

# From the Chair's Desk

## Boston University History Department August 2010



Greetings from Bay State Road!

At this year's graduation, Professor Diana Wylie got me thinking. In her witty and moving commencement address, Diana reported on the accomplishments of many recent alumni and reflected on the meaning of the experiences we all shared at BU.

She inspired me to follow in her footsteps and compile what I hope will be the first of a series of updates on the

ferment of activity here at the BU History Department.

I intend, of course, to enjoy the sheer pleasure of bragging about the achievements of current students and faculty, but I also want to create a venue in which they can share their adventures in historical research with all of you. Most especially, I encourage alumni to contribute stories of their own experiences to share with the community of folks who have studied history at Bay State Road.

So please keep in touch! Send stories, jokes, adventures, misadventures, cautionary tales, and any other material to me at [bjschulm@bu.edu](mailto:bjschulm@bu.edu) or just email [history@bu.edu](mailto:history@bu.edu).

### ALUMNI NEWS

**Frances Wade** (Class of 2007) writes from the White House, where she works in the Records Department and helps edit the President, Vice President, and First Lady's correspondence. "I have worked for two incredibly different Presidents," Frances reports, "have been aboard Air Force One, had a beer with President Obama on the South Lawn, played fetch with Bo, and

for anyone who's thinking that records sound really boring, I get to read the coolest morning newspaper every morning, straight off the President's desk."

**Craig Heeren** (Class of 2003) went from BU to Teach for America, on to NYU Law and is currently clerking for federal Judge Harold Baer in the Southern District of New York (you may have seen his courthouse on the news recently thanks to the Times Square fellow). Baer's court has heard some of the most important and contentious cases arising from the Wall Street meltdown. In one recent decision, Craig's judge cited "the great American philosopher" Yogi Berra: "I wish I had an answer to that because I'm getting tired of answering that question."

**Diane Schumacher** (M.A. 1995) checks in from Rome, where she is completing a three-year stint teaching history at the Marymount International School. A Bay Area native and teacher at Miramonte High School in Orinda, Diane has taught at American schools in Paris and Switzerland and will take up a new post this fall at St. John's International School in Waterloo, Belgium.



Frances Wade with Bo on the White House Lawn

**Sara Rac** (Class of 2007) is a management consultant for Accenture in New York City. Sara just celebrated her “three year anniversary with the firm, and I’ve learned so much about business and office politics (I never really believed my mom that they existed) and on a whole, it’s been a great experience.” Sara maintains her interest in politics and “in order to help keep myself current, I have taken to writing a blog.” You can follow her commentary at [www.politicaldigestives.blogspot.com](http://www.politicaldigestives.blogspot.com).

2010 Ph.D.s—(From Left) Robyn Metcalfe, Kate Jewell, David Atkinson, Melissa Graboyes, Bob Black, and Ron Lamothe



## MASKED AND ANONYMOUS

Who are you? Really? In *Venice Incognito*, the first volume of a two-part history of the meaning and practice of masking in modern and early modern Europe, Professor James Johnson explores the history of disguise, imposture, and the construction of identity. Beginning with a spirited account of masking in a city famous for carnival, Johnson finds that carnival was not the only occasion when Venetians masked themselves. Masked audiences gathered inside theaters, patrons came to cafes in masks for conversation, foreign diplomats donned masks to greet local nobles, even beggars put on masks for begging. For over a century before the fall of Venice, Venetians of every rank wore masks in public for six months of the year. “Venice Incognito” recon-



Masks in Venice

structs the logic and rationale of masking. In doing so, it treats festive, theatrical, and formal masks, as well as the unseen “masks” of impostors, seducers, and con-men.

## RANDOM NOTES

It dates me, I know, but I came of age reading *Rolling Stone* magazine. Throughout the Seventies, I waited anxiously for the next issue to arrive and I read every one from cover to cover. The reviews told you which records to buy, the oracular pronouncements of critics like Greil Marcus and Ralph Gleason raised the stakes of every Dylan album or Springsteen performance, and the wise, sometimes wiseacre “Random Notes” staked out a relationship to the wider world. I don’t pretend to duplicate that accomplishment, but do want to share some quick news of department doings. . . .

Together with the MET College Gastronomy program, our Working Group on the History of Food is establishing a new Food History track. This Fall Professors Jim McCann (“Nature’s Past”) and Tom Glick (“Readings in Food History”) will offer courses through the Gastronomy program that will include cooking (and eating). Look for recipes in the next issue. . . .

BU has entered into a partnership with the University of Warwick that will involve research projects and stu-

dent exchanges across a wide range of fields. In September, we welcome Warwick’s Trevor Burnard to kick off a collaboration in the History of the Atlantic World. Professor Burnard will speak Wednesday, September 8, at noon on the subject, “Only Connect: Expanding the Spatial Borders of Early American History - the Fashion for Atlantic History and Continental History” . . .

This academic year, we awarded six Ph.D.s, one of the all-time largest classes. In honor of their graduation, the class of 2010 presented a substantial gift to underwrite future graduate students at a celebration on May 13. For more about this distinguished group of scholars and their generous gesture, click <http://www.bu.edu/bostonia/web/metcalfe/> for the story at *Bostonia On-line*. . . .

President Richard Nixon, FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover, Miami Slumlord Luther Brooks—a rogues’ gallery? No, these are a few of the characters, both prominent and previously neglected, featured in the 2010-11 American Political History Seminar—monthly presentations by visiting scholars on Wednesday afternoons. For a complete schedule, visit <http://www.bu.edu/history/APHI/Seminars.html>

Enjoy the last days of summer!

All best,  
Bruce Schulman