

## Student with disability can handle building problems, but not people's attitude problems

By Jody L. Jacobs  
Staff Reporter

If any student should be happy about the renovations to improve accessibility in the Olmsted Building at Penn State Harrisburg (PSH), it should be Renee Reedy. She is a senior psychology major who has cerebral palsy.

Although she is able to walk with the assistance of a walker, she said that it is not practical for her while she is on campus. Because she has to carry her books and travel between several classrooms, she says she uses a wheelchair.

Reedy said that although the problems with the building accessibility are large, what really needs to be changed are the attitudes of students, faculty, and staff.

"The building I can deal with," she said. "But I can't deal with the way people write me off simply because I have a disability."

Jody Gebhard, Lion Ambassador vice president elect said she has noticed that the only contact some students will make with Renee is if they encounter her when she needs assistance with the physical barriers of the building.

"I've heard her say that

people will help her, but they won't talk to her," Gebhard said.

Reedy attributes these attitudes to a lack of awareness about disabilities such as hers. People who have physical challenges can make others feel uncomfortable because their vulnerabilities are more obvious, she said.

"No one likes to be vulnerable, and disabled people are vulnerable," she said.

Linda Meashey, Licensed Psychologist, is coordinator of academic development programs in the student assistance center. She said that the difficulties students may have in talking with Renee involve the ability to deal with human differences.

"The handicap is only the setting for who Renee is because she has to deal with the physical barriers," Meashey said. "But, through that, her beautiful spirit and depth is much more apparent."

Often people don't know how they should act or treat an individual with a disability, she said. Meashey also said that Reedy is not judgmental of students that may not understand her cerebral palsy. The important thing to remember is

that "it's OK to ask," Meashey said.

Reedy said that if students see another student with a disability, like herself, they should act like they would toward anyone else. Disabled people are not afraid to talk to others and desire friendships too, she said.

"The only difference is that I'm trapped in a body that doesn't work," she said. "Pretty soon you'd see that inside, where it counts, we're the same."

This semester, her courses include research methods, human relations, and ethics. Ethics is her favorite, she said.

"I think that it (ethics) is important," she said. "It's about what you believe about things."

At times, Reedy needs someone to type papers for her because of her cerebral palsy. Also, if she has an essay-type exam, she needs help to write out the longer answers.

"But as far as the thinking part goes, I've got to do that," she said.

The Student Assistance Center has been helpful and accommodating to her individual needs, Reedy said. The center is very good with handling the needs of disabled students,

she said.

Assistant Coordinator of Non-Traditional Student Affairs, Donna J. Howard said she is currently assisting about 15 students on campus who have physical or mental disabilities. She is the person who has been helping Reedy with her papers and tests.

"Renee dictates the exams," Howard said. "I write word for word what she says. It's all her stuff."

Howard said that Reedy is a very open person and has done well in any campus setting.

"She's brilliant," Howard said. "I think she is an above average student."

Reedy has several interests outside of college. She said she enjoys all types of exercise, including swimming and horse back riding. She has also been taking an aerobics class which is geared toward her abilities, she said.

Her younger brother Sean will be married at the end of this month. She has been looking forward to his wedding.

"And I'm in it," she said, "walker and all."

Although she listens to all types of music, Reedy says that she likes country music

**See Renee page 7**



photo by Jody Jacobs

**Renee Reedy, senior psychology major, doesn't let her disability get in her way**

## Associate Dean position remains open

By Christine Brooks  
Staff Reporter

Dr. Burton Porter of Western New England College entertained the idea of joining the Penn State Harrisburg team in an open forum on March 29 in the Gallery Lounge.

Porter, who has applied for the position of Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, spent two days touring the PSH campus.

The job would include advising, teaching, program accreditation, and involvement with the new honors program.

Porter currently holds the position of Academic Dean in the School of Arts and Sciences at Western New England College in Springfield, Mass.

"It's Penn State qualitative excellence that has drawn me to this institution," Porter said. "I'm impressed with the faculty and staff. The faculty have excellent backgrounds."

Porter's main involvement would be with undergraduate students. "Students are coming in today with more problems," he said. "They need more supportive services."

In solving conflict, Porter claims he is approachable. He tries to see below the appear-

ance of the problem and build trust by being trustworthy.

"The students I've spoken with seem pretty well satisfied with the exception of the parking fee and paying 50 cents for schedules," Porter said. "I see these as relatively minor things."

Porter believes the library is at the heart of an academic institution and that the library usually does not get a very loud voice. He would like to see significant resources allocated to the library.

Building intellectual excitement and involving students in more events would be one of Porter's goals.

Porter holds a Ph.D in Philosophy from St. Andrews University, Scotland and a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Maryland at College Park.

He has published six books, some in several editions, and is currently at work on a seventh. He has done both scholarly and creative work.

Porter has a 13-year-old son he likes to spend a lot of time with. He enjoys music, tennis, sailing, writing, and can get lost in reading.

"I agree with Voltaire about this," said Porter. "That life isn't good; it isn't bad, it is tolerable."

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## Composing sacred music satisfies his soul

"I would be happy doing what I do now for the rest of my life," said

PSH professor Dr. Robert Lau

By Mary Angelo  
Contributor

One will never see a paper-only recyclable can in Dr. Robert Lau's office; he doesn't need practice sheets to compose his music.

"I create by allowing things to be carried inside me for a long time," said Dr. Lau. "I save a lot of paper, pencil and aggravation by carrying it around in my head until it has enough shape to be written down."

Dr. Lau is a part-time professor at Penn State Harrisburg, coming from Lebanon Valley College where he was a member and chairman of the music department for 22 years. He currently holds five part-time jobs including private teaching, composing, church organist, teacher, and the director of the Harrisburg Choral Society.

"I would be happy doing what I do now for the rest of my life," Dr. Lau said. "I gave up what I did because I wasn't feeling personal success where I was (at Lebanon Valley College), although I was very successful otherwise."

At a time when most children were playing in the mud, Dr. Lau decided at the age of nine that not only did he want to be a musician, but he also wanted to teach.

"I knew I wanted to teach on a college level," Dr. Lau said. "so that my students

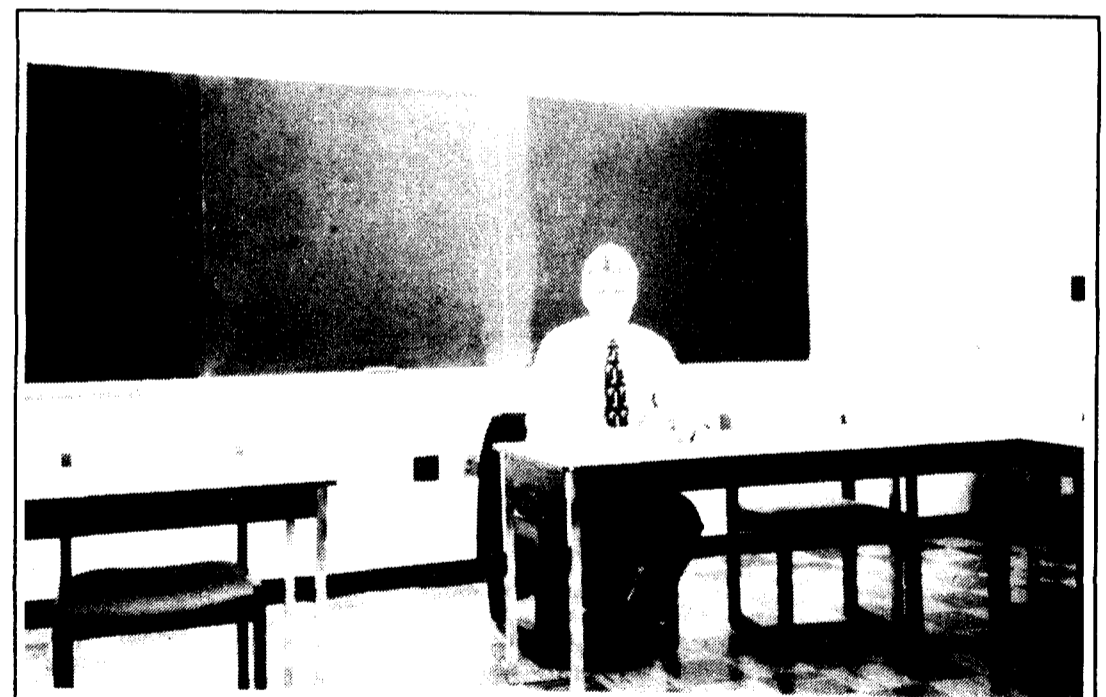


photo by Wendy Hess

**Dr. Robert Lau holds five jobs as PSH professor, director of Harrisburg Choral Society private teacher, composer, church organist.**

could make a career of it."

He also enjoys the college crowd because he is able to delve deeper into his subject matter, and he knows the students are eager to learn, otherwise they wouldn't pay to take his classes.

Although his parents weren't very musical, his two older brothers and twin sister all played instruments, and his maternal grandmother was a pianist in silent movies.

Dr. Lau has studied violin, viola, piano, and the organ. He regularly plays organ at a church and is also the choir director there. This is where he began composing his

sacred music.

"For years I'd been a church organist and during the ceremony I would doodle," said Dr. Lau. "Someone suggested that I write all of this music down. When I proceeded to, I sat there for two days playing solitaire, then the ideas flowed."

His ideas have succeeded in selling 76,000 copies of an anthem he wrote that wasn't even his favorite. It is noteworthy that a piece considered a "success" by publishers standards should sell about 5,000 copies.

His most cherished piece he's written is one entitled, "Mary, Mary, Rock

Your Baby," which was written for advent. Dr. Lau also writes most of his lyrics.

Aside from composing works now, he also composed as a child.

"I wrote something as a child," Dr. Lau said. "I rewrote Mozart. And then I wrote something else and discovered it was Beethoven."

He spends a lot of time in Maine every summer in an isolated place to compose. Interestingly, when writing, he never imagines how people will react to his music.

"After it's finished," said Dr. Lau. "I want someone to like it, but I never

**See Dr. Lau pg. 7**