HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

From the High Chair...

I have spoken to you in the past about the importance of global awareness and the study of foreign languages and cultures. I could not have imagined how frighteningly prophetic these thoughts would be until that fateful day on September 11, 2001. History can change with the explosive intrusion of a single cataclysmic event. To most Americans, what did Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and even Afghanistan mean to them prior to 9/11/01? After that day, however, the world was different, fundamentally changed, and a new vocabulary of places and people flooded our televisions and computer screens night and day. Suddenly it did matter that a multiplicity of languages were spoken in far-off Afghanistan, and that warlords and tribal groups ruled over a dizzying mosaic of plain, valley, and mountain. Seemingly unimportant events conspiring in a troubled land ruled by misguided Islamic fundamentalists and foreign terrorists came home to us—we became students of global history overnight. A history lesson learned the hard way—a superpower cannot hide from the world and its problems. "Splendid isolation" is no longer an option. And aren’t we so very thankful that we live in a country where the separation of church and state constitutes one of our most cherished freedoms?

"It was the best of times. . . ." This has been a very busy year, and the faculty continue to bring lustre to the department. Professor Fred Baumgartner was honored as the Social Science Historian of the Year; Professor Roger Ekirch received two awards recognizing his seminal article in the American Historical Review; Professor Amy Nelson won a Certificate of Teaching Excellence, one of only five awarded in the entire College of Arts and Sciences; and the team of Professors Dan Thorp, Marian Mollin, Kathy Jones, and Mark Barrow won a prestigious award from the Center for Innovation in Learning to create and test online interactive learning modules for the core U.S. history survey classes. Professor Ewing was co-organizer of a global history symposium for public school teachers in the region held at Virginia Tech last November, a wonderful and timely opportunity for outreach and continuing education. While Professor Thorp is off in New Zealand on a Fulbright Fellowship this semester, Professor Richard Hirsh has been admirably serving as acting associate chair of the department. Professor Randy Shifflett won a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to continue his work on "Virtual Jamestown". Be on the lookout for a film coming out this at the end of this year—Professor James Robertson is the consultant for a film on the Civil War starring Robert Duvall. This year, the department designed and proposed a Ph.D in History focusing upon global and comparative studies and a new technology-based M.A. and Ph.D program called Clio-informatics (Clio being the Greek mythological muse of history). In addition, our efforts to form a History Alumni/ae Advisory Board are proceeding apace, and I am delighted to report that our very first board member is history alum Philip Shucet, the newly-appointed Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Transportation. More on Philip later in the Newsletter. Special thanks to Ron and Sue Crawford for their generous gift of stocks to the department and to Mac Banks, History, ’72, for his funding of the annual Banks Prize for the top graduating history major. Please pencil in the College of Arts and Sciences social science alumni/ae reunion scheduled to coincide with the Virginia Tech-Pitt football game on Nov.1-2, 2002. The History Department will offer some informational presentations on the latest activities of the faculty. Come and join the fun.
It was the worst of times. . . . Well, it can’t get much worse. We have been hit with devastating budget cuts, hiring has been frozen, major restructuring plans are going on which may mean the end of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the department is facing a flood of nearly 5,000 students per year pounding on our doors to fulfill the Board of Visitors’ unfunded mandate to take an introductory U.S. history course before graduating. There is no hope of accommodating these numbers without additional resources from the college and the university. We will have to be creative. . . . and count on the kindness of strangers.

With sadness I report the deaths of two of our beloved retired colleagues, Professors Les Mellichamp in December 2001 and Bill Lane in January 2002. There are obituaries elsewhere in this issue, but I cannot fail to say a few words about them. Les taught our Intellectual European History course, was an old-world humanist and literary editor, and entertained our social gatherings with his music. I remember the uninhibited exuberance of a youngish faculty flat-footing to the music of Les and his local band, and a certain innocence that vouchsafed that we ought not to take ourselves too seriously. As for Bill, a sweet and decent guy who taught Latin American history and did some advising in his later years, he was always upbeat, down-to-earth southern friendly, and appreciated a good joke—and even a bad one. Both of these men survived the difficult publish-or-perish years of the 1980s with dignity and grace. They never doubted that the students and undergraduate education should always come first.

Professors From the Past....

In response to numerous requests from alumni asking about their favorite professors, we wrote every professor we could remember, requesting an update on their activities since leaving Virginia Tech. Many have moved on and their letters returned as "undeliverable". But several responded and we hope you enjoy catching up with some of your favorite professors from the past.

Leslie Mellichamp responded to our request for the article on faculty from the past in November 2001. "I am responding to your request for news. By way of an economical reply, I enclose a copy of the back cover of a collection of poems published not long after my retirement from the history department in 1985. Of course, almost twenty years have passed since that was written. My daughter, Jean Milliken, took over The Lyric several years ago, and old age and Parkinson's Disease have overtaken me. I still garden a bit, make a little music, and write a little poetry." The back cover of the book of poetry states: "Leslie Mellichamp was born in 1921, the same year as The Lyric, the poetry magazine with which his name has been associate for thirty years, and of which he has been the editor since 1977. After not in the classroom teaching courses ranging from electrical engineering to intellectual history to Shakespeare, he could usually be found playing the bass fiddle with local bluegrass or jazz bands, or lying, often sober, under his 1953 Studebaker Commander. He gardens and cuts wood. Betsy, his wife of forty years, occasionally threatens to wash his mouth out with soap or to resign as managing editor of The Lyric—both with perfect justice. Their three children, Jean, Nancy, and David, are scattered from New Orleans to Vermont to Italy. He retired, unrepentant from the history department at Virginia Tech in 1985."

(Editor's Note: Sadly, Dr. Mellichamp passed away on December 18, 2001, shortly after responding to our newsletter update request).

Robert G. Landen was associated with Virginia Tech during two separate periods. Dr. Landen writes: "First, the time from the summer of 1967 to the summer of 1969 when I gave up a position at Dartmouth to serve as the first permanent "head" of the Department of History (note: History was part of a large, service-oriented, Department of Social Science until 1966 when it became a separate department and was administered by Professor Bill Mackie as "acting head" until I joined its faculty); second, the years from the fall of 1988 to July 1995 when I returned to Blacksburg as Director of the center for Programs in the Humanities and Professor of History and Humanities. After leaving Virginia Tech for the first time in 1969, I continued to teach courses in modern Middle Eastern history, published a number of scholarly books and articles about the area, and participated in academic conferences. But, during most of the nineteen years until my second arrival in Blacksburg in 1988, my primary focus was on discharging a succession of academic administrative positions in a number of universities. After retiring from my second term at Virginia Tech in 1995 I was appointed Professor Emeritus of History and Humanities at the University. My wife, Tricia, and I, both undergraduate alumni of the College of William and Mary, moved back to Williamsburg later in 1995. Our two major achievements—both with perfect justice. Their three children, Jean, Nancy, and David, are scattered from New Orleans to Vermont to Italy. He retired, unrepentant from the history department at Virginia Tech in 1985."

(Professor Emeritus of History and Humanities at the University. My wife, Tricia, and I, both undergraduate alumni of the College of William and Mary, moved back to Williamsburg later in 1995. There, we have kept more than busy with alumni and other activities at William and Mary, redoing a "mature" home, gardening, raising family pets, taking painting and other classes, volunteering at Colonial Williamsburg, sojourning frequently to our second home on North Carolina’s Outer Banks, and laboring upon my major on-going project: writing a scholarly history of the Persian/Arabian Gulf region in modern times."

Anastatia Sims (1984-87) is alive and well and living in Statesboro, Georgia, where she is Professor of History at Georgia Southern University. She has written one book, The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880-1930 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997) and served as co-editor for a collection of essays Negotiating the Boundaries of Southern Womanhood: Dealing with the Powers That Be (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000). Currently she is working on a biography of Juliette Gordon Low, founder of the Girl Scouts of the United States.

Jere Link, former assistant professor in history and humanities, taught at Virginia Tech 1989-1991. While teaching German history, he team-taught Humanities as well. During his stay in Blacksburg, Jere won a grant to do archival work in Germany one summer, attended two conferences, and read a paper on the German Schiller Fund, 1859-1917, a charitable foundation for needy writers, their widows and
orphaned. Jere left Tech to accept a position at an Atlanta prep school. At Westminster, Jere has found the advantages of an endowment of ca. $200,000,000; also, his métier, teaching bright adolescents. He is even reconciled to survey courses. At Westminster, Jere teaches Philosophy and Russian History electives, and, like Tech colleagues, has had to adapt to the teaching of World and Global History. Jere is serving his fourth year as chairman of his department of 21 teachers. He is the proud single father of Zach, 78 pounds (half-Chow, half-Shepherd). News from the B’burg crowd will be much appreciated at his e-mail address: jereLink@westminster.net.

Herbert Winnik: “I was a professor at Virginia Tech from 1965-1969. I left to go to St. Mary’s College of Maryland, a small liberal arts state college. I was a professor at there from 1969-1999 and am now retired. I served as acting department chair, and president of the Faculty Senate two times as well as on numerous committees. I reside in Leonardtown and would be happy to hear from some of my colleagues during those years.”

Arthur Hirsh: “I have been in Vienna now for 1.5 years and I’m enjoying it immensely. It’s a beautiful, very safe city, with incredible cultural institutions and a large international community. There are many international organizations located here including the UN, OSCE, and OPEC to name a few. At the Webster-Vienna campus that I direct we offer Bachelor and Master degree programs to 400 students from 60 different nations, so we are very much an international community as well. (You can find out more about us at our webpage: www.webster.ac.at ). Webster has a network of such campuses in Europe (London, Geneva, Leiden, as well as Vienna) and Asia (Shanghai and Thailand) as well as the main campus in St. Louis, Missouri. I will have the opportunity to be Interim Director of our Thailand campus for 3 months (January thru March, 2002) until we find a permanent Director there. It will be my first time in Asia and I am really looking forward to the challenge (but I will also be happy to get back to Vienna afterwards!). If anyone is passing through Vienna or wants to say hello, they are welcome to contact me.”

Voula Saridakis: “I finally defended and finished up my Ph.D. in Science and Technology Studies. The title is ‘Converging Elements in the Development of Late-Seventeenth Century Astronomy: Instrumentation, Education, Networks, and the Hevelius-Hooke Controversy’. Also, I am currently a Visiting Scholar with the University of Chicago’s Conceptual and Historical Studies of Science program.”

Mary Neth: “I am currently Associate Professor of History at the University of Missouri-Columbia. I teach graduate and undergraduate courses in U.S. women’s history and social history, as well as the U.S. history survey. I also added a course titled “Gender, Race and American Popular Culture” to my repertoire this semester (F’01). My book, Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, was published in 1995 and is available in a paperback edition (Johns Hopkins University Press). My current book project is “Tapping the Margins: Women, Gender and Performance in the History of Tap Dancing”. This is a collaborative project with VT’s own Ann Kilkelly (Professor of Theater and Women’s Studies). For this project, we received two Senior Smithsonian Fellowships (one in the summer of 1999 and a second in the summer of 2000. We were the first collaborative project ever to be awarded a fellowship at the National Museum of American History) and, currently, a two-year National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Grant (2001-2003). I am also co-editing an anthology on the history of women in Missouri with my University of Missouri colleague (and also a former VT history department member), LeeAnn Whites. I also recently published an essay entitled “Seeing the Midwest with Peripheral Vision: Identities, Narratives and Region” in the book entitled "The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History" edited by Andrew R.L. Cayton and Susan E. Gray, (Indiana University Press, 2001). The essay does mention my sojourn in Blacksburg and "the South," so might be of some interest to VT grads.”

Kathleen Hilton is at University of North Carolina--Pembroke and is currently Acting Dean of the Graduate School.

Professor Ronald J. Nurse is completing his last semester at Virginia Tech this spring. Professor Nurse has served Virginia Tech for over thirty years in the College of Arts and Sciences, beginning in 1971. He was a dedicated teacher of a wide range of courses from freshman to advanced-graduate level. He advised and counseled numerous undergraduate and graduate students during his long career, and chaired or served on four Ph.D. and 12 M.A. committees. Professor Nurse made important contributions in research on modern American foreign policy, particularly on the Vietnam War, authoring one book, Development of American Foreign Policy, and five journal articles and book reviews, delivering numerous professional papers at national conferences, and lecturing at many public schools in the region. He was the recipient of the university’s Sporn Award for Excellence in Teaching (1972-73) and two Certificates of Teaching Excellence; was elected as a member of the Academy of Teaching Excellence; served as Assistant Provost (1976-80), Director of the Summer School (1976-80), President of the Virginia Association of Summer School Deans and Directors (1978-81), Vice-Chair of the commission on Undergraduate Studies (1976-80), Director of the University Honors Program (1976-90), Director of the Governor's School for the gifted (1983-89), and Co-Director of the Freshman Orientation Program (1976-90); served as presenter/chair of over thirty sessions, panels, and workshops at annual Honors Conferences (1976-90); and served on many departmental committees. Professor Nurse will be moving on to Seattle, Washington in May, to be closer to family and pursue other interests.

Faculty In The News...

Ginette Aley is a Ph.D. candidate from Iowa State University working on a dissertation tentatively titled "The American Midwest at Dawn"; it is a study of the canal era. Ginette came here to teach HIST 1004 this spring and summer, having already taught 3 upper-level courses at Iowa State. Last fall, she published a brief article on Irish immigrants in the Midwest, in Indiana Canals. Besides
teaching the course, this semester she has submitted three encyclopedia articles—one being a 2,000 word thematic essay on Midwestern canals, two book reviews, and is also the abstractor for the Journal of Southern History.

Linda Arnold developed a senior seminar on the Mexican-American War and the Media, 1846-1848, in which students, collaboratively and collectively, evaluated a documentary series, analyzed articles on the role of the media in that war, and produced electronic transcriptions all of the articles in the Times of London and many of the articles published in the Niles Register. The production of an online research site has provided students well beyond Virginia Tech with additional freeware for research. Dr. Arnold intends to continue providing students the opportunity to participate in this project and extend coverage to additional newspapers. You can explore the work of our Virginia Tech History Department students at: http://www.maibill.vt.edu/history/arnold/USMxWar/timeswebpage.htm

Diane Barnes published an article “Building Communities Out of Frontiers: The Grist Mills of Harrison County, West Virginia, 1784-1860,” in the Fall 2001 Journal of Appalachian Studies. She also presented a paper this semester (February) entitled “Immigrant Workers in Late Antebellum Petersburg,” at the Douglas Southall Freeman and Southern Intellectual History Circle Conference, in Richmond, Virginia.

Mark V. Barrow, Jr. held a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship during the spring of 2002. His fellowship gave him time away from his regular teaching and service duties to continue researching and begin writing his next book, which is tentatively titled American Naturalists and the Specter of Extinction. Working on the boundaries between the history of science and environmental history, Dr. Barrow is exploring how and why indifference about the plight of endangered species has gradually given way to deep concern. In particular, he is focusing on the American context and highlighting the central role that naturalists have played in promoting broader apprehension about anthropogenic (human-induced) extinction from the colonial period to the Endangered Species Act (1973). So far his work on the project has taken him to archives in Cambridge, Massachusetts; New York, New York; Washington, D.C.; and Berkeley, California.

Fred Baumgartner became president of the American Catholic Historical Association in January for a one-year term, and was named “Scholar of the Year in History” by the Virginia Social Sciences Association in March.

William C. Davis lectured at the Georgia Historical Society, Millsaps University, Florida Southern University, and at the David Crockett Symposium at the Texas State Museum. Two books have been published: Rhett; The Turbulent Life and times of a Fire-Eater, from University of South Carolina Press in November, and Look Away: A History of the Confederate States of America, from Harcourt and a main selection of the History Book Club and an alternate of the Book of the Month Club. Mr. Davis was on a two-week book promotion tour in April, lecturing at the Smithsonian, New Orleans, Albany, Houston, Annapolis, Austin, and Wilmington.

Roger Ekirch continues to make progress on his book about nighttime in Western history, due to be published by W.W. Norton. A small portion of the book appeared as an article in the American Historical Review – “Sleep We Have Lost: Pre-industrial Slumber in the British Isles.” The article has just won two awards: the James L. Clifford Prize and the Percy C. Adams Prize. Prof. Ekirch's night research was recently featured in the October issue of Nickelodeon Magazine alongside articles on Harry Potter, Britney Spears, and The Rock! In addition to other speaking engagements, Professor Ekirch served this March as the keynote speaker at the statewide conference of the Virginia Crime Prevention Association.


Richard Hirsh, the department’s historian of technology, won the Sturm Award for Excellence in Faculty Research this spring. The award, given by the Virginia Tech chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, recognizes scholarship that significantly contributes to the advancement of liberal learning. Richard won the award primarily for his book, Power Loss: The Origins of Deregulation and Restructuring in the American Electric Power System (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999). The book’s novelty comes from its use of themes from history, political science, and science & technology studies to explain recent efforts to alter the structure of electric utility industry. Because of the relevance of Richard’s work—with blackouts in California and the bankruptcy of Enron making the news—Richard has been sought after by radio and print journalists to provide insights on a complicated subject that is nevertheless vital to our modern way of life.

James I. Robertson, Jr. and Prof. William C. Davis, co-edited a book-length study, *Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains,* that will be published by Stackpole Books late this year or early in 2003. It is a volume in the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies series. Dr. Robertson and Professor Davis are also completing a guide on how to teach Civil War history to 8th-12th graders. When printed this spring, and thanks to a private foundation grant, copies of the guide will go free of charge to every middle school and high school in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Dr. Robertson’s next publication, Stonewall Jackson's Book of Maxims, will be published by Cumberland House in September. Two months later, Greenwich Workshop Publishers will issue a coffee-table volume, Gods and Generals. Artist Mort Kunstler has done the paintings; Dr. Robertson has written the text. The book will be released commensurate with the premiere of the big Warner Brothers film by the same name. At the moment, he is working on another project for the Civil War Center. This is a large collection of Civil War letters by Capt. John Preston Sheffey of the 8th Virginia Cavalry. Once the editing is completed, Louisiana State University Press will publish the letters.

Peter Schmittbenner, American Institute of Indian Studies, Senior Research Fellow, 2001-2002, has written an article for the Global Network entitled “September 11 and its Aftermath, etc: A View from India.” Here is an excerpt: “...being in India, like the festival of
Sankranti, has not only been an experience of renewal, but one which has introduced me to new found knowledge and sentiments about the countries on opposite sides of the globe which I know best. I look forward to sharing my experiences with people back home and inspiring others to follow my lead. I will remain in India until December of this year, conducting research on a project entitled: "Hydraulic Engineering and Cultural Construction in South India: The Legacy of Sir Arthur T. Cotton (1803-1899)," which I am conducting under fellowships from the American Institute of Indian Studies and Fulbright. I welcome dialog with anyone who either has reactions to what I have written here, is interested in my research, or might be interested in spending time in India.”

Dan Thorp is in Wellington, New Zealand for spring semester. He is a J. William Fulbright Senior Scholar conducting research on Pakeha Maoris - Europeans who lived among the native Maori of New Zealand. The work he is doing is based on material in the Alexander Turnbull Library, the National Library, the National Archives, and discussions with Pakeha and Maori who have memories of Pakeha ancestors or others living a Maori lifestyle in earlier times.

Peter Wallenstein's co-edited book, The Encyclopedia of American Political History (2001), was named an Outstanding Academic Title for 2001 by Choice magazine and the American Library Association. So was another reference work, The United States in the Nineteenth Century, for which he served on the editorial board. His next book will be out in the fall.


Center for Civil War Studies …

As part of its chief goal to educate the nation’s young people about the Civil War, Virginia Tech’s Virginia Center for Civil War Studies has distributed a two-volume video set, “West Virginia as a Child of the Civil War,” to every elementary and middle school and to every library in West Virginia. The videos were written and narrated in part by Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr., executive director of the Civil War Center and Alumni Distinguished Professor of History and William C. Davis, director of programs for the Center and Professor of History. The videos look at the effect of Virginia’s secession on its western counties; examine Virginia’s efforts to hold onto those western counties; and chronicle West Virginia’s development into a separate state. Although, the video set was distributed without charge to the West Virginia schools and libraries, the Center will sell boxed sets to the public for $36 per set. Persons interested in obtaining the set should write the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies, Department of History, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061. Proceeds will be used by the center to fund additional projects.

Students in the News…

David Mouser won the Hertzler Culinary History Prize for his paper about food on Virginia plantations. The $500 prize was officially awarded on April 27 at the Annual Virginia Tech Culinary Committee Chef Challenge to be held in Roanoke.

Jonathan Tyler was the Department of History’s nominee for the Dean’s Scholarship for Spring 2002.

Congratulations to our top students in the Class of 2002: valedictorian Kirsten Davis; co-salutatorians Katherine Donley and Katherine Rask.

Jonathan Noyalas (M.A. Hist) received an award from the Virginia Social Science Association for best graduate student paper at its conference. The conference was held at the Virginia Military Institute on March 22 - 23. The paper was titled "Early's Costliest Victory: The Second Battle of Kernstown and its Impact on Union Strategy in the Shenandoah Valley, 1864."

Michelle Lovasz (M.A. Area Studies, ’02) was inducted into the honor society of Phi Kappa Phi in Spring 2002.

Student Awards and Recognition of Honors Reception …

The James W. and Martha N. Banks Award Banks Reception was created by McRae (Mac) C. Banks in 2001 to honor his parents, James W. and Martha N. Banks, who live in Union, WV. History was his father’s first love, and both parents are involved in the Monroe County Historical Society. The Banks Award is given to a graduating senior majoring in History, with the highest grade point average and an interest in United States history. A monetary prize and certificate was awarded to this year’s valedictorian, Kirsten Carter Davis.

The Curtis Award was created by Frank Curtis. Mr. Curtis never attended college but loved Civil War era history. Due to this love, he joined the Chicago Civil War Round Table and met J. Ambler Johnston, who graduated from Virginia Tech in 1904, and a close friendship developed. Mr. Curtis ultimately established an endowment through the Virginia Tech Foundation for the continued support of Virginia History. The Curtis Award is given to an undergraduate student with the most outstanding essay on a topic in Virginia and/or Civil War history. A monetary award and certificate was presented to this year’s recipient, Stephen Arden Long.

The History Prize was created to acknowledge the strong emphasis the Department of History places on written work. Any undergraduate student may submit a paper on any historical topic. A monetary award and certificate was presented to this year’s recipient, Kurt Edward Axt.
**Graduate Conference Update…**

The Fifth Annual Brian Bertoti, “Innovative Perspectives in History” Graduate Student Conference was held April 5-6, 2002. This year’s conference, held at the Donaldson Brown Hotel & Convention Center on Virginia Tech’s campus, was a roaring success with 15 papers -- representing six different schools -- presented, and keynotes delivered by Joel Williamson of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Carol Sheriff of the College of William and Mary. Paper topics encompassed a broad range stretching from early American attitudes towards the elderly, to Gilded Age campaign finance reform, to Italy’s 1948 election. Carol Sheriff, serving as the Saturday luncheon speaker, elaborated on her research into the Erie Canal’s social significance. Additionally, Joel Williamson, the conference keynote, gave a fascinating discussion on his research on William Faulkner’s family. From the perspective of budding historians, however, the most interesting aspect of his talk was not the findings as much as his method. The events were well attended, with graduate and undergraduate students, as well as faculty, well represented. As a whole, participants and organizers were extremely pleased with the conference. Said one faculty member, “An excellent job -- best I’ve attended!” And a student from the University of Virginia said, “It was a lot of fun, and it was an excellent atmosphere in which to present my first paper…I shall encourage all my fellow Cavaliers to attend next year’s conference.” Finally, it is important to note that this year’s conference may not have occurred had it not been for the support and hard work of Robert Teagle, a graduate of Tech’s graduate history program, who raised $900 for the conference. And as always, the attendance and support of the Bertoti’s themselves gave the conference greater significance. Thanks to all who attended and helped to make the conference a success.

Jonathan Hoganson, Conference Chair

**Club Scene…**

This year, Phi Alpha Theta and the History Club were fairly active. We had monthly meetings to discuss and plan for upcoming events, and we got to see a lot of members attend at least one or two meetings. Dr. Ochsenwald delivered a talk entitled “A Historical Perspective on the Attack on America,” Dr. Robertson spoke with us about his work on the upcoming film “Gods and Generals,” and we organized a resume writing workshop through Career Services to help us develop more effective resumes. We inducted 26 students into Phi Alpha Theta this semester and had a few students come out who were specifically interested in getting involved with the History Club. New officers were just elected on April 3 and are as follows: Rebecca Walker, President; Alexis Brown, Vice President; Matt Israelson, Secretary; and Craig Campbell, Treasurer. We have a lot of great ideas for next year and are excited about getting Phi Alpha Theta and the History Club more involved in the Virginia Tech community! Congratulations to all our new members inducted in Spring, 2002.

Kirsten Davis, Phi Alpha Theta Co-President

**Alumni Spotlight… Philip Shucet, Class of 1972**

Philip Shucet graduated from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1972, part of the University’s centennial class. Philip was a member of the Corps of Cadets and served as the Regimental Scholastics Officer during his senior year. He focused his studies on Russian History, with minors in Russian language and English. Philip currently lives in Virginia Beach.

Armed with a degree in History, Philip’s writing and research skills landed a job with the West Virginia Department of Highways writing environmental impact statements for highway projects. Philip discovered that his liberal arts education helped him work with engineers to explain highway projects to the general public and permitting agencies in non-technical terms. Working in West Virginia for 12 years, Philip’s career there culminated in an appointment as the first non-engineer to become the statewide Transportation Planning Manager.

In December 1985, Philip moved to Arizona to become the Environmental Planning Manager for the Arizona Department of Transportation. While in Arizona, Philip was able to work with engineers, local officials and the public to win approval of several controversial transportation projects. One of his more memorable assignments in Arizona was the archaeological recovery of human remains from an ancient burial site for medicine men. The dig had to be completed to allow the replacement of a bridge washed away by a flood. Before the dig could begin, Philip had to record the exact procedures that would be followed. Once recorded, these procedures were played aloud by a tribal medicine woman who sought confirmation from “spiritual advisors” as to whether or not Philip was being truthful about the care that would be taken with any recovered human remains. Thankfully, the medicine woman pronounced the intentions worthy, and the project was permitted to proceed.

In 1989 Philip left government to join the private sector. During that time, Philip worked for the engineering firm of Michael Baker Jr., Inc, a company or nearly 4,000 people providing engineering and energy services on a global basis. As a corporate Executive Vice president, Philip had the opportunity to manage several major projects, as well as serve as President and General Manager of two corporate subsidiaries. His project work led him to many states, as well as to Germany, Israel, Japan and Denmark. In April, 2002, Philip accepted an appointment as Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Transportation. He states: “I am very excited about this new challenge. Strike another blow for victory for History majors from Virginia Tech!”
Philip is a member of Phi Alpha Theta, a Fellow in the Institute of Transportation Engineers, and a member of a new Advisory Board for the History Department. "Regardless of whether one chooses to work in academia, the public or the private sector, the complexities of today's world require the integration of liberal arts and humanities with the technical sciences" he says. "The added value of an education in history is the ability to learn from the past to influence the future."

**Alumni Corner...**

Jim Casada (MA ’68): “I enjoyed the recent departmental newsletter, although I must confess the names I recognize are precious few indeed (Bud Robertson and Tom Howard). I graduated with an M. A. in 1968, and after completing my Ph.D. at Vanderbilt, taught at Winthrop University for 25 years. I took early retirement six years ago to pursue a second career as a freelance writer specializing in hunting, fishing, nature, and environmental issues. I have written upwards of 3000 feature articles and have been involved in some way (as author, editor, compiler, or contributor) in roughly 100 books. My most recent efforts include editing a two-volume anthology of the African writings of Frederick C. Selous, a similar work on the hunting and conservation writings of Theodore Roosevelt entitled Forgotten Tales and Vanished Trails, an original work on turkey hunting, Innovative Turkey Hunting, and a cookbook co-authored with my wife, Wild Bounty. Two of the books won awards. My most influential professors were Bud Robertson, Tom Howard, and Bill Mackie, and there was a least influential but I guess I'll leave that individual unnamed.”


Ben Bazak (’77) is one of two winners of the McGlothlin Awards for teaching excellence, which are among the largest financial prizes in the United States for teachers. Ben is a math teacher at Patrick Henry High School. He has been a teacher for more than twenty years and has taught math in Greece and Austria. Ben was cited for tutoring at-risk students and establishing a children's book fund. He has been cited for his skills in motivating students and integrating topics from the real world in math classes.

Sherryl W. (Willetts) Eldred (’73): “I am currently teaching high school - world history honors and American history along with AP US government and AP comparative government. I will be awarded a Educational Specialist degree in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University in November. I recently completed a county-wide project for our social studies teachers by creating a web site for social studies teachers. This site includes History Alive! strategies and lesson tips (for staff development and support) as well as newsletter information and links. I also recently spoke at the Florida Council for the Social Studies conference in Tampa, Florida on creating lessons that allow students to confront tough citizenship issues and respond in a variety of ways.

Garland E. "Garry" Calhoun III (’74): “I have been a Financial Services Representative with Met Life since 1979. I have strong positive memories of all my professors, but the most influential was Dr. James Robertson, who took my strong like of history and turned it into a love. Although I was not able to pursue my original goal of a teaching career, I still do occasional presentations at my wife's school on the Civil War, and all the time I'm thinking: Would this be up to Dr. Robertson's standards? It never is, but I keep trying.”

David Rieger (’92): “I work for The Mariners' Museum in Newport News and a couple of months ago we received the engine from the U.S.S. Monitor.”

Barrett F. (Bart) Warner (’93): “Upon graduating from Tech, I went on to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where I obtained the Master of Public Administration degree in May 1996. After working in the field of city planning in North Carolina for approximately five years, I returned to the Commonwealth in 2000. I presently serve as the Director of Planning and Community Development for the City of Bedford. My understanding of history is a tremendous asset in my career as a local government administrator, particularly since the future of our cities and their ability to maintain their identity and sense of place are inextricably linked to their past. When asked what a person can do with a degree in history, my standard response is anything and everything you want to do.”

Catherine E. Wilson (’93) is a category specialist/buyer with the Kroger Co. Mid-Atlantic Division in Roanoke, VA.

Jeffrey S. Osborne (’95) was recognized as an agent with outstanding sales and service achievement in the recent production year for Nationwide Insurance in Blue Ridge, VA.

Dayna Lassinger-Laur (’95) is currently teaching American History and law at Central York High School in York, PA.

Sandy Campbell (’96): “I'm a marketing communications manager for CIBER Enterprise Solutions, an enterprise resource planning software consulting firm headquartered in Bellevue, WA and Denver, CO. We specialize in implementing and integrating PeopleSoft, Oracle, SAP, Commerce One and Siebel software, with the majority of our customers coming from the government, higher education and health care industries. My job duties include development of marketing content and corporate communications, including development of website content for our Internet and intranet sites. I've been with the company for about 3 years. I live in Bothell, Washington right outside Seattle, and enjoy hiking and skiing in the beautiful mountains nearby. I'm currently applying for a Master's in Communication program at the University of Washington, specializing in Digital Media. Long term, I hope to take my knowledge of traditional and non-traditional media and produce news segments for an online broadcaster such as MSNBC or even one of our local news channels. My degree in History from Virginia Tech prepared me for the job I do now by developing my critical thinking, research and writing skills. I learned to dig down for the story within the story, and to communicate clearly and concisely. Those are skills that made me a good student, and it turns out, they make me a valuable employee as well.”
Amy McKane Rueter ('97) gave birth to Anya Noel, December 2000. Amy says “I use my History degree is to edit my husband’s papers for his MBA program, and I can devour books in record time! I am still painting murals, and am getting into the faux finish field, and am contemplating a degree in interior design. I’m also running a lot--just did my first half marathon. My most influential professors were Dr. Dan Thorp and Dr. Kathleen Jones.”

Frank Stovall (’98, ’99) is site manager of a 400 acre park in Laurens County, South Carolina, which was the site of the 1780 Battle of Musgrove Mill. This position works closely with USC, the National Park Service, and other agencies to protect Revolutionary War sites throughout the state. Frank writes “when I was in college, I would visit museums and park sites, and just enjoy the experience. Now, I marvel at sites that make it look so easy. It is too easy to get lost in meetings with architects, engineers, surveyors, emergency planners, archeologists, supervisors, human resources people, finance, politicians, transportation planners, volunteers, etc., and forget about educating the public and researching history. I am glad I learned to juggle in grad school. Frank was featured as the College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Spotlight for November, 2001

Jonathan P. Fisher (’98) received a J.D. from the Dickinson School of Law of Pennsylvania State University.

Obituaries…

Dr. Leslie Ray Mellichamp, Jr., 80, of Blacksburg, on December 18, 2001, left his earthly cares and joys behind him to join departed loved ones waiting for him in the next world. He was born in Columbia, S.C., January 3, 1921. With a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Clemson University, an M.A. in English from UNC, and a Ph.D. in Liberal Arts from Emory University, his talents and interests were wide ranging. A respected poet editor of the poetry journal, The Lyric, for 25 years, he was also a fine history teacher at Virginia Tech, an enthusiastic musician who performed with local bluegrass, Dixieland, and gospel groups, and a veteran of the U.S. Army, serving during WWII in the Philippines with the Signal Corps.

Wilford Heyman (Bill) Lane (Maj. USMC Ret.), 80, of Blacksburg, passed away at home with family, January 14, 2002. He was born November 14, 1921, in Birmingham, Alabama. Bill was honored to have served in WWII and the Korean War and continued to serve his country in the CIA for two years. He received his B.A. and M.A. in History from the University of Alabama and took additional graduate studies at Duke and Yale Universities. He taught History at Virginia Tech (VPI&SU) for 32 years and served as the Assistant Dean of Arts & Sciences, during which time the first students graduated in Liberal Arts.

Thanks to our contributors who support our endeavors in the History Department!

Attention Alumni…

“Historically Speaking” is in its fifth year and continues to change and grow. Please take the time to email us about your life. We also appreciate your story ideas and comments. Return this form or email your update to us. Our address can be found at the top of the first page of the newsletter, or you can email jafranci@vt.edu.

Name______________________________________
Year Graduated________________________________
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Most Influential Professor________________________
Story Ideas_____________________________________
Comments______________________________________