Mary Ellen Miller

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She has taught at WKU for more than five decades and served under six university presidents. But English professor Mary Ellen Miller has decided to scale back her duties in the classroom.

Amy Bingham talks with her about her long career in this week’s View from the Hill.

President Ransdell calls Mary Ellen Miller a WKU treasure. The long time professor of English has made her mark at WKU in a variety of ways and now plans to transition to part time status.

 “I knew I was gonna love this job and I did.”

It’s been nearly 54 years since Mary Ellen Miller taught her first class at WKU.

 “I think my first impression was how mannerly they were and respectful.”

A welcome change after teaching at the high school level.

Miller says she never thought she would become the longest serving member of the faculty.

 “I didn’t imagine back then I’d be alive at this time.

Miller and her husband, renowned poet and educator Jim Wayne Miller both joined the faculty at WKU in 1963.

 “We talked about the future down the road after 25 years which is standard but he up and died and had to switch my plan.”

 “I think if I stayed home and grieved I might have just died.”

Miller served two terms as a faculty regent, one in the 1980’s and one in the 1990’s.

 “I made friends with the board members and it made it easier to bring up subjects that were tricky.”

She also learned early on to never spring anything on the president.

 “I knew that lesson so I always went to him first and got the lay of the land.”

Miller also played a big role in founding WKU’s Center for Robert Penn Warren Studies at WKU after her committee contacted Guthrie city officials about purchasing his child hood home.

 “We ended up being friends with them because they said we would have never done this if you hadn’t called our attention to it. “

Miller admits she’s no fan of technology but does like to email and stays in daily contact with former students.

 “Got a poem accepted, finished my book, decided to go to graduate school that’s the favorite part of my day I think.”

Miller will only be teaching two courses when the semester begins later this month. She has also passed along her duty of carrying the mace at commencement to the next longest serving faculty member, Walker Rutledge.

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

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