



Michael and Margaret Kalton Endowed Scholarship

Honoree Biography

Mike and Margaret Kalton's diverse but oddly complementary paths converged in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1970. Margaret was in her first year as administrative assistant to the Chair of the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, at Harvard University. Mike arrived a few months later to begin his first year as a Ph.D. candidate in the program. He had just left the Jesuits after 12 years, having earned a Master's in Greek and a Licentiate in philosophy. He had also spent three years in Korea at a Roman Catholic Seminary where he taught Greek and philosophy to Korean seminarians. His experience in Korea inspired a lifelong interest in East Asian cultures and world views, and especially with how they contrasted creatively with the religious traditions and philosophical thought of the western world. Margaret had grown up on a farm near the Blue Ridge Mountains in central Virginia, attending an Episcopal girl's boarding school as a scholarship student for her junior and senior years of high school, followed by Randolph Macon Woman's College, also on scholarship, where in 1965 she received an A.B. degree in Art with a minor in Philosophy. Her senior year was marked with an emotional breakdown that led to psychotherapy and several years of psychoanalysis. This experience familiarized her with the terrain of the inner life and critical thinking in a way that proved to be a wonderful complement to Mike's spiritual training in the Jesuits, and inspired her continuing interest in his academic endeavors. Mike and Margaret were married in 1972.

While Mike completed his course work and read for his general examinations, they lived at Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions, a

residence for a scholarly community drawn from diverse world regions, traditions, and cultures. "God's motel," as it was nicknamed by the divinity school students, provided a valuable introduction to cultures and religions from around the world, and subsequently to the culture of Korea, and much of East Asia. Supported by a Fulbright grant and a Fulbright-Hayes housing grant, Mike and Margaret went to Korea for his dissertation research while she studied Korean and began making pottery. After two years they returned to stay with Margaret's family in rural Virginia for the final writing of the dissertation and the birth of their son, Max, who became adept from an early age at herding Black Angus cows out of the garden from the safety of his baby carrier on his daddy's chest. Mike received his Ph.D., a joint degree in Comparative Religion and East Asian Languages and Civilizations, in 1977, followed by a one-semester fill-in appointment at Brown University, and then a tenure track position at Wichita State University in Kansas. Their daughter Annaka was born in March of 1979. After several years Mike became chair of the Study of Religion Department, an interesting introduction into administration and departmentalized university politics, with its resulting if unintended intellectual compartmentalization. At Wichita State Margaret was able to pursue pottery; she subsequently expanded her art into sculpture and printmaking, earning BFAs in Ceramics, in Sculpture, and in Printmaking. The family came to love the plains-especially the sky! And the dramatic weather! And the fascinating wealth of grasses! And the many interesting people they met. However, in 1990 Mike was offered the opportunity to be part of a group of 13 faculty beginning a new campus of the University of Washington, in Tacoma. How often does a professor get to help create a new university from the ground up? Mike loved the idea that from the beginning UWT would be interdisciplinary, with a chance to invent a new non-departmentalized

structure responsive to the complex problems of a globalizing world. What an irresistible prospect!

The next 21 years in Tacoma amidst the beauty and richness of the Northwest have been years of challenge and flourishing. Max and Annaka continued their educations from middle-school to professional careers. Mike worked to help shape the university in an interdisciplinary direction from its infancy to its youthful maturity. He saw the burgeoning environmental movement not only as addressing the central problem of our era but also as the emergence of a new world view for the western world with provocative symmetry with his understanding of East Asian thought. This exploration has led him to a deep engagement with systems thinking, the essential foundation for understanding both human culture, the ecology of the natural world, and their troubled interface. He now feels especially grateful to have spent these years in an interdisciplinary culture of rich and many-stranded conversations with colleagues, and in an institution that allowed him to develop and teach courses in environmental ethics and systems analysis as well as comparative religion, yielding a vibrant cross-fertilizing mix of compelling interest. Margaret has enjoyed this ongoing conversation, along with pursuing her work in pottery, and has expanded her interest in three-dimensional art into landscape and garden design. Talking over supper with candidates for new positions, introducing new faculty to Tacoma and the Pacific Northwest, engaging with the dynamic human, intellectual, and institutional facets of UWT has shaped and filled their lives over these years.

On a personal note, the extraordinary beauty and complexity of Puget Sound, the surrounding mountains, the ocean, and the earth has called us to make useful and interesting objects, to create landscapes and gardens, to grow in religious awe and reverence, and to try to find a responsible place in the community of life.

We are especially pleased to be able to contribute through this scholarship to the support of a student whose abilities and goals will also be shaped through engagement with this natural and human community of vital inquiry, learning and inspiration. We are grateful to Mike's colleague, George Mobus, for the honor of having established this scholarship in our names. He and his wife, Janet, have been valued friends who have enriched our lives personally as well as professionally.

Mike retired from UWT in 2011.

He and George are currently collaborating on a book on systems science.