President's Column

Thanks to all of you who helped to make the 29th Annual WAWH conference such a success. I have had very positive feedback on Chris Littleton’s keynote address, on the number and mix of panels, and on the party at Peggy Renner’s. I want particularly to thank Peggy for her hospitality and her offer to continue to host these events in Pasadena in the future. I am particularly indebted to past-president Susan Waldover Morgan and president-elect Karen Blair for filling in for me at the conference. At the last minute I was invited to join a group from ASU West who were going to China for ten days, leaving on May 16. Thanks to my good friends in WAWH I was able to make the trip. It was truly eye-opening. China is growing economically at a rate double that of the U.S.—10% per year. Signs of the new market economy are everywhere, from the plethora of new hotels to the thriving night markets. Surely this system can’t be called communism anymore unless there’s such a thing as joint venture communism.

Everyone I spoke with seemed enthusiastic about the new opportunities. The rural people for once are faring better than their city cousins. Anyone with anything to sell, from agricultural products to tourist trinkets, seems to be out to make money with a vengeance. The city workers who are being laid off as their government-owned factories are phased out are having a tougher time of it, but even in Beijing I heard a few complaints. Of course growth has its down sides, as well I know from nearly two decades in the Southwest. As cars replace bicycles city pollution becomes noxious and choking. Beijing and Xi’an were so overcast I never did see ‘blue sky’. Massive building and street widening to allow for more cars make both cities look like war zones and are destroying many of the hutongs—old family neighborhoods along twisting alleyways. In Beijing particularly, with its three rings of highways, there seems to be not so much urban planning as mushroom growth. In Shanghai I met my friend Shen Xiao Hong, a Yale American Studies Ph.D. who is currently working for CIEE at Nanjing University. In what for me was the highlight of the trip, she showed me the city, which absolutely captivated me. I’d go there in a heartbeat. While Beijing seemed like a sprawling, dusty, overgrown country town (except for the incomparable Forbidden City), Shanghai has aptly been described as the Paris of Asia. Its long colonial past left an architectural legacy of art deco buildings along the Bund which now are thronged with newly mobile Chinese with money in their pockets. I had a drink in the bar of the old Peace Hotel and found something oddly reassuring about the way the Chinese have reclaimed the place, fifty-something couples dancing to the jazz band. Across the river in what a decade ago was a rice field and is now Pudong, the fastest growing trade zone in Asia, rises the much mocked and maligned China Pearl TV tower, which struck me as whimsical and delightful, the perfect place to rent a hotel room for New Year’s Eve, 1999. Over dinner in one of Shanghai’s oldest restaurants, I asked Shen to comment on the winners and the losers in China’s new economy. She remarked that middle-aged women are having a rough time in the new service economy, which puts a premium on youth, education, and good looks. Thinking it over I realized that the new joint venture hotels are full of young, attractive men and women while the night markets (open stalls selling everything from fruit to old mahjong sets) are populated mainly by middle-aged women whose English seems limited to “Hello, hello, one dollar.” They drive a hard bargain, as I learned when I showed Shen the treasures I’d bargained for. My porcelain bust of Chairman Mao, a classic piece of cultural revolution kitsch, which I’d got for a fraction of the asking price, didn’t seem like such a deal when she told me I’d paid roughly the equivalent of what a Beijing couple would pay for a washing machine (and about what we pay for a good pair of running shoes). Enough for now.
Mary Anderson, SNJM, (Holy Names College, Oakland) is the recipient of the Outstanding Teaching Award given by the Alumni Association of Holy Names college.


Anna Elsbach Koblitz will leave in August, 1998, Hartwick College for a tenured position in the Women’s Studies Program of Arizona State University.


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**WAWH Awards and Prizes**


perspectives of gender, race and sexuality, the author demonstrates how antilynching came to be identified as a woman’s issue, and how the women’s protest, itself, changed to conform to the gendered traditions of female only organizations. At the same time, Schechter made a significant contribution to our knowledge of the work of Wells and her importance as a writer and political activist, and the role of black women in shaping the antilynching movement.

Graduate Student Fellowship: The 1998 award was split between two outstanding applicants, Bridgett Ford, a Ph.D. candidate at U.C. Davis, and Van Nguyen-Marshall, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of British Columbia. Bridgett Ford’s dissertation is entitled “People of Sorrow, Children of Grace: Race and Religion in the Antebellum West,” which combines quantitative social analysis with a cultural history of religious belief in a comparative study of Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky. The Committee was especially impressed by the project’s comparative scope, attention to the urban antebellum west, theoretical sophistication, and extensive use of both public and private community documents. Van Nguyen-Marshall’s dissertation, entitled “Poverty and Poverty Relief in Northern Vietnam, 1883-1945,” problematizes the widely held scholarly and political assumption that widespread pauperization of the Vietnamese peasantry fed the anti-French and communist-dominated national resistance movements. Van’s research in Hanoi archives, newspapers, and contemporary periodicals and fiction, seeks to historicize poverty by documenting how both village mutual self-help societies and French colonials perceived socio-economic realities, the state-village relationship, and collective responsibility. Her work promises to illumine social conditions in the villages, the everyday dynamic of colonialism, and the relation of both to the Vietnamese struggle for national independence. The committee praised her attention to an understudied region and time period, mastery of four languages (especially Chinese, which she learned specifically for this project), and original approach to understanding the dynamics of colonialism and national resistance movements.

NEW!!! ELIZABETH PERRY GRADUATE TRAVEL AWARD

WAWH thanks Betsy Perry for donating funds to establish a travel award for graduate students. Starting next year graduate students who need funds to enable them to present their work at the annual WAWH conference can apply for travel money when they submit their paper panel or proposal. The WAWH appreciates Betsy’s generosity and her long term support of the organization.

Call for Papers! For CONTOURS a new, multidisciplinary journal exploring the experiences of people of African descent. Please send topics related to Women of African Descent Anywhere in the World. Suggested deadline for submission is August 1, 1998; later submissions will be considered for Volume two. To request a style sheet, inquire further, or to submit manuscripts (four copies), contact: CONTOURS, Duke University, Box 90719, 121-N Carr Building, Durham, NC, 27708, USA. Call (919) 660-3197, Fax (919) 660-3198, e-mail: LLHORN@ACPUB.DUKE.EDU. If you would like your recently published or forthcoming book to be considered for review in Contours, please have your publisher submit a review copy to: Professor Sheila Smith McKoy, Book Review Editor, Contours, English Department, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 37235, USA.
Fellowship Announcement!

The Paul Klemperer Fellowship in the History of Medicine and The Audrey and William H. Helfand Fellowship in the Medical Humanities

Each year the New York Academy of Medicine offers the Klemperer and Helfand Fellowships to support work in history and the humanities as they relate to medicine, the biomedical sciences, and health. The Klemperer Fellowship supports research using the Academy Library as a historical resource. It is intended specifically for a scholar in residence in the collections of the Academy Library. The Helfand Fellowship more broadly supports work in the humanities, including both creative projects dealing with health and the medical enterprise, and scholarly research in a humanistic discipline as applied to medicine and health. Although residence is not obligatory, preference in the selection process will be given applicants whose projects require use of the resources of the Academy Library and who plan to spend time at the Academy. Applications must be received by February 1, 1999; candidates will be informed of the results by May 15, 1999. Requests for application forms or further information should be addressed to: Office of the Associate Librarian for Historical Collections and Programs, New York Academy of Medicine, 1216 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10029. Email: history@nyam.org. Tel: 212-822-7314.

CCWH-Prelinger Scholarship Awarded! The Coordinating Council for Women in History is pleased to announce that Frances L. Buss of Tucson, AZ, has been selected from a large group of candidates from all over the world and the U.S. to received the first $10,000 CCWH-Prelinger Scholarship Award. Buss, who is adjunct instructor at Pima Community College and affiliated scholar with the University of Arizona, will use the award to complete an oral history of Mary Robinson, a sharecropper who becomes an effective indigenous leader and activist in rural Alabama. In addition, she plans to deposit the taped interviews with Robinson in the Schlesinger Library of American Women. Although she received a Ph.D. in history less than three years ago, Frances Buss has already published four books, including the well-known La Partera: Story of a Midwife (U. of Michigan Press, 1985). She has distinguished herself as a scholar even as she worked actively on behalf of poor and indigent women.

Announcement

Radcliffe College and the Harvard University Press announce the launching of preparations for the next volume of Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary. Volume V of Notable American Women will include essays on approximately 500-600 women who have died between January 1, 1976, and January 1, 2000, with an expected publication date of 2003. We are actively soliciting suggestions of possible subjects for our extensive database, especially nominations reflecting the contributions of undocumented groups, regions, or specialties. If you wish to nominate a subject (or subjects), please supply a short synopsis of her career and its importance, as well as basic bibliographic sources, both secondary and archival (if known). We also welcome names of scholars who are interested in writing specific articles or serving as consultants for specialized fields. Please address all communication to: Susan Ware, Editor, Notable American Women; Volume Five, The Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, 10 Garden Street Cambridge, MA 02138, 617-496-0564; notable@radcliffe.edu.
Member News - The Networker

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(Clip and send with your check to: Janet Brodie, WAWH Secretary, Department of History, Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, CA 91711. Do not send to J. Braithman. Reminder: Membership runs from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31. Membership dues are tax-deductible.)

The Networker

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