

THE STURGES REVIEW

**The Department of History
State University of New York, Geneseo
1 College Circle
Geneseo, NY 14454**

Spring 2012



FROM THE CHAIR:

Over the past several decades, the history department at Geneseo has built a rigorous and well-respected program. Working on this alumni newsletter is always a treat, giving us the opportunity to see in a broad frame the many different kinds of success that our students find. This is a challenging time for public higher education and unfortunately we are not immune to the impact of budget cuts and staff shortages. The fact that the history department at Geneseo continues to thrive in the face of these challenges reflects well on the dedication and skill of our faculty, the talent and enthusiasm of our students, and our shared sense of responsibility to the past.

As we reflect on the many positive developments that have come about in recent years, it is also important to acknowledge the many talented faculty and students who helped build the foundation for the department's current success. Those of us who are currently in the faculty are extremely mindful of the many decades of hard work that made the department what it is today, and we strive to be good stewards of the legacies created by the many faculty and students who have passed through the Sturges Building.

These thoughts are close to the surface this year as we prepare to mark an important transition for the department. This May, Bill Cook will retire after forty-two years of service to the college. Bill's contributions to the life of the department, the college, and the Geneseo community are legion. He is the only member of the history department to hold the rank of SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor (highest rank in the SUNY system), the only member of the department to have run for a seat in the US Congress, and the only member of the department to regularly rub elbows with internationally known political and business leaders. Bill's reflections on his career at Geneseo appear elsewhere in this newsletter and much of the programming connected to our annual Alumni and Awards Weekend in April will focus on celebrating his contributions to the department and the College.

On behalf of the department, I would like to thank Bill for his dedicated service and acknowledge the key role that he has played in setting the course for the college's current success. Bill, along with a core group of faculty who came to SUNY Geneseo in the 1970s weathered a period of enormous change. The decisions that they made helped set the institution on the path to greatness and we continue to reap the benefits of their leadership and foresight. We again are entering a period of change as American public higher education faces a number of challenges. The next several years promise to be interesting times, but the history department is in a good position to sustain its tradition of excellence. Thank you, Bill, for all that you have contributed to our success.

Joe Cope, Acting Chair

DEPARTMENT NEWS

During the past year, history faculty members have been particularly active in expanding undergraduate research opportunities and building connections to the local community. We consistently have large numbers of students working on independent research projects ranging across a variety of different fields. Geneseo history majors have been highly visible at undergraduate research conferences, including Geneseo's Great Day showcase and the annual Phi Alpha Theta (history national honors society) regional conference. As has been the case for the past several years, Geneseo students brought home multiple "best paper" prizes from the 2011 Phi Alpha Theta conference held at Le Moyne College in Syracuse. We also have seen a growing number of students taking part in national research conferences. This past fall, seniors Paul Fallot (mentored by Meg Stolee) and Danny Bailey (mentored by Emilye Crosby) participated in the annual conference of the Consortium for Public Liberal Arts

Colleges in Keene, NH. Danny also presented his work at the national Phi Alpha Theta conference in Orlando, FL and, along with seniors Dave O'Donnell and Keven Adams, presented original research as part of a panel at the 2011 Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History Annual Meeting.

As we reported in last year's newsletter, the department has also been sponsoring student internships at local museums and historical societies, particularly the Livingston County Historical Museum and 1941 Historical Aircraft Group Museum (both located in Geneseo). This year we have expanded these initiatives, thanks in large measure to the efforts of Kathy Mapes, who has been doing important work in connecting interested students with local groups and in designing academic experiences that compliment the student internship experience. Thanks to Kathy's commitment, we now have more students working on various kinds of history-related internships and

service learning projects than at any time in the past several decades.

Department faculty are increasingly visible in the local community in other ways – Cathy Adams and Joe Cope both serve on the board of trustees of the Livingston County Historical Society and faculty make regular appearances as guest speakers before a variety of community audiences. Within just the past two months, Cathy Adams, Justin Behrend, Bill Cook, Jordan Kleiman, Michael Oberg, and David Tamarin have been featured speakers at events in the area and have been very successful in connecting a wider audience to the scholarly work that goes on in the history department. If you are interested in following news of these events, you might consider joining the “SUNY Geneseo History Department Alumni Group” on Facebook, where we regularly post information about faculty publications and presentations.

The history department is also in the process of building coursework that connects historical learning to local contexts. Cathy Adams has been working on public history offerings for the past several semesters, and this spring is piloting a new course entitled “Public Local History”, which will

introduce students to the subfield of public history and will connect them to various historical societies and institutions in the area. Next fall, Jordan Kleiman will also be introducing a new interdisciplinary course entitled “Building an Alternative Food System in the Greater Rochester Area: Past, Present, Future”, which will connect scholarship on environmental history to hands on experiences in the area. Curriculum development is an important part of the work that we do on an ongoing basis in the department – this year alone we have offered nine new or experimental courses, with topics ranging from the “History of Buddhism” and “World Christianities” to the “Experience of Disaster” and “African-American Voting and Politics”. We also benefit this year from a new addition to the department. Steve Bein, a dual appointment in History and Philosophy, comes to us after spending a number of years as an award-winning faculty member at Rochester Community and Technical College. Holding a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Steve will be teaching several courses per year for the history department, focusing on East Asian intellectual history and the history of Japan.

Alumni and Awards Events

This year's Alumni and Awards Luncheon will be held at the Big Tree Inn in Geneseo on Saturday, April 14 from 11:45 to 4:30. As in previous years, this event will offer the opportunity for alumni to reconnect with the faculty (and each other), and to sample some of the successes that our students have achieved during the past academic year.

This year's program will include a celebration of the career of Bill Cook. After a lunch buffet, we will host a roundtable discussion by several of Bill's former students and Bill will speak about his forty-two years as a faculty member at Geneseo.

From 3:30-4:30, the department will host a cash bar mixer at the Big Tree for the faculty, emeriti and alumni. The mixer offers an excellent opportunity to reconnect with old friends and get to know some of the new faces in the department.

We do ask that alumni who plan to attend the luncheon send an rsvp to mckinney@geneseo.edu by March 9. This will allow us to plan for food and other accommodations. As always, the event is free, but we are happy to accept donations at the door to help offset the cost of the luncheon.

MEMORIES AND RECOLLECTIONS: A NOTE FROM BILL COOK

This is my last 'report' on my activities as a professor of history at Geneseo because I will retire at the end of the current semester after 42 years at the College. When people ask me what I will do, my answer is that not much will change except that I will no longer be grading papers and exams! I will continue to give lectures all over the world and to do research and write. In fact, one reason for retirement is that I have not had much time to write in the past few years. Here's hoping I still have something to say.



Speaking of writing, Ron Herzman and I

published the 3rd edition of *The Medieval World View* with Oxford University Press. Since the first edition was released in 1983, we have added three new chapters and have thoroughly re-arranged and updated the bibliography. Check it out on amazon.com. I also will soon publish two keynote addresses I have given at conferences on Franciscan art. One was delivered in Genoa, Italy and will be published in both English and Italian. The other was in Denver, sponsored by the Franciscan Institute of St Bonaventure University.

I was my usual mad self last year, moving around the globe to give lectures and lead groups. In the US, I gave lectures in Minneapolis, Portland (OR), Rochester, and at Wabash College. I did a 3-day program on Rome for the Aspen Institute in Colorado. I taught both my Siena course and Humanities I in Italy. I led groups of CEOs in Istanbul and Siena. I did a 4-day program in Florence for Friends of Florence and another for the Aspen Institute. In the fall, I spoke at Forum 2000, a meeting of world leaders organized in Prague by the late President Vaclav Havel. I took a group of Wabash College students (and 1 from Geneseo) to Kenya for 12 days. I took a group from Texas around Siena for a few days, and I spent several days in Siena with a group of alumni of Geneseo. By the way, Wes Kennison and I are repeating that opportunity for Geneseo alums this coming August, so get on the College website and sign up.

I have been on the road quite a bit in connection with Geneseo's capital campaign, Shaping Lives of Purpose. I have already had the joy of speaking with alumni in New York twice plus Rochester, Buffalo, and South Florida; and next month I will appear in Denver. Open those pocket books and wallets, and remember that you can designate your gift for the History Department.

I have begun my last semester of teaching, including doing a section of Humanities I for about the 60th time. The books never get old, and the students seem to get younger all the time. I am anxious to have one more opportunity to convince students of all majors of the value to looking creatively and carefully at the past.

I remember well my first class at Geneseo—Western Civ I in Sturges 108 at 8:00am in the fall of 1970. In fact, I have in class now the nephew of my very first student, Matthew Baynes (he was first alphabetically in that first class). Two hours later I taught my second class. Barb Combes (in Siena last summer) and Dan Mattoon were among the eager freshmen in the class, as was Doug Cope, whom I run into every now and then at our local Wegmans.

I estimate that I have taught close to 10,000 students. That means I have probably graded 25,000 papers and another 25,000 exams. My career may have been extended if there had been computers in 1970, but I sense that I lost some vision while reading lots of bad handwriting. I know many of you have said the same thing about comments I wrote on your papers, but that doesn't count because you were young enough to survive.

When I was at an alumni gathering in Buffalo, I saw several old students—Wayne Ginty, Mike Haskell, Joanne (Lubuglio) Haskell, and Gary Witter. They are all retired! I think that means that it is time for me to hit the road and the recliner. However, both my undergraduate and graduate mentors are alive and well, so I anticipate a long and fruitful retirement.



Since many of you have visited me at 14 Oak Street, you need to know that I have moved—all the way to 3 Oak Street. Among the advantages is that I can sleep 52 seconds longer all semester! So, if you come to town and want to find me, come by 3 Oak Street, a large olive-colored Victorian just down the street from my old home.

I am one of those throwback persons who has had only 1 job in his entire life other than summer employment while in college. I could not pronounce or spell Geneseo (not, as it turns out, Genesco) when I applied for a position in medieval history in the winter of 1970. My first personal contact was with Val Rabe, who picked me up at the Rochester bus station (classy entry on my part, huh?). By the time I got to Geneseo, I knew a hell of a lot about the history of the village that would become my home.

I had never given a lecture or taught a class when I walked into Sturges 108 on the September morning. I was not absolutely sure I would be any good at teaching or that I would like it enough to make it my career. Within weeks, thanks to good colleagues and wonderful students, I knew I had not just a profession but a vocation.

Of course, within a few years, I learned to take credit for every successful alum (“I taught them everything they know”) and to distance myself from my less illustrious students (“They ignored everything I said”). Seriously, I rejoice in the opportunity to be a small part of the education of so many of you. I see alumni who are doctors, lawyers, business people, professors, teachers, librarians, clergy, and so many other important professions. More importantly, I see alumni who are good citizens in a hundred different ways from being elected officials (at least two have become mayors) to participating in civic organizations to serving in the military. Still more important, I see alumni who are good people—moms and dads and neighbors.

At graduation, I still thank parents for entrusting the people they love most to Geneseo's care and to my care. I always remember that even if a student of mine is slothful and irresponsible, he or she is the most precious person on earth to someone; and I try to treat them accordingly.

I end my career joyfully because of the quality of young faculty we have hired as Val Rabe and Bill Derby and Martin Fausold and Jim Somerville retired. If you older alumni have not met "the kids", you need to come back and do so.

Of course I worry about the funding for SUNY and the fact that we have not replaced two recent departures. I would hate to think that I will have been the only medieval historian in Geneseo's history, since I was the first. We need some support in Albany, and we need your help with that and your \$\$ if you have them to spare. I am a proud Geneseo donor; and if each of my former students would give only \$100 per year, that would mean \$1,000,000 each year to support the College and the History Department.

I look forward to seeing many of you on April 14 for one or both of the events of that day—our annual luncheon in which we give awards to our finest students and an evening dinner. I just ask one favor—when you write your name on your name tag, write it big because your scribble in bluebooks has taken its toll on my eyes.

Bill Cook

UPDATES FROM ALUMNI:

We are always happy to share news about history alumni in this newsletter. We also try to share information about faculty presentations and publications, student and alumni achievements, and campus events on Facebook through the "SUNY Geneseo History Department Alumni" group. We hope that you will consider joining this group. Updates can always be sent to Joe Cope at cope@geneseo.edu.

Amy Breimaier, Katie Smart, Andrew Gustafson and Andrew Reiser are completing their master's

degrees in history at the University of Houston. Amy, Katie and Andrew Reiser are planning to enroll in Ph.D. programs at other institutions.

Frank Cafarella is head of the Social Studies department at Cosgrove Middle School in Spencerport.

Justin Cleveland is a consultant with the National Park Service in San Francisco. He is working on a long term project renovating Battery Wallace, a World War I era installation north of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Katie Deierlein will graduate with an M.A. in International Education from George Washington University in May. Her studies have taken her to Brazil and Senegal and she recently finished an internship with the U.S. Department of State in the Office of UNESCO Affairs. She is currently working part-time at the U.S. Department of Transportation and is researching the problems and solutions associated with project management in international development.

Janine Giordano Drake is in the process of completing a PhD at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Her dissertation is entitled "Between Religion and Politics: The Working Class Religious Left, 1886-1920."

Barbara Combes Ingrassia is completing her fifteenth year as a librarian at the Lamar Soutter Library at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, MA. As head of the Copyright & Licensing Department, she negotiates licenses for electronic resources and guides faculty and staff through the intricacies of copyright law in the digital age. She has also been instrumental in building a LibGuide on the LSL website, and designed workshops and consultations on digital copyright. A note from Barbara her recent participation in the first ever Geneseo Alumni Trip appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

Tom Ingrassia is president of The MotivAct Group(TM), a training and

personal development company focusing on life coaching, goal setting, reducing stress, achieving work/life balance, organizational creativity, and discovering core genius. Clients include financial services companies, sports teams, educational institutions, business networking groups, chambers of commerce, and health/fitness clubs. Additionally, Tom tours the country with his "Motown and the Civil Rights Movement" multimedia lecture program. In celebration of Black History Month in February 2012, he will present the program throughout the northeast. Tom also serves as president of the Board of Directors at the Pakachoag Music School of Greater Worcester, and as publicity director for the Worcester Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

Emaline Johnson is enrolled in the University of Rochester's Warner School of Education pursuing a master's degree in Childhood Education and Teaching Literacy. She has also been interning at School No. 36 in Rochester, providing Academic Intervention Services for struggling first- and second-grade students.

Justin Levy is working for Latham and Watkins LLP, a corporate litigation firm based in New York City.

Nick Lombardo completed a master's degree at Syracuse University. He is currently employed with the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the US-India Policy Studies

Program, focusing on bilateral security and defense issues as well as economic development and trade policy.

Chris Machanoff is an organizer with Service Employee International Union Local 200 United. A recent blog post by Chris can be read at <http://labornotes.org/blogs/2012/01/union-stooges-nlr-b-no-panacea-workers>.

Ed McGrogan is online editor for Tennis.com and his tennis-related blog posts appear regularly on ESPN.com.

Stan McKay has been accepted into the Teach for America program. He will be training with Teach for America staff at Rice University over the summer and will begin teaching middle school in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas next year.

Jean (Iovale) Mendler is now working at P.S. 173 Queens, The Fresh Meadow School, as an administrative assistant to the Principal. Her duties include community liaison work with the PTA, school staff and local community organizations, as well as organizing many student activities such as violin and ballroom dance lessons and the organization of special school events such as the annual Lunar New Year Multicultural Celebration and the Ballroom Dance and Violin evening performances

Jill Robinson Morris and **Charlie Morris** both work at North Carolina State University. Jill is now the

Assistant Director of NC LIVE, a statewide consortium of 200 academic and public libraries in North Carolina. She is responsible for promotions and outreach work, as well as negotiating licenses for library databases and eResources. Charlie graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with an M.S. in Information Science in August 2011. He has been awarded a position in the NC State University Libraries Fellows Program where he works on designing and develop the Libraries' website, and coordinates emerging technologies in the Libraries' Learning Commons.

Tim Munier works at Strong Hospital on the Hematology and Oncology floor as an RN.

Steve Nelson works in Syracuse as a copywriter and is planning to enter law school in the fall.

Rich Olson is working as an analyst for the Department of Defense in Quantico, VA, and is pursuing a master's degree from Mercyhurst College.

Jason Smith was recently appointed Superintendent of Schools in the Lyndonville Central School District. He had previously served as a principal in the Elba Central School District and as a social studies teacher in Albion.

Alex Waldauer completed his master's degree in mechanical engineering at Northern Arizona University in Dec. 2011. He currently lives in Syracuse and

works for Anaren as a mechanical engineer.

Audrey Watkins will be enrolling in the University of Albany's Public History master's program in the fall.

UPDATES FROM FACULTY

Cathy Adams continues to serve on the board of trustees of the Livingston County Historical Society. She has also presented a number of local workshops and talks, including a roundtable on "The History of Agriculture in Livingston County".

Justin Behrend had a brief article on a Civil War slave revolt published in the *New York Times*. He presented a paper on the Political Geography of Reconstruction Violence at the "Beyond Freedom" conference at Yale University. He is finishing revisions on an article entitled "John R. Lynch and the Memory of Reconstruction," and continuing to work on his book manuscript, "Reconstructing Democracy". He is also teaching a new course in the spring semester, cross-listed with black studies, entitled "African-American Voting and Politics."

Joe Cope is serving as Acting Department Chair during Tze-ki Hon's sabbatical leave and will take on the role permanently beginning in the 2012-3 academic year. He is working on a long term project exploring faith healers in the 17th century British world and his first

article based on this work, entitled "The Irish Stroker and the King: Valentine Greatrakes, Protestant Faith Healing, and the Restoration in Ireland" appeared in the November 2011 issue of *Éire-Ireland*. In the classroom Joe has been developing a course on "The Experience of Disaster", which explores individual and collective responses to various episodes of calamity in the period 1500-present.

Emilye Crosby's book, *Civil Rights from the Ground Up*, was published by the University of Georgia Press in March 2011 (additional material on her book appears elsewhere in this newsletter). She has made a number of appearances connected with the book, including author events at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, the Albany Civil Rights Institute in Albany, GA, and the Oral History Association Annual Meeting in Denver. Emilye continues to present on her scholarly work, including talks at Hood College in Frederick, MD, Emory University, and the Legacies of the Civil Rights Movement Symposium in Orem, UT. She has also been conducting teaching workshops in a number of locations and was one of the core faculty at a National Endowment for the Humanities workshop at the Fannie Lou Hamer Institute at Jackson State University. This year, Emilye has a fellowship position as visiting scholar with the James Weldon Johnson Institute at Emory University

Tze-ki Hon stepped down as Chair of History Department on August

31, 2011. He published four articles/book chapters in 2010-2011. He is taking a sabbatical in 2011-2012 to complete three book manuscripts: *Visions of Modernity* (Chinese University of Hong Kong Press), *Revolution as Restoration* (Brill), and *Teaching the Book of Changes* (Oxford University Press).

Jordan Kleiman is currently revising his book manuscript entitled *The Appropriate Technology Movement in American Political Culture*, which will be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press. He is also finishing an article examining the intersection of alternative technology and environmental justice activism in the South Bronx during the 1970s and eighties. This semester, Jordan is teaching a new INTD 102 course entitled "Fracking 101: The History, Politics, Science, & Technology of Unconventional Gas Development". In designing and teaching this course, Jordan has been able to draw not only on his scholarly interest technology and the environment, but on his experience as co-founder of Rush Citizens Concerned About Hydrofracking, which is currently pursuing a one-year moratorium in the Town of Rush. He has also given two public presentations on the subject in the past several months and is scheduled to give two more this Spring. Meanwhile, the Geneseo Food Project, which Jordan co-coordinates with Ken Cooper of the English Department, is heading into its fifth growing season. The Project includes a campus community garden, a speaker series, a student-

run Community-Supported Market program, and a "head-and-hands" American Studies course entitled "American Garden" (co-taught by Jordan and Ken). In the Fall, Jordan will be offering a new INTD 388/HIST 388 course entitled "Building an Alternative Food System in the Greater Rochester Area: Past, Present, Future".

Kathy Mapes has been acting as department internship coordinator and as the chair of American Histories Core Committee. This year, she took on an additional role as co-chair of the President's Commission on Diversity and Community at Geneseo. Last spring, Kathy took part in a roundtable discussion on "What Agricultural History Can Tell Us about the Local Foods Movement" at the Organization of American Historians annual meeting in Houston. Professor Mapes is continuing work on a book manuscript on land, labor and immigrants and is in the process of finishing an article manuscript entitled "'Peasant Pioneers': Land, Race and Immigration Restriction, 1880-1929". A review essay entitled "Promises of the Past" also recently appeared in *Reviews in American History*.

Michael Oberg is completing his biography of Eleazer Williams and he continues to conduct research for native nations in New York to support their sovereign rights. He has signed contracts to write a book on the Treaty of Canandaigua for Oxford and edit a volume in Oxford's edition of Richard Hakluyt's

Principal Navigations. He is beginning work on a second edition of his textbook, *Native America*, published by Wiley Blackwell. This year he has presented papers at the Conference on Iroquois Research, the American Enterprise Institute, East Carolina University, and the Early Modern Studies Institute at the Huntington Library.

In addition to his traditional menu of Latin American courses, **David Tamarin** has integrated more offerings in Spanish history into his teaching. His research interests have moved into the history of mid-twentieth century Argentine-Spanish relations, focusing on the complex relationship between Argentine ‘strongman’ Juan Domingo Perón and Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. Tamarin also continues a long-standing collaboration with the Rochester Labor Film Series (co-sponsored by the Rochester AFL-CIO Labor

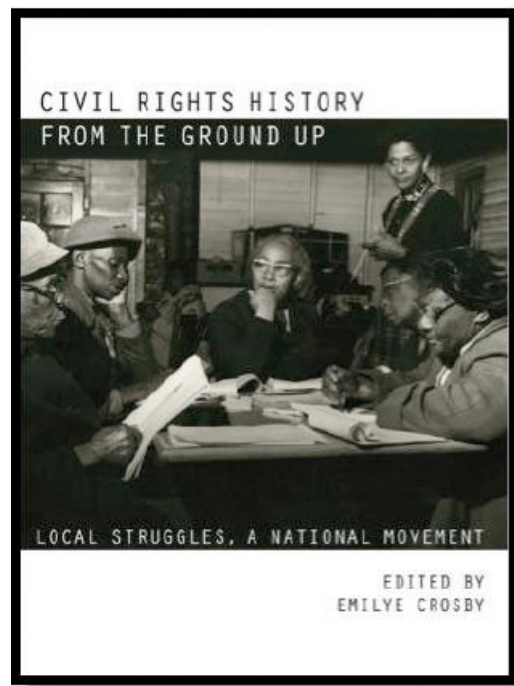
Council and George Eastman House’s Dryden Theater) in helping to select Spanish language films for the series as well as presenting them to and leading discussions with Dryden Theater audiences. He most recently (October 2011) introduced and led a discussion of the powerful Spanish-Bolivan co-produced movie, *Tambien la Lluvia* [Even the Rain], which traces patterns of exploitation and repression in Latin America from the Columbus invasion down to the present day.

Jim Williams continues to teach ancient history, western civilization, and Humanities I. His family visited their daughter Peggy while she taught English in Hungary last year. His wife and he now are looking forward to Peggy's marriage this summer. Jim is vice-chair of the College Senate this year and an Elder at Christ Community Church.

PUBLICATION PROFILE:

Emilye Crosby, *Civil Rights History from the Ground Up: Local Struggles, A National Movement* (University of Georgia Press, 2011)

Emilye Crosby’s new book is a collection of scholarship from some of the nation’s most important scholars of the civil rights movement. Focusing on “bottom-up” approaches to the movement, the book engages with topics such as nonviolence and self defense, women in the movement, and historical memory, situating these issues in local communities and contexts. The book has already received impressive feedback –



Julian Bond, former chair of the NAACP refers the *Civil Rights History from the Ground Up* as “engaging and accessible for non-specialists and thought-provoking for scholars....It is a must read for anyone interested in the freedom struggle and in a just, democratic society”.

This book emerged from an on-campus conference entitled “Local Studies, A National Movement” that Professor Crosby organized in the spring of 2006. In the Acknowledgements to her book, Crosby describes the conference as “an extraordinary gathering [which] brought together almost two hundred people – students, activists, teachers from K-12 to university professors, scholarly specialists, and other interested folks.... The conference included thought-provoking presentations, dynamic readings of personal accounts, spirited debate, and considerable conversation. It was a wonderful illustration of the potential for rigorous and meaningful academic exchange outside of the Ivory Tower” (p. xi).

Of particular note are the ways in which Crosby weaves her students’ experiences with civil rights history into the scholarship. Her acknowledgements include many thank yous to the undergraduates with whom Professor Crosby has collaborated over the years. Professor Crosby’s impact as a teacher is also underscored in a section entitled “Why Study the Movement? A Conversation on Movement Values and Movement History”, which transcribes a discussion session led by noted scholar Charles Payne during the 2006 conference. The voices of a number of Geneseo students and alumni are represented in this exchange, and their perceptive comments reflect a nuanced understanding of the topic. Crosby’s concluding chapter focuses extensively on these issues, drawing on her experiences with Geneseo students in the classroom, in structured learning communities, and in directed studies. This essay tracks the transformative impact of student engagement with the history of the civil rights movement, as students struggle to make themselves “part of an educated, informed society that embraces a realistic, usable history, one that can help, not undermine, efforts to fight for justice” (p. 471).

Crosby’s work promises to be a major contribution to civil rights historiography. It also reflects the spirit of exchange and collaboration that is so integral to the teacher-scholar ideal at SUNY Geneseo.

**SPOTLIGHT ON ALUMNI:
GENESEO ALUMNI ADAPT TO
ROLES AS NEW FACULTY**

Submitted by Michael Oberg

Graduates of the Geneseo History department routinely enroll in some

of the finest graduate programs in the country. Now, more and more of them are finding employment in academia, even in a very tough job market. Shawn Wiemann has just completed his first semester as an Assistant Professor in the History

Department at Onondaga Community College, in Syracuse. Shawn joined the faculty at OCC after earning an MA degree at William and Mary and his Ph.D in Native American and Early American history at the University of New Mexico. Brad Franco, who earned his Ph.D in Medieval European history from Syracuse, joined the department of history at the University of Portland in the fall of 2010. Tim Nicholson, a recent Ph.D graduate from Stonybrook, teaches in our sister institution at SUNY-Delhi and Craig Miller, who left Geneseo to pursue a Ph.D at the University at Buffalo, teaches at Penn College in Williamsport.

All four credited their undergraduate education at Geneseo for equipping them with the skills they needed to succeed in graduate school and that helped them land their first academic teaching positions. “While at Geneseo I was exposed to innovative teaching styles and mentored by faculty who were actively publishing in their field,” Craig pointed out. “It is,” he said, “difficult to overstate the importance of this combination to students who intend to pursue doctoral research.” Tim seconded this notion. “The student-centered nature of the program and the great professors at Geneseo provided me with examples about how develop and run a class which became critical in selling myself and my teaching ability at Delhi.”

All four alums noted that their professors at Geneseo equipped them with the research training that

put them ahead of many of their classmates in terms of their preparation for graduate study. Brad Franco pointed out that “the amount of feedback I received on written assignments made me a more efficient and better writer; HIST 220 and 221 were invaluable in teaching me to think like a historian and to learn some of the skills needed to conduct research and engage in the historical enterprise; the one-on-one time I had with faculty during office hours and elsewhere, along with their guidance and encouragement led me to consider pursuing a career as an academic.” Geneseo was able to fund some of Brad’s senior research in Siena, Italy, and provided the money for Shawn Wiemann to travel to Hartford to complete work on the honor’s thesis that later became the basis for his dissertation, a biography of the Pequot Indian leader Robin Cassacinamon.

Indeed, all four of the successful job seekers commented on the dedication and commitment of their Geneseo faculty. The faculty on the third floor of Sturges, Shawn said, and “their dedication to public education, to giving all the students who passed through their doors the best education possible, was always an inspiration for me.” His professors at Geneseo, Shawn continued, “took an uncertain eighteen year old kid unsure of what he wanted to do with his life, and helped him find focus. They did that for me, I know they did it for others.”

All of us congratulate our alums, and we look forward to opportunities in the future to continue to provide our students with an education that inspires them to do great things.

2011 GENESEO ALUMNI TRIP TO SIENA

This past summer Barbara and Tom Ingrassia (right) participated in the first ever Geneseo Alumni trip to Tuscany, Italy. This ten-day adventure was sponsored by the SUNY Geneseo Alumni Office and included of 25 alumni and their family and friends, spanning the class years of 1961-2006. Based in Siena, the trip was an immersion program led by Wes Kennison, lecturer and fellow in the Office of International Programs, and included lectures, programs and tours guided by faculty members including Bill Cook and Ron Herzman. According to Barbara,



“Because these Geneseo faculty members have lived in-- and had a long-standing relationship with-- Siena, we were privileged to see and experience things that most tourists never do. ‘History’ was all around us—live and up close. We took trips outside the city every day, had plenty of free time to explore on our own, ate, and ate, and ate—‘so much gelato, so little time,’ as Wes said. We even went to cooking school—and ate the fruits of our labors—with no ill effects! A highlight was our visit to Florence, where Dr. Cook led our group on a wonderful private (thematic) tour of the Uffizi Museum—including areas that are NEVER open to the public. What a treat! Dr. Herzman guided us on a “search for evidence of Dante’s Divine Comedy throughout Siena. And of course we were there at just the right time to learn about, and witness the preparations for, the August Palio horse race. We learned so much; definitely a life-changing experience. It was so special to once again be under the tutelage of Drs. Cook and Herzman after all these years!”

Information, photos, and descriptions of the 2012 Alumni Trip to Siena can be found at <http://www.geneseo.edu/alumni/siena-italy-alumni-trip>.