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Last Updated: 9:41 pm | Monday, April 7, 2008

# Prof makes book in sports

## Longtime fan of NKU women's team

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

**HIGHLAND HEIGHTS** - Northern Kentucky University turns 40 this year, and Robert Wallace is one of the few faculty members who started his career at the birth of the school.

"I began as an assistant professor in 1972," said Wallace, who became a Regents Professor of Literature in 1991. "I had my interview for the job on a beautiful April day on the Covington campus."

Wallace is the author of the forthcoming book, "Thirteen Women Strong: The Making of a Team," which will chronicle the 2006-07 NKU's women's basketball season.

**ADVERTISEMENT** The interview came at a nerve-wracking time. Wallace held a new doctorate of literature from Columbia University, but the job at NKU was one of only six literature jobs advertised nationally - and he'd never taught before.

"I had learned a lot about literature during my six years in graduate school, but in those days we did not learn anything about how to teach," Wallace said.

He learned quickly and adapted what he knew to the NKU student body.

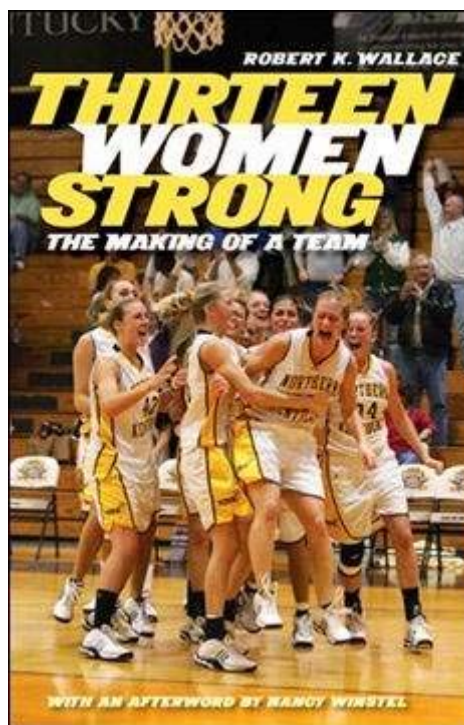
"When I first arrived at NKU, I gave carefully prepared lectures, because that was what I had experienced as a student in college and graduate school," Wallace said. "I soon came to rely more on class discussion as a way to get students engaged with the material and to find out how they were responding to the reading."

He made another change when he learned his students had jobs.

"Arriving here straight out of graduate school, I assigned too many books in my literature classes, not realizing how many students were working 20-25 hours a week," Wallace said.

"I learned that what I knew was not nearly as important as what I could help students to learn. The best learning comes from the way students put things together in their own hearts and minds, not in what they may take down directly from me."

Starting at a young school also allowed Wallace to shape the program.



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Robert Wallace was inspired to write a book about the NKU women's team.

"Because NKU was a brand new four-year school in 1972," he said, "I have been able to develop a series of interdisciplinary exploratory courses I might not have been able to teach at other schools: Music and Literature, Melville and the Arts, Douglass and Melville."

An interest in different things led Wallace to a women's basketball game in 1974. A student in his American literature class in 1974 was a walk-on to that team: Nancy Winstel, coach of the school's NCAA Division II champion women's basketball team.

"I went to some games to watch her play and now I go to all of the games to watch her coach, game after game for a quarter of a century and almost half of my life now," he said.

Wallace notes that even in sports things have changed.

"In the early days ... they did not report the results of the women's games," he said. "One year I called Maryanne Zeleznik (the former WNKU news and public affairs director) during the whole season to ask her to report the women's scores. Fortunately, things have changed."

Wallace's book is due in September from the University Press of Kentucky.

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