GERALD R. PROUT ’71

2004 Alumni Achievement Award

Gerald “Jerry” R. Prout graduated from Westminster in 1971 with a degree in history. Prout fondly recalls that Westminster had the best history department “west of the Mississippi.” His thesis on Winston Churchill’s idea of an Anglo-American union under Dr. Russell Jones was a “labor of love.”

During his four years at Westminster, Prout was chairman of the Honor Commission, a resident hall counselor, as well as a four-year letterman in track. His 47.6 in the 440-yard NAIA 1971 finals in Billings, Montana is the school record for that distance.

Prout received a Master's degree in intellectual history from Duke University in 1972. In 1973, Prout joined the Whirlpool Corporation in Benton Harbor, Michigan where he wrote speeches for the CEO and completed his ROTC commitment. Later that year he left for Fort Lee, Virginia and a stint as a Lieutenant in the Army. With the war winding down, Prout was assigned active reserve and was able to return to Whirlpool, rejoining the company’s Governmental Affairs Department in 1974.

An article in the Conference Board Record written by Prout landed him his first Washington, DC based assignment in government affairs in 1976 with the Burson-Marsteller firm. Among Prout’s first clients was FMC Corporation, a Chicago based conglomerate manufacturing chemicals, defense equipment and machinery.

In 1979, FMC offered Prout a job in state government relations. Armed with another Master’s degree in political science from American University in 1979, Prout began a 25-year career with FMC, capped by his being named Vice President of Government Affairs in 2000.

During his years in Washington, Prout has been a staunch advocate on a range of issues impacting his company. He has chaired the Business Roundtable’s Planning Committee, served on the National Commission on Superfund, was appointed by the Clinton administration to the National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee, by the Bush administration as a member of an International Trade Advisory Committee, and by the Congressional Black Caucus for the National Environmental Policy Commission. He has written a number of articles on environmental issues for publications such as Regulation and Corporate Environmental Strategies.

Prout also remains active with Westminster through the Emerson Fellows Program and hosting student interns in the Washington, DC area during the summers.

Prout’s real joy is his family, his wife of 28 years, Claudia, and their four sons, who reside in Fairfax Station, Virginia. While his sons Tyler, age 26, Drew, age 24, Evan ’04, age 22 and Colby, age 19 were growing up, Prout coached a number of little league and county basketball teams. “I had the best mentor for coaching you could possibly have in Coach Dick Ault,” he says. Prout enjoys reading and researching history, jogging and dabbling with poetry and golf.

“...when I think of the qualities that are required – trust, insight, the ability to communicate ideas and a competitive fire – I can’t think of a better training ground than my four years at Westminster College.”