FROM THE CHAIR

Diane Vecchio, October 2015

Dear History Alumni,

After six years of excellent leadership, John Barrington has stepped down as Chair of the History Department. John’s years at the helm were characterized by diligence, sincerity and meticulous detail to the multitude of responsibilities required by a department chair. The members of the History Department thank him for a job well-done!

We kicked off the 2015 fall semester with our annual Gilpatrick History picnic expertly prepared by Steve O’Neill, featuring a low-country boil, enjoyed by history majors and faculty and their families on a warm September evening.

During Homecoming weekend, we welcomed back many former history majors, some of whom brought the next generation of future Furman students. A lot of partying continued throughout the day until the football team’s loss to The Citadel.

Since our last newsletter, the department bid farewell to Wendy Matsumura who took a job at UC-San Diego and Cengiz Sisman who is teaching at the University of Houston and welcomed back Professor Jim Leavell, who is teaching Japanese History and our former President, David Shi, who will be teaching U.S. History Since 1877.

In addition to the history department’s high standard of teaching, our faculty members have been busy this year with exciting scholarly activities and engaged learning with our students. Steve O’Neill took a leading role in planning and publishing on the commemorative event: “Fifty Years: Commemorating Desegregation at Furman, 1965-2015” and worked closely with history alumnus, Brian Neumann, who is teaching at the University of Houston and welcomed back Professor Jim Leavell, who is teaching Japanese History and our former President, David Shi, who will be teaching U.S. History Since 1877.

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In my History Senior Seminar, I often ask students to complete the following sentence about their final research essay: “In this essay, I argue...” Please provide a synopsis of your book.

JH: The book is about how people quantify nationalism. It is about how they measure and map, and spread information, and then how they spread that knowledge. There are two primary arguments: 1 that the process of measuring nationality is not obvious. It is a process that ended up being worked out over seventy years, and there are a lot of cultural factors that shape that knowledge. It isn’t people saying: “let’s go measure nationalism.” It is: more about social practice and how people learn to see and measure nationality and 2 that radical nationalism is a product of scientific practice. It is a product of the way people see nationality. The emergence is less about abandoning classical liberalism, disillusionment, racism, but more about how people measure nationality.

To put it in another way, by the beginning of the 19th c. many intellectuals wanted to organize politics based on nationality, but couldn’t because they didn’t know where the members of each nation lived in a spatially specific sense. The radicalization of nationalist politics at the end of the nineteenth century then was less of a change in ideology and more of a shift in terms of being able to see nationality, or being able to measure nationality in geographically specific ways.

SN: While doing research in the 100°F Bombay Presidency Archives (in Mumbai, India), cooled only by ceiling fans, I recall a moment when desiccated bookworms fell out of a 19th century British Indian emigration file and how that sparked a conversation with a new archival clerk. He was puzzled about the existence of the archives themselves. He wondered: who saves what and for what purpose? I had an illuminating conversation about sources, history, and historiographical significance with someone who is charged with managing and controlling records that are part of The Government of India’s contemporary bureaucracy inherited from those about whom I sought to gain insights. It just got me thinking.

Do you have an anecdote about doing archival work or procuring primary source materials for your work that our readers might find intriguing?

JH: I worked with mostly published material. One archive was the Klett-Perthes archive in Gotha, Germany. It was a geographic publishing factory and now its archives are held in that office. It was a leading geographic publisher in the 19th/20th century. When I visited, there was a group of 20-25 senior citizens (approx. early 70s) walking through the factory. I talked to them and learned that they were on a class reunion trip. As children, they used to live in a town called Breslau which is today called Wroclaw. They were in about 3rd grade class when the war ended in 1945. At that time, Breslau was transferred from Germany to Poland and the German residents of the town were scattered as refugees across West Germany. Every year since this expulsion, these expellees have gathered together to celebrate their former lives in Breslau. What really struck me about this experience was how profoundly the memory of expulsion had shaped their lives and identities. These men and women were only in grade school when this event occurred, they did not have a long history together as perhaps a group of high school friends might. And yet they had maintained and grown these friendships through the years and across the miles. One of them pulled out a map and showed me the name of the Breslau still on the map. The geographic publisher continued to publish with German names even though town was now in Poland. I found it fascinating. I mean, what do you remember from when you were nine years old? Here they are still keeping this town, those connections, alive.
One hundred years ago, the nations of Europe engaged in one of the most destructive wars in human history. This past May, a group of Furman students led by Jason Hansen and Marian Strobel traveled to Europe to examine the way this tragic event has been remembered. Starting in London, the course took the students to a variety of memorials and museums (including the newly refurbished Imperial War Museum) before heading out to the battlefields of the Great War such as the Marne, the Somme, and Verdun. For comparative purposes, the group also traveled to Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia to see how World War I has been remembered there, as well as to compare it with the more recent ethnic wars of the 1990s and to meet those adversely affected by the fighting there. Though somewhat of a whirlwind, the trip was an eye opening experience for all participants. They walked in the cemeteries and memorials of France and Belgium, explored underground caverns and tunnels in Arras and Sarajevo, and discovered exciting cultures in Belgrade and Dubrovnik. Students had gained a much deeper understanding of the difficult relationship between war and memory – an awareness that came in handy when the debate started here in South Carolina about the Confederate flag and its symbolism for Americans today.

With Asian Studies: John Barrington in China

Last summer, I enjoyed the privilege of accompanying Dr. Harry Kuoshu (Asian Studies) and 14 incoming freshmen on a two-week visit to China. Among the highlights of the program were a walk along the Great Wall, a visit to the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, a river cruise through the classic, steep-sided Karst Mountains of Guilin, an acrobat show in Shanghai, and a tour through a model village at Yonglian, where capitalist means are used to fulfill communist social goals. We finished at Suzhou University for a lecture program and a chance to get acquainted with Chinese students and faculty. One of many informative presentations was Professor Qinggen Xu’s account of his upbringing in an impoverished rural community: he made it possible to understand Mao’s appeal for so many ordinary Chinese people in the 1950s and 1960s. Throughout our travels I was surprised by the sheer scale of everything — Suzhou, described to me as a “small city,” turned out to have 13 million inhabitants! — but I was most of all struck by the extraordinary friendliness of everyone we met and the relaxed atmosphere we encountered everywhere.

Travel Writing in Italy

Diane Vecchio

Diane Vecchio accompanied Nick Radel (English) and Rich Letten (Communication Studies) and 28 students to Italy for a May Experience course, Travel Writing in Italy. The group flew into Rome and promptly boarded a bus to Vico Equense, a charming village outside of Naples with a view of Mount Vesuvius. In Southern Italy the group visited the rugged coast of Amalfi, Pompeii and Naples. Returning to Rome, they spent five days in the Eternal City and caught Pope Francis in his Pope-Mobile during a Wednesday morning service at the Vatican. Vecchio took a group of students to the ancient Roman ghetto, toured the oldest synagogue in Italy and sampled the local Italian Jewish cuisine: Jewish-style artichokes and dolci ebraici (sweets) such as struffoli (a nut and honey filled dessert). After five days of Florentine Renaissance art (and leather shopping), the group concluded their Italian sojourn in enchanting Venice. By the end of the trip the professors were happy to report that the students’ writing had greatly improved after endless hours of class meetings in hotels. Congratulations to history major, Katie Foster, who published her travel essay from Italy in Cahoots 1.3: The Tourist Issue.
Alumni Spotlight
Ansley Quiros ’08

Interviewed by Savita Nair

Ansley Quiros graduated summa cum laude with a BA in History and a minor in Latin American studies. In 2014, she completed a PhD in History at Vanderbilt University. Her dissertation is entitled: “God’s on our Side: Today.”

Lived Theology in the Civil rights Movement in Americus, Georgia, 1942-1976.

This interview is part of series over the past few issues of the History Newsletter.

Alumni Spotlight
Ansley Quiros and Savita Nair, 2008 Commencement

SN: What did you do to your dissertation topic?

AQ: When I went to Vanderbilt for graduate school, I initially intended to pursue the study of American immigration history. I spent the first year of my coursework imagining the tangents of turn of the century New York, considering the cultural exchanges occurring in urban centers, and wondering about the emerging power of the state to create and enforce national borders. But the deeper I got into my studies of immigration, the more persistent one issue became: race. At every turn it seemed, American history and the black freedom struggle, but also showed the people, events, and conflicts in this town, not, for many, just about lunch counters and voting; it was also a struggle over Christian segregationists claimed that God was on their side, racial issues were imbued with religious meanings. The struggle over civil rights was a political conflict. Since both activists and theological as well as a social, cultural, and exclusions. And this discovery led me to a different line of questioning, one more personal and closer to home; indeed, another field of study altogether. As I pressed into the racial issues at the heart of immigration history, I began to think more about the South, particularly about the confounding relationship between race and religion. These were issues that had long dogged me at the corners of my consciousness as a child of the South, raised in Atlanta, but now I brought to them a historian’s perspective as well as native’s injustiousness.

SN: What was the most intellectually challenging aspect of your doctoral work?

AQ: Hmm, that’s an interesting question. I would say the most intellectually challenging part of my doctoral work was asserting some sort of intellectual control over such massive amounts of material. Whether in a seminar course where I was expected to quickly synopse over the contents of a thousand pages, or in the dissertation where I had to somehow make sense of a million seemingly disparate details, it was a constant challenge to not only understand what I was reading or seeing, but to offer an authoritative or informed judgment about it.

SN: Did your Furman experience prepare you for graduate school?

AQ: Yes, though it was challenging. I was prepared well by Furman to do precisely that sort of thinking. My early years of graduate school were marked by reams of reading. While other students became overwhelmed by the volume and often left some portions unread, I was able to read everything carefully, because of the reading load I had had at Furman. My rights at James B. Duke prepared me well for days in Nashville’s coffee shops. Reading thoroughly and carefully is, of course, the best preparation for thinking clearly. And thinking clearly is the first step toward thinking creatively. Furman absolutely equipped me to work hard and think well. Oh, and to write. At Furman I wrote 3 page papers, I wrote 20 page papers and everything in between. That was also excellent prep for grad school.

SN: What would you say to a current Furman History major who is considering pursuing a PhD in History for an academic career?

AQ: First, I suppose I would say, Good! I’m glad you are. History is an important field of study and we need bright young people bringing their ideas and experiences to it. I’ll answer this one with a story. When I was at Furman, spring of my junior year, I had breakfast with the then-President, the wonderful David Shi. It was one of those meetings to talk about The Future. When prompted, I told Dr. Shi that I was considering going to graduate school. He responded, not unkindly, with a host of important questions—(What are you going to study, specifically? With whom? What foreign languages are required? How will you find this venture?)—none of which I had an answers to. I went to graduate school anyway. I tell you this story because I think there’s advice on both sides. Dr. Shi was right. Going to graduate school is an important decision, especially in today’s market; one should have a pretty good idea of a course of study, an advisor, the skills required. But, though I was terribly naive, I was right too. Sometimes, if you love something, you just have to try and figure it out along the way, hoping and trusting that things will work out.

SN: What advice would you give to a current Furman History major who is considering pursuing a PhD in History for an academic career?

AQ: Oh, there are so many so much of both! Carving out time to do research as a young professor is certainly a challenge, but I continue to find joy in that process, arduous as it is. I teach a 4-4, which is four classes in the Fall semester and four in the Spring, quite a serious teaching load. Though it is tiring, I enjoy preparing class, re-learning the material constantly. I always discover new things as I teach—sometimes the material catches you by surprise. For example, last fall in the survey course, I unexpectedly got choked up talking about the Corps of Discovery. It just hit me anew that the opening of the West created new possibilities for Black Americans and women and my voice thickened with emotion—and on the third class of the day no less! History continues to give me joy, even as I struggle to present it accurately and coherently. It can be a challenge, too, to make the material accessible to my students while also maintaining the integrity of history’s complexity. Narrative helps with this—so I try to tell the story of the past day in class, something I learned from listening to Tim Fehler’s masterful lectures. My students are, by far, the most challenging and most joyful part of my job. Some days I think I cannot possibly answer another question that is already on the syllabus, or answer another email about absences, and then, a student will make me laugh, or their brimming youth will stare up at me in all its openness, or they will just really get it on a test and my heart will melt. It’s a job full of books and full of people and, though it’s sometimes too full of paperwork and grading, it is a happy one for me.
Throughout the nine weeks that I interned at the National Archives, I thoroughly enjoyed learning, in-depth, how records are processed, catalogued and presented to the public researchers. My job as Processing Intern was described as the "arrangement, organization, and description of federal and military documents that are housed in the National Archives." My function was to carefully prepare the collections in this way and present an index for the researchers to utilize when searching for information. In one case, I created a folder list for the U.S. Scouting Force Fleet, assisted the vault manager with descriptions of Presidential laws from Monroe to Lincoln, and created "UD Entry Descriptions" for the U.S. Navy Yard. I was also given projects that were considered "outside of my department," such as writing Congressional inquiries to Senators in Washington, DC and standard requests for the Reference Department.

I was also given a special project relating to documents/papers found in an antique desk formerly belonging to Major Paul Clendenin, an army surgeon in the Spanish American War, that were donated by the Clendenin family. Being in the Processing Department allowed me to observe how a document is prepared, described, catalogued, and filed for future use. The Clendenin letters helped me discover how documents are processed into the National Archives from beginning to end — from the time they are received, processed, put in protective plastic sheets to the time they are stored inside one of the preservation stack areas ready to be pulled for future researchers. Holding documents that were signed and approved by presidents of the United States was the most indescribable and memorable aspect. The most rewarding part was to physically handle historical records that not everyone has the chance to see, let alone hold. Working with these historical documents (that were older than what I have dealt with in past internships) carries significant meaning for me. I had the opportunity to interact with history at a whole new level and I saw the whole "process" of how the Archives implements and makes said documents available for the researching public.

On November 12th, 2015, J.L. "Bud" Alley, returned to campus to discuss his book, \textit{The Ghosts of the Green Grass} (2010), a memoir of his experience as a soldier in Vietnam. He appeared alongside another Vietnam memoirist, James Lawrence, author of \textit{Reflections on LZ Albany: The Agony of Vietnam} (2013). Recipient of the Silver Star and the Purple Heart, and son of Furman's former athletic director, Lyles Alley, Bud is a 1964 graduate of the history department who earned a M.A. in history in 2011. An ROTC graduate at Furman, Alley, who served in Vietnam between 1965 and 1966, was part of an experimental program in which untrained 2nd lieutenants went directly from college to active duty. As it turned out, Alley's introduction to Vietnam occurred at the infamous battle of la Drang Valley, in October 1965, portrayed in the film “When We Were Soldiers.” In that battle, the U.S. suffered devastating losses, but the military high command declared it a victory based on body counts, a decision that arguably contributed to the definition of what “winning” meant in Vietnam. In his book, Alley describes the final stage of the battle—the 2nd Battalion/7th Cavalry’s engagement with North Vietnamese forces at Landing Zone Albany, but he also portrays the chaotic weeks leading up to the battle, when his battalion was assembled haphazardly at Fort Benning, GA.
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2015 Student Awards

2015 Student Awards were given to History majors at the Senior Awards Banquet in April.

The Endel award is given to the top male student in history

Donny Santacaterina

The Gilpatrick award is given to the top female student in history

Grace Tuttle

Student Awards

Jeannine Pregler Chewning (’91) was selected as the John Marshall Foundation’s High School Teacher of the Year in Excellence in Teaching the Constitution. In addition, she has received the Robert H. Jackson Center National Award for Teaching Justice for her work in prevention education surrounding human trafficking. She received the award in November at the National Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference in New Orleans.

Robert Dreslin (’99) is project coordinator at Franklin Templeton Investments.

Jay Miller (’12) is an English teacher in Utashina, Hokkaido, Japan as part of the JET Program.

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We would like to thank very much the following people/organizations for donating to the History Alumni Fund and/or the John Block Fund. The latter is a new fund dedicated specifically to supporting history faculty research. Your financial support is a valuable contribution to our mission here in the department. If you happen to donate through an alternative venue, be sure to stipulate specifically the fund you are supporting so your gift is placed in the proper location.

Thank you to our donors!

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As many of you know, each year in the donation sheet, we ask if you would be willing to "let us put any of our majors in touch with you for the purpose of internships, shadowing or career information." We have received many responses from you and have created some valuable contacts for our majors. Your advice and guidance has proven invaluable. We want to draw upon your vast experiences to help our majors by enhancing this program and creating a more robust database of contact information and careers. We are tentatively naming this the "History Alumni Career Advice and Internship Program."

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Marian Strobel recommends Eve LaPlante's *Marmee and Louisa: The Untold Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Mother* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012). It might seem strange to recommend a literary biography, yet LaPlante’s story of Louisa May Alcott and her mother Abigail May (“Marmee”) Alcott, reveals more about life in antebellum New England than most historical monographs. A member of the extended Sewall clan, Abigail was related to some of the most prestigious of Massachusetts’ leaders, including John Hancock. Willfully marrying the brilliant but indigent Bronson Alcott, Abigail found herself wedded to a philosopher and educator who was unable to support his growing family of daughters due to his own impracticality and dreaminess. The result was poverty and frequent moves, at least thirty in all. Meanwhile, the family participated in the intellectual and reform ferment normally associated with the pre-Civil War era. Born into such circumstances in 1832, Louisa May Alcott yearned for a literary career and frequently supported her family while writing for popular fiction magazines. Not until the late 1860’s with the publication of *Little Women*, did she achieve lasting fame and financial security. Basing the novel on her own experiences, she created one of the most beloved of nineteenth century literary works. What Eve LaPlante (herself a relative of the Alcotts) has accomplished in this dual biography is to separate fact from fiction about the Alcott family and also to add needed detail about the arduous lives of women at a turbulent time in America.


Lloyd Benson recommends Don Doyle’s *The Cause of all Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (Basic Books, 2014). It is an engaging contribution to the new scholarship on the Civil War in a global context. Doyle charts how U.S. and Confederate leaders conceived their war aims and sought to manage diplomacy in terms of broader political and economic transformations taking place in the Atlantic world during this era. Doyle’s interpretation is accessible to a general audience with an interest in how this defining American crisis fits into the larger story.