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Anna Ruff
Armstrong State University

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History Matters:

An Interview with Dr. June Hopkins

If you were a history major with a serious interest in 20th-century United States history, particularly the New Deal, welfare policy, or FDR, then you are more than familiar with Dr. June Hopkins, who has officially announced her retirement after teaching American history for almost two decades at Armstrong. As a senior who has taken two of Dr. Hopkins' classes, I was very happy to have the opportunity to interview this well-respected professor.

Before becoming a historian, Dr. Hopkins graduated from the University of California at Berkeley with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. She claimed that her love of reading influenced her to be an English major. She later earned a Masters in Public Administration from Pace University in New York and worked as a social worker in New York City. Her life track shifted after getting her PhD in American History from Georgetown University and she finally became a history professor at Armstrong in the fall of 1998.

The main reason for her becoming a historian was that Dr. Hopkins wanted to write a book about her grandfather, Harry Hopkins (1890-1946), a significant figure in early 20th-century US history, who served as President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal Administrator and personal emissary to Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin during World War II. She moved to California State University at Northridge to earn a Masters in History and then went to Georgetown for her doctorate degree. It is interesting to note she worked toward her doctorate at the same time that her daughter was working on her own doctorate at Columbia

University. Dr. Hopkins' book, *Harry Hopkins: Sudden Hero, Brash Reformer*, was published in 1999. Dr. Hopkins remarked that going back to school was the best decision she made.

At Armstrong, what Dr. Hopkins loves most about teaching are the students. There were many little things about teaching that are memorable, such as a student mentioning that her class was one of the most important classes she had ever taken. Dr. Hopkins said it was a great moment when a former student recognized her on the street and told her how they loved her class. Indeed, nearly all the students the interviewer talked to share the same view: Dr. Hopkins's classes were not easy, but her style of teaching did help them become better writers and history explorers. "For me, it is the students—those who work their way through the classrooms, learn from us about the past, and have good memories of their time here—who make me happy to be a historian." Dr. Hopkins conveyed the words five years ago when interviewed by this journal (for inaugural issue that received tremendous support from Dr. Hopkins, then the Chair of History Department), and now she feels still the same way. Dr. Hopkins has a passion for history, and she wants her students to do their best.

After leaving Armstrong, Dr. Hopkins will continue her research on her grandfather's career in World War II. She will also be researching some broader family history.

(Interviewed by Anna Ruff)