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History at SUNY Brockport Spring 2000

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The Department of History continues to keep busy responding to the new initiative of the SUNY Board of Trustees in General Education. We estimate that the augmented history requirements could increase the number of students the department teaches by as much as an overwhelming 78 per cent. While we have two years before the full impact of these requirements descends on us, even in the 2000-2001 academic year we face a considerable increase in students. Accordingly, the College has allowed the department to add faculty to replace retirees and to meet the new demands. Searching nationally for new faculty is an exciting, but time-consuming activity involving the entire department. The results, however, are more than worth the effort. The department has hired two new full-time faculty members, made one appointment jointly with Delta College, is currently conducting another national search in early modern European history and may well look for yet more new faces before the year is out.

Our first new appointment is Wanda Wakefield, whom some of you know from her previous teaching in the College as an adjunct and as a one-year appointment. Wakefield is a joint appointment between the Department of History and Delta College. She had a career as a lawyer before she completed the Master of Arts in History at SUNY Brockport in 1990, then went on for her PhD in History at SUNY Buffalo. Her academic specialty is the history of American sports and the construction of American masculinity. Her book, *Playing to Win: Sports and the American Military, 1898-1945*, was published by the State University of New York Press in 1997. She is currently studying the culture of NASCAR and definitions of masculinity in the American South. Between her teaching at Brockport, her work as an international Luge judge (see article within), and her research at the NASCAR archives in Daytona Beach, Florida, Wakefield is indeed a woman for all seasons.

Our next appointment is Dr. Alison Parker, a specialist in American women’s history. Parker received her PhD in History at the Johns Hopkins University in 1993 and taught at Goucher College and the University of Texas at Arlington before moving to SUNY Brockport. She is the author of one book, *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933*, published by the University of Illinois Press in 1997, plus a number of articles. With Stephanie Cole, she has co-edited another book, *Political Identities: Women and the Unstable State in Nineteenth-century America*, being published this year by Texas A&M Press. Her current research project is a book tentatively titled *Gendered Reform Strategies: Women and the State in Nineteenth-century*...
America, which takes her back to the pre-Civil War era to explore the ways in which women’s political activities shaped their political voices.

The department’s third new faculty member is Dr. James Spiller, who received his doctorate in American history from the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 1999. Spiller’s scholarly interest is in the history of American science and technology. His doctoral dissertation entitled “Constructing America at the Peripheries: The Cultural Politics of United States Science and Exploration in Outer Space and Antarctica, 1950s - 1990s” explores the cultural and political uses of science and technology in the Cold War era and even into the present. He has completed articles--two of them scheduled for publication this year--and made a number of presentations from his dissertation and has taught at SUNY Brockport for both the Department of History and Delta College. He has also been on the faculty of the National Outdoor Leadership School directing wilderness expeditions and teaching mountaineering for the past decade.

In my last Note from the Chair, I reported on retirements and in this one I have introduced a few of the new historians who will eventually--maybe even rapidly--replace the old. The department takes a bittersweet pleasure in this inevitable progression, valuing both continuity and change and rejoicing to see new colleagues dedicated to our enduring values of scholarship and commitment to students.
In any event, we luge officials and athletes also came to Lake Placid to see the new track that was built in the past year to replace the 1932 bobsled track and the luge track which was built for the 1980 Olympics. Precisely because it was a chance for the world’s best sliders to see the track before next year’s World Cup at Lake Placid, the finest luge athletes of the last decade were there. As you might expect, TNT heavily promoted the Goodwill Games as a chance for the world’s best to “prove it.” They also promoted the luge competition as a showdown between athletes like Georg Hackl, winner of the last three Olympic gold medals; Markus Prock, many-times World Cup champion; and Jens Mueller, the current world champion in luge. Despite the presence of many other excellent sliders from Italy, Latvia, Switzerland, France, Canada and the United States, the pre-event story line for television was devoted to gearing the audience up for the Prock, Hackl, and Mueller confrontation.

Then a funny thing happened on the way to TV bliss. When I got to the track Friday morning to work the men’s race I was confronted with shocking news and rumors. Apparently, Hackl, Prock, and Mueller had decided not to race as they felt the new track was “too dangerous.” Now, mind you, I’ve seen Georg Hackl slide beautifully down the old Lake Placid track when all about him were crashing and cursing and complaining bitterly about the conditions. So I was, like everybody else, skeptical about the guys’ withdrawal. One interpretation floating around Mount Van Hoevenberg was that since the “Big Three” were all millionaires from personal endorsements and national team funding they had no reason to race for the paltry money Ted Turner was offering. A similar interpretation was that since there were no World Cup points at stake, they had no reason to compete. A less kind interpretation suggested that they knew they could not win on the new track and therefore didn’t want to risk embarrassment. (This last interpretation was supported by Hackl’s comment to the media that he had brought the wrong steels to America and could not steer his sled as well as he would like.) And a fourth interpretation bandied about on the hill, but not in their presence, was that the three were just chicken.

In any event, the race was going to go on no matter who chose not to compete. The question then was, how was TNT going to present the event? Were they going to concentrate on the story that three sliders had decided the track was too dangerous? Or were they going to cover the race as it happened and look for a new story? And that’s where the weird disconnect came in.

As an historian I was privileged to watch the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc from a unique perspective. When I first began training to be an official we were taught what to do if, during an international competition, an East German or Russian or whatever wanted to defect. (The answer? Find a police officer, as a cop can take anybody into custody on a temporary basis.) Some months later, we heard that the East Germans had decided not to send their junior national team out of the country, both for fear of those very defections, and because the government had become so unstable that funding was unlikely. Less than two years later I was on the mountain when a group of Latvian sliders showed up, with the CCCP torn off of their jackets, asking to compete under their national flag rather than that of the Soviet Union and from Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Anyhow, as a result of that experience I had developed a fondness for the athletes from Latvia and Slovakia especially, as they had gone from being well-funded representatives of powerful states to poor athletes struggling to afford their sleds and travel expenses.

This brings us, in a roundabout fashion, to the very interesting men’s race. After the first heat, Armin Zoeggeler, the Italian World Cup champion, was in first place. Adam Heidt from the United States was in second. And in third, from Slovakia, was a young fellow named Jaroslav Slavik. Now Slavik was a relatively new guy in luge and had never been anywhere near the top five in international competition. But on that day Slavik was truly world-class. I watched the race and was amazed at how calm and specific he was about driving down this allegedly dangerous track.

During the second heat, Zoeggeler continued to dominate, while Gerhard Gleisher from Austria pulled ahead of Heidt, who had a lot of trouble on his run. That left Slavik to race. Well, he again drove a gorgeous line and ended up, after all was said and done, in second place! Second place! This was a magnificent achievement and a huge upset and had the making of a
terrific TV story. Think about it: an unknown athlete from a small, poor country overcomes huge obstacles to triumph in the big race. Plus, Slavik was handsome and even more handsome when he realized he was going to win a medal. Plus, the $5,000 that Slavik earned for finishing second represented real money for the boy from Slovakia.

So, how did TNT tell this story that night? They devoted most of their broadcast time to an interview with Hackl and Prock, allowing them plenty of time to detail their complaints about the new track. Then they had a short interview with Ron Rossi, executive director of USA Luge, expressing his disappointment that the Big Three had chosen not to race. And finally they showed Zoeggeler’s winning run.

The next night a bunch of us sat around debriefing the races. We understood why TNT devoted a lot of time to the victory by the American doubles team of Mark Grimmette and Brian Martin. We understood why TNT didn’t seem to care much that a bunch of German women did well in the women’s race. But we did not (and I still don’t) understand why television storytellers were unable to latch on to the best story of the entire competition.

As I said, a weird disconnect between the lived experience and the made-for-TV version of events.

Faculty News

**Landmark Books in All Fields**

**ARDEN BUCHOLZ**’s fourth book and one hundredth publication, *Moltke and the German Wars, 1864-1871*, is currently in press with Macmillan in England. He is also completing an essay in German for *Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft*, Darmstadt, for its two volume-work, *Eliten im Kaiserreich*, and reviewing for *The Journal of Military History, Central European History* and *The Historian.

**SUMIKO HIGASHI** is teaching graduate seminars on film history and on silent film in the Department of Film and Television at UCLA during the winter and spring quarters.

**OWEN IRELAND** has been selected to receive a Gilder Lehrman fellowship at the New York Historical Society. The grant for $2,500 is for research at the New York Historical Society.

**JOHN KILLIGREW** published an article entitled “The Northern Campaign of Zhuge Liang, 228-234” in *early Medieval China.* Vol. 5, 1999. Pp. 54-91. Two reviews: *The Tao of Spycraft: Intelligence in Theory and Practice in Traditional China*, and *One Hundred Unorthodox Strategies* have been submitted to the British military history journal *War in History* and will appear in the July 2000 issue. He is also writing three brief essays on ancient Chinese military history for the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of the Ancient World.*

**KATHLEEN KUTOLOWSKI** addressed the Finger Lakes Chapter of the Philalethes Society, the Masonic Research Society, on January 29, 2000. Her topic was “Building Community on the Genesee Frontier: Freemasonry and the Social Order.” Then, for something entirely different, she reviewed a new study from the University of Iowa Press, *Of Cabbages and Kings County: Agriculture and the Formation of Modern Brooklyn,* for *Agricultural History.*

**JENNY LLOYD** has been awarded a Scholarly Incentive Award for travel in her research project, “William O’Bryan, the O’Bryan Family and Bible Christian Women.”

**ANNE MACPHERSON** chaired a panel and gave a paper on another at the “Paradigms in World History Conference” at SUNY Binghamton, March 3, 2000.

**SALAHUDDIN MALIK** recently gave a paper at Scholars Day 2000 called “Emergence of Muslim Community in the County of Monroe: An Historical Perspective” and will participate in an upcoming roundtable of the American Council for the Study of Islamic Societies at Villanova University on April 29, 2000.

**ROBERT STRAYER** has been awarded a Leadership Grant from the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education for the period February 1, 2000 through January 31, 2001.
Scholars Day

Scholars Day this year consisted of several History Sessions chaired by history faculty and presentations read by history majors. Topics varied, ranging from *The Legend and Character of Nero* to *Local History: College Street*.

Jeffrey S. Brown ’92 won the prestigious Raymond N. Ball Dissertation Year Fellowship for his topic “Vitalism and Progressivism: Subjectivity, Social Order and the Modernist Search for Meaning, 1910-1920.”

Jason Clune ’98 is currently a case manager at Covenant House Florida in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. After he acquires the necessary experience, he hopes to work for the Department of Juvenile Justice as a juvenile probation officer. By the way, he loves going to the Miami Dolphin football games.

Jeanette Ford-Fernandez’s ’75/’80 manuscript entitled: *Mao’s Prey; Chen Binrong: A Liberal Intellectual*, has been accepted for publication by Garland Publishing of New York City. Ford-Fernandez was a history graduate in 1975 and, after advanced Chinese language study in Taiwan and Singapore, was one of the first American graduate students to study and research in China after Deng Xiaoping opened China. Chen Binrong (1909-1990) was a famous liberal writer and essayist in Shanghai who experienced the wrath of Chairman Mao Zedong. Ford-Fernandez had access to Chen’s private papers and his various manuscripts. She was the first of Professor John Killigrew’s students in Chinese history to go on to graduate school, experience language study abroad in a Chinese environment, and concentrate in the field.

Larry Frisa ’98 is an 8th grade social studies teacher at Dake Middle School in West Irondequoit. He also just got engaged to Kara Crosby (also a first-year teacher in Spencerport).

Mark DeJong ’93 has finished his degree in Library Information Science at SUNY Buffalo and recently taken a job as a government documents liaison librarian at the University of Maryland at Frostburg. Prior to this he was an adjunct instructor at Monroe Community College in Rochester for five years, teaching transitional studies.

Jacob Gertzog ’97 passed his oral comprehensive exams at Brandeis with distinction. He is now working on his dissertation.

Michelle Korn ’95 received her master’s in education at Nazareth College and is now teaching first grade at Autumn Lane School in Greece. She loves every minute of it!

Lisa Monacelli ’80 had the pleasure of returning to campus this past fall for the first time in 15 years and enjoyed seeing how the campus has changed and how the town has grown. She is still proud of the “A” she earned in Dr. Steve Ireland’s class and regards him as one of the best! She teaches 8th grade American history at Salamanca Central School.

William Neufang ’83 currently resides in Liverpool, NY, and works as a product manager with AT&T.

Bart Prager ’81 currently lives at Salisbury Mills, NY and has been married for 13 years and has two daughters ages 10 and 7. He has been working at the Metropolitan Trucking in Paterson, New Jersey as a pricing manager. Since he graduated he has been back to SUNY Brockport at least twice and says it is nice to see that some of his former professors are still at work.

Anna Schoenfeld (formerly Schlabach) ’97 got married last August to Gregg Schoenfeld ’94. She is an admissions counselor at Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, DC.

Barbara Thompson ’95 is associate director for CStep/McNair Program and also an adjunct lecturer in the Departments of History and African and Afro-
American Studies. During her spare time she has started her PhD work at the University of Buffalo.

**Gregory Van Dussen**’s ‘69 article on Robert Strawbridge appeared in the *American Nation Biography* (Oxford). He and his wife also spent two weeks in July ’99 as volunteers at Corrymeela, Northern Ireland. Also, Van Dussen will represent the Western New York Conference at the 2000 General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

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**Phi Alpha Members: Anthony Leichter and Eric Sterling**

The Department of History’s chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the international history honorary, held a formal ceremony on March 30, 2000, to induct new members.

Congratulations to the following students, whose outstanding scholarship has qualified them for membership:


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**2000 DEPARTMENTAL AWARD WINNERS**

The Chair and Governance Committee of the Department of History take great pleasure in announcing the 2000 recipients of the following departmental awards, presented at the College’s annual Spring Honors and Awards Ceremony on April 5. We congratulate you on your fine record and salute you for your contributions to the department.

- **Jack Crandall Award:** *Melissa Davis*
- **W. Wayne Dedman Award:** *Ronald Satta*
- **Departmental Scholar:** *Wendy Kirby*
- **Robert R. Griswold Award:** *Patrick Sage*
- **Arthur Lee Award:** *Costadinos Tavelaris*
- **Kempes Schnell Award:** *Christopher Brownwell*
- **George S. Queen Award:** *Christopher Brownwell*

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The annual lecture honoring Sig Synnestvedt, chair of the Department History from 1969-1974, took place on the evening of March 23, 2000. The speaker was Kenneth T. Jackson of Columbia University, a distinguished historian of urban America and current president of the Organization of American Historians. His lecture was entitled “Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education.” Attending the lecture and the dinner that preceded it were three generations of the Synnestvedt family: Nadine Synnestvedt, widow of Sig; her daughter Barbara Synnestvedt Karas; and her granddaughter Kily Karas. The event was funded by the Synnestvedt Lectureship, which provides for an “annual lecture by a noted scholar on a topic closely related to Sig Synnestvedt’s major concern: deepening our understanding of the nature of black/white relations in America and advancing the cause of human brotherhood,” and the Brockport Student Government through the History Forum. Professor Jackson’s entire lecture fee was donated to the Organization of American Historians to further its work as the leading professional organization for historians of American history.