



## Alumni

# Holy Renaissance man!



William Anderson '51

Adam West (William Anderson '51) explores another art form as he sketches, paints his partners in crime

What *didn't* Adam West — aka **William West Anderson '51**, aka Batman on the 1960s hit TV series — do when he was at Whitman College?

West was a literature major and a psychology minor. He wrote for *The Pio*, argued on the debate team, sang in the school choir, pondered supply and demand in the Economics Club, stayed buff (for a future role in tights) in the Outing Program. He swam, skied, ran track and played water polo.

Holy Renaissance man, Batman! But riddle us this: How is it that the only areas West didn't explore at Whitman were acting and painting, the artistic through-line in his career?

"That is one for The Riddler," said West, sitting in a lounge of the Marcus Whitman Hotel that could have passed for Wayne Manor on the "Batman" set. "I suppose there's only so much you can do once you pledge Beta House."

West made up for his late start in acting and latent interest in art. In a career that spans nearly 50 years, he has worked in more than 50 films and five television series. To mark the 40th anniversary of the "Batman" series, West put his secret life as a painter on public view

with an exhibit of 52 sketches and paintings depicting his partners in TV crime and punishment: The Joker, Catwoman, Egghead and others. The show sold out.

"I don't paint butter dishes, doilies or hummingbirds in my garden," West noted shortly after the show opened at the M Modern Gallery in Palm Springs, Calif. "It's more raw, I suppose. But it always creates a reaction."

As did West's celebrated role as Batman. The part proved both signature and stigma for the actor. After the series ended in 1968, West struggled to get serious roles. Producers couldn't see beyond his Batman image, even after he played tough-guy parts like Johnny Cain in "The Girl Who Knew Too Much."

"Batman is a great example of how Hollywood thinks it can create a persona for you when it doesn't know who you are," West said. "But who am I to complain? I got to work with the greats: Vincent Price, Burgess Meredith, Cesar Romero. And we had some great fun."

West remembers one episode in particular: Batman vs. Egghead (Price). At the end of one take, Price suddenly started lobbing eggs at West and Burt Ward, who played Robin in the series.

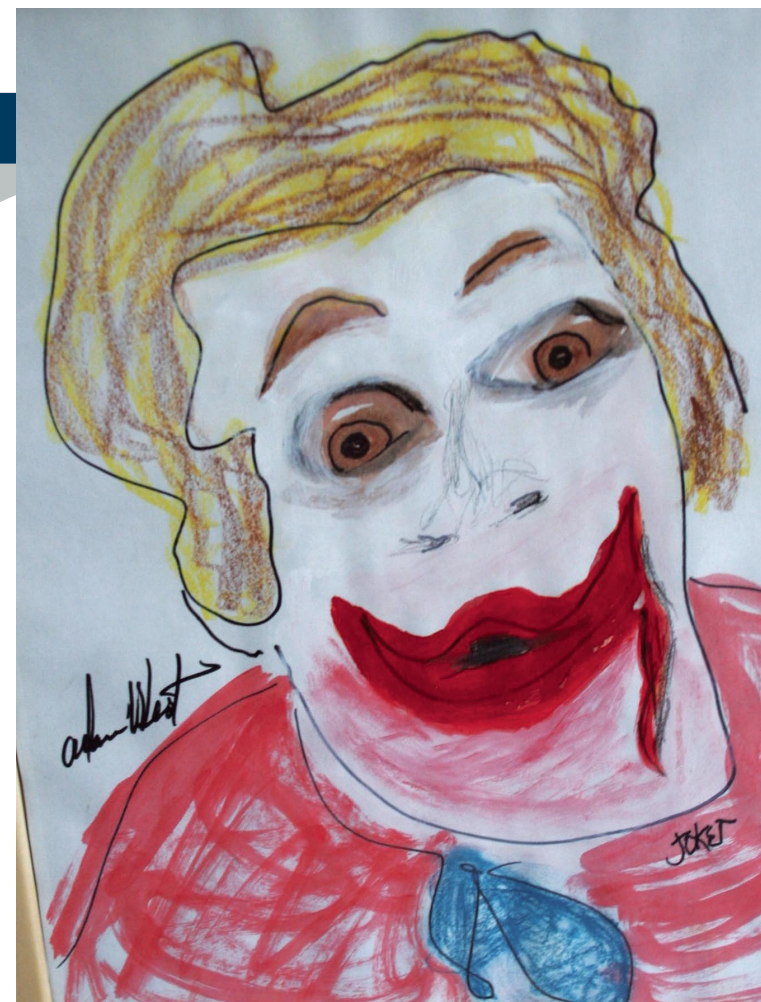


The Bookworm, as played by Roddy McDowall.

When the crew asked Price to stop, he said: "With a full artillery? Not a chance!" A take-no-prisoners egg fight ensued.

"Batman" was theater of the absurd," said West. "I enjoyed those years, and I've made my peace with the after-effects. (William) Shatner has his Trekkies, and I'm delighted and fortunate to have my Batties."

West maintains that he's not a serious painter, even when his wife for 36 years, Marcelle Tagand Lear, insists that he is. "The serious part of my work is that I paint what I dream. Seriously," he said.



The Joker, as played by Cesar Romero.

When West's daydreams take him back to his childhood in Walla Walla, he thinks that maybe he was an actor all along. On days when he wasn't working in the canneries or alfalfa fields, he was riding over hill and dale on Champ, a high-spirited American Saddlebred. "I was already doing westerns on the farm," he said. "I taught Champ to stand on a barrel, you know. I almost thought I'd head off to the circus."

West's father was the third of four generations of "hard-dirt wheat farmers." (His brother, John, still carries on the tradition.) His mother was a concert pianist who regularly invited opera singers to their home. "I got to hear all the stars from the top of the banister," West said.

Batman, he allows, was in his blood from the day he found a trove of comic books hidden away in a suitcase on the farm. Of all the heroes in all the comics, Batman stood tallest for West.

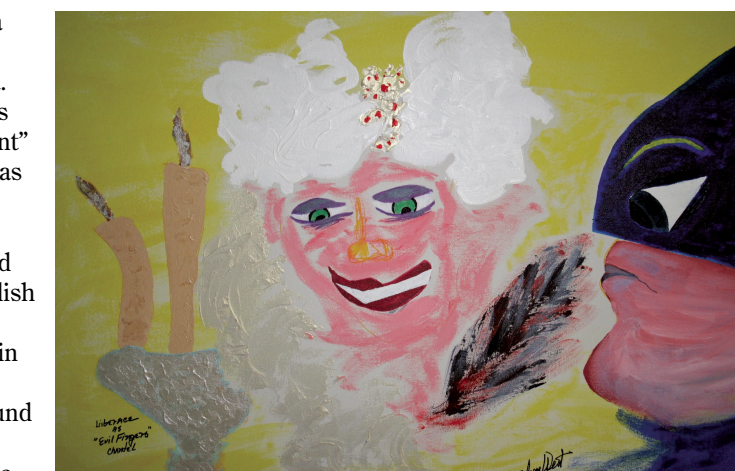
Truth to tell, West's acting career began in Walla Walla. His stepmother,

Adele Anderson, was a key player at the Little Theatre of Walla Walla. When one of the actors in "Ladies in Retirement" suddenly died, West was lassoed into the role.

When he was at Whitman, West learned from Professor of English Thomas Howells that "you didn't have to be in theater to learn about great drama." West found it through the literary immersions that characterized Howells' classes.

"You read, you discover yourself in a character, and part of that character stays with you in some way," he said. "You can call it up again when you need it."

As if on cue, West rises from his chair in the lounge of the Marcus Whitman. He surveys the room as if he were back on the "Batman" soundstage. With an



Evil Fingers Chantel, as played by Liberace.

elfin grin, he calls up his Bruce Wayne/Batman persona and offers a few words of advice for his Whitman brethren.

"Planting a time bomb in a library is a felony," he said, deadpan. "And if you meet an alien in the park, report him."

— Keith Raether

*"Hollywood thinks it can create a persona for you when it doesn't know who you are. But who am I to complain? I got to work with the greats: Vincent Price, Burgess Meredith, Cesar Romero. And we had some great fun."*

— Adam West





## MSNBC.com VP: What he learned at Whitman still guides his decisions

What is life after Whitman? “Everybody has a different story,” said **Travis McElfresh ’92**, on his recent visit to campus to speak to students, faculty and staff. “But there is something of Whitman in everything I do,” he said.

McElfresh has done a lot since he graduated from the college. Parting wasn’t easy, so he worked as a technician in the Department of Geology, his major at Whitman. He went from there to graduate school at the University of Wyoming to Ameritech in Denver to OneSoft Corp. to Xbox.com to Microsoft to MSNBC.com, where he is vice president of technology. All in 14 years.

His learning experience at Whitman informed every step of the way, McElfresh said, and it continues to guide the decisions he makes in his current position. “Whitman was the best four years of my life in terms of learning what I needed to know for life,” he said.

At MSNBC.com, McElfresh oversees program management, development and testing, video architecture, master control operations, news production and Web operations. He started as a program manager three years ago.

“X-box was cool but it was about wasting people’s time,” he said. “At MSNBC.com, it’s back to that knowledge transfer thing. We’re educating the world.”

The MSNBC.com Web site is the No. 1 online news site in the world. The news clearinghouse boasts 1 billion page views a month and 72 million unique viewers, more than any online cable news network. Content is updated every four or five minutes.

“My focus is morale, being part of something that people are passionate about and getting great results,” said McElfresh.

When McElfresh came to Whitman from Hillsboro, Ore., as an honors student in English, he was one of the few students who owned a personal computer. The Internet era was still in its infancy.

In his first year at the college,



Daniel Bachhuber '10

**Travis McElfresh '92 speaks during the Career Center's Andjolkovic Lecture. The lecture series is funded by an endowment made possible by Voja Andjolkovic '94 in honor of his parents.**

*“If you’re looking at Whitman as a product, and the features it offers, yeah, the weather is nice, but the professors are amazing. The amount of time they invested in me was incredible.”*

— Travis McElfresh '92

McElfresh spent as much time cycling and running rivers as studying. His grade-point average headed south of 2.0. He wrote a five-page paper on Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein” for his Modernism class that “was so bad my professor wouldn’t even assign a grade to it.” He rewrote it and rewrote it. It was part of his “wake-up call.” By his senior year, he said, “I was pulling 4.0s.”

“If you’re looking at Whitman as a product, and the features it offers, yeah, the weather is nice, but the professors are amazing,” he said. “The amount of time they invested in me was incredible.”

McElfresh’s post-graduation plan was to get a Ph.D. and come back to Whitman as a geology professor. Then the technology bug bit him. He stayed up until 4 a.m. in front of a computer. He built a content management system for the Web and started programming in earnest.

“I was having a good time but trying to balance it all. Geology on one side and this distraction on the other,” he said. “I could see the viability of the computer industry. And I liked the work. It was a way of giving back, which is another Whitman thing,” he said.

“At some point you have to come to terms with what you like and what you don’t like. I like the collaboration with other people. In the work world I found the opportunity to solve things as a group.”

McElfresh, who is married to **Amy Schneider '93**, allowed that he could not have planned his life path “in a million years.” But Whitman’s “takeaways” — the lessons he learned that guided his decisions for the following 14 years —

prepared him for what was to come, including the “rocket ride up, rocket ride down” in the dot.com world.

Whitman taught him how to think critically in order to solve problems efficiently. (“My greatest strength now,” he said.) It gave him communications skills, confidence and, most of all, adaptability.

“My advice to you is to take opportunities when they present themselves rather than clinging to a set plan,” he said. “Whitman will prepare you in great ways. That is not spin.”

— Keith Raether

## Whitman Alumni Collection

### Granddaughter of Stephen and Mary Penrose writes about her grandmother

“Another Sort of Pioneer, Mary Shipman Penrose” tells the story of a remarkable woman and, through her, relates a fascinating slice of American history.

Mary was not only a devoted wife and mother but also a dedicated local and national civic leader who contributed greatly to Whitman College, the Young Women’s Christian Association, the Congregational Church and many other causes, on a national scale and in the remote town of Walla Walla, Wash., where she made her home.

Born in 1868 to a prominent Hartford, Conn., family, Mary was raised in the sophisticated East, but with her 1896 marriage to Stephen Penrose, a Congregational minister and president of Whitman College, she committed herself to a life in



what was still the western frontier.

In the rural wheat lands of south-eastern Washington, Mary raised six children, assisted her husband as he led Whitman College to a place of national prominence

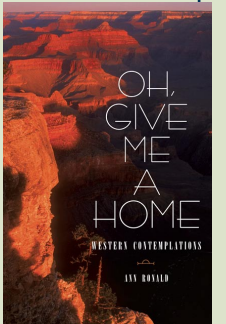
among liberal arts colleges, served as a leader of the early 20th-century national YWCA movement and devoted herself to local civic efforts that benefit the citizens of Walla Walla to this day.

“Another Sort of Pioneer” offers several compelling narrative threads: about a large, lively family; about women devoted to community service; and about college life in the



Frances Stickles

**Ann Ronald '61** was one of the recipients of the 2006 Nevada Writers Hall of Fame and Silver Pen awards presented by the Friends of the Library and the University of Nevada, Reno. “The first award honors writers with a long-term commitment to the craft, while Silver Pen awards are intended to recognize emerging or mid-career writers.” Ann’s work, which focuses on landscape, includes “Earthtones: A Nevada Album,” a book of essays about the Nevada landscape. The selection committee lauded Ronald’s “artistry in the printed word.” Her new book, “Oh, Give Me A Home: Western Contemplations,” is a “realistic, yet fond look at the West, a ‘home’ that for most of us is as much a state of mind as it is an actual place.” *University of Oklahoma Press, October 2006.*



**Jason M. Colby '97** is the author of an article titled “Banana Growing and Negro Management: Race, Labor, and Jim Crow Colonialism in Guatemala, 1884-1930”; the article appears in *The Journal of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations’ Diplomatic History*, Vol. 30, Number 4, September 2006.

first half of the 20th century.

Author **Frances Cope-land Stickles '50** earned her master of arts degree from the University of Washington in 1954. She is the eldest granddaughter of Stephen and Mary Penrose and the author of four previous books.

— Mason Smith, editor of the book, is the former director of communications for Whitman.

Available through the Whitman College Bookstore, [www.whitman.edu/bookstore](http://www.whitman.edu/bookstore).

## Alumni Reunions 2007-08

### Fifty-Plus Reunion Classes of 1956 and earlier June 8-10, 2007

Special gatherings for 1942-1943, 1947-1948 and 1952-1953  
[www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions\\_50plus.cfm](http://www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions_50plus.cfm)

### Fiftieth Reunion Class of 1957 May 17-20, 2007

[www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions\\_50th.cfm](http://www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions_50th.cfm)

### Fortieth Reunion Class of 1967 April 26-29, 2007

[www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions\\_spring.cfm](http://www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions_spring.cfm)

### Thirty-Fifth Reunion Classes of 1971, 1972, 1973 April 26-29, 2007

[www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions\\_spring.cfm](http://www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions_spring.cfm)

### Twenty-Fifth Reunion Class of 1983 Sept. 26-28, 2008

[www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions/cfm](http://www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions/cfm)

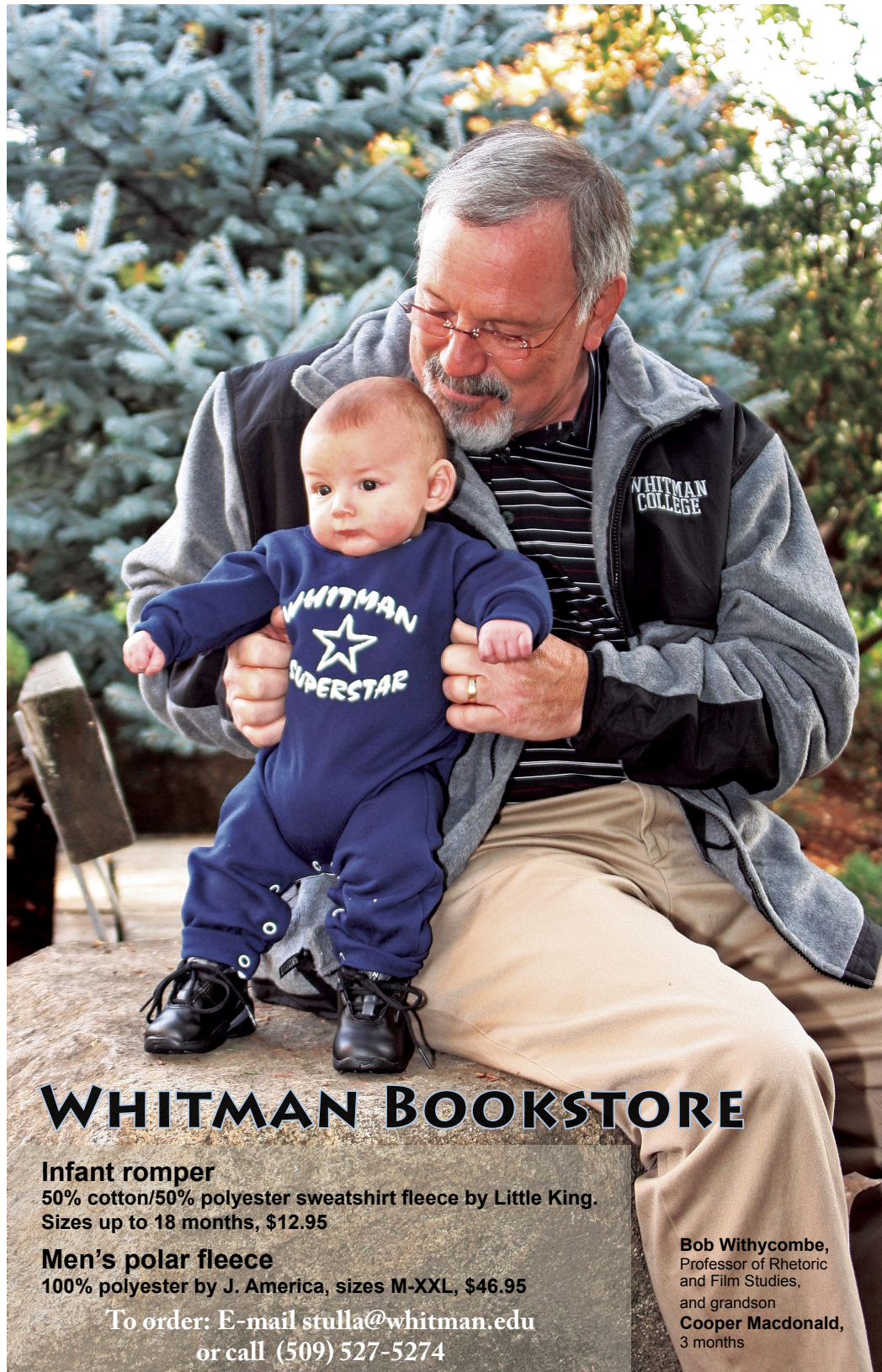
### Tenth Reunion Class of 1998 Sept. 26-28, 2008

[www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions/cfm](http://www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions/cfm)

### Fifth Reunion Classes of 2002, 2003 and 2004 Sept. 26-28, 2008

[www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions/cfm](http://www.whitman.edu/alumni/reunions/cfm)





**WHITMAN BOOKSTORE**

**Infant romper**  
50% cotton/50% polyester sweatshirt fleece by Little King.  
Sizes up to 18 months, \$12.95

**Men's polar fleece**  
100% polyester by J. America, sizes M-XXL, \$46.95

To order: E-mail [stulla@whitman.edu](mailto:stulla@whitman.edu)  
or call (509) 527-5274

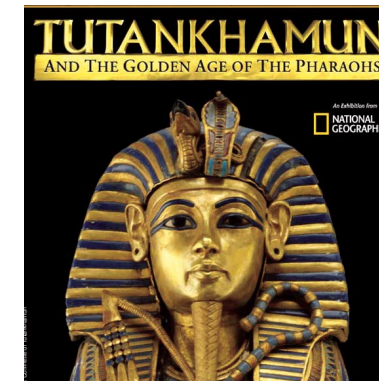
**Bob Withycombe,**  
Professor of Rhetoric  
and Film Studies,  
and grandson  
**Cooper Macdonald,**  
3 months

*Lore Fawer Rude*

## TRIPS ■ TOURS

### *Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of Pharaohs Amarna: Ancient Egypt's Place in the Sun March 2-5, 2007 Philadelphia*

Associate Professor of Anthropology Gary Rollefson will accompany this tour to see the treasures of ancient Egypt before they leave the United States. The Franklin Institute exhibit includes 50 major artifacts excavated from King Tut's Tomb, including the king's gold crown, and one of the gold and inlaid coffins that contained his mummified remains.



The tour also includes:

*An afternoon at the Barnes Foundation,* one of the finest private collections of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist and early-modern art in the world; visit to the *Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*, the nation's first art school and museum; tour of the *Philadelphia Flower Show*, with "The Legends of Ireland," which features more than 10 acres of displays by the world's best landscape designers and florists.

Cost: \$1,050  
per person,  
double  
occupancy.



### *Arctic Norway — Spitsbergen, North Cape July 4-21, 2007*

Geology Professor Bob Carson will accompany this Arctic adventure cruise on the *Discovery*, which highlights the coast of Norway. From \$3,395 per person, plus taxes.

### *Sun Valley, Idaho Ski with the President Jan. 26-29, 2007*

President George Bridges and Dr. Kari Tupper invite alumni, parents and friends to join them for skiing and socializing in Sun Valley the week of Jan. 25-30. This event is still open, but those participating must arrange for their own lodging.

### *Whitman in Ashland Aug. 3-5, 2007*



Friday evening: "The Tempest"  
Saturday matinee: "On the Razzle"  
Saturday evening: "Taming of the Shrew"  
Sunday matinee: "As You Like it"  
Sunday evening: "Romeo and Juliet"

Faculty speaker: Theresa DiPasquale, associate professor of English.  
Dan Donahue '88 will perform in "The Tempest" and "Romeo and Juliet" and meet with the alumni group.

**REGISTER EARLY FOR TRIPS AND TOURS:** For information, call (800) 835-9448, ext. 1, or (509) 527-5167; e-mail [hoglund@whitman.edu](mailto:hoglund@whitman.edu); or visit [www.whitman.edu/alumni/tripsschedule.cfm](http://www.whitman.edu/alumni/tripsschedule.cfm)



# Alumni



## Where in the world have you met a Whittie?

Alumni often have chance encounters with fellow Whitties, or people with Whitman connections, at locations around the world. If you get that "It really is a small world isn't it?" feeling when you unexpectedly run into a Whittie, share the story. To get started, Alumni Office staffers share some of their Whittie sightings. E-mail yours to Nancy Mitchell at [mitchenl@whitman.edu](mailto:mitchenl@whitman.edu). If you have a photo, send it, too. Watch future magazines for Whittie encounters.

Sixty Whitman alumni, parents and friends toured the Galapagos Islands earlier this year. Leading the adventure were Delbert Hutchison, professor of biology, Pat Spencer, professor of geology, and Nancy Mitchell, associate director of alumni. While touring the Charles Darwin Research



Mary Lou Phillips Holding '68 ran into Jim DeMeules '67 and other members of the Whitman alumni group touring the Galapagos Islands this year.

Center at Puerto Arroyo on Santa Cruz Island, the participants were divided into small groups, each led by a naturalist. The group Nancy was with met up with another non-Whitman group at a refreshment shack.

As Nancy explains it, "**Sara Running '82** called out to me and said, 'Nancy, I want you to meet **Mary Lou Phillips Holding '68!**' Mary Lou was touring the Galapagos with friends when we had the chance meeting."



The alumni group touring the Galapagos Islands visited the legendary Post Office Bay. In whaling days, sailors would drop their mail in a barrel



Photos courtesy of Nancy Mitchell

Linda Weihmann Brown '69, of College Place, and Pat Spencer, Whitman geology professor, check out the mailbox at Post Office Bay in the Galapagos Islands.

located on the island to be picked up by the next ship that came by en route to the letter's destination. The tradition lives on today, and Whitman's alumni visitors took postcards to the island to mail. In turn, they agreed to take mail left at the post office and hand-deliver it to anyone who lived near their hometown. **Mary Lou Phillips Holding '68** was reunited with Whittie friends as a result of the postcard she brought back to deliver.



This summer Whitman College Alumni Office staff members Margaret Hoglund and Nancy Mitchell were headed to Yellowstone for a vacation. While driving through Jackson, Wyo., Nancy spotted **Penny Penrose Bignold '56**.

"Margaret whipped around the block and pulled up in front of Penny who was standing on the street corner. It turned out that Penny was in Jackson on the way to Yellowstone after a Kappa Kappa Gamma convention," Nancy said. Penny told them: "The group I'm with won't believe this; I keep telling them that Whitties are everywhere!"