General Education requirements to include in courses women, minority, and third world materials; this kind of inclusiveness in both the curriculum and the faculty was also made a goal in the university's mission statement. I created the first undergraduate brochure, created "notes from the Chair," produced bi-annual newsletter, guided processes for Strategic Planning and for Assessment of English Majors, helped set

up a new Writing Consultation Program and a Computer Lab. In addition, as Chair of the English Department, I advocated internationalizing the curriculum. I taught not only Women Writers and Literature of the Developing World, but their first course in World Literature Written in English.

By January 2000, when I retired, in addition to Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision, I had co-edited Conversations with Nadine Gordimer and published forty articles on women's studies and literature. I was selected to participate in two faculty development trips--one to the Ivory Coast and Tanzania (1983) and one to China and Japan (1989). In 1988, I had a grant to give five lectures on women writers at Mohammed V university in Rabat, Morocco. In 1994, in competition with all faculty in both private and public institutions of higher education, I was one of eleven in the Commonwealth of Virginia to win the SCHEV Award for teaching, research, and service with a special emphasis upon teaching. In 1996, I won the Charles and Elizabeth Burgess Faculty Research and Creativity Award in the College of Arts and Letters.

In 1996, I was made an Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University, which was awarded for research: "You have been a pioneer in gender studies; your scholarship has broadened literary analysis and fundamentally changed the discourse." From January 2000, my title was Eminent Scholar and Professor Emerita of English.

By November 2000, I had started taking classes in drawing and painting. Now I am a Professional Artist. This is my current resume:

NANCY TOPPING BAZIN'S art is displayed continuously at the D'Art Center (740 Duke St., Norfolk), The Artists Gallery (608 Norfolk Ave., Virginia Beach), and The Gallery Shop (420 High St., Portsmouth). From 2007-2011, Nancy was one of the five Managing Artists at Pembroke 4 Art Gallery. Locations for her seven solo exhibits included the Virginia Children's Museum, Riverview Gallery, The Artists Gallery, the Norfolk Botanical Garden, and the

Central Library of Virginia Beach. In 2017, her painting “Bird Watchers” was one of 43 works selected (out of 500) to be enlarged on commercial vinyl for a Drive Through Art Gallery on Sewells Point Road in Norfolk. She was one of 12 outstanding Hampton Roads artists invited to display their work in Newport News at the Peninsula of Fine Arts Center’s 2017 holiday Art Market Series. From January through June 2018, she had eighteen paintings at Wells Fargo Advisors in Norfolk. In 2018, she had a painting accepted into the Central Virginia Watercolor Guild in Charlottesville and two others in an All Media Exhibit at For Arts Sake Gallery in Henrico, VA. She was juried into the June 2018 Gloucester Arts Festival exhibit by Jeff Harrison, curator emeritus of the Chrysler Museum.

Harrison said of her whimsical bird paintings: “Creating an entire world is an uphill battle for any artist, but Nancy Topping Bazin has done just that, populating a whimsical realm of fantastic feathered creatures, a world of brilliant color and bold, semi-abstract patterns. It’s a charmed place of pure imagination that offers hours of joyful contemplation.”

Jurors have given Nancy seventy awards for her paintings. Her art has been published in eight international books and included in several international exhibits. In 2015, she published her own book Why I Love to Paint Birds. Her art is often described as unique, intuitive, happy, fun, and, most of all, whimsical.

I have had two careers—one in women’s studies and literature and one in art. Both are represented on my website: www.nancytoppingbazin.com