



History Department Newsletter

Recent Graduate Working with Immigrants

By Matt Harms

Laura Rheinheimer graduated from Goshen College in 2005 with a history major and minors in Spanish; international studies; and peace, justice, & conflict studies. After graduation she participated for a year in Mennonite Central Committee's Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program in Recife, Brazil.

Upon returning to the United States, Rheinheimer considered putting her history degree to use in law school but decided to wait to enroll. "I wanted to have experience working in a legal setting before making that decision," said Rheinheimer. Her time with SALT had, however, convinced her that she wanted to continue working with people from other cultures and improving her language skills, so she applied for Mennonite Voluntary Service, looking for positions that would give her both legal and cross cultural experience.

In 2007 she began working as a paralegal in Harlingen, Texas, a town just thirty minutes from the U.S.-Mexico border, for an organization called ProBAR. ProBAR is a legal aid



office that offers legal rights information and limited legal representation to immigrants held in federal detention centers. In the region where Rheinheimer lives there are two facilities that hold adults and five that hold unaccompanied youth. The detainees come from many different backgrounds. Some have been legal residents for years. Others have overstayed visas, while other prisoners have recently crossed the border. Once detained these immigrants face a difficult legal situation. According to Rheinheimer, "Regardless of whether the immigrants have lived [in the United States] for years or if they have [recently] come to seek asylum, find work, or [reunite] with family, it is very difficult for them to be released from detention."

In her work with ProBAR Rheinheimer has helped immigrants from many different countries. When she first started in 2007 Rheinheimer primarily helped Somali asylum-seekers by preparing applications and researching the conditions of their home countries. In July 2008 she began working with ProBAR's children's

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History, Law, and International Service

By Matt Harms

GC history majors are prepared for a wide range of careers, which is a valuable asset as careers and life plans take unexpected turns.

Early in life Ed Miller, a 1967 graduate and history major, had a clear sense that he wanted to go into law. In high school he was fortunate to connect with a local Mennonite lawyer in Lancaster, Pennsylvania named Sam Wenger who offered him experience in a law office. So when Miller enrolled at Goshen College he knew he wanted to be a history major and then go into law. After graduating from GC he entered Temple University's law school.

Miller spent the next two years studying law, but in 1969 his career path took a detour. The United States was in the midst of the Vietnam War and Miller was drafted. He chose alternative service, and with his wife, Twila, accepted a three-year position with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Nepal doing economic development work.

From 1969 to 1972 and again from 1976 to 1979, the Millers worked alongside Nepali people developing industrial infrastructure, using an apprenticeship model that allowed individuals in the local community to develop professional skills. Miller found the experience fulfilling, noting that "the infrastructure that the program built still exists today."

Upon returning from his first term with MCC in 1973, Miller passed the state Bar examination and began working for a Lancaster, Pennsylvania law firm. Initially, he worked in many areas of law, but as his law office became increasingly specialized he began to focus on tax and business law.

Through the 1980s and the early 1990s Miller continued practicing law but found himself itching for a change of pace. "[At the law firm where I worked] we always had the right to take a yearlong leave of absence without pay," said Miller, so in 1996 he took a year to

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project. For the children's project Reinheimer works mainly with boys from Central America. (Their artwork lines her office walls—see photo, p. 1)

Reinheimer noted that while building personal relationships with her clients is her favorite part of the job, it can also be draining. "I enjoy talking to our clients... hearing where they come from, what their lives were like before, and what they want from their futures.... I learn so much... about their countries, their language, their lives," said Reinheimer, "[but] often the stories are hard to hear. The boys we are able to help are those who have suffered in their home country – severe domestic abuse, attacks by gangs, or life on the streets."

Despite the traumatic stories, Reinheimer enjoys her work, and she feels that her history degree has served her well. She uses the research and writing skills she gained as a history major

to prepare presentations about foreign country conditions to support her clients' claims. Reinheimer also finds that she often uses oral research skills in conversations with immigrant boys to gather information and write their stories in order to help them qualify for legal relief.

In the coming year Reinheimer plans to continue working for ProBAR. After that she'll decide whether or not to go to law school, but at the moment she's conflicted. "Law fascinates me, and I think I might be able to help more as a lawyer," said Reinheimer, "but my favorite part of my job is direct contact with clients. [O]ften lawyers are one step removed because of their focus on law. Some days I want to be a lawyer, and some days I want to be a counselor."

Whatever her choice, Reinheimer plans to use the intercultural and investigative skills she has developed to continue her work providing legal aid for immigrants in the United States.

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live in Calcutta, India and help prepare for the 1997 Mennonite World Conference. Then in 2001 MCC asked Ed and Twila to return to India as MCC's country representatives there, which they did, serving until 2007.

He believes that the skills he developed as a history major have been invaluable for his work as a lawyer and a service worker in international settings. "My history degree helped me write clearly and think analytically," said Miller, "This has been vital for my work in law." Similarly, Miller noted that a broad liberal arts degree exposed to him to different ideas and worldviews that helped prepare him for interactions with different cultures. "I wouldn't have been able to function as well without those sort of classroom experiences," noted Miller, "I was ready to experience different cultural assumptions [I] knew that [my] own worldview wasn't the only one, and I found joy in learning about different ideas."

Miller sees connections between his law degree and his international experiences, such as attention to detail. Likewise, Miller noted his international experiences have influenced his work as a lawyer. "[In Nepal and India] I learned to be very patient. Most things were [negotiated], even the vegetables we ate. Prices weren't set, details weren't set, but [negotiation] happened in a personal way, and I enjoyed that negotiation," said Miller, "Lawyers don't have to be nasty, mean spirited, or bombastic to be effective. I've tried to become a patient negotiator."

Miller insists that despite a clear sense that he would become a lawyer, his life has been anything but predetermined. He's arrived where he is today by saying yes to opportunities that have presented themselves, and he hopes to continue to say yes. "I'm not sure [what comes next]," Miller reflected when asked about his plans for the future, "but I'm going to see what might come, and if I'm at all physically or mentally able I'll say yes if I can."

Senior Seminar Theses

Nine history majors completed senior seminar during spring 2009. As always, senior historians undertook extensive primary source research and intensive writing. Congratulations to the Class of 2009!

Lydette S. Assefa (Indianapolis), "Identity in the Midst of Instability: An Analysis of the Oppositional Relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Meserete Kristos Church in the 1960s-1980s."

Nathan D. Graber (Elkhart, Ind.), "Making the Land Pay: Profitability and Land Use in Elkhart County, Indiana, 1830-Present."

Matthew Harms (Ephrata, Pa.), "Short Term Work for Long Term Change: An Early History of S.W.A.P., D.O.O.R., and Group Venture."

Alex P. Lake (New Holland, Pa.), "'Between a Golden Flood and Cupidity Gone Drunk': Federal Reserve Branch and System Policy Formation in 1927."

Melissa J. MacGregor (Glen Ellyn, Ill.), "From Requirement to Encouragement: College Mennonite Church's Formal Attitude toward the Indiana-Michigan Prayer Veil Ordinance (1967-1968)."

Mary E. Mapes (Kendallville, Ind.), "Construction Amidst Chaos: Building a Town in the Midst of the American Civil War."

Dirk J. Miller (Wellman, Ia.), "The Mennonite Bill of 1874: Unnecessary Legislation for an Immigration Already Underway."

David R. Rumsey (Iowa City), "Rails to Trails: The Pumpkinvine Debate."

Isaac T. Smith (Iowa City), "A Fatal Identity Crisis: A Comparative Study of Studebaker's Strategy, 1933-1935 & 1954-1956."

Cross-Cultural Interpretation: History in Nanchong, China

By Lydette Assefa

For history major Elijah Martens, spending the fall 2008 semester in China's Sichuan Province for Study-Service Term (SST) helped him better conceptualize his study of history—and it wasn't only the 2,200 year-old sites that provided new perspective.

Martens's host mother for the first six weeks of SST was Liu Lixin, a Chinese history professor. Liu, a 53-year-old professor of American history at China West Normal University in Nanchong, was eager to talk to Martens about Chinese and American history as well as politics. Liu's daughter had emigrated from China and married an American soldier serving in Iraq, and Liu was eager to practice her English and learn more about both American perceptions of history and her son-in-law's country. Martens benefited from Liu's English competency as they discussed in depth varied interpretations of history of the two countries. "My living situation was particularly great in my relationship with my host mom. I couldn't have asked for a more ideal situation – engaging with people from different cultural experiences in your field of study is amazing," Martens said.

Martens' conversations with his host mom often focused on the issue of censorship, a subject that intrigued him. Martens discovered that in Chinese textbooks, historical critique and analysis increases with the emotional and historical distance of the topic. Growing out of conversations with his mom, Martens chose as his SST final project to interview history professors about censorship.

For some young Chinese professors, self-censorship was a reality in the classroom. While direct governmental interference and censure was not seen as a real threat, many Chinese professors feared social discouragement and criticism from students and others for talking about the Cultural Revolution or the 1989 events in Tiananmen Square. For these young professors, the fear of acquiring a bad reputation that might impede their career prevented them from addressing sensitive topics in the classroom. Others approached history as merely the reiteration and recitation of facts about the past and avoided all discussion, analysis, or interpretation.

However, Martens's host mother provided an interesting contrast to the hesitant and fearful younger professors. As a seasoned, widely published and established scholar, Liu was quite candid about the Cultural Revolution. Unlike the young professors, Liu had taught in the university for several decades and was well connected in the campus community as the college president's classmate and former girlfriend. She had also been present at Tiananmen Square in 1989 and shared openly with her students about that experience. When Martens asked how she could be so candid, she replied, "No one in China has energy to deal with an old woman!"

While censorship is not the subject of Martens' senior thesis, the process of conducting oral interviews and the self-awareness necessary as an interviewer are all important skills he took from the experience. He believes his project illustrated the role of interpretation in historical research and the need for discussion and a global perspective.

History Internship: Ruthmere Beaux Arts Museum, Elkhart, Ind.

Enter Ruthmere Museum and you're transported to 1910. It's a fusion of Chicago School Prairie Style and classic French Beaux Art in architecture and fine art. Resembling more of a grand post office than a Victorian mansion, Ruthmere's style is pure Edwardian – tamer, more demure, more simplistic. This June is my first anniversary working with Ruthmere Museum, where I have been an intern, a docent and a volunteer.

Compared with other mansions that once lined the same block, Ruthmere is a smaller and plainer home. Nevertheless, there are Tiffany Lamps, Rodin sculptures, a new fangled air conditioner, and an elevator for luggage, as well as full wiring of electricity *and* gas lighting. Pomegranates, a symbol of wealth and prosperity, cover the house in wooden carvings, stained glass and ceiling decorations. Not to mention the fact that the house had a game room for playing pinochle and dancing.

Last June, I spent the month pouring over the details of Ruthmere, including an attempt to locate all those pomegranate carvings. With a lot of historical research and memory work, I designed my own tour for the house. After two weeks of preparation, I gave my first tour of Ruthmere. And then my second ... and then my fortieth. By the time autumn came around, I was a confident docent who still loved showing visitors the ins and outs of the house.



Along with giving tours, I have assisted with Ruthmere's annual Christmas Yuletide Walk, Northern Indiana Quilt Garden Tour, Children's Garden Camps, Elkhart Art League Art Galleries, Elkhart's Sesquicentennial Celebration and much more. I have tried my hand at public relations, archival documentation, podcasts, photography, wedding coordination, quartet performances and public speaking. I have had the opportunity to work with a range of people, from Smithsonian staff to third graders. It's been an excellent and expansive work experience. I have gained a deep appreciation for Elkhart history, nineteenth-century architecture, and pomegranates! Whether or not I end up in the museum field professionally, I will always try to find time to volunteer. For more about Ruthmere, visit: www.ruthmere.org

— **Melissa MacGregor**, a history and investigative skills major, graduated in May 2009

Faculty News

Jan Bender Shetler

This year Jan taught several of her popular world history courses, including History of Ethnic Conflict, and Gender in World History. In the fall she attended the African Studies Association annual meeting in Chicago. Jan is the recipient of a Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad Grant which is funding her research in Ethiopia during summer 2009. She will share some of her research next year under the auspices of the C. Henry Smith Peace Lectureship. Jan has been named the Smith lecturer for 2009-2010 and plans to present her research under the title "What Mennonites Can Learn from Ethiopia and the Meserete Kristos Church about Building Peaceful Relations between Muslims and Christians."

Lee Roy Berry, Jr.

Lee Roy continues to teach half-time while also maintaining a community-minded law practice in Goshen. The February 19 issue of *The Record* featured an interview and profile of Lee Roy's path to graduate school and teaching. Read it online at <http://record.goshen.edu/2009/02/2608-professor-recalls-path-to-political-science>. He was also featured in the spring 2009 issue of Eastern Mennonite University's alumni magazine *Crossroads* (p.17).

Steven M. Nolt

During fall 2008 Steve and his wife Rachel led Goshen's China SST unit—the first unit to be based in Nanchong—and he returned to the classroom in the Spring semester. During the 2008-2009 school year he published a chapter in the book *Halle Pietism, Colonial North America, and the Young United States* and an article in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. Steve continues as book review editor for *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. He will be on sabbatical during 2009-2010, in residence as the Snowden Fellow at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, during which time he hopes to complete work on several writing projects.

John D. Roth

This year John taught first-year colloquium and senior seminar, among other courses, while also directing the Mennonite Historical Library and editing *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. He authored the book *Practices: Mennonite Worship and Witness* (Herald Press, 2009), and continued his frequent speaking to Mennonite churches, conferences, and youth groups. He gave a keynote address at the biennial Conference on Faith and History, and presented a paper

at a March 2009 conference on Pietism, at Bethel University, St. Paul, Minnesota. He also was co-organizer of the Mennonite Historical Society's June conference "Anabaptist Convictions After Marpeck."

Schlabach to publish Hersherberger biography

In October 2009 professor emeritus of history **Theron F. Schlabach** will publish *War, Peace, and Social Conscience: Guy F. Hersherberger and Mennonite Ethics*. The book is a product of years of extensive archival work and dozens of interviews. Guy Hersherberger, who was a history professor at Goshen College from 1925-1966, was a creative and influential Mennonite leader who articulated peace theology in the midst of World War II and helped shape alternative service programs in lieu of the military. Hersherberger also guided the Mennonite community movement and led Mennonite responses to labor conflict, civil rights, and capital punishment, all the while advocating a thoroughgoing biblicism and commitment to the church. The 600-page book will be published by Herald Press.

2009-2010 Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to Scholarship winners for the 2009-2010 School Year!

- Willard and Verna Smith History Scholarship: **Thomas Leischner** (Harrisonburg, Va.) and **Elijah Martens** (South Bend, Ind.).
- Oswin and David Gerber Scholarship in Mennonite Studies: **Anna Showalter** (Waynesboro, Pa.) and **Crystal Zook** (Willow Street, Pa.)

Recent Alumni and Student Publications and Awards

Steven P. Miller ('99) recently published *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* (University of Pennsylvania Press), which has received positive critical reviews, including a review in the April 16 *New York Times* Sunday Book Review. Miller will teach four courses in American history and political history at Goshen College in spring 2010.

Jonny Gerig Meyer ('08) published "Sending Mixed Messages to Congress: Mennonite Involvement in Proposed National Health Care Reform, 1992-1994," in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, April 2009, 181-220. The article was based on his senior seminar thesis.

GC history majors took first and second prizes in the undergraduate category of the annual Horsch Essay Contest sponsored by the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee. The winners, announced in September 2008, were **Jonny Gerig Meyer** ('08) and **J. André Shenk** ('08), whose entries were their history senior theses.

Current major **Crystal Zook** received a fellowship from the Fund for Theological Education—one of only fifty awarded nationally. She is spending the summer with Philadelphia Praise Center through Goshen College's Ministry Inquiry Program.