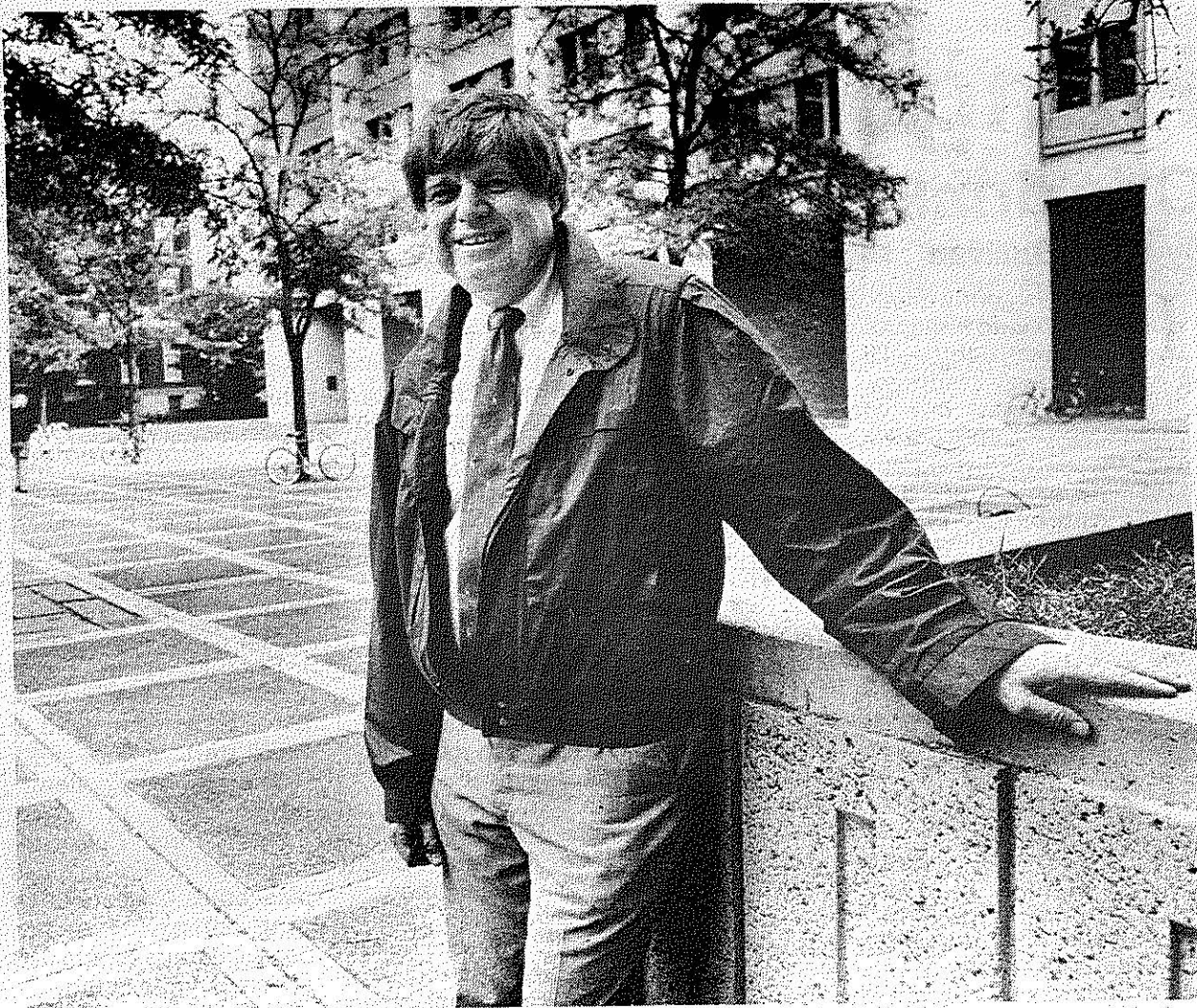


He's casual;
he's relaxed

J.W.

is a 'friend'
to SGA,
the debate team



J.W. Patterson, despite some "attractive, enticing offers," prefers to stay at Kentucky where he teaches and advises students. (Photos by J.D. VanHoose)

By Darrell Clem

On a late-summer afternoon last month, J.W. Patterson relaxed in a corner chair at Charlie Brown's, a cocktail lounge located in the heart of Chevy Chase — a locally well-known neighborhood near the University of Kentucky. At 5 p.m., only a handful of patrons gathered around the main bar, a few feet away, talking in hushed conversations.

The atmosphere matched Patterson's personal style — not one of formality as students sometimes expect from university professors. As Patterson ordered a bourbon and water from an approaching waitress, someone opened the front door, letting bright rays of sunlight partially fill the semi-darkness inside. One feels comfortable talking with Patterson, who shuns the authoritarian role played by many professors.

Instead, the relationships between Patterson and students who know him well are more like two-

way streets. Ask anyone on the UK debate team about him and the response will be similar to those given by Student Government Association officers — "He's a good friend." As the waitress returned with his drink, Patterson leaned further back into the chair and began talking about his various roles at UK, often closing his eyes as if he were scanning the 24 years since he came here.

"I'm in a teaching capacity, but I'm also in a student capacity — I learn a lot from the SGA people and my debaters," he said. "I see it more as a partnership."

Patterson's first involvement with student government began in 1963, when he became special assistant to former UK President Jack Oswald. The university worked closely with Lt. Gov. Steven Beshear, who was then SGA president, in planning and executing UK's 1965 centennial celebration. Afterward, Pat-

erson continued working with SGA on an informal basis until new governing regulations in the late 1960s required student organizations to have faculty advisers. His advisory position then became official.

Twenty-one years later, Patterson's loyalty to SGA has not dimmed. When SGA President Tim Freudenberg talked about Patterson, his serious tone was intermittently disrupted by laughter — the kind of laughter that comes from thinking about the antics of a cherished friend.

"J.W. — Dr. Patterson — has one of the most awesome record collections you've ever seen," Freudenberg said. "Everything from Chuck Berry to Culture Club, from Waylon Jennings to the Clash and the Cars. It's amazing."

Many of the songs on those albums carry memories of former student government officers Patterson has known. "You can ask

him who was chairman of the (student) senate 15 years ago, and he probably not only remembers them, but probably knows what they're doing now," Freudenberg said. "When he talks about previous officers that he's worked with, he'll bring up the ones he feels he didn't become friends with, and that really hurts him — he feels like something went wrong." Patterson plans to stir up the memories with a reunion next June of all past student government presidents since Beshear.

Freudenberg emphasized how Patterson often goes out of his way to help friends. "One time I had to go home last spring to sign a bank loan that I was getting to fix my car," he said. "Dr. Patterson drove me 90 miles home in the middle of the day, because I couldn't drive my car there. He waited while I talked

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to the loan officer and signed all the papers, then he drove me back." Patterson, as SGA adviser, signs expenditures from income accounts and makes himself available for any needed advice. "I consult him two or three times per week about faculty or administrators that I don't know," Freudenberg said. "He's invaluable for any advice about how to handle people. He knows everyone here" at UK.

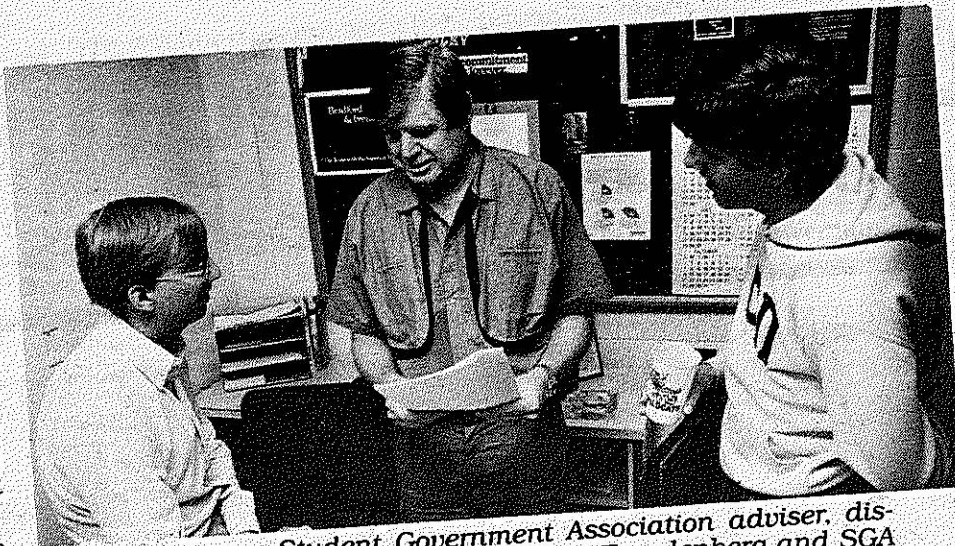
"He's very up to date on how to deal with issues," Freudenberg said. "He's a trained orator — he can help you with how to present something to the senate. His advice is sought for a lot by (SGA officers), and he never lets us down."

"I've been in many student organizations and I've never seen a faculty adviser as interested and as supportive as Dr. Patterson is," Freudenberg said. Compared to other faculty advisers — those who attempt to dominate organizations and those who are advisers by signature only — Freudenberg said Patterson "offers advice when asked or whenever he thinks it's appropriate. He'll do what we ask him to do by way of helping with things, but, on the other hand, he's not going to tell us what to do."

"He's a model faculty adviser in a lot of ways — and he's fun too." Since Patterson first became involved with SGA, UK's administrators and faculty have developed more respect for the organization. Patterson said students should be involved in the decision-making process on campus.

"I've always felt that student government was a vital and necessary outlet for several reasons," he said. "It is at least one body that is campuswide in scope. One of the objectives of the association is to get the student voice (into) many areas of student life, including academic affairs."

The student body is represented in many decision-making areas now, such as the Board of Trustees, the University Senate Council, and college and departmental advisory committees. Patterson said some faculty members in the past have resented the fact that a student may be placed in a situation where hiring faculty members or department heads is an issue. Over the



J.W. Patterson, Student Government Association adviser, discusses politics with SGA president Tim Freudenberg and SGA senior vice president John Cain.

years, however, he said students have earned the respect they deserve.

"The idea was never that the students would make the final decisions on these matters, but that they would be heard and listened to," Patterson said. "I would say that approach has grown in popularity — has become accepted. I don't hear many objections registered, as I did 10 or 15 years ago."

John Cain, SGA senior vice president, said Patterson is "highly respected, and that gives us a certain amount of respect too." According to Cain, Patterson always is accessible and "I get the feeling that he not only cares about what you're doing, but he cares about you personally." Cain summed up the feelings of several SGA officers: "He's almost like a second father."

Anyone doubting Cain's remark need only speak to members of UK's debate team — they spend about 20 hours each week with Patterson, and sometimes more during debate trips to other universities.

Quita Papka and Mike Mankins, debate partners, have known Patterson for three and four years respectively. UK has one of the top 16 debate teams in the nation and regularly competes with other big-league teams, including Harvard and Dartmouth universities.

Patterson, who has been director of the team since 1971, serves as an administrator, managing tournaments and finances. As Mankins said, "He's responsible for keeping the program alive."

In addition, Patterson makes sure that each debate trip is

unique. For beginners, he records a tape of songs from his hundreds of albums, and each tape is named after the university that hosts the tournament. One song — Willie Nelson's "On The Road Again" — begins each tape.

"He lets us pick a song to put on the tape, and I've never nominated a song that he didn't have on record," Mankins said.

At the end of the debate season, the debaters each nominate five songs for "Song of the Year." Papka said each song must have been heard at least three times by more than two people. "There are all these rules," she said.

After she stopped laughing, Mankins added: "So we vote and have this final party, where he plays how the vote came out. We have a plaque up in the office of the songs of the years."

"Last year it was 'Back On the Chain Gang' (by The Pretenders)," Papka said. As her laughter faded into a smile, she said: "He's really a good person. Sometimes he's a little difficult to work with, and I don't think any of the debaters would tell you that's not true, but the impression you get from him is that he would do anything for you."

"We're around him all the time," Mankins said. "I guess if I only saw him two hours a week, I'd never see him in a bad frame of mind, but there's the simple fact that I see him for about 20 hours a week. If we have a disagreement, we feel very free to say, you know, 'You're out of it.'"

Patterson agreed. "I'd like to think that we feel free to register our disagreement and try to iron them out in the best way possible. Unless you're working toward the

same goal, I think not much is going to be accomplished.

"If I'm critical of a debater, I'd like to think they don't take it as a personal attack, but they take it as — This is what he thinks I need to do to be a better debater."

In December, for example, former UK debaters now living all across the nation will meet at Patterson's Bent Tree condominium for a Christmas party. "They're all coming back," Mankins said.

Papka added, "We're not invited — we're not alumni yet."

"He knows everything about everyone who has been on the team," Mankins said. "One of them just got married in Versailles, France."

Since debaters travel so extensively, many of their best friends live on campuses far away. "It's kind of strange, you know more people from other campuses than you do here sometimes," Mankins said.

Papka said, "We see them almost every weekend."

Debaters also socialize with student government officers because Patterson is involved with both organizations. The two groups often party at Patterson's apartment, one of which is called "Jimi Hendrix Memorial Day," Papka said, "because he is such a fan of Hendrix."

Of his role as debate director, Patterson said that before 1971 "I had not planned to become involved in active coaching, although I've always had an interest in it." Urged on by debaters who needed a coach, he accepted.

"It's the personal contact and seeing the personal growth and development of the people," Patterson said, when asked about his attraction to debate. "I see that as such an important contribution to the education of the people that I deal with."

Those students who know Patterson only in the classroom expect a more structured role from him, "I think it should be as much of a partner relationship as you can make it," he said. "When you only see a student in class, it's hard for them to accept it on that level."

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Sometimes they're not used to that kind of working relationship."

Patterson said that although he attempts to keep abreast of departmental affairs in the College of Communications, in which he teaches, "I would have to admit that my activities with debate restrict me from attending as many of the seminars, guest speakers, lectures, this kind of thing. But I'm certainly very interested in the department — I feel very good about it."

Patterson's first "regularly assigned college job" was at UK in 1960, after he taught for one year at the University of Arizona to replace a faculty member who had taken a leave of absence. He was born in Stilwell, a small Oklahoma town located just west of the Arkansas-Oklahoma border. He received his master's degree in speech from the University of Michigan and later com-

pleted his doctorate in speech communication at the University of Oklahoma.

Patterson's mother currently lives in Tulsa, and his father died last December. A disagreement between them at Patterson's birth led to the name J.W. One preferred Jackson Wallace, while the other wanted to name him Jason William. The one agreement, and the final compromise, was the adoption of the first initial in each name — J.W. "It's something I would never do to a kid," Patterson said.

Patterson first moved to Lexington, "we didn't plan to stay very long. We were sort of on an Eastern trip, as we called it. We'd always lived in the Southwest." Patterson wanted to teach in different areas of the country, including New England, before returning to the Southwest.

The "we" in those early day plans refers to Patterson and his ex-wife, Virginia Leigh, who has since remarried. They were married for 20

years and have been divorced about 10 years. "That chapter, I'd say, is closed, with the exception that we both have mutual interest in our daughter, Elizabeth." She now attends high school at Miss Porter's, in Farmington, Conn., while Patterson's ex-wife resides in Lexington.

Patterson's accomplishments include actively participating in Omicron Delta Kappa, a leadership honorary, as a faculty member for a number of years, co-founding the pre-law honorary Societus Pro Legibus, and co-writing "Contemporary Debate" with David Zarefsky, a friend from Northwestern University. Patterson currently is embarking on a second book, this time about advanced studies in argumentation.

As for the future, "I have no specific plans for change," Patterson said. In the past, he has received "some very attractive, enticing offers" — including positions at the universities of Texas,

Minnesota and Virginia — "but for one reason or another (I) didn't want to leave the University of Kentucky. I like the community."

Just before Patterson left Charlie Brown's, he once again touched on the issue of faculty-student relationships. "If I can make a contribution toward helping someone learn to do something for themselves, it's quite thrilling. That provides me with a great deal of satisfaction.

the relationship between faculty and student is artificial, but it shouldn't be — as long as there's mutual respect and one respects the role of the other."

Reporter Darrell Clem is a senior majoring in journalism. He also works as a staff writer for the Kentucky Kernel.