

Catalyst Profile
Bruce Katz

With a promise to his mother in mind, Bruce “Bud” Katz, who graduated in 2014, walked across the Ramsey Center stage three months after his 70th birthday. Months later, in an essay titled, “No Absolutes,” he humbly writes, “there is nothing compelling about my achievement.” He goes on, describing his gratitude for each class and professor, even the one that gave him the “sole damned ‘B’” that made Summa Cum Laude out-of-reach.

Still, before pushing up the coast from Florida in 2006, Katz worked with words. For forty years, he was a “communicator by trade.” He dabbled in strategic communication, marketing, philanthropy, politics, and retail. From experiences in the States and in West Berlin, where he was stationed in 1962 as part of the U.S. Air Force Security Service, he learned all “social ills are solved by good communication.”

And after retiring in Highlands in 2007, it was with this tenet in mind that Katz decided to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in literature with a minor in creative writing at WCU.

“I chose literature and writing because I love words,” wrote Katz in “No Absolutes.” “And in retirement I imagined myself doing a great deal of reading and writing, and [I] didn’t want to squander either activity on anything of inferior quality.”

His late mother also motivated Katz to turn his Associate of Arts from Valencia College in Orange County, Florida, into a four-year degree. Despite his non-traditional student status, he “endeavor[s] always” to keep promises, especially those made to his mom.

During Katz’s seven years at WCU, the “beautiful campus nestled in the hills of Western North Carolina,” he reveled in literature. The English Department exposed him to the magical realism of Márquez’s “100 Years of Solitude,” the post-colonial themes of Hulme’s “The Bone People,” and the sub-plots of Dickens’s “Bleak House.”

His “literary universe” expanded as he was introduced to “contemporary masterpieces” from Don DeLillo, Jose Saramago, Colson Whitehead, and Nicole Krauss.

Ron Rash’s creative writing workshop, a “high water mark” of Katz’s senior year, allowed for lessons in perseverance. Guest speakers emphasized the doggedness needed for publication while Rash imparted some “hard-learned wisdom” on the class of ten.

“I took away an understanding of there being absolutely no absolutes in terms of how one might achieve any definition of success as a writer,” wrote Katz.

While the road to fame may appear bleak for many burgeoning novelists, “Katz’s writing has found its way into *Skin Diver Magazine*, *The Orlando Sentinel*, *PCT Magazine*, *The Jewish Literary Journal*, *Nomad*, and *Mosaic*. From his property in Highlands, he is now working on a novel, novella, and numerous short stories.

“Tom Stoppard says, ‘Words are sacred. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones, in the right order, you can nudge the world a little,’” wrote Katz. “That’s why I’ll absolutely be writing for the rest of my life.”