



# History's Happenings

H I S T O R Y   D E P A R T M E N T ,   L A M A R   U N I V E R S I T Y

## Dr. Storey Reflects on Career

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Spotlight on Graduate Assistants
- Local Veteran Honored
- PAT New Members Initiated
- News Bits
- Pet Corner

John Storey began studying history with a very different plan in mind than becoming a professor. "I thought perhaps that I might become a preacher," Storey said, and he felt that a preacher should know something about history. As the young Storey became more acquainted with professors such as Ralph Wooster, Wesley Norton, and Sam Evans, he began to rethink his professional ambition. By his junior year he knew he wanted to teach at a university.

He gravitated toward US Intellectual History, especially the tie between race and religion. When he first came to Lamar, he taught courses on the history of ideas, but all of his writing focused on religion. After approaching a hesitant chair, he was given a class on the history of religion. Storey continued to teach this course on religion in the South until he stepped down last May.

Storey sees technology as the most significant change in the profession since he began in the field. This has

made research tremendously easier with more access to documents directly from the office computer. He also feels that dependence on technology in the classroom has changed the dynamic of interaction with the



Dr. John Storey  
(<http://dept.lamar.edu/history/storey.htm>)

students, for better or worse.

As chair, Storey believes schedule building, as well as meeting the needs of students in tight economic times, were the more challenging parts of the job. However, he felt that keeping the department fresh,

with new people and new points of view was the most difficult part of the position.

Dr. Storey says he admires most professors who remain current and continue to research and write throughout their careers because this reinforces good teaching. When asked about the people he admires the most, Storey recognized Ralph Wooster, Naman Woodland, Robert Reed, Ralph Lynn, and his dissertation advisor, Paul Nagel.

In retirement, Dr. Storey plans to continue writing and traveling a great deal with his wife. He also does stained glass work as a hobby and hopes to do more of that as well. As a distinguished member of the faculty of Lamar's history department, his presence will be missed, though we all wish him well in his future ventures.

— Cassandre Durso

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## Department Mourns Loss of Caraway

Thomas Earl Caraway, Adjunct Instructor of History, passed away January 4, 2011. He was born in Silsbee, Texas, to Virgil and Rose Caraway. After graduating from Silsbee High School, he joined the United States Navy and later attended Galveston College.

He entered Lamar University and received his Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in 2003. He also worked as a Laboratory Instructor in the Department of Geology (now the Department of

Earth and Space Sciences.)

He began work on a Master of Arts in History in 2004, completing the degree in 2008. He served as Adjunct Instructor of History until his death. He is survived by a sister, Carolyn Caraway, and many cousins, nieces and nephews. He was buried with full military honors in the Houston National Cemetery.

Tom was a gifted teacher, often refer-

ring to his teaching as "the best job I have ever had." He approached his duties as he approached everything else – with passion and a drive to succeed. When his voice began to fail, he requested a microphone so that he could continue to work. As one of his colleagues said, "We will miss his enthusiasm and good humor. He was a major presence in the history department and he will not be forgotten."

— Howell Gwin

## Local Veteran Honored by Norwegian Government

On March 4, 2011, Rear Admiral Trond Grytting of the Norwegian Navy traveled to Silsbee Convalescent Center to present Leif Oistad with the Norwegian Defense Medal. Sent in the name of King Harald V, Admiral Grytting was honoring Oistad's service during World War II.

Oistad was born March 12, 1922, near Fredrickstad, Norway, the youngest of eight children. After graduating public school, Oistad worked

as a seaman on various vessels. He joined the U.S. Army in 1942 and trained with the 99th Battalion at Camp Hale, Colorado.

He was recruited, along with other Norwegians and Americans of Norwegian descent, by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) for a special unit to conduct operations behind enemy lines in occupied Norway.

(Continued on page 4)



Front row: Leif Oistad; Second Row: Oistad's wife, Delene; daughter, Lisa Mowen; Third Row: Oistad's daughter-in-law; son, Erik; Adm. Trond Grytting. Photo by Mark Mengerink.

"[T]he project hopes to be the first book-length study of suicide in the ghettos and camps of Eastern Europe during World War II."

## Mengerink Takes Advantage of Faculty Development Leave

Mark Mengerink, assistant professor in the department, was awarded a faculty development leave for spring semester. The leave allows faculty release time to conduct research, write, and pursue other scholarly activities.

Mengerink has visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum archives in Washington, D.C. and the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies on the campus of Yale University

for material relating to his project on suicide during the Holocaust.

Based on his dissertation, the project hopes to be the first book-length study of suicide in the ghettos and camps of Eastern Europe during World War II. He hopes to identify a publisher for the manuscript soon.

Mengerink also continues to examine how heavy metal bands represent the Holocaust, Hitler, and the Nazis in their lyrics. He

recently traveled to Las Vegas to present a paper on the topic to the Southwestern Social Sciences Association annual meeting. An article based on this research is under consideration for publication in an interdisciplinary anthology examining the sociology of music titled *Ritual, Authenticity, and Globalization in Music: An Introduction to the Sociology of Music*.

## Spotlight on Graduate Assistants: Sharon Courmier

Born in Beaumont, Sharon (Michelle) Courmier, knew from an early age she wanted to study and teach history. Like most of us, Sharon had an amazing teacher that opened her eyes to the fascinating world of history. "Her name was Mrs. Blitzer and she taught me that history was more than dead men and dates; that it was full of interesting

stories and people that you could never find in a book."

Sharon's research interests focus on women. "I love biographies and I am fascinated by strong and empowered women." She hopes to teach when finished with her M.A., eventually completing a Ph.D. in history when her children are a bit older. She dreams of returning to Ger-

many and teaching American history on a U.S. Army of Air Force base.

When she has free time, Sharon spends it with her family. Sharon and Paul, her husband of twelve years, have two children. Katelynn Danielle (Katie) is eight and Ethan Tyler is two-and-a-half.

Sharon also likes to read from

her library of 1500 books. She reads widely in history, biography, crime novels, and the occasional romance novel.

Most importantly, Sharon has another dream. "I would like to raise my two kids to love learning and education as much as I do."

## Dr. Forret's Busy Year



Gabriel Forret. Photo courtesy of Jeff and Sharon Forret.

Dr. Jeff Forret, associate professor in the department, continues to produce high quality scholarship, as illustrated by the acceptance for publication of his most recent article, "Slaves, Sex, & Sin: Adultery, Forced Separation, and Baptist Church Discipline in Middle Georgia," by the prestigious journal *Slavery & Abolition*.

In addition to this recent article, Forret also wrote the "19th-Century Slavery" entry for the *Oxford Encyclopedia of American Social History*.

Dr. Forret has impressed the scholarly community with his research, but it seems people outside of academia have taken notice as well. A filmmaker is considering making a motion picture based on his research on slavery.

Most importantly, Gabriel Forret was born on November 1, 2010, making sure that Jeff and his wife Sharon are a little more tired every morning. We wish Jeff, Sharon, and Baby Gabriel the best.

## Spotlight on Graduate Assistants: Cassandre Durso

We have Ms. Atmar and Dr. Gwin, both of the Lamar history department, to thank for inspiring Cassandre Durso with a love of history. As Cassandre admitted, "[t]heir lecture style and passion for their field made me realize that there was more to the subject than the dates and names I had been forced to regurgitate in grade school."

Born in Southeast Texas and re-settling here in 1995 after moving several times, Cassandre graduated from Nederland High School in 1999.

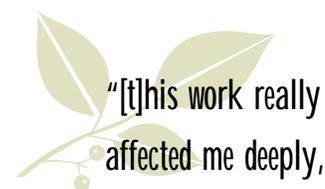
She and her husband, Shane, have two children. Shelby is nine and Harmony is five.

Of the numerous books Cassandre has read this year, her favorite is *Survival in Auschwitz* by Primo Levi, one of the most significant Holocaust memoirs. She stated, "[t]his work really affected me deeply, and showed me that the light of humanity can survive in the darkest of places."

Her current research interests take her far from the Nazi camps of the

Holocaust though. She is currently researching the experience of Italian immigrants to Texas and Louisiana, which forms the basis for her upcoming M.A. thesis.

Cassandre plans to graduate in May 2012 and eventually enter a Ph.D. program when her children are older. Her goal is to become a professor "so that I can inspire others as I have been inspired."



"[t]his work really affected me deeply, and showed me that the light of humanity can survive in the darkest of places."

## Faculty Benefit from Brown Bag Workshops

Under the direction of Dr. Jimmy Bryan, assistant professor in the department, several faculty have organized a brown bag workshop series. The workshops aim to assist faculty in their current research. Participants read a previously-circulated paper by a faculty member and gather to discuss the paper, providing both positive feedback and constructive criticism. The workshops also allow faculty to keep abreast of the current research interests of their colleagues.

February's workshop allowed department members to discuss Dr. Rebecca Boone's research on Mercurino Gattinara, grand chancellor of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

In March, participants examined Dr. Forret's research on slave adultery and forced separation in Baptist churches in Middle Georgia.

April's workshop will focus on Dr. Mengerink's research into heavy metal bands' creation and propagation of Holocaust memory.

Participants envision the brown bag series expanding to include graduate students as well, providing an opportunity to receive constructive, supportive feedback.

The brown bag series will continue fall semester. For more information on the workshop, please contact Dr. Bryan.



## Leif Oistad Honored (Continued from page 2)

After training in Washington, D.C., Massachusetts, and Britain, the Norwegian Special Operations (NORSO) Group parachuted into occupied Norway in spring 1945.

Until the end of the war in May 1945, Oistad and the NORSO Group attacked retreating German army units and destroyed rail lines. When the war ended, the NORSO Group served as an honor guard for the Norwe-

gian Crown Prince in a victory parade in Trondheim.

Oistad came to the U.S., where he eventually became captain of several seismic research vessels. As captain for Shell Oil Company, Oistad and his crew searched for oil mainly in the Gulf of Mexico, but also all over the world. He married, had two children, Lisa and Erik, and eventually retired to Village Mills.

In 2009, Oistad gifted his personal papers relating to his military service to the Special Collections Department in the Mary & John Gray Library at Lamar.

More information about Oistad's military career appears in "Behind Enemy Lines with Leif Oistad: An East Texas Resident Recalls World War II." Based on Oistad's personal papers and an interview with Dr. Mark Mengerink

of the history department, the article appears in the November 2010 edition of *The Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record*.

Sadly, Leif Oistad died Thursday, March 17, 2011. He was 89.

**"I was a bit of a late bloomer in that regards." Patrizi on her switch of majors from biology to history.**

## Focus on Graduate Assistants: Jessica Patrizi

A native of Beaumont, Jessica Patrizi graduated from Monsignor Kelly Catholic High School. After graduation, she enrolled in Loyola University in New Orleans, where she studied biology in the pre-medicine program.

She became interested in history far into her undergraduate studies at Loyola. As she admits, "I was a bit of a late bloomer in that regards." She eventually switched her major and then

transferred to Lamar University, where she earned her B.A. cum laude in history with a minor in political science.

Jessica's research interests center on documenting slave cultural practices, especially those that began in Africa and continued once the slaves had reached America. Jessica hopes to chart the continuity and discontinuity in cultural practices relating to death.

Her M.A. thesis will examine interment and funeral practices and document the death omens slaves used to interpret and resist death. Also, she will explore how these cultural practices served as resistance to the institution of slavery.

Once completed with her M.A. program, Jessica plans to either attend law school or enroll in a history Ph.D. program.

## Webb Society Students Experience OAH Conference

Students in the Webb Society traveled to Houston the weekend of March 17-20 to experience the Organization of American Historians annual conference.

Dedicated to promoting the study and teaching of American history, the organization encourages scholars to stay

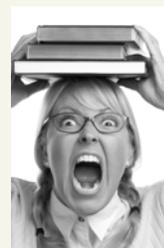
current on the latest scholarship and teaching strategies.

This year's conference included over 150 sessions on topics ranging from the origins of the Civil War to the current Texas textbook controversy and more.

It proved a great opportunity for Lamar history students to

see professional historians at work outside of the classroom.

Webb Society members also volunteered to assist conference goers, enabling them to experience the event from a different perspective.



Our students get fired up about learning.

## Phi Alpha Theta Initiates New Members



New members with Dr. Wooster, l to r: J. Patrizi, M. Minnick, R. Morris, M. Wiley, Dr. Wooster, A. McKenna, A. Williams, M. Davis, A. Lilley. Photo courtesy of Cassandre Durso

The annual Phi Alpha Theta initiation

of new members and banquet occurred Wednesday, March 23, 2011, in the Spindletop Room of the Mary & John Gray Library. Phi Alpha Theta is a national history honor society with strict grade point average requirements for admission.

This year the Mu Chi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta welcomed Katharine Bethel, Madison Davis, Amanda Lilley, Alexandra McKenna, Matthew Minnick, Renee Morris, Jessica Patrizi, Jennifer Whittington, Mari-Kathryn Wiley, and Amarienne Wil-

liams as new members.

Attendees at the banquet were treated to a presentation by Dr. Ralph Wooster, professor emeritus in the department. Dr. Wooster discussed his service in the U.S. Army Historical Division in 1950s occupied Germany.

Congratulations to the new members and thank you Dr. Wooster, university friends, family, loved ones, and faculty for making the evening successful.

## Scholarships Available

The Department of History is accepting applications for departmental scholarships in Fall 2011. Scholarships will be awarded based on academic record and potential for success in historical studies.

Scholarships are available for both graduate and undergraduate students. Application forms are available in the History Office, Archer 200. The deadline

is April 15, 2011. Applicants will be notified by mid-May.

Applicants should have completed 12 hours of history including at least one 3000-4000 level course and 50 hours overall.

Immediately available are scholarships honoring Samuel E. Evans, Harold and Eleanor Fritze, Howell H. Gwin, Jr., and

the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. Other scholarships may become available next fall.

All applications will be kept on file for future consideration. Contact Dr. Howell Gwin with any questions. His contact information is Archer 200C. Phone: 880-8530. Email: howell.gwin@lamar.edu

— Howell Gwin

*"Application forms are available in the History Office, Archer 200. The deadline is April 15, 2011."*

## Patty Renfro: Award Recipient

The university recognized Patty Renfro's commitment and hard work by awarding her a Distinguished Staff Award. Patty was one of eleven staff members to be recognized in a ceremony held April 5, 2011.

As administrative assistant for the department since 1997, Patty has used her extensive experience to keep the depart-

ment running efficiently.

A graduate of Lamar, Patty worked as data processor and secretary in human resources in the private sector before coming to Lamar's history department.

The consensus reaction to the good news among faculty and students in the department is

"It's about time." Everyone in the department realizes the crucial role Patty plays.

Please congratulate Patty on her prestigious award.



Visitors to the department will always be greeted by Patty's smiling face. (<http://dept.lamar.edu/history/renfro.htm>)

WE'RE ON THE WEB!!  
HTTP://DEPT.LAMAR.EDU/  
HISTORY/



## LAMAR UNIVERSITY

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Written and edited by Dr. Mark Mengerink. He would like to thank Cassandre Durso and Dr. Gwin for their articles that appeared in this issue. Thanks also to those who supplied information for the latest installment of *History's Happenings*. The newsletter's success depends on your participation. If you have noteworthy news to report to the university community, please contact Dr. Mengerink.

It is the purpose of the Department of History to impart a knowledge and understanding of the past to the students enrolled in the University. This objective is based upon the belief that such knowledge and understanding improve the quality of life of individuals and contribute to the welfare of our society. The department seeks to accomplish this objective through a program of continued study and research by its members and students. Research interests of the department focus on both American and world history.

## N e w s B i t s

- Dr. Lee Thompson continues to work on his next Theodore Roosevelt biography. This summer Thompson will benefit from his fellowship at Wolfson College, Cambridge. Thompson hopes to complete the book, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great War*, in 2012. This fall he will also attend the North American Conference on British Studies Conference in Denver.
- Drs. Mary Scheer and Mark Mengerink now serve as advisors to history majors. Make sure you're on track for graduation by visiting your advisor often. Dr. Scheer advises freshman and senior majors. Dr. Mengerink is making appointments for sophomore and junior history majors.
- Theresa Hefner-Babb, instructor for the department and reference librarian in the Mary and John Gray Library, had six encyclopedia entries published in late 2010. The entries appear in M.E. Sharpe's *Encyclopedia of the Early Republic and Antebellum America*. She was also elected as the chair-elect for the Library Instruction Round Table and as Councilor for District 8 in the Texas Library Association.
- The department recently purchased several DVD videos with HEAF money for use in history classes. They will be housed with the other videos owned by the department in the graduate assistant office. Space limitations prevent a full listing of titles, but the videos cover American, European, and world history topics.

## P e t C o r n e r



Hi!! My name is C.C. That's short for Christmas Cat. I love living with Dr. Scheer because I can sleep wherever I want. See? I'm in the bathroom sink! I like adventures, too, but this one I had was too scary. I thought it might be fun to take a car ride...on the underside of the car. My neighbors decided to drive to Woodville, so I hitched a ride. Then I explored Woodville for four days until mommy and daddy could rescue me. That's the last outdoor adventure for me! I'll just stick to lounging about the house. I think I used a couple of my lives on that adventure!