From the Chair

It is always a great pleasure for me to write our alumni and update you on the latest developments in the History Department. There is much to talk about. As you are aware, Furman is in the midst of a massive curriculum review process that will transform our General Education Requirements. The academic calendar is also being revised to include two traditional terms and one “Maymester” at the end of the school year. During 2006–07, the History Department met weekly to reshape our major and devise exciting new courses. The process took many hours, but we are pleased with the results and believe they were worth our efforts. John Barrington deserves special thanks for running our discussions and keeping track of the confusing details that accrued as our thinking evolved. His task was not always an easy one.

Another part of the new curriculum is the introduction of First Year Seminars for incoming students. Thus far the History Department has proposed several intriguing ones (such as “Southern Women: Black and White”, “The US Civil War Through the Lens of Biography” and “The Twenties”) that will be introduced during the Fall of 2008. Many more are in the pipeline. Also in the pipeline are Maymester study-away classes in Italy, central New York and the Low Country. The department is also planning for traditional foreign study courses during the fall and spring semesters.

In terms of personnel, this past year has been a challenging one. After an extensive search, we hired Monica Black, a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia, to teach German history and Twentieth Century Europe. Her position is a tenure-track one. Holding tenured posts are Marjan Boogert, Ph.D. candidate in Japanese history at Harvard; Jennifer Lofkrantz, Ph.D. candidate in African history at York; Matthew Gillis, Ph.D. candidate in ancient/early Christian history at Virginia; and Craig Caldwell ’02, Ph.D. in ancient history at Princeton. In addition, we have created a permanent slot for Courtney Tollison ’99, who holds a joint position at Furman and the new Upstate History Museum. Courtney, the recipient of a Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina, is handling all of our internships. It should be noted that missing from our ranks this year are Jennifer Davis, who has departed for the University of Oklahoma, and Jan Kiely, who is on a two year leave of absence due to a position at Johns Hopkins University. He is headquartered in Nanjing, China. Needless to say, so much coming and going proved to be stressful, but we survived and are delighted to have so many new and talented young scholars with us. Kate Keller and Alex Vari, our one year appointments from 2006–07, have found permanent employment at Eckerd College in Florida and Marywood University in Pennsylvania.

Many of you may be wondering about our emeriti faculty. Ed Jones is hale and hearty, and is frequently seen around Greenville. So is Jim Smart, who occasionally teaches a class for Furman’s evening division and is still “wowing” his students. John and Barbara Block have purchased a condominium in Chicago that they visit with their grandchildren. Bill and Ava Lavery have built their dream home outside Charleston; Bill remains busy with Furman activities in the Low Country. Jim and Judy Leavell travel frequently, but will stay home long enough for Jim to teach Asian art during the 2008 winter term. Jim had an impressive gallery exhibit of his photographs in the Art Department this fall. The History Department realizes that many of you are grateful to our fine emeriti for their many talents. To honor them, David Spear is having their photographs reproduced and hung in our suite.

Our students continue to be a joy to teach. Some days are more joyous than others, but most of our classes are vibrant examples of superb teaching and engaged learning. We know we are doing well with our students. Many go on to distinguish themselves in graduate and professional schools and in the business world. They are bright, animated and upstanding citizens. We would love to have you come by and meet them. As always, we in the History Department are grateful for your generous contributions to the History Alumni Fund. Your gifts, no matter the size, mean a great deal to us and help in supplementing our academic programs. As I have written before, your gifts validate what we do. We miss you and are always happy to hear from you. Please write, e-mail or drop by. Our doors are always open.

— Marian E. Strobel
William M. Burnett Professor and Chair
Editor's Note: The department would like to take this opportunity to introduce our alumnus to the department's newest tenure-track member. Following the model of past newsletters, I have conducted a brief interview with Monica that appears below, preceded by a few brief biographical notes.

But before we jump into that, the department would like to congratulate Monica for having garnered two prestigious awards coming out of graduate school. The first is the Fritz Stern Prize, of which the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. awards only two nationally each year. According to its website the award is given to “the two best doctoral dissertations submitted in German history, German-American relations or the history of Germans in North America. The winners are invited to the GHI to present their research at the annual symposium of the Friends in November. The prize winners receive an award of $2,000 and reimbursement for travel to Washington, D.C. Their dissertations will be considered for inclusion in the ‘Publications of the German Historical Series’ published by Cambridge University Press.” And then if that weren't enough, Monica received the Dr. Richard M. Hunt Fellowship for the Study of German Politics, Society and Culture. It is awarded by the American Council on Germany in New York City. Monica plans to use it for travel to Germany to do research in summer 2008. A hearty congratulations Monica!

City and State you were born: High Point, NC

Degree and Field: M.A. and PhD, Modern European History

School: University of Virginia

Undergraduate School: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill


EC: How did you become interested in your field of study (in three sentences or less)?

MB: Strangely, I took almost no European history courses as an undergraduate at Chapel Hill. I took mostly U.S. history, and especially courses in the history of the U.S. south. I had broad interests. I took courses on Latin America, Japan, Africa, and Eastern European literature. But I had German language skills, a minor in German, and I knew I wanted to study history in graduate school. So it happened like that. I think I was often struck by parallels between the histories of Germany and the U.S. south, and maybe in some unknown psychological way that geared me towards German history, having grown up in the south.

EC: Here we are sitting in your office, in your first position in your first year of your professional career (by the way, you need to get some books on your shelf to cut down on sounds bouncing off the walls here), what does it all feel like to you?

MB: People have told me about the imposter complex of young faculty, the feeling that as teachers we will be exposed for not really knowing very much. It’s a real sensation, I understand it. I’ve been a student all my life, now I’m the teacher. But actually it’s quite exciting, and I believe that teaching is a tremendous responsibility, because learning can be painful. To have your assumptions and worldview challenged is not necessarily fun, at least it wasn’t always for me. Although if we embrace and open ourselves to those challenges, they can be incredibly exciting. In any case, I take that responsibility very seriously with my students. I hope to be able to foster the excitement for learning in my students that I experienced myself as a student. And as for Furman, it has been a great environment. Everyone has been welcoming and supportive; everyone in the department gets along and works well together and is helpful. The faculty is very engaged and instructive. For example, I put together a course proposal and Marian came down to talk to me about it, feeling that I should change some aspects of it, but she was fair, clear, straightforward and supportive, and I learned a lot from what she said. Simply put, it has been very good for me here, and I’m very happy.

EC: A couple years ago in this newsletter I asked John Block upon his retirement to survey German historiography and the study of German history from the perspective of his many years in the field. You are just entering the field, so I can’t ask you the same question, but I can ask you the current state of the study of Germany and/or where you think it is headed?

MB: Since 1989, the focus of German historians has been heavily oriented towards the post-1945 period, and especially the comparative legacy of Nazism on East and West Germany. One question has been how the two Germanys, having shared the same past, came to such different conclusions about the meaning of that past under different ideological circumstances. Marxist dogma in East Germany contended that fascism was simply the outgrowth of capitalism and that therefore West Germany essentially represented the continuation of the fascist regime in a new form. This perspective allowed East Germans to more or less wash their hands of responsibility for Nazism. West Germany, however, had a different experience, and especially following the 1968 generation, when German youth began questioning the values and mores of their parents’ generation, a new emphasis gradually began to be placed on remembering Nazism and what had happened in the Third Reich. West Germans began, as they put it, “to come to terms with the past.” It is fascinating how a people who historically shared so much in common could arrive at such differing views during just forty years of separation.
**EC:** I have heard German historians refer to this issue of guilt and the degree to which Germans have had to negotiate this question of responsibility for Nazism. Some have said that they haven’t taken enough responsibility, others have said that they may have even “overguilted” themselves such that it has been somewhat debilitating to the intellectual exercise of studying history. What are your thoughts on this?

**MB:** I don’t really see it as question of having too much or not enough guilt. As a cultural historian, I’m more interested in the question of when the engagement with the Nazi past occurred and why it occurred then, rather than some other time, at all. I think many people outside the field of German history don’t realize that for many years after WWII people in Europe and the U.S. simply did not talk about what happened in Germany. As an example, Raul Hilberg wrote his dissertation at Columbia University in the 1950s on the mechanisms by which the Nazi assault on Europe’s Jews was carried out. It has since been published as *The Destruction of European Jews*, and is considered a masterwork in the field. But at the time, Hilberg had a hard time finding a publisher for it. The political philosopher and German-Jewish refugee Hannah Arendt was one of the readers of Hilberg’s manuscript; even she believed at the time that the book would be of little interest. That’s how things were then. Even the term “Holocaust” was not in common use at that time: the word “genocide” itself had only recently been created, and it only began to be used widely after 1948. It was not until after the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel in 1961 that the term Holocaust came into broad use to refer to the Jewish genocide. So, for many years, the Holocaust, as we now call it, was widely ignored. Only toward the end of the 1970s did an upsurge begin to occur, which became an explosion by the 1980s, with not only academic studies emerging in multiple disciplines, but also movies and survivors’ memoirs and so forth. And so for me what is so interesting and the question that I think we should ask is: Why did this “coming to terms with past” sud- denly emerge then and not at a different time, or why at all, for that matter?

**EC:** And in regard to the future of German studies?

**MB:** I would say that for the “foreseeable future” (which, as we know, does not exist!) post-1945 will continue to be the focus of a lot of scholarship. I sometimes lamented that, as a scholar, because I would very much like to write a book on a nineteenth century topic. Maybe I’ll manage to find one that will fit the bill somehow.

**EC:** Chris Browning was one of my professors at Pacific Lutheran before he left for Chapel Hill. I arrived there just as he was finishing his book *Ordinary Men*. I hadn’t realized until talking to you now that he was part of this explosive wave of Holocaust studies that you refer to. I had assumed that the Holocaust was a topic of intense scrutiny and analysis since the moment WWII ended. I now see what he was doing there at PLU while researching and writing that book in a new light.

**MB:** That was a path-breaking book, not just for the argument he put forward, but as part of this emerging and expanding historiography of the Holocaust. The argument itself and the question he asked are fascinating: How do “ordinary men,” who by any other standard of measure are just regular guys, become willing and able to commit terrible acts of mass murder? It is a deeply human quandary, and he tapped into that issue also in a more general sense—with reference to the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War, for example—rather than just the specific case of the Holocaust.

**EC:** I just read a review of *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* by Michael Mann, who argues that ethnic cleansing and genocide is a distinctly modern phenomenon and is especially associated with the creation and expansion of modern western democracies. His goal is to place the irony of that fact at the center of his argument and to point out how western nations prefer to forget these things in favor of a more sanitized version of their own history, which they then use to judge other nations.

**MB:** It’s true, and it goes to the heart of what I’m talking about in regard to Germany’s remembering their genocidal history. There is a trend among western democracies to forget that almost to the last their histories of nation building have depended on lesser or greater degrees of ethnic cleansing, including the U.S. in its response to its indigenous population.

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**Some Faculty Reading Recommendations**

Rachael Holmes, *African Queen: The Real Life of the Hottentot Venus* (NY: Random House 2007). A biography of the famed African woman from the Cape who was brought to England and displayed as the “Hottentot Venus” in the 19th century. Written by a journalist, but who did sound historical research. Holmes does an excellent job of humanizing the woman who came to be named Sarah Baartman and showing the complexity of her experience.

E. Ching

John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of WWII* (NY: W.W. Norton, 1999). Dower won a Pulitzer Prize for this book, the most important study of the American occupation of Japan. The interplay between US and Japanese officials, the victors and the defeated, and the top-down approach to “democratizing” Japan molded the society in unanticipated ways. A timely read in light of contemporary US policies abroad. Dower has written numerous editorials (see for example, NYTimes Oct 27, 2002) to reject the Japanese occupation as a model for Iraq.

I. Nakayama

Vernon Burton, *The Age of Lincoln* (NY: Hill and Wang, 2007). By Furman alum and leader scholar of the US South, a synthetic, revisionist interpretation. From Publisher’s Weekly: “Burton’s intriguing thesis is that Lincoln’s most profound achievement was not the abolition of slavery but the enshrinement of the principle of personal liberty protected by a body of law. Thus he elevated the founding fathers’ more restricted vision to a universal one. The outbreak and course of the Civil War should be seen in the light of competing notions of what freedom meant, rather than (as has usually been the case) as a bloody conflict over black emancipation or states’ rights.”

L. Benson
Alumni News of Note:

Tony McDade ’79, won the Richard Furman Baptist Heritage Award at Furman University’s 2007 Founder’s Convocation. Pilfering here from Marketing and PR’s press release…

Tony is a native of Union, South Carolina and was the first recipient of the university’s James L. Baggott Award as the outstanding ministerial student. He earned a master of divinity with languages degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he was The Raymond Bryan Brown Scholar, and received the doctor of ministry degree from Columbia Theological Seminary, with specialization in gospel and culture.

Through more than 21 years of service to congregations in the Carolinas, his visionary leadership has translated into faith-filled action in both church and community contexts. In North Carolina he co-founded the Area Congregations in Ministry, an interdenominational emergency-relief agency in Oxford, and in Statesville he served on the board of Habitat for Humanity and as president of Fifth Street Shelter Ministries. In South Carolina he has provided leadership to such agencies as the Clemson Child Development Center, Pickens County Homework Centers and Clemson Congregations in Touch. He has also done missions work in Honduras and Cuba.

In 2003 he returned to Greenville as executive director of the Greenville Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (GAIHN), a comprehensive emergency shelter and transitional housing ministry. As head of GAIHN, he offers direction and oversight to 28 local congregations that have volunteered to provide shelter, meals and assistance to homeless families in an effort to help them achieve self-sufficiency and self-fulfillment.

First presented in 2000, the Richard Furman Baptist Heritage Award recognizes a Furman graduate who reflects Baptist ideals by thinking critically, living compassionately and making life-changing commitments.

Meet Monica Black continued

EC: A question I have asked our past new faculty for this newsletter is: What do you do with your free time? And the invariable answer is… What free time?! So, what do you do with your free time?

MB: What free time?! Actually, I think people get into this profession because they like to read, so in fact we like to read. At one point in graduate school we decided that we were being too hermetic, hunched over computers, working and reading all the time, so we decided to take up ballroom dancing. We enrolled in classes at a dance studio, but then one day when many of us were on the floor taking a lesson, an irate man burst in through the doors demanding to see the owner, who was our instructor. I think he was accusing the owner of flirting with his wife or something like that. But it was scary and everyone in the room was affected by it, so we quit ballroom dancing and went back to reading. It’s safer.

NEWS FLASH:

History Museum of the Upcountry Opens Its Doors

After nearly ten years of work, a Furman history professor and more than twenty-five former history majors will see the fruits of their research and design work immortalized in permanent exhibits in the new Upcountry History Museum (UHM). On September 28 and 29, the Upcountry History Museum celebrated its grand opening with a Friday night gala for donors and a Saturday history fair that drew two thousand visitors to the museum’s location at Heritage Green in downtown Greenville. Heritage Green—bound by College, Atwood, and Academy Streets—is the former location of the Furman Women’s campus. Furman history majors and Professor Steve O’Neill researched many of the stories and events from the past that are brought to life by cast figures, text panels, photographs and short films in the 8,000 square feet of exhibit space. Since 1999, students enrolled in History 84, the department’s internship course, and summer scholars funded through the Furman Advantage Program have worked with the museum staff and a Boston exhibit design firm to discover and interpret the Upstate’s past. O’Neill, director of Furman’s Huff Center for Piedmont History, supervised the efforts by history majors and served as the historian for the overall project.

The UHM’s exhibits reflect a broad transition in the museum design field, away from the old approach of creating repositories of artifacts toward, what one scholar called, the development of “sanctuaries of meaning.” The design process began with an effort to identify and investigate representative stories, people and events from Upcountry history. The designers then used audio, video, text panels and interactive displays to transform the stories, characters and events into history that can be experienced by the visitors. “This approach put a premium on research that was both careful and imaginative,” O’Neill says. O’Neill invites student researchers and interns from years past to return to see what their efforts have wrought. He continued, “All those familiar with the project know, it could not have been done without the work of our history interns. For so long, I told the museum interns, ‘You are doing important work. For the next thirty or forty years, this research will help the Upcountry community understand its past so it can better chart its future.’ They responded to that challenge. I hope they’ll come to the museum now and in the future and enjoy the fact that they gave something to the community at the same time they were learning some history.”


Since Furman is moving to a new calendar and curriculum in Fall 2008, the History Department has taken the opportunity to reexamine and improve its major. The changes have been prompted by the comments of past and present majors, as well as by developments in the field of history, nationally and globally.

While majors will continue to take a minimum of nine history courses, these courses will be redesigned to provide students with a more structured educational experience. Three distinct types of courses will be offered: foundation, advanced and senior seminars. Foundation courses will be surveys that cover extensive time periods and broad regions, such as Medieval Europe, Modern China and Colonial Latin America. The department will offer seventeen of these, covering virtually all regions of the globe. Although the content of the foundation courses will vary considerably, they will all provide grounding in important skills, including the distinctive uses of primary and secondary sources, and the principles of good historical writing. Every major will need to take at least three foundation courses: one on European, one on North American and one on Asian, African or Latin American history.

Advanced courses will focus on more specific time periods, places or themes. They will include such topics as “The Atomic Bomb,” “Gender in South Asia,” and “The History of Science.” All advanced courses will include some study of historiography. Every major will need to take at least three advanced courses. At least one of the foundation or advanced courses must deal with a pre-modern period of history. In their final year, majors will continue to take a Senior Seminar with an emphasis on research and discussion.

One of the most significant innovations of the new major will be an emphasis on integrating what has been learned in a variety of courses, internships, and study away experiences. As soon as a student declares a history major, s/he will be asked to keep a portfolio of syllabi, papers and other relevant materials that will help the student to recall everything that has been learned over the course of the major. History professors will meet regularly with groups of students to discuss connections between courses and to encourage reflection on the larger significance and purpose of studying history.

You might notice that one of the developments in the new major is the elimination of History 11, formerly titled Ideas and Institutions in Modern Western Civilization and now titled History of the Modern Era. This decision was not made lightly or without hours of discussion among the history faculty. History 11 has been a cornerstone of the department’s identity and is a course that is near and dear to many of us. But in many ways the decision to alter the course was made for us by the faculty-wide vote to change the entire curriculum. With no department having sole control over any GER’s, it was left to us to decide if we should/could keep History 11 as the gateway course for the major. We decided that it would be too difficult to do so and also meet our expectations to participate heavily in the new freshman seminar program and also to provide more significant training at the upper division level. We felt that turning History 11 into a menu of course options at the foundation level was the best strategy.

Alumni News

Editor’s note: As usual, we have cobbled this information together from a combination of personal submissions, the sign-in sheet at homecoming and Marian’s honest ear to news;…

Tyler Ames ’06 is a student in Virginia Beach, VA.

Dan Atkinson is practicing Construction Law and General Litigation for Wilkes Law affirm, P.A. in Spartanburg, SC. He is also serving as Counsel for the Medical Committee for the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas.

Jayda Biddix Justus is a stay-at-home mom in Richmond, VA.

Sidney R. Bland contributed entries on Susan Pringle Frost, Eulalie Salley and women’s suffrage to the South Carolina Encyclopedia, Chafee USC Press, 2006. The Sidney Rhoderick Bland History Scholarship at James Madison University was endowed in 2006 by one of Sidney’s early undergraduate and graduate students, the first recipients to be named in spring 2007.

Brian Brewer ’00 is teaching high school AP Geography in Brunswick, GA.

Eric M. Cain is teaching social studies in the Talented & Gifted Department at Alpharetta High School in Alpharetta, GA. He is also serving as a peer diversity advisor and coaches the mock trial team at Alpharetta High School.

Jonathan Caskey ’03 is working in PR for the Southern Conference in Spartanburg.

Susan Clayton Kenny, ’91, married Richard Kenny in November 2006. She is in DSL online marketing at BellSouth in Atlanta.

Stephen Crapps ’72 is a controller in Las Vegas, NV.

Meg Culp ’06 is a student in Birmingham, AL. For the past three years, Charles E. Davis III has served Elon University as Sr. Director of Individual Giving in Institutional advancement—we’re raising lots of money and having a great time!

Robert Dreslin now works for Franklin Templeton Investments in St. Petersburg, FL. He and his wife, Rhoda, are expecting their second child in August.

Ed Good ’67 is working in commercial real estate in Greenville, and is also on Furman’s Board of Trustees.

Kenley Farmer is now an attorney in Washington, D.C.

James Keeler (’78) practices law in Orlando, FL, and his wife, Sandra, is a computer systems professor at Seminole Community College in Lake Mary, FL. Their daughter Alyssa is a junior at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO, where she is a pre-med major. Their daughter Emily is a tenth grade student at Winter Springs High School.

Cathy Lane Watson ’00 is working in advertising for Home Depot in Kennesaw, GA.

Margaret Lewis ’06 is in graduate school in history at the University of Virginia.
Alumni News continued

Courtney Loeb is teaching World History and Government at Dutch Folk High School for the second year.

Barrett Matthews ’06 is in law school in Winston-Salem.

Scott Davis Maudlin is a CPA in Atlanta, GA.

Scott McPherson is at the University of Florida working on a PhD in history, specializing in South Africa.

Laura A. Muckenfuss retired in 1997 from DOD Work and left Washington in 2000. Today she is living in Knoxville, TN, and is renovating an old farm house with a lovely view of the Smoky Mountains. It keeps her busy!

Jeffrey Patterson is still working with the law firm of Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough splitting time between our offices in Columbia and Boston. He also has two beautiful daughters- Caroline and Lilly.

Tyler Pearson ’03 is working in journalism in Macon, GA.

Erin Shelor, class of 1992, is teaching history at Millersville University

Brett Shumate ’03 is working in a law firm in Washington, DC.

Alfred M. Smoak, class of 1950, died on November 24, 2006, in Willits, California. His graduate work was at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, California. He pastured 5 churches in California and retired in 1989, moving to Willits and building a Retirement Home. He and Joyce Templeton Smoak, also class of 1950, were married 57 years.

Will Swinson ’06 is a counselor for an after school program in Atlanta.

Lon Thomas is an attorney in Marietta Georgia—Real Estate Practice with fellow 1988 Furman Graduate Mark Brown.

Calli Vaquero: The department’s investigative team has discovered that Calli was awarded the George Wolfskill Memorial Scholarship Award for Excellent in Master’s Studies at the University of Texas, Arlington. Congratulations Calli!

Ben Wallace ’06, is in law school in Columbus, GA.

Randy Webber ’82 is working as a development director for a nonprofit in Louisville, KY.

Retiree Profile: A.V. Huff

Editor’s Note: You may have noticed from our past editions that we have conducted interviews with departmental members who were retiring. We interviewed John Block in 2005 and Bill Lavery and Jim Leavell in 2006. With no new retirees this year, we have the opportunity to backtrack and visit with A.V. Huff, who retired before John Block.

EC: I see you have a new book out, South Carolina: An Illustrated History of the Palmetto State (American Historical Press).

AV: Yes, it’s actually a revised edition of the book originally done by Ernest McPherson Lander Jr., of Clemson University who was a contemporary of Al Sanders. When they asked him to provide a new and updated edition, he passed and they turned to me, the young kid on the block.

EC: How much new material did you bring to it and where did you find it?

AV: About 30% is new. Many of the images I took myself, others I found in archives and libraries. The South Caroliniana Library has an impressive collection of images.

EC: I am reprinting in the newsletter this year an article from the Greenville Piedmont from 1969 that describes the demonstration outside the administration wing in protest of the administration/trustees decision to not allow Bernadette Dorn to speak on campus. You and Bill Lavery were identified in the article as speakers at the demonstration. Do you recall that event and what can you tell us about it?

AV: I remember it very well. John Block was also a speaker, so the history department was well represented. Later when I became Dean I noticed that all the office doors had big, heavy locks on them. I asked Peggy [Peggy Park, former executive administrator] why they were there. She told me that Dean Bonner had the locks installed in response to that demonstration in 1969 saying that his office would become command central in the event the campus was rocked by student protests like those occurring elsewhere throughout the country. So, he had those locks installed. The first thing I thought of was, ‘Well we’re on the inside now.’

EC: The protest must have occurred shortly after you started here.

AV: I arrived to Furman in 1968 and already at that time there was an active student anti-war movement on campus. I remember one time when Lavery and I were going to the library and one of the librarians, Miss Alice Adams, found us on the steps and said to us, “You two have to be careful. You might not be here long.” I also remember that on the day of the protest we assembled in front of the library to march over to the administration building and as we were making our way over there I looked up and saw Dean Bonner looking down on us from a Chair’s meeting in Furman Hall. His frown was notorious for striking fear in its recipients. But we made our speeches, presented our petition to President Blackwell’s secretary, because he was conveniently off campus. Ultimately, we felt it to be an important issue defending an open campus.

EC: I had never heard of this event until I read the article. Was there much of an environment of student protest on campus at the time?

AV: Yes. The SDS had a southern wing, and we had a branch here on campus. The Methodist student group had an overlapping membership, and I was the faculty advisor for Wesley. I remember at one of our meetings a group of athletes came and surrounded the meeting and stood there trying to intimidate us by looking tough. Someone at the University of Virginia wrote his Ph.D. dissertation about anti-war activism in the south and Furman was one of his case studies and he came here and interviewed all of us. It was eventually published.

EC: Were you worried about the implications of protesting the administration so early in your career?
AV: When I arrived, the history department had an interesting reputation as being a critic of the administration. Winston Babb was actually one of Dean Bonner’s best friends, but the department never bit its tongue when it came to criticizing the administration. Actually Dr. Gilpatrick had been instrumental in establishing the department’s reputation in this regard.

EC: Once you became Dean did you ever find yourself a bit irritated with young rambunctious faculty, as you yourself once were, apparently?

AV: Every element in a university has its role to play and ideas are more forthcoming when we are playing those respective roles. At times I was exasperated, but I was always proud of the differences of opinions that were expressed and the environment of debate that defined Furman. I find that where there is constant peace and harmony, there is not much of interest going on.

EC: Did you see this spirit of difference in any other arenas of the institution.

AV: One of the things that is interesting in this regard is the relationship between Furman and the state Baptist convention. The tension between us was always palpable. Furman was always pushing the convention, and many of our best religion professors had been fired from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. So it was really no surprise when the break occurred. Furman’s opposition to many convention policies was appropriate for an academic institution. One of the concerns I have today is whether our reliance on deep financial pockets might have an impact on our freedom of inquiry. We can’t produce graduates that simply reinforce the status quo.

EC: Have you felt that the administration of Furman has had a strong commitment to this sense of free inquiry?

AV: Yes, for example before Blackwell came here to be President and was at Florida State, he had been called before the Florida legislature to be questioned about whether or not he was harboring communist faculty members. Blackwell did a great deal to establish a reputation of intellectual freedom here at a difficult time. Even though the protests and the anti-war movement on campus gave Blackwell constant problems, I later learned that privately he was pleased with the internal debate.

EC: I haven’t heard of this aspect of Furman’s history, i.e. the student anti-war movement. Has this history been lost from our collective and institutional memory?

AV: Sometimes it percolates up, but yes it has been largely overlooked. Furman has often been a voice for reason and sanity in a state where those traits were commonly lacking. What would have been the fun of being a faculty member at Amherst or somewhere like that? The stakes were much higher here. If you look at the local newspapers and the editorial challenges to state/local opinion, you’ll often find that the writer has a Furman connection, either currently or in the past.

EC: What drew you into the study of history?

AV: To make sense out of the disparities in American society, and southern society in particular, and how those disparities contrasted with the principles upon which this country was established. I’ve spent forty years trying to figure out the south, and South Carolina in particular, and I’m not sure I know anymore now than I did then. But I’m no longer surprised by the things I learn. The British historian Sir Herbert Butterfield, in a little book from the early 20th century on a Christian understanding of history, said that the only Christian doctrine proved by historical investigation is original sin. Historians are sometimes accused of being eternal pessimists, because we study all of the bad things that people do to one another. So we are seldom surprised by what the bad things people do. But hope springs from the evidence of good occurring in the midst of the bad. The great shock for my generation is to learn that achievements are not always sustained. I believe we were making progress in this country in various arenas—race relations, political equality and even economic equity—between the mid 1930s and the mid 1970s. But then out of the same ferment of the 1960s there emerged a backlash that maintained that the rich needed to grow richer and the poor poorer and we needed to allow the wealthy to control government again in a way that had not been the case since the early 1930s. Personally, all these developments have been very distressing. I hope we can restore some of the gains we made then.

EC: As I hear you speaking, it sounds like there exists a relationship between your

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Congratulations to Erik Ching

The editor of the newsletter is certainly happy to congratulate his nemesis and colleague Erik Ching for having used his sabbatical in 2005 to produce the following works.


A study of how the peasant uprising of 1932 has been remembered, and the way in which those memories were politicized in subsequent decades. Relies on new evidence, particularly the original manuscript notes of an oral testimony collected by the famed poet and martyr, Roque Dalton. We were the first scholars to be granted access to Dalton’s archive by his family since his death in 1975.

Reframing Latin America: A Cultural Theory Reading of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), co author with colleagues from Furman’s Modern Language department, Christina Buckley and Angélica Lozano-Alonso. This book grew directly out of the IDS75 capstone seminar in Latin American Studies taught at Furman. Designed for undergraduates and a general audience, it offers an introduction to cultural theory/postmodernism and uses that theoretical framework to interpret Latin America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Las masas, la matanza, y el martirio en El Salvador: ensayos sobre 1932 (San Salvador, El Salvador: University of Central America—UCA—Editores, 2007). Coauthored with Carlos Gregorio López Bernal and Virginia Tilley. This book offers translations of three revised articles by Ching dealing with the 1932 uprising that were previously available only in English. One article was co-authored with Tilley, and a fourth article is new and authored by Bernal. The goal is to make accessible Ching’s work to audiences in El Salvador in Spanish for the first time.
Congratulations John Barrington

John published a chapter entitled “Symbiotic Strength: An Eighteenth-Century View of the British-American Relationship,” in America in the British Imagination, edited by Catherine Armstrong, Roger Fagge and Tim Lockley (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007). Many historians assume that huge differences in climate and racial composition made Britain and its American colonies so distinct that they were bound to develop separate national identities. The sources John examines for this chapter suggest that the opposite was true: different climates and products, and even the slave labor that produced some of those products, were factors that made the British Empire into a single, organic nation.

NEWS FLASH: Courtney Tollison’s Position with Department Redefined

In September 2007, the Upcountry History Museum opened its doors to the public. Our colleague Steve O’Neill has played an integral role as a consulting historian throughout the duration of the construction. In recent years, Steve has been involved in the museum’s oral history and local history research projects, and much of that work has contributed to the exhibit design. Beginning in September 2007, Courtney Tollison, who has served as visiting assistant professor of history since 2004, began a joint position that involves teaching courses in the Furman History Department while also serving as the Museum Historian. Tollison will teach History 84, our internship course, as well as other history courses. This joint position will allow Furman students to apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to doing public history. Currently, seven Furman students are assisting with a video documentary on the contributions of upcountry residents to World War II. The History department is excited about our affiliation with the museum and the possibilities it creates to develop the research skills of our students.

Retiree Profile: A.V. Huff continued

profession as a historian and your personal moral compass, with the former informing the latter.

AV: That is true, and there are historians with a different set of values who read the same period of history that I’m talking about very differently.

EC: How have you seen the study of South Carolina history change, or not in the 40 years you have been studying it?

AV: Interpretations of South Carolina history have roughly mirrored historiographical developments in the discipline of history more broadly. But South Carolina has a lot of people with an interest in history who wave the flag and are basically apologists for many less admirable aspects of South Carolina’s history. But there has always been a core of what we might call more “thoughtful” historians whose studies have followed those of the historical professional more broadly. Of course, the flag wavers define these other historians as eccentric story tellers and they more or less disregard what they are saying. I’ve heard so many students, here and elsewhere, talk about how great this or that teacher was, but then express beliefs totally contradictory to what the teacher was saying. I can think back to the students who absolutely loved Dr. Gilpatrick and sought his classes out just to hear him speak, but then rejected many aspects of what he said that they didn’t like.

EC: It sounds like you are saying that those folks you are referring to compartmentalized information, accepting the aspects they wanted and rejecting the rest.

AV: That’s right, and it should tell us that professors should never take ourselves too seriously. But we have to be faithful to our calling and let the chips fall where they may. If people choose to ignore what we say, that’s their choice. I remember Lavery used to say to his students, “I’m casting imitation pearls before real swine.”

EC: What do you think of the changes, or lack thereof, at Furman over these 40 years?

AV: Furman has changed in some ways and in other ways it hasn’t. Furman has always had a strong core of committed scholars and a body of intriguing and eager students. I think that faculty core has gotten larger. Ed Jones used to say that our goal in hiring in the department should be to leave it stronger than when we found it. I think the evidence indicates that we have achieved that. The department has always attracted good faculty and strong students. When I came, it was clear that History was recognized as a leading department on campus, and now one of the things confronting us is the fact that many other departments have improved greatly and so the department has more competitors now.

EC: I’ve felt that since I’ve gotten here (the last hiring mistake the department made) that we have had a streak of great hires. It seems that every year we can go out onto the market and identify the one or two top candidates and land one of them.

AV: This is part of the growth of the university’s reputation as a whole and especially of its financial resources. Today it is able to provide competitive salaries. When I arrived here I earned a salary of $9,000 and there were many professors who had been working here for a decade or more who were making little more. That was a shame, but that was the reality of it. Furman has made great progress, but we are not there yet. I remember when I was on one of the first strategic planning committees; we said that if we could raise 100 million dollars in endowment by 2000 the school’s financial worries would be over forever. Now we are at over $500 million and we need another $500 million to get to that place. But that’s an attainable goal. We used to laugh at Blackwell’s insistence that Furman should be great by national standards. We don’t laugh about that any more.

EC: The analogy I use to describe how it felt arriving here in 1998 when I came was like stepping onto a fast moving ship that was under a full head of steam.

AV: I felt the same way in 1968. But of course I always enjoy thinking of one of Charles Brewer’s great lines to his students, “Who would ever have thought that you could get such a great education in greater Traveler’s Rest?”
Met Our Other New Non Tenure-Track Colleagues

MARJAN BOOGERT

City and State you were born: Delft, The Netherlands
Degree and Field: Ph.D. Candidate, East Asian Languages and Civilizations
School: Harvard University
Undergraduate School: Leiden University
Dissertation title, or working title: Working title: Being a Daimyo in Seventeenth-Century Japan
How did you become interested in your field of study (in three sentences or less)? In college, where I majored in Japanese studies, I realized that my favorite classes were in history. That made me reconsider my notion that I would end up working in international business or as a diplomat, and after spending some time in Japan for further study I decided to pursue a degree in early modern Japanese history.
Book Currently on Your Bedside Table: Grotesque, by Natsuo Kirino

JENNIFER LOFKRANTZ

City and State (Province) you were born: Vancouver, British Columbia
Degree and Field: Ph.D (in progress) African History (M.A Queen’s University, African History)
School: York University
Undergraduate School: Simon Fraser University
Dissertation title, or working title: Ransoming and Redemption in the Western and Central Bilad al-Sudan c1800-1910.
How did you become interested in your field of study (in three sentences or less)? I took my first African history course as an undergraduate because I wanted to know why there were Muslims in Africa and I got hooked. My interest in ransoming stems from my studies of slavery and Islamic law.
Book Currently on Your Bedside Table: Other Colors: Essays and a Story by Orhan Pamuk and Framing the Early Middle Ages by Chris Wickham

MATTHEW GILLIS

City and State you were born: Madison, Wisconsin
Degree and Field: Ph.D. in History, specializing in Medieval Europe; M.A. Medieval Studies
School: University of Virginia (Ph.D.) and Western Michigan University (M.A.)
Undergraduate School: University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point
Dissertation title, or working title: Gottschalk of Orbais: A Study of Meaning, Power and Spirituality in a Ninth-Century Life
How did you become interested in your field of study (in three sentences or less)? I decided to become a medievalist after reading the work of J.R.R. Tolkien, as well as ancient and medieval texts like Vergil’s Aeneid and Beowulf. Interested in intellectuals from these periods (especially theologians) and liking a challenge, I decided to focus on the Latin thinkers of the “Dark Ages,” who tend to be derided today as unoriginal, uninteresting and uninspiring. I hope to revise such views by focusing on the relationship between early medieval spirituality and theology on the one hand and political power on the other.
Book Currently on Your Bedside Table: Spinoza, Ethics

CRAIG H. CALDWELL, III

City and State you were born: Bristol, TN
Degree and Field: Ph.D. in History (Late Antiquity)
School: Princeton University
Undergraduate School: Furman University
Dissertation title: “Contesting Late Roman Illyricum: Invasions and Transformations in the Danubian-Balkan Provinces”
How did you become interested in your field of study (in three sentences or less)? I decided to become a medievalist after reading the work of J.R.R. Tolkien, as well as ancient and medieval texts like Vergil’s Aeneid and Beowulf. Interested in intellectuals from these periods (especially theologians) and liking a challenge, I decided to focus on the Latin thinkers of the “Dark Ages,” who tend to be derided today as unoriginal, uninteresting and uninspiring. I hope to revise such views by focusing on the relationship between early medieval spirituality and theology on the one hand and political power on the other.
Book Currently on Your Bedside Table: Spinoza, Ethics
Some History of the History Department

Editor's Note: Here's a little something that emerged from Professor Lavery's office as he was cleaning it out upon retirement. In good historian style, he preserved some primary evidence. This is particularly relevant to our interview with Professor Huff below, as well as providing an interesting look at campus politics in the late 1960s. By the way, an excellent documentary on B. Dorn and her post SDS years in the Weather Underground came out a couple years ago. See: The Weather Underground, 92 min., directed by Sam Green, released May, 2004.

From: The Greenville Piedmont, May 23, 1969
350 Students, Faculty Rally Against FU Speaker Policies

**An estimated** 350 Furman University students and faculty held a rally outside the administration building this morning protesting the university policy concerning outside speakers.

The rally was concluded by presentation of a petitions signed by 625 persons, including some members of the faculty, to the administration. Spring enrollment at Furman is 1,783.

The petition came in response to the university's denial of a request for Miss Berandine Dohrn [Dorn], a staff member of Students for Democratic Society (SDS), to speak on campus this week.

An administration spokesman said Miss Dohrn was found unacceptable based on university policy established in January 1968, concerning outside speakers.

The policy says “speakers should not include those who, on the basis of past record and stated views, may be expected to indulge in obscenity, condone immorality, or to advocate overt disobedience of the law and the use of violence.”

Miss Dohrn was the second speaker denied under the policy this year. Earlier Rennie Davis, who was an organizer of the demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, was denied permission to speak.

The petition backed a charge by student body president Ron McKinney of Greenville campus because of ideas he is going to present in obscenity, condone immorality, or to advocate overt disobedience of the law and the use of violence.”

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McKinney explained the background of the speaker policy conflict, noting that he and a group of students have studied the situation, looking particularly at policies on other campuses.

“It is our feeling that Furman should have a free, open platform,” McKinney said. 

**William J. Lavery**, history instructor, told the students, “We have come here today because we care for Furman and we respect the goals she has set for herself.”

Lavery added, however, that a “major stumbling block” to Furman’s academic progress has been “a lack of concern for her policies and a lack of confidence in ourselves.”

Lavery referred to Wofford College as an institution quite similar to Furman, but with a speaker policy which allows anyone who is willing to subject himself to questioning to speak on campus.

**A.V. Huff**, also a member of the history department and a Methodist minister, concluded the rally, stating that freedom of expression and inquiry is “a part of Furman’s tradition.”

Huff praised the work of recent administrators and teachers and called the present speakers policy “a forward step.”

“But the spirit of free inquiry is today under attack from both the right and the left,” Huff said, calling for commitment to the principles of freedom of expression and inquiry.