

Dr. Joseph L. Wheeler

2009 Alumnus of the Year, Monterey Bay Academy

BY CHARLOTTE HENDERSON, DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI AND DEVELOPMENT – MONTEREY BAY ACADEMY

Dr. Joseph Leininger Wheeler, MBA Class of 1954, has etched a life and legacy upon leaving MBA that others will continue to enjoy long after Joe has left this world.

Dr. Wheeler is renowned around the world as the author and anthologizer of more than sixty books, prompting Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family, to characterize him as “America’s Keeper of the Story.”

The son of a missionary in Central America, Dr. Wheeler is fluent in both English and Spanish. Joe and his wife, Connie Palmer Wheeler met at MBA and later married. They have made a point to stay connected with MBA throughout the years. The Wheelers established the Connie Wheeler Oceanic Music Scholarship in fond memory of Connie’s days as an Oceanic.

In Dr. Wheeler’s thirty-four-year teaching career, he taught English on the junior high, senior high, and college levels and chaired college English and communication departments at Oakwood University, Southwestern Adventist University, and Columbia Union College.

Over the years he has volunteered his time to speak to countless groups about the writing process, the importance of reading books, and the art of storytelling. He has spoken on these subjects to thousands of people both personally and through telephone interviews on radio stations across the country.

Dr. Wheeler was the 1995 Gold Medallion Finalist, one of the literary world’s highest honors as well as the 1996 Seal of Quality Recipient, Family Television’s highest honor. He is considered by Gale Contemporary Authors as one of America’s most eminent editors and he has the longest-running Christmas story series in America, entitled *Christmas in My Heart*.

Dr. Wheeler can easily be described as teacher, author, volunteer, entrepreneur, leader, host, and founder. He is considered to be the world’s foremost authority on the life and times of Zane Grey, is co-founder of the international Zane Grey Society, and continues as its chief executive director.

Finally, to quote one of Joe & Connie’s dear friends and a fellow MBA alumnus, Dr. Robert Mendenhall, Class of 1963, and professor at Southwestern Adventist University. Dr. Mendenhall writes, “Let me share what I consider one of Joe’s most endearing customs – a practice I not only greatly admire, but one that speaks most eloquently about his love of books, the advancement of reading, and the sharing of great stories. Joe and his wife Connie welcome many overnight guests in their home in the mountains above Denver, Colorado, and for years Joe has carried on the striking tradition of giving each guest one of his books, inscribed with a personal note. In this way, Joe seeks to assure that both now and in future generations, reading and sharing stories will always be a part of American life and culture.”

Dr. Joe Wheeler has made a mark on America and has been recognized by America at large. It is now our privilege today to recognize Joe Wheeler, on behalf of Monterey Bay Academy and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, for his contributions in keeping the values America was founded upon in the forefront lest they be forgotten, for his service to Adventist Christian education, and for 55 plus years of faithfulness and loyalty to Monterey Bay Academy. For these reasons, we are proud to recognize Dr. Joseph L. Wheeler as the Monterey Bay Academy Alumnus of the Year 2009.