In one corner of Joan Hinde Stewart’s former office at the University of South Carolina (USC) College of Liberal Arts sat the second edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary* — all 20 volumes. On a stand in another corner rested the more modest, but dogeared, *Random House Webster’s Dictionary* (unabridged, of course). And in the bookshelf that lined one wall of the unassuming office from which Stewart managed the largest of USC’s eight colleges sat a third dictionary.

Despite the scholarly books about 18th-century French literature that predominated the shelves in Stewart’s USC office and have been a part of her life for more than three decades, those three dictionaries reveal the most about the woman who received a standing ovation when she was introduced on May 13th to a packed Chapel audience as Hamilton’s 19th president.

“I like words, and I love dictionaries,” Stewart said. “I like grammar; I like syntax; I like diagramming sentences; I like parts of speech. French provided me with all of that, and in a foreign language, too,” she added, in recounting how she first became interested in what has become her scholarly passion.
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Notwithstanding her status as a scholar, it is Stewart’s use of words that stands out most to her colleagues and admirers, and makes her ideally suited to be the next occupant of the southeast corner office on the first floor of Buttrick Hall. One hour after she was announced as president, Stewart was virtually with students at a reception in Café Opus.

Stewart (seated) and Chairman of the Board Stuart L. Scott ’61 (standing, center) are flanked by Presidential Search Committee Co-Chairs Drew S. Days III ’63 and Patricia T. Smalley.

Joan Stewart on …

... what attracted you to Hamilton? … “The emphasis on communication, the value placed on faculty and student interaction and on community, and a commitment to diversity that goes back to the College’s very beginnings. … Add to all that an exceptionally talented student body, a dedicated faculty, and alumni of truly uncommon loyalty and devotion. I realized there had to be good reason for all that loyalty!”

... returning to New York? … “The very sounds of peoples’ voices are different, and I love those sounds. I like the South, too, but this is a perfectly comfortable and happy transition for me. Maybe I’m crazy, but I look forward to some real winters.”

... being part of an academic couple in the same field? … “The very sounds of peoples’ voices are different, and I love those sounds. I like the South, too, but this is a perfectly comfortable and happy transition for me. Maybe I’m crazy, but I look forward to some real winters.”

... being Hamilton’s first woman president: … “Philip is very Midwestern. He’s calm and thoughtful and extremely supportive of me. There’s never been a list of competition between us.”

... reading novels and listening to books on tape? … “I like narrative and I like plot. And at the same time, I’m constantly thinking about how what I read relates to education.”

... unwinding: … “I expect Hamilton to become increasingly recognized as a national leader among liberal arts colleges and, with its historical emphasis on communication, as a place characterized by vigorous conversation about the very meaning of liberal arts education.”

... liberal arts education: … “While we teach students to think critically, we also want to make sure that they have the sense of history that has made criticism possible.”

... Hamilton’s place in higher education: … “While we teach students to think critically, we also want to make sure that they have the sense of history that has made criticism possible.”

Bill Truslow
With half a dozen books and more than 100 articles, essays, chapters, book reviews and presentations to her credit, she is, according to long-time friend and colleague Ronald C. Rosbottom, “one of the most influential scholars in the country in her field.” Wellesley College Professor of French Vicki Mistacco said Stewart is “a tremendous source of inspiration” and “a pioneer in the study of fiction by 18th-century women writers.”

For several years, Hamilton Professor of French Roberta Krueger has had her Introduction to French Literature class read Isabelle de Charrière’s Lettres de Mistriss Henley, an 18th-century epistolary novel edited by Stewart and her husband, Philip. “Joan Stewart’s publications are very impressive,” Krueger said. “It’s exciting to have a president with such a distinguished — and ongoing — record of scholarship whose work on French women writers of the past has had a real impact on the way we teach our classes.”

Notwithstanding her status as a scholar, it is Stewart’s use of words that stands out most to her colleagues and admirers, and makes her ideally suited to be the next occupant of the college presidency. “It is not an exaggeration to call her eloquent. When I’m in Joan’s company, I try to be my best in speaking the language and writing the language. She will raise the bar for students to speak the spoken word and write the written word capably. She’ll do that by her own use of language.”

Former USC Board Chair William Hubbard said Stewart “looks you right in the eye and speaks directly about issues. One of her strengths is that she doesn’t give you a lot of fuzzy talk. She takes on issues squarely, and I believe that results in trust, which makes her very effective.”

“I believe that she will be able to relate extra-ordinarily well to the entire college community,” Hubbard continued, “from the freshman student to the most sophisticated donor.”

Hamilton’s reputation for teaching students to communicate well is part of what attracted Stewart to the College. “It was exemplified by the people I met,” she said, citing, especially, early conversations with trustee Drew S. Days III ’59 and Vice President for Academic Affairs David Paris ’71. “[Their] skills, not just in communicating, but in listening, which is an important part of communication, were very impressive, very appealing.”

Stewart had an equally strong impression of Hamilton’s “personality.” “Thoughtful, articulate, civil, those were the impressions of students I formed during my visits in April and May. They were warm,” Stewart recalled of her reception with students in Café Opus just an hour after being introduced in the Chapel, adding, “they were challenging, but challenging in a courteous and civil way.”

Daisy Mera ’04, a fellow Brooklyn native and a dedicated faculty, and alumni of truly uncommon loyalty and devotion. I realized there had to be good reason for all that loyalty!”

...liberal arts education: “While we teach students to think critically, we also want to make sure that they have the sense of history that has made criticism possible.”

...being part of an academic couple in the same field: “Philip is very Midwestern. He’s calm and thoughtful and extremely supportive of me. There’s never been an iota of competition between us.”

...being Hamiltion’s first woman president: “It’s hardly an innovation for a woman to head a major institution nowadays, but I appreciate that it does have symbolic value. To me, it’s less important than what Hamilton is and what Hamilton represents.”

...Hamilton’s place in higher education: “I expect Hamilton to become increasingly recognized as a national leader among liberal arts colleges and, with its historical emphasis on communication, as a place characterized by vigorous conversation about the very meaning of liberal arts education.”

...returning to New York: “The very sounds of people’s voices are different, and I love those sounds. I like the South, too, but this is a perfectly comfortable and happy transition for me. Maybe I’m crazy, but I look forward to some real winters.”

...unwinding: “If possible, I go to Paris! When that’s not possible, I get on the treadmill or listen to the Clancy Brothers, Kenny Rogers or Edith Piaf. I also like to watch old movies on video, preferably those set in Paris.”

Notwithstanding her status as a scholar, it is Stewart’s use of words that stands out most to her colleagues and admirers, and makes her ideally suited to be the next occupant of the south-east corner office on the first floor of Buttrick Hall.

Joan Stewart on ...

...what attracted you to Hamilton: “... the emphasis on communication, the value placed on faculty and student interaction and on community, and a commitment to diversity that goes back to the College’s very beginnings. I was interested in the possibility of being the first woman president of a place characterized by vigorous conversation about the very meaning of liberal arts education.”

...continuing the upward trajectory of the institution: “... the people I met, especially, their skills, not just in communicating, but in listening, which is an important part of communication, were very impressive, very appealing.”

...getting to the final stage for making our selection, she was the unan-...
Colleagues Comment on Joan Stewart …

"Joan is at heart a scholar and a teacher. That is her core.”

"For Hamilton College, hiring Joan Stewart can be equated to winning the lottery. Without a doubt, she will take you to new heights. She will thrive, and you will thrive."—SUSAN HOOD, DEAN, USC DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

"She seems very serious, but she has a wry sense of humor.”

"Joan brought energy into the college that wasn’t there before.”—DAVID G. HODGES, COLUMBIA, S.C., BUSINESSMAN AND USC SUPPORTER

"I found Joan Stewart to be a great colleague. She will represent your college in an exemplary manner. She is an excellent administrator who works as a consensus builder and brings people together to get things done. I personally like Joan’s great sense of humor; the ability to laugh at herself and not take herself too seriously.”—PATRICIA KUDRI, DEAN, USC COLLEGE OF HOSPITALITY, RETAIL, AND SPORT MANAGEMENT

"She’s a person of quality and manifest integrity. You can trust what you hear from her.”—KENDRA C. ROBOTTEN, FORMER DEAN OF FACULTY, ANDERSON COLLEGE

"I am sure that all constituencies at Hamilton — faculty, students and administration — will be energized by her presence. She will find the spark of originality in all of you and encourage you, each in your own way, to achieve your highest potential.”—ULINE MISTACCO, PROFESSOR OF FRENCH, BELLESLEYS COLLEGE

"She’s a very intelligent person, and, at the same time, a very down-to-earth and warm individual.”—JEROME D. COMM, USC PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

"She’s extremely supportive of strong teaching.”—JUDITH KALB, USC ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RUSSIAN

"It’s always easier to leave things as they are,” Hodges said. “[But] if there’s an issue that needs to be dealt with, she’ll deal with it. Joan is supportive of new ideas,” continued Hodges, "and she has the confidence to let people try new things. She has wonderful judgment, and her genius is encouraging people around her to be creative.”

Added Samuel Tenenbaum, Hodges’ successor as chair of the College’s National Advisory Council: “Joan helps nurture people to come up with good ideas; she will stimulate that.”

I ask a lot of advice and try to find out as much as I can,” Stewart said. “I understand the importance of being decisive, but I don’t act in a precipitous way.”

Moderate and unassuming, with a quick smile and an easy laugh, Stewart, nonetheless, acknowledged that she is a perfectionist. “She has an eye for excellence and is bold,” said USC history department chair Maney. “When you hire it’s not just a matter of choosing the best person in the applicant pool. She’s looking for the best people in the country, and she’s not satisfied with less.”

“She’s a person who is always going to move the bar up,” Tenenbaum said. In taking the Hamilton presidency, Stewart is returning to her home state and making good on a promise she made nearly 40 years earlier when a New York State Regents Scholarship made it possible for her to attend college.

“As part of that scholarship, I promised that, if possible, I would make a career of teaching in New York. I’m happy to be back, and happy to be able to fulfill that promise after so many years.”

Stewart graduated from St. Joseph’s College in Brooklyn, the first in her family to attend college. She lived at home and commuted more...
**Small Residential Liberal Arts Colleges are the Glory of the American Educational System ... and Hamilton College is a Particularly Glorious Example of Such an Institution.**

“Joan Stewart is an extraordinary dean, and Hamilton — faculty, students and administration — will be energized by her presence. She will find the spark to get people to come up with good ideas, she will stimulate that.”

Joan Stewart clearly is a person with enormous integrity. Hubbard recounted. “The easy way out would be to say ‘let’s study this more’ and risk having the proposal watered down to the point where it did not accomplish its goals. But Joan stood firm in a very diplomatic yet firm manner to the sentiment made impassioned pleas to the board that she was right on all points, and her recommendation unanimously carried the day.”

Added USC Assistant Professor of Russian Judith Kalb: “She may make a decision that is not popular, but she’ll do so because she has a great sense of the big picture and can weigh what she thinks will work best for her college.”

“You’ve got a president who has a strong relationship-based personality,” said David Hodges, former chair of USC’s College of Liberal Arts National Advisory Council and an ardent USC supporter. “She’ll know everyone’s name at Hamilton College, she’ll like them because she likes people, and they will like her. That will give her a reservoir of goodwill which will help her make hard decisions. If people like her as a person, and if they believe she has a basic understanding of their position, then when she has to step back and say this isn’t going to work, you can’t do this, or we have to change that, I believe people will give her more room than if they didn’t like her to start with.”

“Joan brought energy into the college that wasn’t there before.”

David G. Hodges, Columbia, S.C., Businessman and USC supporter

“I found Joan Stewart to be a great colleague. She will represent your college in an exemplary manner. She is an excellent administrator who works as a consensus builder and brings people together to get things done. I personally like Joan’s great sense of humor, the ability to laugh at herself and not take herself too seriously.”

Patricia Moody, Dean, USC College of Hospitality, Retail, and Sport Management

“Joan is at heart a scholar and a teacher. That’s her core.”

Patrick J. Maney, Professor and Chair, USC Department of History

“Joan is supportive of new ideas,” continued Hodges, “and she has the confidence to let people try new things. She has wonderful judgment, and her genuine enthusiasm for people around her to be creative.”

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Stewart graduated from St. Joseph’s College in Brooklyn, the first in her family to attend college. She lived at home and commuted more...
than an hour each way by subway and bus. “I did a lot of studying on the train,” she recalled. When she received her bachelor’s degree, summa cum laude, her mother asked her father the significance of the Latin honor. “I don’t recall,” he responded, “but it must be good.”

When she received her bachelor’s degree, summa cum laude, her sister and 92-year-old mother, who totally supportive of me.” That’s especially know,” he responded, “but it must be good.”

When Ruth Simmons was named the 18th president of Brown University in November 2000, Stewart’s mother clipped the article from the New York Daily News and sent it to her daughter in South Carolina. “Look Joan,” Stewart recalled her mother saying, “she’s just like you. She studied languages, and now she’s a college president.”

“The implication was clear,” Stewart recounted, “and even though I realized, of course, that this was my mother speaking, somewhere deep within I must have thought, hmm...”

Hamilton’s Presidential Search Commit- teel started thinking seriously about a search. Stewart soon after she was identified as a potential candidate by the search firm that worked with the College. “She immediately rose to the short list in terms of the candidates we were con- sidering,” said Associate Professor of Philos- ophy Todd Franklin. “The College has great momentum, and we were looking for some- one who could maintain and continue the upward trajectory of the institution. By the time we got to the final stage for making our selection, she was the unanimous choice.”

Soon after she was intro- duced as Hamilton’s 19th president, Joan Stewart joined USC Assistant Professor of Psychology Brad Smith, a 1983 Hamilton graduate, and his daughters outside “Hamilton College,” the building housing the anthropology and naval science programs on the Columbia, S.C., campus.

At the same time, 80 miles to the south, Stewart’s interest was growing. “It was a cumu- lative process for me,” Stewart said. “With every encounter I had, either with a person from Hamilton or with something [written] about Hamilton, I became more interested and more excited.” Her interest progressed to the point that when Chairman of the Board Stuart Scott ’61 and Vice President for Academic Affairs David Paris ’71 offered Stewart the position over dinner in early May at Garzill’s on Greene Street in Columbia, she accepted on the spot.

Stewart’s passion for education and her progression to the Hamilton presidency go back to her days in Brooklyn. As if to remind us, “in an age in which people tend to talk more about technology and skills training and economic develop- ment, she makes the case for liberal arts in a thoughtful and articulate way.”

“She sincerely believes in the power of education to change the world,” Rosbottom said, “and she believes in the liberal arts.”

And if, as Hamilton’s president, Stewart ever needs to provide evidence of the trans- forming nature of a liberal arts education, she can offer herself as an example. A first- generation student college with a limited worldview after high school, Stewart still possesses the wisdom in getting to the front of the line in selecting Joan to be its president.

“She’s a big loss,” Hubbard said. “She’s absolutely one of the top leaders here at the university. [But] I’m absolutely delighted for her. She has enriched my life.”

Added Rosbottom, former dean of the fac- ulty at Amherst College: “This is a wonderful match. Whatever adjustments she may have to make, she’ll make quickly and successfully.”

The skeptics will cite Stewart’s association with large public universities, but Hamilton “She may make a decision that is not popular, but she’ll do so because she has a great sense of the big picture and can weigh what she thinks will work best for her college.”

Professor Todd Franklin said the search com- mittee considered that issue and quickly dis- missed it. “The concern about the transition from a large public to a private institution was mitigated by her experience in the liberal arts and her ability to speak to issues that resonate with all of us concerned about the liberal arts.”

“Although I have spent most of my career in large public institutions,” Stewart acknowl- edged, “I cherish my experience, both as a stu- dent and as a young teacher, in small colleges. Liberal arts colleges are the great American invention. They were born of the European Enlightenment, but it was Americans who had the energy to put those ideas into practice.”

“He is a lively and entertaining speaker who makes the case for the liberal arts in the most compelling fashion that I have ever heard,” Hubbard said. “In an age in which people tend to talk more about technology and skills training and economic develop- ment, she makes the case for liberal arts in a thoughtful and articulate way.”

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Introduction

When Ruth Simmons was named the 18th president of Brown University in November 2000, Stewart’s mother clipped the article and mailed it to her. “It still lives in Brooklyn,” Stewart said, “but they have been destroyed.”

When she received her bachelor’s degree, Stewart said, “it was a natural thing for me,” she only considered attending St. Joseph’s, St. John’s, and Brooklyn College. “I didn’t know there were colleges outside of Brooklyn and Queens, and I didn’t know about residential colleges,” she said, perhaps only half in jest. “I didn’t know about them, I didn’t have much experience in selecting a college.”

At the same time, 800 miles to the south, Stewart’s interest was growing. “It was a cumulative process for me,” Stewart said. “With every encounter I had, either with a person from Hamilton or with something [written] about Hamilton, I became more interested and more excited.” Her interest progressed to the point that when Chairman of the Board Stuart Scott ’61 and Vice President for Academic Affairs David Paris ’71 offered Stewart the position over dinner in early May at Garibaldi’s on Greene Street in Columbia, she accepted on the spot. Stewart’s passion for education and her progression to the Hamilton presidency go back to her days in Brooklyn. As if to remind herself of her roots, her office wall displays a photograph of her third grade class at St. Mary Mother of Jesus School. “I loved school, I loved books; I loved libraries; I loved teachers; and I loved sitting in class.” Not surprisingly, then, she does not recall having ever been absent or late during her four years at St. Brendan’s High School. “I was a very committed, happy student. I just loved sitting in class.” Not surprisingly, then, the skeptics will cite Stewart’s association with large public universities, but Hamilton is a particularly glorious example of such an institution. “She sincerely believes in the power of education to change the world,” Rosbottom said, “and she believes in the liberal arts.”

And if, as Hamilton’s president, Stewart ever needs to provide evidence of the transforming nature of a liberal arts education, she can offer herself as an example. A first-generation student with a limited worldview after high school, Stewart now presumes the presidency of one of America’s pre-eminent liberal arts colleges. She said she can hardly express her joy at the challenge that awaits her at Hamilton, but those who know her best are betting she’ll find the words to do so. “She may make a decision that is not popular, but she’ll do so because she has a great sense of the big picture and can weigh what she thinks will work best for her college.”

Professor Todd Franklin said the search committee considered that issue and quickly dismissed it. “The concern about the transition from a large public to a private institution was mitigated by her experience in the liberal arts and her ability to speak to issues that resonate with all of us concerned about the liberal arts.”

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SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY

F O R M A L E D U C A T I O N

Ph.D., French, Yale University, New Haven, Conn., 1970
B.A., summa cum laude, French, St. Joseph’s College, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1965

A C A D E M I C A P P O I N T M E N T S

Professor of French, Hamilton College, 2003 –
Professor of French, University of South Carolina, 1999-2003
Professor of French, North Carolina State University, 1981-89
Associate Professor of French, North Carolina State University, 1973-77
Instructor/Assistant Professor of French, Wellesley College, 1970-77
Teaching Associate/Acting Instructor of French, Yale University, 1967-70

A D M I N I S T R A T I V E A P P O I N T M E N T S

President, Hamilton College, 2003-
Dean of Liberal Arts, University of South Carolina, 1999-2003
Head, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, North Carolina State University, 1984-85
Acting Head, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, North Carolina State University, 1984-85
Chair, North Carolina Humanities Council, 1988-89
Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Programs in Humanities and Social Sciences, North Carolina State University, 1983-85
Assistant Head, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, North Carolina State University, 1978-82

S C H O L A R S H I P

Stewart has authored or co-authored numerous books (several with her husband, Philip), articles, essays, chapters and book reviews. She is currently working on a book on women and aging in the 18th century, a subject on which she has secured at numerous universities, including Yale University. Napa, 1973-79; Oxford, 1983-85; and the British Library.

P E R S O N A L

Stewart is married to Philip Stewart, the Bengtzon Professor of English and Comparative Literature Studies at Duke University. They have two children, a daughter, who is pursuing a Ph.D. in German at Indiana University in Bloomington, and a son, who is a student at Prescott College in Arizona.