Department of History and Geography News

Volume 3, Issue 2  Spring 2012

Department Hosts Its Second Homecoming Reception

On October 22nd, the Department of History and Geography hosted its second annual Homecoming Reception. The event proved to be just as successful as last year’s reception. We had a return visit from artist and ’99 alum Letitia Lee whose paintings were once again displayed and available for purchase. Three of her paintings are displayed in the History/Geography suite with captions about the paintings as well as information about the artist. Among those in attendance was everyone from Raymond Beck, who is a 1975 graduate of Elon, K. Walter Grom who is a 1964 graduate, to Stephanie Murr who graduated in 2009. When asked about how Elon has influenced what they are doing today, here’s what they had to say:

Raymond L. Beck ’75: Elon’s History faculty in the early 70’s was stellar. As the college taught me the powers of critical and analytical thinking that served me well throughout my 32-year career as the historian, researcher, and as site manager of North Carolina’s state capitol. The skills and knowledge acquired at this institution allowed me the privilege of accurately restoring North Carolina’s most historic building – and following retirement to assist in the research of some of Elon’s most valuable artifacts, some overlooked and some “lost”.

K Walter Grom ’64: Elon prepared me for my jobs as an educator for 42 years and for graduate schools Georgetown University, Washington D.C.– School of Foreign Service and SUNY, Albany– School of Education.

Stephanie Murr ’09: Through constructive criticism, personalized feedback, and challenging curriculum, Elon’s history department gave me the skills I need to be successful in law school.

Among the attendees of the reception were also:

- Deanna Hansbrough–Manning (’92) Teaching in Durham Public Schools working with gifted kids
- Allen Wolff (’89) Teaching at Turpentine Middle School in Burlington, NC (14 years)
- Rob Smeaton (’90) Working as a pharmaceutical representative
- Gilbert Brittle (’55)
- Whyte Carter (’09) Issues insurance policies at Tapco Underwriters.
- Neal Dugre (’06)
News Briefs

Study Abroad in South Africa: Dr. Amy Johnson

Amy Johnson: This January Drs. Prudence Layne (English) and Amy Johnson (History and General Studies) led 29 students on an academic excursion to South Africa. Following a 16-hour plane ride, they landed safely in Cape Town, South Africa. While there they visited Robben Island, where many political prisoners were held during apartheid; the Slavery Museum; the Jewish and Holocaust Museums; and even met with Archbishop Desmond Tutu at St. George’s Cathedral. They also took a little time out for climbing Table Mountain, sightseeing at Cape Point, relaxing on the beautiful beaches, and of course shopping in the bustling vendor markets. They spent the last 10 days of their South African excursion in Johannesburg. The Hector Pieterson Museum, the Apartheid Museum, and their tour of Soweto were particularly transformative. Students had many opportunities to immerse themselves in the local culture. In addition to completing 4 days of intensive service work with local agencies and schools, students ate at local restaurants, saw a play, participated in a drumming circle, visited churches during worship, and interacted with numerous people in the townships.

Study Abroad in Italy: Dr. Charles Irons

Charles Irons: Twelve Elon students accompanied Professor Charles Irons to Assisi, Italy in summer 2011. Irons resurrected an Elon faculty-led study abroad program, in which students spend a month abroad and take two courses, an Italian language course and a General Studies course on contemporary Italy. Before it was suspended in 2008, the program had moved around the country, and Irons situated it in the part of the world other than central North Carolina that he knows best. “I have had a love affair with Assisi since summer 1994,” explained Irons, “and I could hardly believe my good fortune in getting to relive some of my favorite adventures with Elon students. We explored castles, went to a street festival with my good friends in neighboring Foligno, toured a vineyard, visited monasteries, had an audience with the mayor, and-in general-crammed as much experiential learning into the term as possible.” Instructors from Accademia Lingua Italiana Assisi taught the language courses, while Irons taught the general studies course. If the planets align, he hopes to take a group every other year.
Working with his advisor, Dr. Michael Matthews, Lumen scholar Chris Jarrett (‘11) completed a 170-page Honors thesis (in Spanish) titled “Hacia el buen convivir: Experiments in ‘Development with Identity’ in the Ecuadorian Amazon.” His study examined changes in the cultural identity of Amazonian Kichwa people of the Napo province as they engaged broad economic and political forces spurred by globalization. Mr. Jarrett was rewarded for his hard work by receiving a Fulbright Research grant to undertake one more year of investigations in Ecuador. He also will begin his Ph.D. in Anthropology at the University of Texas, San Antonio next year.

Working with her advisor, Dr. Michael Matthews, Lumen scholar Renee Zale (‘11) completed an Elon College Fellows thesis titled “The Influence of Memory on the Returned Exile Experience in Post-Dictatorship Chile.” Her study examined the experience of Chilean exiles who left during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, finding that they often experience a “second exile” when returning home after the fall of the regime. Ms. Zale now works for Worldteach in Columbia as an English instructor for children and young adults.

Visit from Historian & Elon (‘85) Alumnus, Dr. Steve Sabol

History alum Dr. Sabol (‘85), associate professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, visited Elon’s campus November 1, 2011 to deliver a public lecture that reflects his scholarship on World War I. “The First World War As A Global Revolution” attracted a standing-room-only crowd of more than 80 students and faculty who listened as Dr. Sabol explored some of the First World War’s larger social, cultural, and economic consequences. A widely-published scholar, one of Dr. Sabol’s current projects is a study of North Carolina and the First World War that includes work from department members Nancy Midgette, Jim Bissett, and Clyde Ellis. Students joined Dr. Sabol as well for dinner before his lecture.
Dr. Mary Jo Festle has contributed to the literary world once again with her latest book entitled “Second Wind: Oral Histories of Lung Transplant Survivors (Palgrave Studies in Oral History)”. *Second Wind* relates the compelling stories of 'ordinary' Americans who sought a second chance through lung transplantation and the historical and socio-medical factors that affected them. Excerpts from oral history interviews reveal the physical and psychological challenges of deciding to pursue a transplant, waiting for a donor organ, and adapting to a new life with a lung from someone who died. Meaningful for those facing transplantation, their caregivers, scholars, and people outside the transplant community, *Second Wind* explores themes of uncertainty, timing, identity, coping, and quality of life.

Thank you!  
Asante!  
Danke!  
Arigato!  
Spacibo!  
Merci!  

Thanks to the generous donors generous gifts we have been able to fund functions such as the Elon School of Law Conference. This conference took place on February 25th and featured panels on “War and the Question of “Command Responsibility,” “War Crimes and Human Rights”, “Human Rights, Corruption, and Poverty,” and “Immigration and Human Rights.” A number of Elon graduates from the History & Geography department delivered papers and the conference featured a luncheon speech by Angolan human rights activist, Rafael Marques de Morais.

Donor funds will also help fund some of our future speakers such as Bayo Holsey, who will visit our department in April. More news to come in the fall issue of our newsletter.
Different Shades of Red: Symposium Held at the University of Tulsa to Celebrate the One Hundredth Anniversary of Woody Guthrie’s Birth

In March, Dr. Jim Bissett was an invited speaker at “Different Shades of Red: Woody Guthrie and the Oklahoma Experience at 100,” a symposium at the University of Tulsa to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the year of Woody Guthrie’s birth. The first in a series of events that will be held throughout 2012 to celebrate Guthrie’s life, the symposium was jointly sponsored by the GRAMMY Museum, the Smithsonian Institution, and four universities (the University of Tulsa, Brooklyn College, the University of Southern California, and Pennsylvania State University). Bissett’s presentation, “Demanding Democracy: The Socialist Movement and Oklahoma Politics,” was part of a panel on the political culture in Oklahoma at the time of Guthrie’s birth.

Send us your news! Current students with History and/or Geography interests, alums, and faculty, should send their news for our fall 2012 newsletter to Marnia Gardner (mgardner4@elon.edu) by July 15, 2012.