

June 28, 2017: “Small good things in Wyoming”

in the Platte County Record Times

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“Families have done good for state, city, students.”**

**Unfortunately, the editors butchered the intro to reduce word count. You can read
their version in the e-edition, trib.com**

Community colleges influence students—and state economies—in a number of positive ways. When in the course of researching Wyoming’s two-year colleges I came across the contributions of the Bailey and Scully families to Casper College, I determined, if at all possible, to get to know Marlan Scully and Judith Bailey Scully in person. Little did I imagine, my encounters with the Scullys would happen in Texas; much less did I anticipate, it would entail a crash course in quantum science. Yet this is what happened when, in February 2017, Marlan Scully, quantum physicist, passed me couple of books on his beloved field of interest. One of these was by Jim Baggott; the other, he’d co-authored with son Robert Scully.

Marlan and Judith married after graduating from Casper College and before moving on to University of Wyoming, after which hubby Marlan joined Yale for doctoral studies. Since then he has become internationally renowned. Laser science, that offspring of quantum insights, has produced anything from the scanners at check-out counters to optical devices.

“I am particularly interested in the interplay between fundamental and applied quantum physics,” he said at the family’s research farm in southeast Texas. “There’s nothing so useful as a good theory.”

At Casper College, Scully sponsors an annual mid-summer symposium on quantum science that draws researchers from around the world. Last year’s event began with a talk I would have loved to have heard, “Einstein as Student.” In his early, modest beginnings, Albert Einstein advanced by the support and help of his spouse Mileva Maric, the first woman ever admitted into the discipline in a European university.

“Marlan Scully is hands down the most eminent scientist ever to come out of Wyoming,” said my son. “One or two professors at UW may have been inducted into the National Academy of Sciences, but they would not have been born in Wyoming.”

By then I knew that Scully holds distinguished professorships at Princeton, Baytor, and Texas A & M University, and that the Chinese named him their Einstein Professor.

“My best friend and collaborator is my wife,” Scully has said of his lifelong companion. Consequently, in 2005 he established the Judith Baily Scully Teaching Award at Casper College. Talking with various recipients convinced me, this distinction not only acknowledges but also promotes faculty excellence.

“The award honors faculty who demonstrate academic excellence, as characterized by Judith’s outstanding accomplishments as a Casper College and University of Wyoming student,” said Paulann Doane, director of the college’s foundation. “Judith Bailey won honors while attending our college. She took her degree from University of Wyoming only three years after graduating from Natrona County High School.”

Gretchen Wheeler, communications instructor and director of the college’s Center for Learning Through Service, was last year’s honoree.

“I was humbled to receive this award for my work in service-learning,” Wheeler said by email. “I believe deeply in this approach to learning and have been blessed to witness our advancements in learning.” As

a result of their training, she said, hundreds of students have become active in their communities and on campus. Further, through the Center's Alternative Spring Break trips, students travel to states around the nation, where they not only study but also mitigate the impact of poverty. "During our last national accreditation visit, Casper College was recognized for its outstanding service-learning programs."

"Gretchen was chosen because of her longtime commitment to excellence in teaching, her invigoration of student learning through service projects, her mentoring of new faculty over the years, her efforts to build up the forensics program, and a myriad of other positives," said Erich Frankland, the 2010 Scully winner.

"I will never forget the day I first met Gretchen," emailed Paul Marquard, the previous year's winner, when describing an infectious laugh. "On more than one occasion she was instrumental in helping my engineering students communicate better." He characterized Wheeler as passionate about student success and devoted to the welfare of Casper College.

I also touched base with Dale Anderson, the recipient from 2013.

"Dale Anderson is one of our illustrious recipients of the Judith Bailey Scully Teaching Award," Foundation Director Doane said. "He is an outstanding teacher and colleague."

Anderson's wrote that he was surprised to have been chosen, for "there are so many deserving educators on Casper College Campus." He described the talent level at CC as outstanding, saying, "I feel honored that my peers felt I deserved this distinguished award."

On another occasion, when I learned that an early student housing complex bore the name Bailey, Ms. Doane addressed my interest in the Bailey family's contributions. "The Jim and Audrey Bailey Foundation provides significant scholarship funding for non-traditional students," she explained. The family also supported the college's early beginnings.

Both families have done good things for Wyoming students, for the city of Casper, and for this state. Meanwhile I am still working my way through Baggott's 470-page "Quantum Story" that Scully bequeathed. That, too, is a small good thing. As we age, it's a blessing to learn new things, though it be a demanding task.