

## **Dr. Nancy Grace Topping Bazin Celebrated for Excellence in Education and the Arts**

*Dr. Bazin obtained Eminent Scholar and Professor Emerita status at Old Dominion University in 2000 and currently she is a Professional Artist*

NORFOLK, VA, November 19, 2020, Dr. Nancy Grace Topping Bazin has been included in Marquis Who's Who in America. As in all Marquis Who's Who biographical volumes, individuals profiled are selected for their current reference value. Factors such as position, noteworthy accomplishments, visibility, and prominence in a field are considered during the selection process.



Raised in a lower-middle class family in Oakmont, Pennsylvania, Dr. Bazin was encouraged by her parents (who lived through the Depression) to get an education “because it was the only thing no one can take away from you.” She subsequently earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and English, as well as a high school teaching certificate, from Ohio Wesleyan University. In 1956-57 she went to Paris with the Middlebury Graduate School to earn an M.A. in French and then, in the fall of 1957, went to Stanford University to begin studies for her Ph.D. in English. She had met her first husband Maurice Jacques Bazin in Paris and married him in December 1958 at Stanford. From 1957-1961, she taught Freshman English and completed her coursework and a week-long final exam at Stanford. In January 1962, she and her husband left Stanford to travel extensively in the

Caribbean, South America, and Africa. After two more moves and the births of two children, in 1969 she had completed her dissertation and an oral exam for her Stanford Ph.D.

In 1970, she became an Assistant Professor at Rutgers College, which was, at that time, the all-male college of Rutgers University. With pressure from WEAL (the Women's Equity Action League) and Ruth Bader Ginsberg, then a law professor at Rutgers Newark, the Board of Governors was made to understand that, as a state university, it would likely be sued if Rutgers College did not go coed, despite local opposition. Dr. Bazin was placed on a committee to decide “what to do when the girls came.” She led efforts to set up a series of thirty-three programs for 1972-73, to create childcare centers on campus, to develop an active women's caucus, and, finally, to create a Women's Research Institute, of which she was the first to serve as Director. Most important were her efforts to create a Women's Studies Program on this formerly all-male campus. Without any extra pay and without asking anyone's permission, she worked with department heads and faculty to set up courses for each semester so students could earn a Women's Studies Certificate. When she finally asked for the Faculty Senate's approval, the program already existed and did not require a budget, so it was accepted. Dr. Bazin also made an impact as an organizer for the 1974 pre-convention workshops on Women in Language and Literature for the National Council of Teachers of English. Furthermore, she published a book Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision (1973) and, soon after, two articles and a long bibliography on androgyny.

In 1977, she attended at Bryn Mawr the Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration. In the fall of 1977, Dr. Bazin went to the University of Pittsburgh where she had been appointed the Director of Women's Studies. Just she and her two children moved to Pittsburgh, because she and her husband had separated in 1974 and were divorced in 1978. In the fall of 1978, she was offered a position at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. She became an Associate Professor of English and director of the first women's studies program in the Commonwealth of Virginia (begun the previous year with the help of a National Endowment for the Humanities grant). In addition to helping other faculty to develop courses, Dr. Bazin created several interdisciplinary courses: “Women in a Changing World” for undergraduates;

“Women and Power,” “Women’s Spiritual Quest,” and “Mothers and Daughters” for undergraduates and graduate students; and “Women Studies and the Search for Truth” for graduate students. In addition, she created the concept of Affirmative Action in the Curriculum which resulted in the Mission Statement of the university making a commitment to “the principle of equality.” It also made a commitment to hire faculty with expertise in teaching about women, the developing world, as well as African Americans and other minorities. All basic General Education courses were to include this new focus. The English Department even required majors to take one of these three courses: Women Writers, Literature of the Developing World, or African American Literature. These three courses were also taught (two of them by Dr. Bazin) for teachers in the school systems of Hampton and Virginia Beach. For all university and college faculty in the Hampton Roads area, Dr. Bazin organized the two faculty development workshops that were offered each year by Women’s Studies. Meanwhile, nationally she also served from 1978-1981 as Vice-President of the Women’s Caucus for the Modern Languages, an allied organization of the Modern Language Association.

Dr. Bazin served as Women’s Studies Director at Old Dominion University from 1978 to 1985. In 1985, she became Chair of the English Department and began working on a book called Conversations with Nadine Gordimer (1990), which she co-edited with Marilyn Seymour. She was enthusiastic about another goal of the university, namely, to internationalize the curriculum. Her own publications reflected this interest. She had written about writers Virginia Woolf and Doris Lessing before they were well-known. Nadine Gordimer, a white South African, won the Nobel Prize in 1991; Doris Lessing (born in Persia and raised in Rhodesia) received it in 2007. Most important perhaps was that she published articles about the early black African women novelists—Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa from Nigeria, Bessie Head from Botswana, Aminata Sow Fall and Mariama Ba from Senegal. She also wrote about how to integrate black African women novelists into women’s studies courses. She joined the African Literature Association where the scholars in the past had always focused on the male novelists. In addition, Dr. Bazin lectured abroad: in 1988, in Morocco, five times for a faculty exchange with the Mohammed V University and, in 1989, once at the University of Kitakyushu in Japan. She also took faculty development trips to the Ivory Coast and Tanzania (1983), China and Japan (1989), South Africa (1998) and Turkey (2000). When she began her Ph.D. studies at Stanford, most English Departments taught only British literature; at Stanford, she could not even *minor* in American literature, because they did not deem it “great enough.” In her later years at Old Dominion University, she was teaching “world literature written in English” which included not just English-speaking writers from Africa and the Caribbean but also writers from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. By then, of course, American literature was a major field. The curriculum had been transformed.

In addition to her two books, Nancy Topping Bazin published a total of forty scholarly articles as well as various reviews and reports. These articles often began as conference papers, sometimes presented at regional literary or women’s studies associations, but mostly at the national Modern Language Association and the National Women’s Studies Association. As an undergraduate she had been honored with membership in Mortar Board and Phi Beta Kappa and, as a faculty member, she was invited to join the English Honor Society of Sigma Tau Delta and The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, founded in 1897 “to recognize and encourage superior scholarship without restriction as to area of study and to promote the ‘unity and democracy of education.’” As a testament to her exceptional professional endeavors as an educator at Old Dominion University, in 1994 Dr. Bazin was presented with an Outstanding Faculty Award (primarily for teaching) from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, a fellowship from the Ball Brothers Research Foundation, also in 1994, a resident fellowship from the Virginia Center for Humanities in 1995, and the Charles and Elisabeth Burgess Faculty and Creativity Award in 1996. That same year she was designated as an Eminent Scholar, the highest achievement for faculty. Finally, she received praise for

women's studies and feminist literary criticism, which many male English professors in the 1970s had dismissed as a "fad." The letter granting her the title of Eminent Scholar said, "you have been a pioneer in gender studies, your scholarship has broadened literary analysis and fundamentally changed the discourse." In addition, she was eponymously honored with the Nancy Topping Bazin Graduate Scholarship in Women's Studies created at Old Dominion University in 2000—the year she retired with the title of Eminent Scholar and Professor Emerita of English and Women's Studies.

Her connection with the university continued, however, because she had already been invited to be the only faculty member on the committee to choose the next President of Old Dominion University. A little later, from 2004-06, she served as President of the Old Dominion University Faculty Emeriti Association.

On January 4, 1992, Dr. Nancy Topping Bazin had married Robert Eliot Reardon, whom she had dated, for one summer, thirty-four years earlier. Between them they had six grown "children" (her Michael and Christine, and his Rob, Doug, John, and Pam). At the time of their wedding, only two of their eleven grandchildren were born. Once retired, Nancy and Robert traveled extensively throughout Central America, Ecuador, and Europe and then to the Republic of Georgia, Syria and Turkey, South Africa, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. But in between trips, Nancy was preparing for her second career as a Professional Artist.

Nancy Topping Bazin had always loved art. She had been selected in eighth grade to take special art classes at the Carnegie Music Hall every Saturday morning with "the legendary Joseph C. Fitzpatrick" who, for many years, taught most of the young, budding Pittsburgh artists, including Andy Warhol. Nancy attended those classes until she left for college where she considered majoring in art. However, since she did not enjoy her first art teacher, his art, or his class, she chose instead a double major in English and French. But several months after retiring in 2000, she found a little art school in Norfolk run by a recent Virginia Commonwealth University graduate Missy Berent (Ricker). Dr. Bazin loved the classes there and, soon after, at every art center in the seven cities that make up Hampton Roads. From 2007-11, Nancy was one of five Managing Artists and continuous exhibitors at the Pembroke 4 Art Gallery. In 2002, she began taking five-day workshops, especially the famed Springmaid Watermedia Workshops (six per year) in Myrtle Beach, SC, where professional artists from all over the United States came to teach. Since 2006, she has shown her work continuously at The Artists Gallery in Virginia Beach and at The Gallery Shop in Portsmouth, VA. In 2017, she was juried into the D'Art Center in Norfolk. In 2012 she had painted the first of her "Whimsical Bird" Series for which she is known. Although she did other works, her 41 whimsical bird paintings (40" x 32") became her signature subject matter, done (with aluminum foil, black gesso, and watercolor) in her signature style. She had many solo exhibits, including ones featuring her colorful whimsical birds. The locations included the Norfolk Botanical Garden, the Children's Museum of Virginia, Riverview Gallery, the Meyera E. Oberndorf Central Library of Virginia Beach, Bayside Special Services Library, Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists, and For Arts Sake Gallery in Henrico, VA. In addition, her painting "Bird Watching" was selected as one of forty-three out of 500 to be enlarged on commercial vinyl for the Drive-through Art Gallery in Norfolk in 2017. In 2018, a juror and the Curator Emeritus of the Chrysler Museum, Dr. Jeff Harrison, said of her birds, she creates "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." In 2015, she wrote a little book entitled Why I Love to Paint Birds. She was juried into many competitive exhibitions, for instance, Virginia Artists (2013), The Virginia Watercolor Society (2018), the Virginia Gloucester Arts Festival (2018), The Central Virginia Watercolor Guild (2018 and 2019), and the Georgia Watercolor 41<sup>st</sup> National Exhibit (2020). Over the years, jurors have given her paintings seventy-three awards, and many of her whimsical birds have appeared in ten art volumes distributed nationally and some internationally. Just as she frequently gave

speeches to community organizations as Director of Women's Studies, she has given presentations to community and art groups about her art.

Dr. Nancy Grace Topping Bazin has had a superlative academic career and impressive achievements as a Professional Artist. She has already been selected for inclusion in the International Directory of Distinguished Leadership, 2000 Outstanding Scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Dictionary of International Biography, 2000 Notable American Women, and Directory of American Scholars. She has also been included in multiple editions of Who's Who in America as well as Who's Who of American Women, Who's Who in Education, Who's Who in the Humanities, Who's Who in the South and Southwest, the World's Who's Who of Women, Who's Who in American Education, International Who's Who of Professional and Business Women, and Who's Who in the World. Now for her outstanding achievements in two careers—education and art, she has been selected again for this edition of Who's Who in America.

For more information, visit [www.nancytoppingbazin.com](http://www.nancytoppingbazin.com)