



# Viewed Historically

The e-Newsletter of the Department of History  
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## At the End of the Academic Year

I write these lines as the dreary weather of a long and tenacious winter and a cold and damp spring has—finally—given way to more mild and pleasant conditions. The University's commencements were the beneficiaries of this change in weather, whose onset occurred almost precisely as the celebrations of the conclusion of a course of study began. We can only hope that the weather is a good omen for the new graduates as they go out into the world to face a rather uncertain future.

Among these graduates were 72 history majors who received their bachelor's, two graduates who received master's and two new history doctorates, Ryan Stockwell and Kris Lawson. Both Stockwell and Lawson, I am pleased to report, have found employment (not always self-evident for new history doctorates), at the Western Organization of Resource Council, a Montana think tank focusing on clean energy, sustainable agriculture and environmental protection; and Lawson is a visiting assistant professor of history at Westminster College in Fulton. To their good news on employment, we can add that of one of the department's 2007 doctorates, Joel Davis. After a year as a visiting assistant professor at St. Louis University, he has found a permanent position at Concordia University, in Portland, Ore.

One of the signs of spring in the history department is the annual reception in honor of faculty who have published books in the calendar year. This year's reception, which took place on May 6—in unusually chilly weather, I might add—was a more modest ceremony, since there was only one book to celebrate: Professor John Bullion's work on Lyndon

Johnson and American politics. This is the fewest number of books published by history faculty since the annual book reception was introduced in 1996. I would like to reassure all our friends and alumni that the paucity of books this year is a blip on the graph rather than a sign of declining scholarly productivity. Currently, there are at least four books by history faculty in production with publishers, so next year's reception will have a more reasonable number of books to celebrate.

The modest faculty publication record this year gave us the opportunity to expand the reception, to honor other accomplishments and other people within the Department of History. Professor Wilma King already honored at the 2006 book reception for her [\*The Essence of Liberty: Free Black Women during the Slave Era\* \(Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006\)](#), received an additional distinction this year, when her book was chosen by the Board of Curators as the 2008 recipient of the Curators' Award for Scholarly Excellence, given to the author of the best book published by the University of Missouri Press.

Also honored at the reception was history department graduate student, [Tiffany Ziegler](#). She was the first history graduate student to receive the D.K. Anderson Award, given by the graduate school to the best graduate teaching assistant at the University. Ziegler was also the first recipient of a fellowship from the history department's Charles Nauert fund. Donated by Professor Emeritus Charles Nauert, someone who is undoubtedly familiar to many of our alumni, this fund supports graduate students' research outside the United States. Tiffany

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will use the funds this summer to travel to Belgium to study sources for her dissertation on medieval female monastic communities.

The other person honored at the awards ceremony was the department's Director of Undergraduate Advising and Curriculum, Jenny Morton, recipient of the 2008 University of Missouri Excellence in Advising Award. As many of our alumni know very well from their interactions with Morton, she is a wonderful resource for department majors, explaining the ever more complex graduation requirements, offering helpful advice about possible classes, providing useful information about post-graduation career possibilities—and doing so with an admirable mixture of efficiency, encouragement, patience and good humor. History faculty certainly know how much she helps students and feel this award is a long-deserved honor.

Turning to some of the other features of this newsletter, there is a special section dealing with a more somber side of the progression of the years. In the first three months of 2008, two emeritus professors, Claudia Kren and Charles Timberlake, passed away. Their obituaries follow.

News from Alumni contains a note from Elizabeth Bland, BA '03. While at MU, she became interested in public history and now works as an exhibition coordinator at the National Library of Medicine in Washington, D. C. Her account of how she has made use of her undergraduate study of history reveals one way historical studies can be put to use; we would be delighted to hear from other alumni about the use of their study of history for their work.

For the general public, one of the most popular, if not *the* most popular area of historical investigation is the Civil War. Historical Perspectives has a report on research by the department's specialist in the Civil War era, Professor Leeann Whites. Her work involves studying the letters written by Civil War soldiers and, as our readers can see from her

account, considering these letters casts the war and the experience of combat and its aftermath in a very different light.

As summer approaches, we wish all our alumni and friends a very pleasant season and a refreshing vacation. We will be back with Vol. 4, No. 1 of *Viewed Historically* in November. In the interval, you can always look at the department Web site, [history.missouri.edu](http://history.missouri.edu), or contact us, with information about your activities, suggestions for this newsletter (including people you think ought to be receiving it) and comments about the site, at [history@missouri.edu](mailto:history@missouri.edu).

—Jonathan Sperber  
*Chair, Department of History*

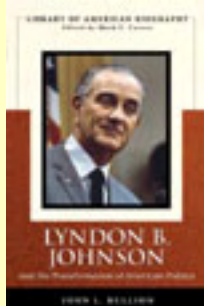
Considering making a donation to the history department? For information on doing so, click on this [link](#). The department chair and the development office of the College of Arts and Science will be pleased to discuss with you any plans you may have to help the Department of History.

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## Books by History Faculty

John Bullion



John Bullion's book *Lyndon B. Johnson and the Transformation of American Politics* has been described by readers as "the best brief biography of LBJ" and as "surely the standard brief biography of Johnson for years to come." Particularly noteworthy

aspects of the book are the treatment of the role of Lady Bird Johnson in his career, the importance of his evangelical background in determining his positions on economic and social issues, his changing reactions to racial tensions during the 1940s and 1950s, and the impact of the "lessons" of foreign policy decisions between the 1930s and the early 1960s on his reactions to the crisis in Vietnam. Lucidly written in words that mirror the cadence and pattern of Johnson's thoughts, conversations, and words, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the Transformation of American Politics* is a compelling portrait of a complex and extraordinary politician.

## Obituaries

**Charles Timberlake,  
1935–2008**

Charles Timberlake passed away in Columbia on March 21, 2008, after a battle with cancer.



Timberlake was born September 9, 1935, in the Appalachian town of South Shore, Ky. He was the first person in his family to attend college, going to Berea College in Kentucky, and graduating with a bachelor's degree in history and political science in 1957. Timberlake received his master's from Claremont College in California, and his doctorate from the University of Washington in 1968.

Timberlake's area of scholarly specialty was Russian history, with a particular interest in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian liberalism and the development of local self-government in rural areas. Among his books are *Essays in Russian Liberalism* (1972), and, with David O'Brien, *Services and Quality of Life in Rural Villages in the Former Soviet Union* (1997).

Hired by MU in 1967, Timberlake taught history here until his retirement in 2004. Colleagues and students remember him as a person of great and persistent and vocal enthusiasm, consistently devoted, with formidable energy, to his teaching, his scholarship, and his service to the department and the university. He was full of innovative ideas, many of which he worked hard to implement, during his term as history department chair from 1995 to 1999. He was recipient of the MU Byler Distinguished Professor award in 1996 and the MU Alumni Association's Distinguished Faculty Award in 2002.

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In that same year, his alma mater recognized his accomplishments in that same year, by granting him its Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Timberlake is survived by his mother, Mabel, of South Shore, Ky., his wife of 49 years, Patricia, of Columbia; and three sons, Mark, Daniel and Eric, along with their wives and children.

A memorial service for Timberlake was held in Columbia at the Missouri United Methodist Church on May 13, 2008. Among the speakers were two history professors. Timberlake's former colleague, Professor Emerita Susan Flader, related, in fitting and elegant fashion, Timberlake's life and career. Timberlake's fellow expert on Russian history, Professor Russell Zguta offered his reminiscences and concluded his talk with a powerful and moving rendition of a Ukrainian church song for the dead, "Eternal Remembrance."



## **Claudia Kren, 1927–2008**

Claudia Wilson Kren, the first female professor in MU's Department of History and, to date, the only female department chair, passed away January 26, 2008.

Born in New York City, October 29, 1927, she earned a bachelor's in physics from Colby College (1949) and a master's (1958) and doctorate (1965) in the history of science from the University of Wisconsin. She was hired by MU in 1965 to teach medieval history and the history of science.

For her dissertation she edited and analyzed the long and complicated text of a 14<sup>th</sup>-century French schoolman, Nicole Oresme, producing a work of some 1,200 pages. It was slated for publication in a prestigious medieval series, but the press fell on troubled times and could not afford to bring out a work of such magnitude for what would have been a very small audience. Nevertheless, Claudia published a number of highly regarded articles in the most prestigious journals in the history of science, including more articles in *Isis* than any other medieval scholar at the time, as well as a book-length annotated bibliography of medieval science and technology and a book on medieval alchemy. Her research on highly technical aspects of medieval astronomy, physics and mechanics involved working from original handwritten manuscripts, either in the original or on microfilm copies. Her scholarship took her to libraries and archives in Oxford and London, Milan, Florence and Rome, Seville, Vienna, Utrecht and Cracow, supported by fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Philosophical Society, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and others.



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Claudia was promoted to full professor in 1976. From 1974 to 1977, she served as department chair, gaining wide respect for her fair and even-handed administration of the department.

Claudia was known for her quick wit, shown in repartee with friends as well as in the classroom. Her courses on medieval history and the history of science, regularly drew 50–80 students, who had the highest opinions of the quality of her teaching. Long before the days of PowerPoint, she prepared 35-mm slides from documents and lithographs to illustrate virtually every aspect of her lectures, and when the department began encouraging one-credit “mini-courses” Claudia responded with courses on medieval warfare, astrological thought, and alchemy that drew even more students and garnered even higher evaluations. She guided a number of masters and doctoral dissertations and was the first recipient of the Elizabeth F. Cooper Faculty of Excellence Award.

My own field of environmental history overlapped with natural history aspects of the history of science; yet, though Claudia was always encouraging and supportive of me, I never sensed that she was much interested in my kind of science, especially anything outdoors. That all changed after she took early retirement in 1986 and moved away to Cape Cod. Some years later when I visited her there I was astounded to find that Claudia, who had never seemed interested in canoeing with me on a Missouri stream, now had a veritable *fleet* of vessels all her own. She had a small sailboat in the bay, a dingy to get from shore to the mooring, and a solo kayak that she could load and unload from her little Toyota by herself to explore tidal streams and marshes.

Claudia became a regular and devoted volunteer at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History. She became extraordinarily knowledgeable about

invertebrates, studying them out on the mudflats, through scientific literature and with a high-powered microscope at home. She maintained the museum aquarium, monitored water quality, and regularly led natural history field trips for young and old alike, creating a much loved “Mudflat Mania” program. In recent years, with all the controversy over Darwin, evolution, and stem-cell research, she developed a highly popular seminar series, “Dialogues on Darwin,” offered most recently in fall 2007.

Claudia came down with what she thought was a cold while visiting her son Stefan, his wife Betsy, and her granddaughter Hannah in Minneapolis over the holidays. Some time after her return to the Cape, she was taken to the emergency room by a friend—where, by sheer coincidence while waiting to see a doctor, Claudia (who had never in her life owned a television) saw her son Stefan interviewed by CNN regarding his cardiovascular research group’s stunning success in getting a rat’s heart reconstituted with stem cells to beat on its own. After tests, Claudia was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer at an advanced, untreatable stage. She was taken by her son to Minneapolis, where she died in her sleep several days later.

Memorials are suggested to the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, 869 Route 6A, Brewster, Mass. 02631.

—Susan Flader, Professor Emerita

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## News from Alumni

After graduating from Mizzou in 2003 with a degree in history and anthropology, I wanted to continue pursuing my academic interests and eventually get my doctorate. However, it was also very important for me to be involved in public advocacy and awareness. The museum field seemed like a perfect match of my academic interests and my need to be involved in public education, so I moved to Washington, D.C. to get my master of arts in museum studies at George Washington University.

After working at a variety of cultural institutions, including the National Archives, the Smithsonian Institution and the Woodrow Wilson House, I became the exhibition coordinator at the National Library of Medicine exhibition program. I am very lucky in my position in that I not only have variety in my duties and responsibilities, but also have expanded these duties to incorporate my own interests and strengths.

I am the primary person managing exhibition objects, from when we first research them until they are up on the exhibition wall. I spend a large amount of time researching and locating items, negotiating rights, managing object photography/scanning, and disseminating all exhibition item information to the exhibition team and exhibition designers. I am also heavily involved in the exhibition creative process. I attend all exhibition team meetings, research artifacts and storylines, express my creative opinions, and share content and design information with our various designers.

Our current exhibition, [\*Against the Odds: Making a Difference in Global Health\*](#), explores the many aspects of good health, including access to nutritious food, and protection from violence and social inequities. Working on this exhibition not only challenged my understanding of global health, but it introduced me to fascinating history I had known

nothing about. In addition to the exhibition content I get to explore and share with our public, I have been able to work on intellectually stimulating side-projects.

For example, I am curating a small traveling exhibition on *Harry Potter* and its links to the history of science, focusing specifically on the Renaissance and ethical situations. My primary academic interests revolve around mass media and culture, making this particular project especially exciting for me. The exhibition will open at the National Library of Medicine in June 2008.

—Elizabeth Bland, BA '03

## Historical Reflections

An Unexpected Civil War,  
In the Light of Soldiers' Letters

This research began for me in a fairly unconventional way. My father, who lives in Los Angeles and is now 83, threw a blood clot and went blind. I needed some way to spend more time in Los Angeles, and I began to think about what opportunities there might be for me to do historical research in the area. I immediately thought of the Huntington Library, which is a major research center, with lots of grant money to distribute and which holds a fine collection of Civil War soldiers' letters. Surely, I thought, I can think of something to do with these letters. And so I applied for a short-term research grant in summer 2005 there begins my story.

I will say that historians have not exactly been professional when it comes to these letters. By that I mean, that as historians we are trained to consider primary documents in their larger context. How did the writer intend the letter to be read? Who was the recipient of the letter and what did it mean to him or her? In the case of Civil War soldiers' letters,

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however, very few historians have been interested in them for the reasons the soldiers were in writing them. Instead, historians have pretty much raided soldiers letters for what they wanted to know: details about the formal field of battle, like charges, and flanking maneuvers and bombardments. Of course, you certainly can learn about that sort of thing from these letters, but you can actually learn a lot more about things like cheese, and butter, and pies, and even paper and stamps. I read through hundreds of these letters at the Huntington that summer, I slowly began to read them as documenting a second war, a war that ran alongside of the formal field of battle, what I came to call the relational war.

Of course it is a commonplace to note that most Civil War soldiers did not die from their wounds sustained on the battlefield, that most of them died of much more mundane causes, like poor nutrition, over exposure, contagious diseases and lack of decent nursing. What I learned from reading soldiers' letters was just how much difference it made in their life expectancy, not to mention the quality of their life, if they managed to stay in touch with their relations, especially, frankly, their mother. Neither the Union nor the Confederate Army supplied their men with enough food to survive. Nor did they provide them with enough clothing to keep from freezing to death. They frequently failed to even pay them for months at a time.

What I began to see in these letters then was a critical line of supply. And it wasn't just letters, it was boxes. Boxes of clothes, boxes of butter and pies and cheese, and even boxes of paper and stamps and money. A veritable relational war, where the homefolks, however they might have felt about the battlefield conflict, fought in deadly earnest to keep their men alive. I read the stories of men who died when their mail failed to reach home in time for their families to come nurse them back to health. I

read of men who survived only because they had a body servant to send home and get their mother or sister to come back quickly and nurse them back to health.

And so I rolled on from that initial grant at the Huntington to several other large repositories of Civil War soldiers' letters, at the New York Historical Society and the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina. Next year I will return to the Huntington on an Andrew Mellon Fellowship to write up my story of the Civil War soldiers and their largely undocumented, but, I will suggest, major line of supply, and the relational war it delineates.

—*Leeann Whites*



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