Durso Attends PAT Tampa Conference

By Cassandre Durso, M.A. Student

In January, Phi Alpha Theta held its biennial conference for students to learn the art of presenting their original research to fellow scholars. I had the pleasure of presenting my project on the societal change that happened in Palermo, Sicily following the assassination of two leading anti-mafia figures in the 1990s.

This was an invaluable experience that prepared me for my future as a historian, and I was proud to represent the Lamar University History Department to the nation. I hope that in the future more of our history students can take advantage of such a wonderful resource. The environment was a very constructive one, and afforded me the opportunity to meet scholars from many universities, as well as make contacts for networking and research. I was very fortunate to receive assistance from the department for the travel expenses, which is often the obstacle that prevents students from participating in such an event. I look forward to presenting more of my research, and spreading the word about the incredible opportunities available in our department for students of history.

(Editor’s note: The travel money Cassandre received came from a department account funded solely through donations from generous benefactors. If you would like to support more students like Cassandre, please contact Dr. Mary Scheer in the History Department or Janice D. Trammel, Director of Development, Lamar University, P.O. Box 10011, Beaumont, TX 77710-0011, (409) 880-8422, janice.trammell@lamar.edu)

PAT Annual Initiation and Banquet

The Mu Chi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta and the History Department were pleased to host this year’s initiation ceremony for new PAT members on Wednesday, March 21, 2012 from 6:30-9:00pm.

The University Reception Center in the Mary & John Gray Library provided a festive environment for family, friends, faculty, and staff honoring the academic achievements of outstanding students. We were honored to have our very own Dr. Lee Thompson, professor of history, as the guest speaker. Dr. Thompson’s presentation, “Teddy Roosevelt Abroad,” is based on his latest book.

Our annual celebration of excellent history students is the highlight of the academic year. Thank you to all family, friends, faculty, and staff that attended this year’s banquet. Congratulations to all new PAT members!!
Texas History Day A Success

Dozens of local middle and high school students, family members, and friends gathered in Lamar University’s Setzer Center on Thursday, February 23, 2012, for the annual Texas History Day, a part of the National History Day program. The day is the culmination of a year-long effort at helping students actively engage in historical research. Eager students showcased their knowledge of history, critical thinking skills, and creativity through a variety of media, including papers, websites, performances, exhibits, and documentaries. Winners at the local level will participate in the state contest in Austin.

The department extends its thanks to instructors Carol Atmar and Ken Poston, co-coordinators of this year’s event, the volunteer judges, and student volunteers. Without their dedication, History Day could not succeed. Thanks most of all to the middle and high school teachers and students who worked hard to create such outstanding projects!

Department Tidbits

The History Department’s Facebook page is now ready! The department continues to boldly embrace technology and Facebook is a powerful tool in modern communication. Find the most updated History Department news on Facebook!

Dr. Rebecca Boone will lead a study abroad trip to Italy during summer session I. Contact Dr. Boone for more information.

Dr. Mary Scheer has journeyed east along the iconic route to Missouri. The most recent trip found them traveling west to Los Angeles. While in California, their travels took them to two presidential libraries -- Nixon and Reagan, two of the most important presidents in U.S. history.

In the near future, Mary and Richard hope to complete their quest to drive the entire length of Route 66 with a trip from Missouri to Chicago. One wonders...is there a travel book in the near future as well?

Happy Trails!!

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Dr. Bryan was appointed to serve as editor of Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record for 2012 and is excited to work with Robert Robertson, associate editor, and Cassandre Durso, graduate assistant. The Record is currently seeking submissions for the upcoming volume.

In October 2011, the Lamar Chapter of the Walter P. Webb Society (cont’d. on page 3)

Road Trip!

Over winter break, Dr. Mary Scheer, chair of the history department, continued her road trip along the historic Route 66.

Previously Mary and her traveling companion, husband Richard, had journeyed east along the iconic route to Missouri. The most recent trip found them traveling west to Los Angeles.
Department Tidbits (cont’d.)

attended the state-wide meeting at Mexia, TX, where they toured Fort Parker and the downtown district. Members also participated in a panel discussion regarding Texas and the Civil War and witnessed a re-enactment of Civil War-era artillery. The Society also welcomed Beverly Williams as their new co-sponsor. Ms. Williams spoke at the society’s annual Chili Supper on Thursday, February 16, at the John J. French Museum. The Webb Society is dedicated to the preservation and research of Texas local history and is open to all Lamar University students. For information, contact Jimmy Bryan or Beverly Williams in the History Department. The History Department will conduct several Brown Bag workshops this semester. At each session, a faculty member or select graduate student will provide a sample of their current research and obtain feedback from colleagues. Dr. Mark Mengerink presented his work on suicide during the Holocaust on Wednesday, February 29, 2012, at 3pm in the Wooster Conference room. The remaining schedule is TBA but a tentative line-up includes Dr. Jeff Forret’s study of violence in the slave quarters and Ms. Cassandre Durso’s thesis on Italian immigration in Louisiana and Texas. We may add one other later in the semester. For more information contact Jimmy Bryan in the History Department.

The recent rains, while putting the planting of new potatoes on hold, bode well for bumper crops by June. The department’s “garden gnome” (not Howell Gwin), Ken Poston, continues to produce earthy edibles despite the dreary winter season. Poston’s cold crops include cabbage, cauliflower, and broccoli. The new department refrigerator should provide storage for spring’s garden treats, Poston says.

C-SPAN Visits SETX

C-SPAN’s BookTV and American History TV recently featured SETX as its first stop on the 2012 “LCV Cities Tour.” Started in 2011, the LCV Cities Tour highlights the literary life and history of various cities. C-SPAN sends Local Content Vehicles (LCVs), vans specially equipped to shoot and edit video on location, to travel a regional circuit interviewing local historians, authors, and civic leaders. Programming, which aired February 4 & 5 on C-SPAN, included an interview with Spindletop-Gladys City Boomtown Museum Director, Mark Osbourne; a tour of the McFaddin-Ward House with Judith Linsley, curator of Interpretation and Education and adjunct faculty member for the history department; an interview with Executive Director Ryan Smith of the Texas Energy Museum; and interviews with adjunct faculty member Robert Robertson, who discussed the 1943 Beaumont race riot and subsequent civil rights desegregation lawsuits. Other highlights of the week included interviews with J. Lee Thompson, professor in the department, who discussed his latest book Theodore Roosevelt Abroad, and associate professor Jeff Forret, who discussed his book, Race Relations at the Margins, an examination of the relationship between poor whites and slaves in Antebellum South.

Poston’s Green Thumb Dazzles

One Word: Yum.
The last installment of Pet Corner featured Carol Atmar’s adorable cats...well, at least a couple of them. She has more. Many more. But we thought this semester’s Pet Corner should highlight Priscilla, a beautiful Arabian mare that Carol rescued and hopes to rehabilitate. Priscilla is outfitted in her heavy, dull winter coat in this picture, but Carol hopes “to have her polished up by spring.” Good luck to Priscilla and Carol!

Priscilla waiting for a treat.

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; Cassandre Durso and Casey Diaz, graduate students in the department; Mary Scheer, associate professor and chair of the department; Ken Poston, adjunct instructor; Jimmy Bryan, Jr., associate professor of history; 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:

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C-SPAN, cont’d.

Visits to Lamar University’s Archives and Special Collections, where archivist Penny Clark showcased the photograph collection of Dorothy Becker, a nurse during World War II, and the Stark Museum of Art in Orange, TX, where staff members discussed several medieval manuscripts held by the museum, rounded out the C-SPAN visit.

To view the video clips of C-SPAN's visit to Southeast Texas go to http://www.c-spanvideo.org/videoLibrary/ and search “Beaumont.”