History’s Happenings

Phi Alpha Theta Members Shine in New Orleans

Lamar University’s Phi Alpha Theta chapter was well represented at the annual Southwestern Historical Association (SWHA) meeting held from March 27-30, 2013, in New Orleans.

Graduate students Casey Diaz and Collin Rohrbaugh, and undergraduate student Valerie Key, each presented papers reflecting their latest research. Diaz and Rohrbaugh appeared on the same panel examining aspects of 19th-century U.S. history.

Diaz presented “James K. Polk and the Whig Press during the Mexican War,” which examined Polk’s attempt to shape public opinion concerning the war with Mexico despite strong Whig press opposition.

In “Jeffersonian Visions: Lewis and Clark and Astoria,” Rohrbaugh traced the development of and influences on Jefferson’s ideology of westward expansion.

Key participated in an undergraduate panel and presented her interpretation of “Lyndon Baines Johnson: The Man, the Politician, and a Champion of Civil Rights,” arguing that Johnson’s powerful and charismatic persona, combined with his passion for social justice, contributed greatly to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The Southwestern Historical Association is affiliated with the Southwestern Social Science Association (SSSA) and meets annually in conjunction with the SSSA. The organizations are committed to mentoring young scholars and encouraging undergraduate and graduate students to attend the annual conference and present papers in a welcoming and encouraging environment.

Congratulations to these young scholars presenting at their first professional conference.

The 1960 Fund Supports History Education

The 1960 Fund, named for the year the Lamar history department was founded, is a gift account to benefit student activities such as travel to conferences and field trips. It also supports departmental activities such as guest speakers, History Day, and faculty development. Recently, gifts were made to cover the expenses of students to attend the Webb Society fall meeting in Huntsville in November 2012, the East Texas Historical Association meeting in Galveston in February 2013, and the Texas Oral History Association meeting in April 2013, where three history undergraduate students presented their research. The 1960 Fund also covers the meals for the initiates of the Phi Alpha Theta history honorary society and PAT members to attend conferences.

(cont’d. on page 2)
**Partnership Continues**

In November 2012, the History Department and the Texas Gulf Historical Society published volume 48 of the *The Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record*. This is the second volume released under the partnership between the department and the society. It features research articles by former History Department chair John Storey, who wrote “Born of Discord: The Origins and Early Years of Central Baptist Church of Port Arthur,” and recent M.A. graduate Cassandre Durso, who contributed, “Two States with One Goal: Texas and Louisiana Recruit Italians.”

In addition, William Grace of the Tyrrell Historical Library provided an overview of the library’s efforts to digitize its collections and make them more accessible via the internet, and Shannon L. Harris of the Museum of the Gulf Coast wrote about Willie Landry, Cleveland Chenier, and Clifton Chenier, Zydeco pioneers who developed the frottoir (or musical washtub) while residents of Port Arthur.

For more information, contact Dr. Jimmy Bryan, editor of the *Record*.

— Dr. Jimmy Bryan Jr.

**Phi Alpha Theta News**

March 6, 2013 marked the annual History Department celebration and Phi Alpha Theta new membership initiation.

The annual banquet allows history faculty, staff, students and their families, and other special guests to reflect on a successful year and honor outstanding history majors.

This year’s new members include graduate students Robert Barton, Kevin Broussard, Mary Kelone, Sabrina Odom, Adrienne Parks, and Collin Rohrbaugh. New undergraduate members of Phi Alpha Theta include Brent Dixon, Viana Hammon, Rory Smith, and Fred Zoch.

Dr. Maya Irish, assistant professor of history at Rice University, served as the guest speaker. She provided a fascinating examination of Jewish-Christian relations in medieval Spain titled, “Convivencia in the Archives: The Jews of Medieval Castile.”

Congratulations to the newest members of Phi Alpha Theta!

**1960 Fund (cont’d.)**

The history department gratefully acknowledges the following contributors to our 1960 Fund.

Carol and Richard Atmar, Dr. Yasuko Sato, Carmen Breaux, Patty and Mike Renfro, Dr. Rebecca Boone and Chris Boone, Tim Knight, Dr. Mary L. Scheer, Christina Wilbur, Ken Poston, Jim Seratt, Robert Robertson.

If you would like to support our Lamar history students and become a donor to the 1960 Fund, please contact: Dr. Mary L. Scheer at 409-880-8511.

— Dr. Mary L. Scheer
Kudos to Faculty!

HH would like to recognize the outstanding work of the department faculty.

Dr. Rebecca Boone has received a book contract from the British press, Pickering & Chatto, for her manuscript, *Mercurino di Gattinara and the Creation of the Spanish Empire*.

Dr. Lee Thompson continues to keep busy with his work on Theodore Roosevelt. 2013 will see the publication of a paperback edition of his critically acclaimed *Theodore Roosevelt Abroad*, as well as a new study of Roosevelt titled *Never Call Retreat: Theodore Roosevelt and the Great War*. Palgrave Macmillan will publish both books. Dr. Thompson has also been an annual Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge University, since 2005. This position, which carries with it membership in the university, is attained by recommendation of the current Fellows and President of Wolfson College. While there he will conduct research for his seventh book, *The Proconsuls: Milner, Curzon, and Kitchener in the Age of High Imperialism*.

Terry Rioux, adjunct instructor teaching online courses in history, works part-time as a security guard for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences in Los Angeles. She juggles teaching and guarding “Oscar” with continued writing on two projects: a biography of famed WWII hero and actor Eddie Albert, and a screenplay of swashbuckling film star and playboy Errol Flynn.


Humans have cultivated broccoli for 2,000 years.

Presidents Resurrected?

During fall semester 2012, Dr. Mary Scheer’s “American Presidency” class provided students an opportunity to research and portray presidents through first-person interpretation.

Dr. Scheer’s assignment coincided with Bill Barker’s visit to Lamar University. Barker is a renowned Thomas Jefferson interpreter who educated and entertained the university community with his uncanny representation of the third president. (See *History’s Happenings*, volume 3, issue 1, fall 2012)

Dr. Scheer’s assignment represents the spirit of history education at Lamar — professors employing assignments that engage history students and students embracing opportunities to enhance their understanding of the topic.

Brown Bag Series Contributes to Faculty Development

This semester, the History Department’s Brown Bag Workshop series entered its third year! Since the Spring of 2011, a group of history faculty and graduate students meet to learn about each other’s research interest. In each session, a faculty member shares a sample of their current project, usually a draft book chapter, journal article, or conference paper, and the participants read and comment upon that work. This also allows for the guests of honor to receive valuable feedback about their projects. The workshops are open to all faculty and history graduate students with the one stipulation that all who attend must read the material and participate in discussion. Dr. Yasuko Sato opened the Spring 2013 series with her paper, “The Mirror of History: The Power of Narrative and the Construction of Japanese Historical Methods.” In March, participants discussed Dr. Rebecca Boone’s latest research on Mercurino di Gattinara. The April 23rd workshop will examine Dr. Forrest’s research examining slave-on-slave violence. Contact Dr. Jimmy Bryan for updates and more information.

— Dr. Jimmy Bryan Jr.
Edited, compiled, and written by Dr. Mark A. Mengerink, who could not accomplish any of this without assistance from Patty Renfro, the department’s administrative assistant, and colleagues who submitted materials for inclusion in this edition of “History’s Happenings.”

Have History Department related news to include in the next issue? Praise or complaints? Contact Dr. Mengerink:
mamengerink@my.lamar.edu

We’re on the Web!
http://dept.lamar.edu/history

Kudos to Faculty! (cont’d from p. 3)

to the anthology, Texans and War: New Interpretations of the State’s Military History, edited by Alexander Mendoza and Charles David Grear, and published by Texas A&M University Press. In November, he spoke to the Tyrrell Historical Library Association about the significance of local history to his career.

Mr. Alan Autrey, history instructor, has a contract with Cengage/Wadsworth to publish an American History textbook, which will be used in freshmen survey courses.

Congratulations to our dedicated faculty members.

Pet Corner

What could be better than pictures of dogs playing in the snow? Pictures of dogs enjoying a nap after playing in the snow!

Patty Renfro, administrative assistant for the department, is proud of her granddogs, Bentley and Baylor, who are this semester’s featured pets in Pet Corner.

Bentley and Baylor enjoyed a recent holiday snowfall in Dallas.

Bentley is eager to start his walk.

Baylor sniff's his way through the snow. All photos courtesy of Patty Renfro.

Baylor taking a nap after his walk in the snow. Photo courtesy of Patty Renfro.