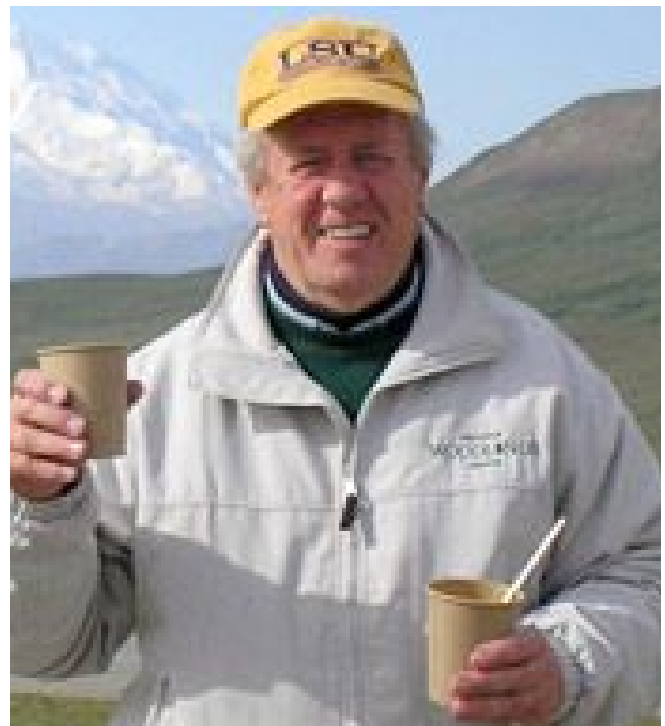


# HISTORY HAPPENINGS

*A newsletter published by the Department of History at the University of Memphis*

*Editors: Suzanne Onstine and Caroline Peyton*



*In this issue of History Happenings, we honor the distinguished careers and tremendous contributions of Dr. Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas, Dr. Charles Crawford, Dr. Stephen Stein, Dr. James Fickle, and Dr. Robert Griffin.*

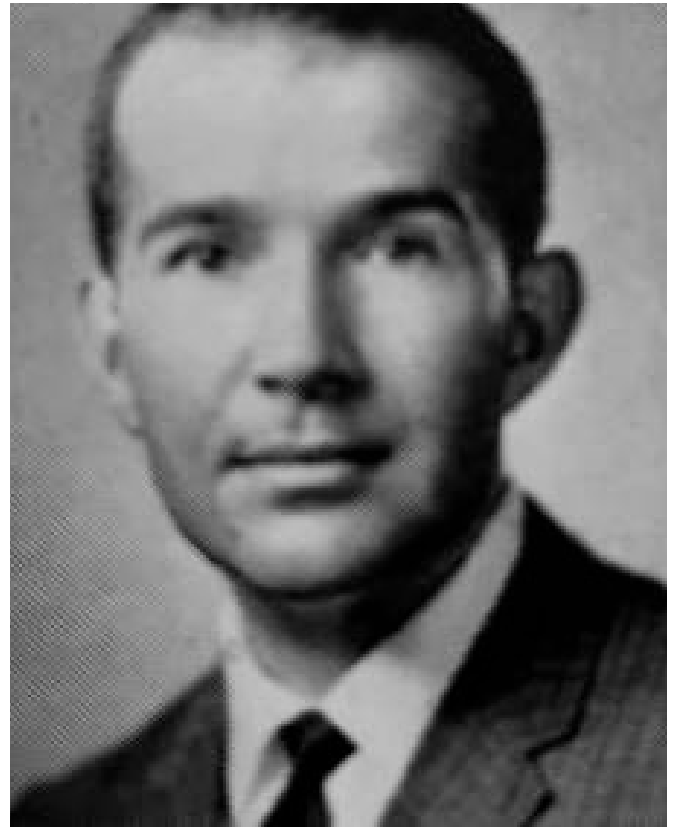
# Charles Crawford is Memphis History

*by Professor Aram Goudsouzian*

If you teach history at the University of Memphis, and if you find yourself in any kind of social interaction in this city, it is likely that someone will ask you about Dr. Charles Crawford. Inevitably, that person will tell you about a terrific educational experience with a man who is an inexhaustible resource of Memphis and Tennessee history, as well as a delightful and beloved character.

Charles retired from the University of Memphis in December 2023. He had an extraordinary career that spanned sixty-one years. He has not just taught history here. He has become a figure of historical significance in his own right.

When I was chair of the department, I would review the teaching evaluations of our professors. In those evaluations, students often referred to Dr. Crawford as one of the best professors at the university, and they called his class one of the best that they had ever taken. Some even mentioned that they felt privileged to have taken his course.



Charles was also an invaluable mentor for our graduate students. He directed twenty-nine students through their doctoral dissertations, more than any other faculty member in the history of our department. He has served as thesis director or committee chair for at least sixty M.A. students, as well. He has touched these students' lives, shaping their future success.

### *Crawford (continued.)*

He regularly taught our popular course on Tennessee history, somehow managing to resonate with a cross-section of students from diverse educational, political, and racial backgrounds. Similarly, his course on the history of Memphis took students to locations throughout the city, where they learned to approach urban history with a hands-on perspective.

In terms of research, Charles was a pioneer in field of oral history. President Cecil Humphreys appointed him director of the Oral History Research Office in 1967, a position that he held until his retirement. He oversaw approximately 3000 interviews through this office, all of which met professional standards for ethics and preservation (continued) He won grants for projects as diverse as World War II Veterans and the Centennial History of the University of Memphis, and he served as president of the Oral History Association. Thanks to his efforts, the University of Memphis has one of the largest oral history collections in the region.

He has written numerous books, essays, journal articles, book reviews, and newspaper articles on the history of the region, state, and city – all of them gloriously free of academic jargon, and many of them geared to bring history to wider audiences.

As one measure of his influence, his book *Tennessee: Land, History, and Government* has been used by over ninety percent of the state's school districts.

His charm and eloquence made him an ambassador for the university. He attracted major donations that sustained the Department of History's lecture series, graduate student funding, and other vital ventures. He further served in leadership positions for a host of community organizations, including the Shelby County Historical Commission, the Memphis Landmarks Commission, West Tennessee Historical Society, Tennessee Conference of Historians, Tennessee Historical Society, Tennessee Heritage Alliance, and Kiwanis Club of Memphis.

The honors for Charles include the National Teacher of the Year Award from the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Meritorious Faculty Award from the University of Memphis, and a Resolution of Appreciation from the Tennessee State Senate.

### *Crawford (continued.)*

It is also worth noting that Charles has lived his life to high ideals. He strives for interracial cooperation and friendship. His ties to the notable Church family have been invaluable for bringing the city's African American history to light. His oral history efforts have crossed lines of race, as well as class and gender.

It has been a remarkable journey for a man who grew up along the Spring River in Arkansas, tending to pigs and chickens on his family's farm. Books inspired his imagination for a life beyond this rural isolation. He earned his BA from Harding College, his MA from the University of Arkansas, and his Ph.D. from the University of Mississippi. (His academic mentor, Jim Silver, was the same Ole Miss professor who befriended James Meredith, the Black man who needed military protection to survive his year. Silver had to leave Mississippi in the aftermath.)

Personally, I owe Charles a debt of gratitude for his friendship. I will always remember that soon after I came to the University of Memphis in 2004, I received a note from Charles asking me to lunch – it was written on a typewriter. Over the years, he has invited me to numerous events, including a number of lunches at the Kiwanis Club, when he thought I would be interested in the subject matter.



When I served as department chair, he and our colleague Jim Fickle sponsored a Mississippi riverboat cruise for the faculty to kick off each new academic year. Once Charles even told a reporter for the Commercial Appeal that I was the best chair in the history of the department – which was never true, but especially not at that point, because I had been on the job for only a few months.

Ultimately, the legacy of Dr. Charles W. Crawford lies in how he helped his students, his colleagues, and the people of Memphis. He did it all with grace and lightness. I can think of no higher tribute to Charles than this: he is friends with Al Gore, Lamar Alexander, and just about every major living figure in the political history of Memphis and throughout Tennessee. Yet when a young student entered into his class, that person became his friend, too.

# Honoring the Career of Dr. Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas

By Professor Dennis H. Laumann

Our colleague and friend Dr. Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas already was a prominent scholar when she arrived at the University of Memphis in 2003. Her groundbreaking monographs, book chapters, and journal articles examining family, women, and gender in the colonial era had established her as one of the leading historians of Colombia. Professor Dueñas-Vargas also had held numerous top administrative positions at the National University in Bogota, the country's premiere institution, including Vice-Rector of the university and Chair of its Department of History. Furthermore, she was a nationally recognized activist who co-founded a feminist organization, the Gender Studies School, and an academic journal, *En otras palabras* ("In other words"). A junior faculty member at the time, I felt honored to welcome a historian of such renown to our department. As definitive evidence of her acclaim, Dr. Dueñas-Vargas was accepted as a member of the prestigious Academy of History of Colombia in 2011.



Dr. Dueñas-Vargas is the personification of a first-rate historian. Throughout her years at Memphis, she always seemed to be finishing up a research project and initiating a new one while regularly presenting - and being honored - at conferences in her field. I fondly remember many spontaneous conversations with Dr. Dueñas-Vargas, when I would find her studying archival documents at her desk, about research on gendered notions of love in colonial-era Colombia.

In fact, when I lecture about gender in my world history course, I often refer to her description of the letters she discovered between upper class men, in which they proclaimed their friendship in impassioned terms. This research eventually was published as one of Dr. Dueñas-Vargas' books, the critically acclaimed *On Love and Other Passions: Elites, Politics and Family in Bogota, Colombia, 1778-1870*, simultaneously released in Spanish in Colombia and in English in the United States in 2015.

Beyond her scholarship, Dr. Dueñas-Vargas distinguished herself as a model departmental citizen. Anyone who has worked on a committee with her can attest that Dr. Dueñas-Vargas always approached assignments with seriousness and completed them with diligence. Moreover, she was a consistent and lively presence at department events. Unlike many historians, Dr. Dueñas-Vargas never limited her scholarly interests to her own field but would enthusiastically engage with speakers sharing their research on completely different subjects, geographic areas, and time periods.



Indeed, her significance to the intellectual life of the department is demonstrated by her long tenure as editor of this newsletter which featured articles highlighting the research of our faculty and graduate students. In preparation for her engaging interviews with colleagues, Dr. Dueñas-Vargas always carefully read and studied their books to formulate perceptive questions.

Numerous colleagues have told me that they will profoundly miss Dr. Dueñas-Vargas' presence in our department. Personally, I always cherished being so close to her corner office – the door was always open, the room filled with afternoon sunlight, (continued)

(continued) the sounds of classical music or Colombian news spilled into the hallway and, sitting at my computer, I often overheard snippets of lively phone calls to her children and grandchildren.

I spent many hours in her office talking about U.S. and Colombian politics, Cuban history, Latin American literature, our lives and families, and a host of other topics. These conversations were always animated by hilarious stories and extended laughs that often drew in colleagues passing by in the hallway.

I have many dear memories of my professional and personal relationships with Dr. Dueñas-Vargas, such as: delicious meals at her home (though she has still not fulfilled her promise to invite me for *bandeja paisa*, a Colombian farmers' breakfast); generously hosting a baby shower for my wife Rebecca and me; conducting interviews with her at a conference in New Orleans (during which, in an elevator surrounded by scholars of East European history, she turned to me and proclaimed: "these people look so *TORMENTED!*"); heated debates in the hallways about the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela; (continued)



and the time she convinced me to pretend I was a new colleague, Dr. Aram Goudsouzian, for reasons I do not fully remember, as I called the library to request a video for her, a successful operation that was nearly derailed as I stumbled when trying to spell "my" name while Dr. Dueñas-Vargas doubled-over in laughter.

Indeed, it has been a privilege and a joy to work alongside Dr. Dueñas-Vargas the past two decades. Our department, college, and university have benefited enormously from her intellectual and administrative leadership and contributions. I certainly will miss her passion, her humor, and her curiosity.

## Honoring the Career of Dr. James Fickle

By Associate Professor of Teaching, Amanda Lee Keikialoha Savage

Dr. James Fickle spent more than half a century teaching students and training historians as a Professor at the University of Memphis and a Visiting Professor of Forest and Environmental History at the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. He taught classes about the environment, the National Parks System, business history, and labor history. During his career Jim authored several books, including *Green Gold: The Rise, Decline, and Restoration of Alabama's Forest Products Industries* (University of Alabama Press, 2014); *Timber: A Photographic History of Mississippi Forestry* (University Press of Mississippi, 2004); *Mississippi Forests and Forestry* (University Press of Mississippi, 2001); and *The New South and the New Competition: Trade Association Development in the Southern Pine Industry* (University of Illinois Press, 1980).

In addition to authoring numerous books, Jim is also the architect of numerous department controversies, including but not limited to his love of paintings featuring dogs playing poker and their prominent placement in our faculty lounge.



As his taste in art might suggest, Jim's outside interests are as varied as his professional ones. He is an avid sports fan and treated (or subjected, depending on your enthusiasm for sports) many of us to basketball and football games all season. His LSU pride knows no bounds. He loves jazz—and not like a normal person enjoys music, but the way a lifelong practitioner adores it. If you rolled up to any restaurant or club in Memphis featuring live jazz I guarantee you Jim would be there, watching our other colleague Dr. Charles Crawford cut a rug on the dance floor. He chats up every musician (and patron) he comes in contact with. He knows everyone's story.



He creates a community of folks, from all the walks of life he loves, and as his colleagues we are lucky to be a part of it.

Jim decided to be a historian for several reasons (above and beyond antagonizing his coworkers), including a love of travel. This was part of the reason he developed undergraduate courses that toured domestically, to show students areas around the US they might not experience otherwise. He told our students that he “continue[s] to be fascinated by the diversity and cultural variety of different parts of this country” which is why he emphasized the importance of those first-hand encounters between students and other environments and pasts. This passion connected him to many of our majors, including photographer Brian Akerson, who said “In my time at the University of Memphis, Dr. Fickle was (and forever will be) such an inspiration in my life. I already had a great appreciation for our National Parks and National Forests, but he inspires me to do so much more to preserve them.”

Jim loves Memphis, and he did everything he could to share that love with the faculty, staff, and students he met while working at UofM. We will miss his outrageousness, and being outraged by him.



## Honoring the Career of Dr. Stephen Stein

By Professor Suzanne Onstine

Over the course of 23 years of dedicated service in the department, Steve Stein chaired numerous search and department committees, served as associate chair, interim chair of grad studies, and interim department chair. But he will be remembered by many as the person who pushed History into the future by launching the department's online program in 2008. He directed and nurtured it for its first six years of operation, convincing even the most traditional department members of its importance. It was the first undergraduate online program at the University of Memphis (second online program overall) and one of the first online history programs offered by a major university. In 2010, the American Historical Association lauded it as one of the most innovative programs in the country. Its rapid growth helped the department achieve the highest number of history majors in its history and ensured financial health during a period of budget cuts across the university.



One of Steve's focus areas, maritime history, led him to frequently be a guest lecturer for the U.S. Naval War College where he is Fleet Seminar Professor. He often taught wargames using popular board games in his office for Memphis students. Steve and his wife Carolyn are avid gamers and have authored and co-authored several game modules and scenarios. Again, Steve was ahead of the trend by using gaming as a teaching tool.



He even got me – a lifelong non-gamer – to join the game nights he and his wife Carolyn hosted, where they fed me fantastic homemade vegan meals and tolerated me ruining careful strategies with Berserker-style game play. I will always remember their hospitality and humor even if I never remember the rules to games.

Although trained as a US Historian, his class on warfare in the ancient world was particularly popular, demonstrating his versatility as a teacher and the wide scope of his interests. Many undergraduate students became interested in the ancient world through this class. Similarly, Steve has published in a variety of fields, and authored books on maritime and military history, online teaching, and the history of sexuality. In 2006, he won the Rear Admiral Ernest M. Eller Prize, for his article "The Greely Relief Expedition and the New Navy." He worked closely with numerous graduate students, both online and traditional. Two of them wrote chapters for Steve's recent book, *Teaching and Learning History Online*. Others wrote articles for *The Sea in World History*, the encyclopedia of maritime history he edited, which featured many of the most important scholars in the field. His latest books are *Military Strategy for Writers* and a short story collection co-authored with Carolyn called *Thieves Berth*.

Although he has already moved west and is enjoying trail runs in warm dry weather in beautiful desert surroundings (yes, coyotes are beautiful) we all hope he will make the occasional visit back to update us on his future research projects and fiction writing.

## Honoring the Career of Dr. Robert C. Griffin

By Professor Suzanne Onstine

Although adjuncts don't formally "retire," I wanted to take this opportunity to recognize Dr. Robert Griffin for his years of service to the University as he will have taught his last class for us this Spring semester. This will also highlight the career of one of our very successful alumni and a dear friend of mine.

Robert started his journey with us as a graduate student under the late Dr. Bill Murnane in 2000 just before Dr. Murnane passed away. Robert tells me the day he died, two weeks before the final exam in his first class with Bill, he also met two of his heroes at the time, Dr. Don Redford and Dr. Ken Kitchen, both eminent Egyptologists. A roller coaster of a start ended well with a PhD under Dr. Peter Brand in 2010 with a dissertation entitled "The Worship of Syro-Canaanite Deities in New Kingdom Egypt", which won the department's "outstanding dissertation award" (2009-2012). He participated in Dr. Brand's Karnak Great Hypostyle Hall Project in Luxor, Egypt, working as an epigrapher for one field season in 2004-05.



This is where I first met Robert and got to know his generous nature. I also got to know his billiards skills as we played pool into the wee hours of the night at a Luxor establishment of a fairly shady nature. His easy going and open nature won him a warm reception with Egyptian people of all kinds. I learned on that trip that he had lived in Turkey for some time and was not a newbie to navigating Middle East travel.

I think the term “western chill” (coined by one of his favorite musicians Robert Earl Keen) best describes Robert’s attitude of observing and appreciating life and people in whatever ways they unfold. He and I have spent many hours over meals and coffee ruminating on anything and everything and nothing in particular.

With this introduction you might be surprised to learn that Robert also had a long career as a Christian minister, earning his MDiv in 2000 from Harding School of Theology. He was the pastor for a small rural church near Memphis while working his way through graduate school, although sometimes he got paid in tomatoes or other produce! His love of Egypt evolved out of his passion for Old Testament history, and when he saw the opportunity to pursue further studies at the University of Memphis, he jumped at the chance.

Robert started teaching for us as an adjunct in 2011, but he had already been honing his skills as an adjunct at Midsouth Christian College since 2001. He taught Old Testament history, Hebrew, and whatever else was needed there. His reliability and skills as a teacher eventually led to him being appointed the Academic Dean there in 2015. During his tenure there he expanded the bilingual (Spanish) options offered. When travel restrictions against Cuba were loosened, Robert obtained a “religious activities” visa and for several years has been traveling to Cuba as a visiting minister with a small Christian church group in Havana. These trips included preaching but were also important cultural exchanges that further deepened Robert’s commitment to teach peace, whether from the pulpit or in the classroom.

# Phi Alpha Theta Report

By Professor Beverly Tsacoyianis

**Three for three at regionals! The History Department celebrates the third year in a row that our students have brought home a Best Paper prize at regional Phi Alpha Theta conferences.**

Phi Alpha Theta, the national History honors society, has awarded students from the University of Memphis yet again! On Saturday April 13, 2024, RaSean Jenkins, a PhD student in the History Department, was awarded the best graduate presentation prize at the Arkansas Phi Alpha Theta regional conference held at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia for his paper “White Flight and the Transformation of Whitehaven, Tennessee.”

RaSean has taken classes in the History Department of the University of Memphis with (among others) Profs. Aram Goudsouzian, Beverly Bond, and Brian Kwoba. “They inspired me to write about diversity, inclusion, and discrimination,” reflected RaSean after the conference. “The regional PAT conference was an excellent forum to practice presenting my research in front of other undergraduate and graduate students that allowed me to travel and present my work to new peers. Attending regional conferences has poised me to present at the bigger national conferences like the biennial national Phi Alpha Theta conference, and even the American Historical Association annual conference. It also brought opportunities to interact with so many of the best and brightest students throughout the region.”

Shiann Cupples, another PhD student in the History department, and Molly Yates, a junior History major, were also accepted to present at the regional conference. Shiann presented a paper titled “The Development of the Medical Commodification of African American Women in the 1800s.” She has taken classes taught by Profs. Sarah Potter, Christine Eisel, Cookie Woolner, Beverly Tsacoyianis and Beverly Bond, among others.



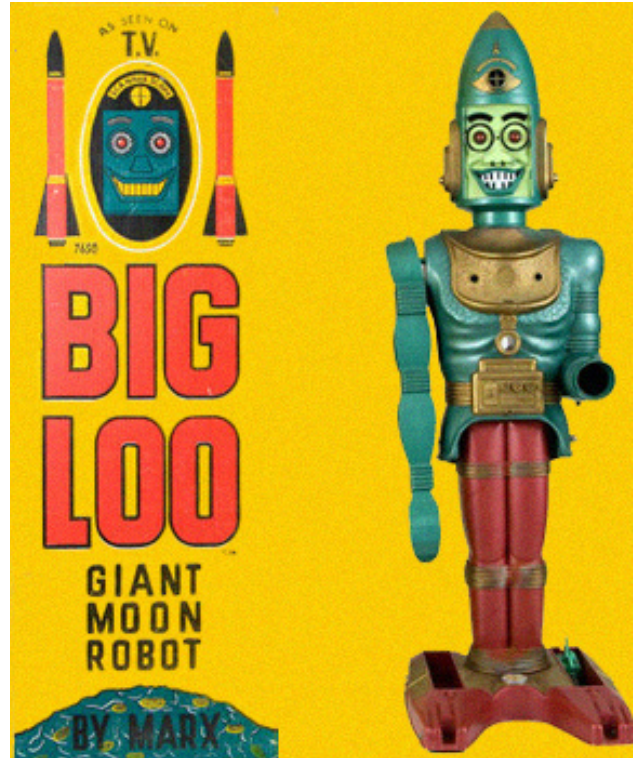
*Pictured below from left to right: Prof. James Conway (alum of the UofM History dept), doctoral students RaSean Jenkins and Shiann Cupples, undergraduate History major Molly Yates, and UofM PAT advisor Prof. Beverly Tsacoyianis.*

Molly, who was also the undergraduate student keynote speaker at the UofM History Department annual awards banquet on April 10, 2024 as the Major Wilson Undergraduate Paper prize recipient, presented on her 2024 Major Wilson Prize-winning paper, “Big Loo Fights for You: American Imagination and Children’s Culture in the Early Days of the Space Age.” Molly calls her time in our department “deeply rewarding, due in large part to the classes I’ve had the opportunity to take with Dr. Peyton.” With Dr. Peyton’s expert guidance, Molly notes, “I was able to write a paper suitable for submission to this year’s PAT regional conference, and I’m still amazed by what an incredible experience presenting my research turned out to be. Not only are these conferences meant to be friendly, encouraging environments for students to practice presentation skills, but the facilitators also provide seriously valuable feedback as a neutral third party mostly unfamiliar with each student and their previous work. I want to go again next spring! I feel these sorts of experiences will prepare me for future networking and conference opportunities in graduate school.”

This is the third year in a row that the University of Memphis has sent winning undergraduate or graduate students from the History Department to the regional Phi Alpha Theta conference closest to Memphis. In her capacity as the Phi Alpha Theta faculty advisor for the UofM Epsilon Nu chapter, Prof. Tsacoyianis has enjoyed attending the past three regionals in a row. “I am thrilled to have this opportunity to be present for our students and to bring more good news to our department,” writes Prof. Tsacoyianis. “Our graduate student Breanna Nicole Johnson won best paper in panel at the PAT regionals held at Arkansas Tech University in April 2023, and our undergraduate student Sophia Rouse, a senior History major at the time, won best paper in panel at the PAT regionals held at Samford University in Alabama in February 2022.”

Our winning streak at regionals has also become a reunion of sorts: the past three closest regional conferences have also included the presence of a supportive alum from our doctoral program in History. Prof. James Conway, currently an assistant professor at Arkansas State University, received both his MA (2007) and his Ph.D. (2015) from the University of Memphis. His doctoral dissertation titled “Moderate Militants in the Age of Black Power: The Memphis NAACP, 1968 – 1975,” was with a committee consisting of Profs. Aram Goudsouzian (Chair); Beverly Bond; Sarah Potter; and Charles McKinney (Rhodes College). While Prof. Conway is not the Phi Alpha Theta advisor at ASU, he notes how meaningful it is for him to show up for his and other students. “I’ve been here [at ASU] three years, and this is my third conference.” Profs. Conway and Tsacoyianis note that regionals are a great place for faculty to interact with other faculty of nearby universities while also serving on student panels as moderators and paper prize judges (*continued*).





*Molly Yates, recipient of the Major Wilson Prize for her essay about “Big Loo,” and student keynote speaker at this year’s Phi Alpha Theta banquet.*

We look forward to continuing our UofM winning streak at the next PAT regional conference in 2025! Please reach out to Prof. Tsacoyianis at [btscynis@memphis.edu](mailto:btscynis@memphis.edu) if you would like to hear more about Phi Alpha Theta and to support chapter, Epsilon Nu. Given budgetary limits, the History Department was only able to award modest travel stipends to cover part of the travel costs for each of the three students who presented at regionals this year, but we hope to be able to fully fund travel and lodging for even more students in the future. Donors can make a huge impact on our department’s ability to continue to support even more undergraduate and graduate students on their professional development journeys as we work to maintain our Carnegie R1 status and bring more accolades to the University of Memphis.

# History Alumni News

Thank you to everyone who responded to our request in the fall of 2023.

- **Thomas (Tom) Appleton (B.A., 1971)**: I retired in 2018 as Foundation Professor of History at Eastern Kentucky University. During my career I edited or co-edited six books in southern and Kentucky history. (My friend Beverly Greene Bond of the U of M department contributed an outstanding essay in one of the volumes devoted to southern women.) Currently I am executive editor of a daily radio series titled "Think History" that is heard on four NPR stations in Kentucky. In 2009, I was honored to have been named an Outstanding Alumnus of the U of M College of Arts and Sciences. I remain grateful for the expertise of my history professors at U of M, who were second to none.
- **Kyra Sanchez Clapper (2021)**: I was appointed Assistant Professor of History at Bethel University at Tennessee in Fall 2023. In Spring 2024, I will teach two survey courses, which include Human Cultures (the first half of Western Civilization) and Europe and the World (Europe since the Enlightenment) as well as an upper-division course on the French Revolution...My current project is a book manuscript on flora exchange and botanophilia correspondences in the transatlantic during the Revolutionary Era (1750-1850). While my dissertation primarily focuses on French Romanticism, my presentations broadened in scope by including German and English people of letters.
- **Burt Newman (1964)**: Just still happy to be alive!!!!
- **Seth Harden (2015 & 2019)** I graduated with my BA in 2015 and MA in 2019. I started off in various roles after my BA and landed in Admissions and Recruitment at Jackson State Community College. I left for 3 years and become the administrator of a church in Jackson, TN. As of October 9, 2023, I accepted the job of Director of Recruitment back at JSCC and love it! I manage our Enrollment Counselors, our welcome desk, and help facilitate our dual enrollment program. Oh, the best part of all? Since 2019, I've consistently taught 2-4 Early and Modern US History classes for Dyersburg State, most of them being at West Tennessee State Penitentiary and the Whiteville Correctional Facility.

## History Alumni News

We need more alumni updates, all of which will be printed in the fall 2024 edition of *History Happenings*. From academic achievements, to professional accomplishments, life events, or favorite memories, we would love to hear from you. To share your good news, please send your updates via one of the following ways:

1. Complete the online form (managed by the editors):  
<https://form.jotform.com/233164366461153>
2. Or simply email co-editor, Dr. Caroline Peyton, with your update, [cpeyton1@memphis.edu](mailto:cpeyton1@memphis.edu). Share your good news with us!