
The Historian

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

GREETINGS:

Greetings to all of you as we enter the last year of the Millennium, and contemplate rounding out the content of our Twentieth-Century history courses.

The Department has had an active fall semester, more so than usual because of the transfer of the History Forum to the fall semester and the inauguration of our new multimedia classroom. This issue includes a report on a successful--if abbreviated--fall History Forum, the second forum of 1998. The multimedia classroom is off to an excellent start, thanks to the hard work of Dr. Waring, who took charge from the beginning. From arranging financing to selecting equipment, Dr. Waring moved the project along. After installation of the equipment at the end of last summer, Dr. Waring helped to train the faculty in the use of this new technology, and oversaw its introduction in many History 101 and 102 classes.

This issue of the newsletter focuses on alumni, and gives a good indication of the wide range of activities that have engaged our graduates. We are especially grateful to those of you who have taken the time to tell us what you have

been doing. To those of you who have written, please keep us updated. For those who have not, we would really like to hear from you! You can email me at dunara@email.uah.edu, or write to us in care of the History Department, University of Alabama in Huntsville, Huntsville, AL 35899.

Andrew J. Dunar, Chair

Beverley !!!!

Virtually everyone who has had any dealings with the History Department over the course of the last nine years has at one time or another received assistance from the department's able, efficient, and cheerful staff assistant, Beverley Robinson. "Bev is the heart and soul of the department," according to Professor Dunar. "It would be hard to imagine how we would keep things going without her." She keeps track of deadlines for students and faculty, handles the paperwork for departmental activities, and generally keeps things running. Her dedication to the students and faculty led to her selection as the recipient of a UAH Foundation Staff Award in 1994.

The qualities that make Bev such a key to the success of the department's activities

sound like the Boy Scout pledge. As Professor Williams commented, "Ms. Robinson is always conscientious, kind, efficient, resourceful, resolute, reliable, courteous, ever-smiling and resilient. I am very grateful for the assistance she provides me and the department."



Professor Boucher added: "I would certainly emphasize her resolute good cheer in the accomplishment of all tasks even at such difficult times as the beginning of the semester."

"What most impresses me about Beverley Robinson is the combination of her professional and human skills," Professor Ellis commented. "She not only serves the staff needs of a busy teaching and research faculty, but is helpful and caring in her dealings with students and, as I can attest by my work with her on the

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History Forum, one of UAH's hardest workers once the doors of the office close."

Bev's work on the History Forum over the years has been an extraordinary contribution, requiring long hours, well beyond the normal workday. "Putting on quality History Forum lectures in both Winter and Fall of 1998 would have been impossible without Bev!" commented Professor Martin, co-director of the Forum. "She skillfully and gracefully navigated the UAH bureaucracy to help keep accounts in order and set up the auditorium and reception area for each speaker, and she followed through on innumerable logistical and administrative tasks--all with a smile!"

Everybody has a recollection of something Bev has done that went beyond the ordinary. One of Professor Waring's memories shows her willingness to serve the department even on her vacation days: "On her day off, at supper time, on a cold and dreary night, getting an eleventh hour call to rescue a poor PART-TIMER in distress, she gallantly drove through RUSH HOUR traffic to cover for the HISTORY Department's IRRATIONAL key policy, and find a key to the closet of the multi-media classroom! Neither vacation, cold, rain, gloom of night could stay the lonely staff assistant from her self-chosen responsibilities!"

FACULTY:

Dr. Lee Williams

received an award from the UAH Minority Graduate Student Association. The president of the group presented the award at the annual UAH program honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The plaque cited Dr. Williams for more than twenty years of service to UAH and to its minority students.



ALUMNI:

Naomi Burke – [Currently volunteering for the Peace Corps in Jordan] I arrived in Jordan 19 months ago, which means I'm 6-9 months away from my close of service (COS). After spending 3 months learning colloquial Arabic and trying to adapt to the culture, I began working at a small community development center in Ma'iin. The center houses a sewing class, a nursery, two kindergarten classes, and a cheese-making facility that only operates in spring-time when the goats give enough milk. I worked on translating project proposals from Arabic into English and wrote my own proposal to renovate old Roman

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cisterns into viable wells that would be fed by the winter rains. This proposal was recently implemented in the village of Hesban. During this time I battled constant suspicion. Many people distrusted the idea of a young, American woman living alone in the Middle East and quite a few people, including my counterpart, thought I was a spy even though the secret police assured them that I'm not. If only my life were really THAT exciting! The reality is that I spend 6 days a week in an office, I study Arabic with a tutor twice a week after work, lock myself inside my house when night falls, spend the winters huddled under 5 blankets with a book and a hot water bottle, and try to visit other volunteers on my one day weekends. Excitement doesn't come around too often, although it's certainly not a stranger. After 6 months of thinly veiled hostility, I moved to a community development center in Jerash. My experience in Jerash has been extremely positive. I've organized a workshop in participatory rural appraisal, advised a local women's business cooperative on how to improve their organization, helped teach a summer-time English class for children, and assist the center's administration. Now I'm working with other volunteers to help sell our centers' products to the ex-patriate community. I've also used my experience as one of the first volunteers in Jordan to help Peace Corps write its program goals for the

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country. A third of the volunteers dropped out earlier this year, but 36 new volunteers arrived this summer and are now working at their sites. Things have slowed down considerably over the past month. The center is nearly empty because everyone is out picking olives. Soon it will be Ramadan and then it'll just be too cold to do anything! I plan on spending this winter pondering income-generating project ideas for women while trying to stay warm.

I've gone home once to attend my brother's wedding and I spent two weeks in Greece exploring Minoan ruins and basking in the sun. I spent last Christmas Eve on Mt. Nebo, gazing down upon the Holy Land. I would like to do that again, although I'm considering a trip to Bethlehem. I plan on traveling to Syria sometime before Ramadan, then Egypt and Israel later on. If I have the time and money, I hope to visit Turkey and Lebanon, too. I still haven't camped in Wadi Rum (soon, soon), but I've gone snorkeling in the Red Sea and hiked all over Petra, which has to be the most amazing archaeological site in the world. Jordan's tourist industry has increased significantly over the past few years, but it's still sadly underrated by the Western world. It's definitely worth a visit.

David Gale - I am teaching 11th- grade U.S. History and 9th-grade World Geography at Howard High School in Chattanooga, TN. Howard High School was founded in

1864 by the Freedmen's Bureau as a school for the children of freed slaves, and the school is named after General Oliver Howard, the commander of the Freedmen's Bureau. It is Chattanooga's first public school and has remained a historically African American high school. I have been asked to participate in a pilot faculty support program for teachers called Critical Friends and serve as one of Howard's faculty representatives in the Hamilton County school system's curriculum development committee.

The Huntsville Historical Review recently published one of my papers. With the help of Dr. Shields and Dr. Roberts, my paper, "The Great Pecuniary Sacrifice: Dr. Thomas Fearn and the Indian Creek Canal," appeared in the Summer-Fall 1998 (Volume 25, 2). I wrote the paper in Dr. Shields' History of the South course, and we edited it for the Review. It is a local history of the construction of a canal that existed in Antebellum Huntsville. I am quite proud of it.

Joe Green – was awarded a four-year Eugene Cota-Robles fellowship at the University of California-Riverside that consists of the following: Year 1: \$14,000 plus all fees and tuition; Years 2 & 3: TA position plus all fees and tuition; Year 4: \$12,500 plus all fees and tuition.

Beth Pollard - May 1995 - graduated with B.A. summa cum laude. Aug 1995 - began

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graduate program in Medieval History at Emory University in Atlanta. Nov 1997 - passed comprehensive exams for the Ph.D. May-July 1998 - participated in archeological excavation of late Roman farmstead in rural Hungary. This was a joint project of Emory, Janus Pannonius University in Pecs, Hungary, and the University of Passau, Germany. Nov 1998 - Dissertation proposal, "Through a Glass Darkly: Power, Law and the Community of the Gallic Church Councils, 400-741," was approved by committee. I am now pursuing my research for the dissertation.

Carol Ann Vaughn – [completed her Ph.D. at Auburn; currently teaching at Judson College] I received the hood [for her Ph.D.] at December commencement. Auburn is binding the dissertation in two volumes, entitled " 'Living in the Lives of Men': A Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Journey from Alabama to Shandong, 1830-1909." I will revise and send to presses sometime this summer or fall. A chapter will be printed in a collection of essays to be published by Eerdman's.

I thoroughly enjoyed my first year of teaching. At Commencement I was given the Holley Award for Classroom Excellence, which I attribute to my preparation at UAH. My specialities in women's history, Southern history, history of American religions, and technology/culture fit in well here. I did a history of American

cinema as a 20th-century history special studies class in short term that went well. The other big success was 20th-century Europe, which used collections of primary sources of WWI and WWII that we have for undergraduates.

I'm in my second year here at Judson, teaching a full load and "chairing" the Dept of History and Political Science. This year I'm chairing the Women's Studies Committee and advising Phi Alpha Theta. We're hosting the Regional Phi Alpha Theta conference on April 17, and I hope to see some UAH people. In February I'll give a paper for the Alabama Association of Historians panel "Integrating Women into the Curriculum." I think my paper is titled "Moving from "Women's History" to "People's History" without Losing the Majority (Again)." In February and March I'm taking student groups on the Civil Rights Trail here from Marion to Selma to Montgomery to retrace the chain of events from Feb-March 1965. (I was very pleased to meet John Lewis in Selma last week while he talked about his memoir Walking with the Wind. We're planning some exciting things for next year. Cliff will visit me in March for his research and the Bridge Crossing and Jubilee in Selma.

I've been speaking to a lot of civic groups lately, which I think is part of the professional historian's responsibility, and I appreciate UAH History faculty's example in this area.

Oh, yes, I have the Senior Seminar, which is amazing on the "other side."

Here at Judson I am often reminded of something a UAH history professor once said to me about teaching: "It doesn't matter if you have 5 or 500 students; as long as you have 1 student who wants to learn, it's all worthwhile."

Cliff Vaughn – I graduated UAH in 1994 with a B.A., summa cum laude, in history. I graduated from Auburn in 1996 with an M.A. in communication (emphasis in Mass Communication).

I entered the American Culture Studies Program at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, in August of 1996. My areas of concentration have been Popular Culture and Mass Communication.

1998 has been a busy, rewarding, and fun year. I was awarded a dissertation fellowship from BGSU to write a "hypertext dissertation" (a dissertation on CD-ROM incorporating the written word, audio and video clips, and photographs). The title: "Dixieland Demonstrations: The Public Display of Power in Selmians' Struggle for Civil Rights." It applies a folkloristic, performance studies and public display approach to civil rights demonstrations in Selma of 1965.

I also passed my core and preliminary exams, and secured approval of my dissertation topic.

And I got married in July! Her name is Mary, and she's a Ph.D. candidate also (in Interpersonal Communication). She's teaching for a year at her

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alma mater -- Grace College -- while I'm busy writing my dissertation. She's absolutely wonderful -- beautiful, bright, and lots of fun!

I've also managed to find time to pursue another interest -- screenwriting. I've written six screenplays and am trying to market any and all of them to interested parties.

But right now all my energy is focused on the dissertation, of course. I hope to graduate in August of 1999, as does my wife Mary.

UAH prepared me well! I've never doubted that for a second. Sorry I've rambled on; there's just been lots of good news!

Janet (Schmidt) Geist - graduated from UAH with degree in history and a minor in Political Science in December 1994. Deciding that she was not ready to hit the books again, she opted not to go on to graduate school. Instead she found a job helping a family with 2 children prepare for the arrival of twins.

In 1995, she married David Geist, also a graduate of UAH. They made their home in Huntsville and continue to have strong ties to UAH through the music department. Both sing in the choirs when their schedules allow. Janet and her family were able to travel to Europe with the choir in 1997. Visiting such wonderful places as Rome, Vienna, Salzburg, Paris, and London was truly a thrill.

Most of Janet's spare time is spent "with the dogs." She and her husband train their two dogs and teach classes in basic obedience at the

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Obedience Training Center of Huntsville. They have also been training their dogs in search and rescue work for two years and belong to the North Alabama Search Dog Association. Their complete dedication to dogs was just slightly altered as Janet gave birth to their first child, Sarah Jane, this past November.

Donna Castellano – After finishing the coursework necessary for my MA in 1994, I intended to sit down and write my thesis on the development of the iron industry in antebellum Alabama. Fate, however, had other ideas. Instead, I have spent the past four years as owner and manager of my software development consulting company. How, you may ask, does a history student who can only use a computer to word process become involved in the high-tech world of software development? Well, it's not that complicated. My husband, the computer expert, accepted a position in Princeton, New Jersey as a consultant. After living in Princeton for four long, winter months, I made three important decisions. First, Princeton winters made the coldest Alabama day seem tropical. Second, I did not want my five-year-old son to grow up and think southern accents were a novelty. Third, if we could make a living consulting in Princeton, perhaps we should try the same thing back home in Huntsville. It was at this point that my academic background became important. The pursuit of a graduate degree in history demanded so much more of me

than simply studying history. To do this job properly, I had to develop my analytical skills so I could break down complex problems into manageable questions. I learned research techniques to gather the appropriate facts and information needed to answer the questions I posed. Finally, through trial and (sometimes) error, I developed the judgement necessary to gather and interpret evidence and determine its logical conclusion. It was out of this process that my company, Embark Software Development, was born in June 1996, on Interstate 81 just north of Bristol, Tennessee. The secret to operating a successful company is remarkably similar to that of writing good history. Both demand careful research, clear thinking, and the ability to make sound decisions based on your understanding of the evidence. Sleepless nights spent trying to figure out exactly what those decisions should be are common to both. Now about that thesis... Donna Castellano B.A. History – 1997, M.A. History--TBA.

Christopher Manning – I completed my Masters thesis in June of 1996. The thesis, entitled “Three Shades of Black: An Examination of the Dialogue on Race Among Chicago’s Black Leaders, 1919-1926,” reconstructed black leaders’ paradigms on race in Chicago using the 1919 Chicago riot as a starting point. In the spring of 1997, I presented the paper at the Southern Illinois University’s conference on blacks in Illinois history and won the conference essay prize.

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I also completed my coursework in the spring of 1997 and I defended my dissertation proposal in January of 1998. The provisional title for my dissertation is “William Dawson and the contradictions of African-American Electoral Leadership, 1942-1967.”

Presently, I am working for the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian as an archivist. My primary responsibility is to create and initiate usage of a cataloging system for the museum’s photographic material. I also assist in managing the collections and displays.

In addition to my academic pursuits, I have begun a career in dance. In November 1997, I became a member of a new dance company, The Chicago Latin Street Dancers (CLSD). CLSD is dedicated to the promotion of Latin Dance in the Chicago Metropolitan area. We have grown considerably over the last year. On December 27th WGN aired a special featuring CLSD. We opened our own studio in January 1998. So after I get the dissertation, I may try to open my own studio- an excellent use for a Ph.D.

Aida Reinbolt - I am happy to report that my history activities are alive and well. Since completion of my BA in History and work on a masters, I have had two articles placed in The Historic Huntsville Quarterly, Spring/Summer '86 and Winter/Spring '88. I have written two histories for organizations with which I am associated and have advised on

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North Alabama history, my area of interest, when consulted.

I have donated my thesis materials on the history of the cotton mills of Huntsville to the Heritage Room of the Huntsville Library.

I had also accumulated a large amount of material and photographs on the first ten years of Constitution Hall Village. All this material has been donated to the historical director of the park. The opening of that project under the direction of Dr. Frances Roberts and Dr. John White was a very exciting time for me. Dr. White devised a course in Historic Preservation in which his class participated. The course included preparing the opening of the park, cleaning and dusting, preparing objects for display, and writing a paper on some aspect of the era. My contribution was to research and write on the clothing of the period. I made some articles of clothing which were worn by the first docents.

For me, historical research has always been the most enjoyable aspect of studying history, and I feel that sharing my research materials is helping to preserve history and assist future historians.

David Lescarini - This Fall I have been attending Seton Hall School of Law in Newark, NJ. Both law school and the North have been experiences in themselves. Law school is as demanding as I heard it would be. I didn't believe the stories I had heard about law school until I got there. It's not as hard as The Paperchase, but it's difficult

nonetheless. I can now understand why attorneys charge such huge fees. Though I find law school more difficult than undergrad, it has been a rewarding experience and it is worth it, if you really want to be a lawyer.

As for the North itself, the way people live in my area in New Jersey is very different from the way we Alabamians live. I thought that the fast paced lifestyle of the North was just a cliché. It's not. The traffic can be awful at times. At a minimum, it takes me thirty minutes to drive five miles to school. I have realized, however, that the people are not as rude as I thought they would be. They can be very nice, it's just that they are in a hurry. Once you realize this, then it becomes easier to fit in with the local culture.

Overall, even though it has been a difficult adjustment for me, I am glad that I had the opportunity to see another way of life both as a law student and as a southern foreigner in a northern state. It has been a rewarding and enriching experience for me.

EVENTS:

History Forum

During the 1998 Fall Semester, the History Department hosted two distinguished speakers for the Fall '98 History Forum lecture series.

On October 2, Dr. Lawrence Levine spoke on "The Search for American Identity." His lecture took a broad

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historical view of the various ways that we have conceived of our identity as Americans and it argued for a more inclusive definition of what it means to be an American to replace the exclusionary approach that has targetted immigrants as scapegoats for America's social and economic problems. He peppered his talk with personal insights into national-identity construction stemming from his own experience as a second-generation American of Eastern European Jewish descent who grew up in multicultural New York City. Dr. Levine is Professor of History and Cultural Studies at George Mason University and author of *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture and History* (1996).

On November 17, Dr. Michael J. Neufeld presented a lecture entitled "Wernher von Braun and the Third Reich." In his talk, Dr. Neufeld drew a sketch of von Braun's life and work in Germany from the 1920s to the end of World War II. Neufeld presented documentary evidence of von Braun's association with the Nazi Regime and his work in Peenemünde on the V-2 rocket, a project that employed concentration-camp labor. Through careful analysis of available evidence, Neufeld offered a complex portrait of a largely apolitical scientist who worked in a highly charged political atmosphere and made choices that allowed him to pursue his life's work. Neufeld refused either to condemn wholly or condone von Braun's choices; the result was a fuller,

more human portrait of the man who has achieved hero status in Huntsville and beyond. Michael Neufeld is Curator in the Aeronautics Division of the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC. He is author of the award-winning book, *The Rocket and the Reich: Peenemünde and the Coming of the Ballistic Missile Era* (1995).

The next History Forum lecture series will be held in Fall 1999. The topic of this series will be the Millennium and Millennialism. Stay tuned for details.

Tournament Day

For the third year, the History Department, in conjunction with the College of Liberal Arts, will sponsor a history contest for local high-school history students. The contest, which has two divisions, one in American history and one in European/World history, will take place on Wednesday, April 21 in the Chan Auditorium in the Administrative Science Building.

The College will continue the format developed last year, when the College of Liberal Arts joined with the department to enlarge the scope of the contest, adding tests in political science and psychology. Students will compete for individual and team awards. Last year seven area high schools participated in a spirited competition. The department anticipates that the schools that participated last year will return, and that other

schools will join. Already we have had interest from as far away as Guntersville (where coincidentally UAH history graduate and M.A. candidate Staci Rigsby is doing her student teaching).

UAH To Offer Classes in Ancient Greek

Beginning in Spring of 1999, UAH will offer an introductory class in ancient Greek taught by Professor James Smeal, who earned his PhD in classics at Vanderbilt. Dr. Smeal's class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 to 3:50 and successful participants will earn three undergraduate credits. Greek has been a desideratum for a long time at UAH, and we are now very pleased to be able to offer it.

UAH Establishes An Academic Minor in Classical Studies

Last year the University approved an official course of study in the classics which will yield an academic minor. The core of the requirements is composed of an ancient language, either Latin or Greek, and is augmented with other classes dealing with the classical world. Students studying in the new minor will choose these classes from History, Art History, Philosophy, Political Science and English. Dr. Gerberding of the History Department acts as the program's director.

The Historian Professor Ian Wood To Speak at UAH In April

The Society For Ancient Languages has invited Professor Ian Wood of Leeds University in England to deliver two lectures at UAH on April 15 and 16, 1999. Professor Wood is a specialist on the history of Europe in the last days of the Roman Empire and the very first part of the early middle ages. For the last several years he has been the director of the European Community's commission studying the formation of the "first Europe". As Europe now forms itself into a community comprising more and more modern states, questions asking what makes a people, a country, or a culture "European" have actual importance for the Community's members. For this reason they established the commission to examine the first time Europe formed itself, something which happened in the early Middle Ages. The results of Professor Wood's commission will be published by Brill in seventeen volumes.

Black History Month

◆ February 6, 1999

Tennessee Valley Jazz Society and The Alabama State Council on the Arts present "Celebrating Black History Through Jazz," Chan Auditorium, Administrative Sciences Building, 10:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m.

◆ February 11, 1999

A Dramatic Presentation by Dr.

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Janis K. Neal of Jackson (MS) State University entitled "Storytelling in the African-American Experience," UC Exhibit Hall, Parlor A, 11:15 a.m.

◆ February 18, 1999

Lecture by Dr. Mitchell F. Rice, Director, Race and Ethnic Studies Institute, Texas A&M University, entitled "Diversity, Affirmative Action, and Multiculturalism: What is the Difference?" UC Exhibit Hall, Parlor A, 11:15 a.m.

◆ February 26, 1999

African-American History Month Luncheon with Dr. Henry Bradford, Jr. as keynote speaker, UC Exhibit Hall, Parlor A, 11:15 a.m. {Tickets \$5.00 each}