There are many things I could write about at the end of an academic year. It’s a time of transitions, in the history department and around the college. Graduation for many of our students; summer jobs and the like for others, as they wait for their next year at Calvin. A quieter office for staff. A return to research projects, mostly left sitting since last summer, for faculty. And more.

I want to focus on our students, and what it is that we do as teachers. More about other transitions for the next issue of this newsletter.

In the last two posts on *Historical Horizons*, our department blog, Bob Schoone-Jongen and I wrote about what our students learn and what we learn from our students, my post focusing on teaching the first half of world history (History 151) for the first time in 16 years, his written to the student teachers he worked with this past year.

A bunch of my students, in a question on the final exam, talked about historical methodology and perspective, and learning that how the past looks changes, depending on the way you approach it.

“Prior to this class, history courses annoyed me because I always thought, ‘History is history, it happened and it’s over with, that’s that,’” one of these students (a science student) explained on her final exam. “This is true: history is in the past and you can’t change the past. But depending on how you approach history or what method you use to approach it, you can learn different things and answer different questions.”

She went on to draw a broader lesson: “This is true with anything in life, if your perspective or approach is too narrow and you lack the ability,…”

*Continued on page 12.*
In the History Department our faculty have been teaching here anywhere from 10 years to 40+! We hope you enjoy both faculty and staff memories of their time as students and their first years of teaching.

**Joel Carpenter:** I taught my first courses at Calvin in 1976-77, as a “sabbatical replacement” for Wells and Marsden. I arrived a day late for the start of the semester, indeed the day after taking my “orals” at Hopkins. I was totally exhausted and still under the gun, working hand-to-mouth to get preps together. After a couple of weeks, two students from the American Social History class came up to me after class and said, “Last week we were thinking we would be dropping your class, but today you were pretty good. We think we’ll stay.” That was a back-of-the-hand compliment if I ever saw one, but it was some affirmation that I desperately needed!

**Jenna Hunt:** When I was about halfway through the first half of my history honors thesis (the research semester), I was frustrated, exhausted, and ready to quit. In fact, I tried to do just that: I went to my thesis advisor, Prof. Berglund, and explained that I had decided that I wasn’t going to do the honors thesis and would be content to graduate without honors. Well, that didn’t work as I had planned. Prof. Berglund sat me down and informed me that if a student like me didn’t do an honors thesis, it would make my advisor look bad, so I’d better get to work. It was exactly the anti-pep talk I needed. I stuck with it, through hours in a statistics lab processing data, even more hours in the library - including one Saturday afternoon spent sitting on the floor in the U of M library stacks, pouring through journals and political cartoons - and the setback of a crashed computer. (I still clearly remember another anti-pep talk from Prof. Berglund when I turned in my first draft after pulling an all-nighter to get something to turn in by the Friday deadline: “This is crap,” he said. “And you know this is crap. We’ll talk about it next week. Go home and sleep.” He was right, by the way.)

The process was grueling, and I remain absolutely glad that I stuck with it. The moment when I finished presenting at the History Honors Colloquium that spring and realized not only that I was done but that I had done it, and done it well, stands out as the highlight of my college career. My honors thesis (“A League of Militant Grandmothers: Women and Religiosity in Late- and Post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine”) remains one of my proudest accomplishments, and I couldn’t have done it without the guidance (and the good kick in the bum) from my advisor.

(And 8 years later, now a staff member in the department rather than a student, I do rather enjoy the role reversal of critiquing faculty writing and holding them to deadlines instead of the other way around!)

**Bruce Berglund:** By my sophomore year of college, I had settled on being a history major. I had started at the University of Minnesota with the aim of becoming an engineer, but calculus brought the undoing of that plan. I then turned to political science, because I was interested in politics, foreign and domestic. As I took courses in political science and history side-by-side, though I found that I enjoyed learning more about what had happened in history classes rather than the theoretical approaches of political science. Plus, I was getting A’s in my history classes and B’s in political science.

But it was the fall term of my junior year that I went from being a history major to a student of history, someone who is not only engaged and moved by the study of the past but has also adopted a historical perspective on the world. Of course, part of this shift came from the events of those months. This was the momentous year 1989. As I wrote on the department’s blog this past December, to mark the 25th anniversary of that season of revolutions, I had a long-standing interest in the communist world and closely followed the events in Eastern Europe. Like others, I was stunned by the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9 and then the rapid unraveling of communist regimes in other countries of the region. The drama of 1989 sparked my curiosity in a way that’s still hard to explain. Eighteen months after that autumn of revolutions, I made my first trip to Europe, with a backpack over my shoulders, and headed straight to Berlin, Prague, and Budapest. (Continued on page 3)
Bruce Berglund continued: My engagement with history was fired in another way that fall of 1989. I was enrolled that term in Professor David Kieft's course on 19th-century European diplomatic history. The course had been recommended to me by someone who was not a history major, who was admittedly not even that interested in history, but who raved about Prof. Kieft's teaching. Indeed, word of mouth had reached far and wide at the university. More than 150 students filled an auditorium, for a course on 19th-century European diplomatic history. But Prof. Kieft was an amazing lecturer—the best I had in my four years at the university. Working without notes and never standing still, he explained such intricate episodes as the origins of the Crimean War and the Bismarckian treaty system in a way that kept us on the edges of our seats. When Gavrillo Princip killed the Archduke and Europe plunged into war in 1914, it was the close to an intricately crafted and vivid drama.

One of the books assigned for that course was A.J.P. Taylor's The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, a classic work of erudite, rigorous, and opinionated history writing. I recall reading the book one afternoon, while sitting on the mall on the university's campus, on the patio in front of the Northrop Auditorium. It was a beautiful autumn day, and the mall was busy with students. But I was absorbed in this book about the machinations of European diplomats. In my notebook, I recorded bits of information that connected with things Prof. Kieft had said in class, and felt satisfied that I was learning from my assigned reading. But I still recall thinking, on another level, that I was not only learning things from the book, I was enjoying the experience of learning. This book—in its style and content—was filling me with a deep sense of pleasure and contentment. In that moment, more than 25 years ago, I had my first glimpse of the life of a scholar—a life lived in the joy of words and ideas and the sharing of knowledge.

William Katerberg: I've got a lot of memories of my one year as a history major at Calvin (1987-88), with profs who 13 years later became my colleagues. Here's one memory, an evolving one.

I took History 351 (US intellectual history) with Jim Bratt in the fall of 1987. We covered a lot of religious and intellectual history—from Puritanism to fundamentalism, anti-modernism, and neo-orthodoxy, to the counter-culture and the New Left. I remember thinking, time and again, “This class is great, interesting! Bratt is so smart.”

A year later, in an intense US religious history seminar with Jay Dolan in grad school at Notre Dame, I remember thinking again and again as I read in the historiography, “That sounds familiar.” Then it hit me, while reading T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace, on anti-modernism in America, that he was saying what Bratt had said in a lecture. Or, more properly, Bratt had said something like what Lears had written. “Bratt took those ideas from Lears,” I remember thinking. “He's not so smart.” Or something like that.

A few years later, in 1996, I was looking forward to my first semester of full time teaching at the University of Maine, with a lot of lecturing ahead of me. I dreaded how long it would take me to put together dozens of lectures for the two large courses I was going to be teaching that fall. I realized that I'd needed to find articles and books to crib from. At some point that summer, maybe that fall, I remembered Bratt. He knew who to steal from and how to package their complex ideas for undergraduates. I revised my memory again. “Bratt's a genius.”

The memory has grown more “arch” in the telling over the years. I've made a habit of telling my students at the beginning of the semester that we all benefit from the learning of others. More specifically, I explain, only a few of the smart things I say over the semester are my own ideas. Most of them come from other people, who I've heard or read. I've adapted the ideas, but they're not really mine—or at least, mine alone.

You can't “footnote” in a classroom like you can in a book or an article. It would get tedious trying to mention the many people, books, and essays that from which you've taken ideas. Some of my best learning goes back to undergraduate lectures by people like Jim Bratt, and then in later years, figuring the mix of people from whom they got their ideas—and, that this is how learning and teaching work. So, thanks to Jim Bratt.
Dan Miller: Dan led the semester in Washington, D.C. for the spring 2015 semester. “Kate and I had a lovely time in D.C. There were fifteen students in the program including two history majors. The students worked at internship sites from Tuesday to Friday for thirteen weeks. Some of the places they worked were the State Department (office of human rights), the Department of Justice (extraditions), the Metro D.C. Police, the National Archives, Senate and House offices, and several NGOs that did business promotion and advocacy work. On Mondays we went to religiously oriented organizations that attempt to influence government policy such as the US Catholic Bishops Conference, the National Association of Evangelicals, the National Council of Churches, the Religious Action Center for Reformed Judaism, the Islamic Center, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, and the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities. The visits were part of a course called Faith and Public Life where students were encouraged to read and reflect on the ways that our faith can and should influence our role as citizens. We also visited several diplomatic offices including the Cuban Interests Section and the Mexican Embassy as part of a course on US-Latin American relations. The actual class meetings were held in the basement of Greystone House, the place where the students lived during the semester. It is located near Union Station. Meanwhile Kate and I were living in a one bedroom, basement apartment about three miles away from the students and just a mile from the Capitol building. It was too small to host big gatherings so we had the students over in small groups for home cooked meals and games. When the students were busy with their internships I did research at the Library of Congress sometimes and at other times Kate and I visited museums and galleries and monuments. The two of us also got out of the city several times to see Monticello, Chincoteague Island with its ponies, Gettysburg, and other nearby sites. Weekends we also went with the students to their scheduled cultural events such as concerts at the Kennedy Center and plays at local theaters. All in all it was a wonderful semester. Highlights included a long evening spent with Congressman Bill Huizenga touring the Capitol building after hours, a Potomac River cruise to Mount Vernon, and "Man of La Mancha", which was performed by the Washington Shakespeare Company. It also has to be said that the students were wonderful—they looked after each other and put up uncomplainingly with less than comfy accommodations and were always eager for new experiences. They're the best!”

Young Kim: Young gave a paper at a conference held at the University of Iowa: “Sound Belief, Sound Body: Heresy and Health in Epiphanius of Cyprus,” Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity XI: The Transformation of Poverty, Philanthropy, and Healthcare in Late Antiquity, Iowa City, IA (March 26-29, 2015). Young also published an article in a volume of conference proceedings: “The Transformation of Heresiology in the Panarion of Epiphanius of Cyprus,” in Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity, ed. G. Greatrex and H. Elton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 53-65. And, he was awarded a research fellowship from the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute and Council of American Overseas Research Centers. He will begin conducting research on his next book project, tentatively titled Cyprus in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium.

Kristin Kobes Du Mez: Kristin’s HIST 356 (US Social and Cultural History) classes have been doing some exciting research and writing and working with app developers to create GR walks tours. Last years’ Historical Riverwalk tour is currently available. An additional tour on East Grand Rapids’ Ramona Park should be available this summer, as will this year’s project, “Beer: A Grand Rapids History”. The free GR walks app can be accessed at grwalks.com, and Google Play.

Some of Kristin’s History 356 students eating donuts at Van’s after testing out a GR Walks tour.
Robert Schoone-Jongen:
“So what do professors do, besides teaching classes and attending conferences? Well, I have been doing involuntary research into the history of medicine since October, examining the evolution of Butterworth Hospital from the vantage point of a bed, finding out about the life stories of nurses, doctors, and technicians, and being very thankful for the legacy of the Mayo Brothers in creating modern medicine. And I have benefited from the role philanthropy has played in funding the expansion of Grand Rapids’ medical facilities.

In between hospital stays and office visits, I have had the chance to write a forthcoming book review of a new work on the topic of how the Dutch in America remained so distinctly Dutch for so long. And for something completely different I had the chance to check a soon to published children’s magazine article for historical accuracy.

I am thankful to [have been able to do] my work with student teachers in a normal fashion this [past] spring, and to have been able to teach my HIST152 students.”

Bob was also the teacher commissioning ceremony speaker at graduation. To read the transcript of his talk, please go to: http://historicalhorizons.org/2015/06/05/to-teach-is-to-learn/.

Professor Bob Schoone-Jongen addresses student teachers at their commissioning ceremony, May 22, 2015 (Photo via Calvin College Facebook stream.)

Young Kim, Karin Maag, and Eric Washington were featured in a seminar on historical worship practices as part of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW) January 2015 Worship Symposium. They joined other historians as panelists for a seminar entitled “Water From A Deep Well: Learning From the Riches of Historical Worship Practices,” hosted by Karin. The session examined the central practices of Christian worship - preaching, prayer, artistic expression, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper - that transcend time and place. The "pastorally-oriented" historians shared vivid examples of how historical practices, events, and personalities can challenge, encourage, and inspire us today.
As another summer field season draws to a close, the UJ15 team took a few minutes at dawn for our annual team photo outside ancient Umm el-Jimal’s Commodus Gate in the West Entry area. This season work has focused on our 2015 grant project from the Sustainable Cultural Heritage through Engagement of Local Communities Project (SCHEP) program. SCHEP is four-year, USAID-funded program being implemented by the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR) and several partner archaeological projects around Jordan. Its goal is to develop new ways of empowering local communities directly in archaeological research and sustainable development through cultural-heritage based economic projects.

As one of the SCHEP partners for 2015, we officially launched on June 1. This year the Umm el-Jimal Project’s main goals are to:

- Prepare ancient Umm el-Jimal’s West Gate area for visitors through archaeological excavation and conservation of the Commodus Gate and surrounds.
- Develop the site’s eastern segment of the interpretive signage trail, consisting of 15 signs running from the West Gate to House 119, the future site museum and visitor center.
- Increase local capacity (and provide economic stimulus) by using these projects to train 17 community members as specialists in site management or digital communications.

We’re excited to join SCHEP because all three of these goals are intertwined. Partnering with community members on research and conservation is not only providing new knowledge and immediate preservation of an important, relatively unexplored area, but continues to develop a corps of local professionals to ensure Umm el-Jimal’s survival as a major Jordanian heritage site. At the same time, preparing the West Gate area and eastern trail signage will create an engaging experience for visitors that also connects directly to the heart of the modern community by literally and symbolically opening up the fence between the town and antiquities. Umm el-Jimal residents tend to see this growing relationship between the community, site, and visitors as mutually beneficial in a municipality traditionally excluded from equal participation in Jordan’s economic growth.

We’re fortunate to have had some great days on the site again this year. Most inspiring moment? Seeing our young friend Sattam Aqil, the eldest son of conservation foreman Ali Aqil, help move stones from the Commodus Gate in preparation for their recording and analysis. To us, there’s no better illustration of what SCHEP is about.

Check out the UJ15 Field Season slideshow on the blog at: www.blog.ummeljimal.org

Like them on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ummeljimalproject and to see photos of past seasons see Flickr: https://www.flickr.com/photos/ummeljimalproject/albums
Hot off the presses

Click on the book photos to go to publisher’s pages.

**Young Kim:** *Epiphanius of Cyprus: Imagining an Orthodox World.* University of Michigan Press, 2015.

“Epiphanius of Cyprus offers the first complete biography in English of Epiphanius, lead bishop of Cyprus in the late fourth century CE and author of the Panarion, a massive encyclopedia of heresies. Imagining himself a defender of orthodoxy, he became an active heresy-hunter, involving himself in the most significant theological and ecclesiastical debates of his day.”

To read more about his book, and to preorder.


Kristin Kobes Du Mez’s book, “[o]ffers insight into nineteenth-century social reformer Katharine Bushnell’s innovative, radical, yet hermeneutically conservative feminist theology; illuminates the difficulties women faced in coming to terms with changing constructions of sexuality, morality, and religion in modern America—difficulties that continue to plague the project of Christian feminism today; sheds new light on the rise of modern feminism and the history of Christianity and feminism in America; and provides a historical backdrop to contemporary evangelical anti-trafficking efforts.”

Click on the book to access the Oxford Press page or go here.


“Never before in American history have we seen the number of African Americans teaching at Christian Colleges as we see today. *Black Scholars in White Space* highlights the recent research and scholarly contributions to various academic disciplines by some of America’s history-making African American scholars working in Christian Higher Education. Many are the first African Americans or only African Americans teaching at their respective institutions. Moreover, never before have this many African American female scholars in Christian Higher Education had their research presented in a single, cross-disciplinary volume. The scholars in this book, spanning the humanities and social sciences, examine the issues in public policy, church/state relations, health care, women’s issues in higher education, theological anthropology, affirmative action, and black history that need to be addressed in America as we move forward in the 21st century. For these reasons and more *Black Scholars in White Space* offers timely and historic contributions to the discourse about making the black community a place where men and women thrive and make contributions to the common good.”


“This informative book by Michelle Loyd-Paige and Eric Washington looks at African Americans—their culture and involvement in the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the blessings, opportunities, and challenges faced in belonging within the Reformed faith family. This is the second booklet in a series on ethnic minorities within the Christian Reformed Church produced by the Office of Race Relations. These booklets are produced as resource materials for the individual, congregation, or classis who is serious about understanding and ministering cross-culturally.”
FEATURED ALUMNI: Jordan Davis, ’14:
“In the summer of 2013, I spent two months on the U.S.-Mexico border with the Undocumented Migration Project, a long-term research project utilizing ethnographic, forensic, and archaeological methodologies to better understand the violence experienced by undocumented border crossers moving across the Sonoran Desert of southern Arizona—an experience I certainly would have missed had I not taken an introductory archaeological course with Professor de Vries, or decided to pursue a degree in history at Calvin. But when Professor de Vries and Professor Howard invited me to join them at the Pita House on Wealthy Street for a board meeting of Healing Children of Conflict, a nonprofit dedicated to providing medical care to children injured by U.S. weapons in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Israel-Palestine, I found myself increasingly spending more and more of my time surrounded by a community of activists and peacebuilders. Nearing graduate school application deadlines, I came to a difficult realization that the life of a historian was no longer where I found my passion—and yet without the Calvin History Department, I sincerely doubt if I would be prepared for the path I am currently undertaking. As I look forward to this upcoming fall, I am very excited to begin the Master of Sustainable Peacebuilding program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, a new interdisciplinary professional program intersecting the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. As an MSP student, I plan to continue to work alongside refugees, migrants, as well as other vulnerable and marginalized communities in the United States and abroad. Yet in a cohort of students composed primarily of natural scientists, lawyers, and social workers, I anticipate that over the next few years I will be asked to articulate how a degree in history has prepared me to respond to the complex concerns of the present. If I have any advice for current or future history majors at Calvin, it is to continuously challenge the borders that we have built around ourselves, and furthermore to never underestimate the power of the past to inspire one to better understand, change, or to hope for a better world.”

Paul Beverly, ’75: “I have been teaching history, mostly at the high school level at a variety of schools (Valley Christian in CA, Covenant Christian in NJ, Eisenhower Public in NJ, and for the last 30 years at Eastern Christian High in NJ). During that time, I have tried to use my summers to continue studies in a variety of programs, from NEH programs to Supreme Court studies. The two most fascinating have been a 2 week study of Islam sponsored by Dar al Islam in Abiquiu, New Mexico. It was a profoundly spiritual experience studying this desert religion, an experience which included participating in a Sufi Dhkir and getting to know two Christian hermits (solitaries) with whom I have kept in touch. The other program was in the Summer of 2013, a National Endowment for the Humanities Landmark in American History program in Birmingham, AL, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the children’s march. I had the privilege of speaking with participants in that march, singing the songs, visiting historic churches, and then "extending the experience" by visiting Selma and Montgomery, worshiping in MLK’s first church (Dexter Avenue in Montgomery), walking over the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma, site of the 1965 Bloody Sunday march—something I have always wanted to do.”
Alumni, continued.


Jonathan Gigler, ’09: “Since graduating I lived a year in Switzerland—teaching U.S. history in German(!); worked as a German teacher in Alabama, and currently work as a world history & German teacher in Denver, Colorado. Two summers ago, my wife, a fellow Calvin grad, and I led a group of 11 students on a 2-month immersion trip to the city of Münster (home of a violent one-year Anabaptist uprising as well as the signing of the Peace of Westphalia). Students went to language school, stayed with host families, and saw the local sights. Later on we had the chance to hike in the Austrian Alps, with day trips to Italy. This coming summer we will again be leading a group with much the same itinerary, but with the additional stop of Winterthur, Switzerland, where Calvin has connections to a private school. In Denver, my wife and I currently attend 3rd CRC, with many familiar Dutch names and a few faces too!”

John Bernbaum, ’65: “I was blessed by my experience as a history major at Calvin and …. went on to graduate school, well-prepared by Charles Miller, Professor Strikwerda, the Van Kleys and others. I had no idea back then that I would wind up working in the USSR/Russia for 23 years as President of the Russian-American Christian University, but a solid liberal arts training provided a good base for this challenging position.”

Dr. Bernbaum is founder and president of the Russian-American Institute, with offices in Moscow, Russia and Washington, D.C. He previously served as Executive Vice President of the Council for Christian Colleges where he founded the American Studies Program, the Russian Studies Program, and the Los Angeles Film Study Center. Prior experience included a stint as a U.S. Department of State Historian. Dr. Bernbaum has been a prolific author on the subject of peace (“shalom”) and faith and work. He earned his Ph.D. in European & Russian History from the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland.

John and his wife Marge have raised a family of seven children and they live in Wheaton, Maryland.

Mary Cagle, ’75: “Ron Wells was my favorite professor …. I loved history at Calvin. I went on to law school because of my wonderful social work professor my very last term. Professor Smalligan suggested law school and then social work masters. I received JD from Cooley, met my spouse and moved to Miami where he was born and raised. I took a job at the Miami State Attorney’s Office. Janet Reno was State Attorney. After 22 years, I left the office as chief assistant, recruited to run a foster care program. From there I went to the state department of children and families as director of children’s legal services to retool the way the state provided legal services to children. After seven years I applied and obtained position of inspector general for Miami Dade county. I love history and so appreciated Ron Wells.”
In Memorium: Henry Ippel, History Faculty, 1951-1985

Henry Ippel was my first history professor and a fine model of what a historian should be. I can’t say I took on that model consciously at the time; I only see it in retrospect – kind of what real history turns out to be.

My course with Henry was Western Civ, full-span, one semester. ‘Plato to NATO’ was the tagline, but ‘Plato’ in this case was antedated by a couple millennia. The textbook we used (I still have it) started somewhere far up the Nile and far down the Fertile Crescent with peoples and empires that rang faint bells from Old Testament chronicles. Henry steered us through them all, then Greece and Rome, the Middle Ages, Reformation and successive revolutions, European imperialism and the implosion thereof in the world wars. America wound up #1 at the end of the story, though Henry had cautionary, definitely not celebratory, things to say about that. And well he should have: the time was Fall 1967, and Vietnam was cranking up in a nasty way.

It’s customary at this point in a reminiscence like this to say that I remember far less of the content of the course than of the professor and the habits of learning I picked up from him. That’s all true, sobering as the lesson must be for a history professor like myself who gives nights of prep and hours of class to narrating what and how. Oddly, I do recall a stray article or two our anthology of secondary essays offered up. One drew an intriguing comparison between the spread of Islam in the Mediterranean world and the postwar Communist tide from Eastern Europe to China. We were at peak Cold War, recall, and I guess anything that explained ‘them’ in a way different from the hysterical McCarthyism still in the air was bound to be interesting. Plus, giving a historical precedent might have communicated some hope for the future—Islam didn’t conquer everything and neither will ‘the Reds.’ Furthermore, said Reds were subject to sober historical analysis like any other people in the past.

What did Henry have to do with all this? First of all, he turned out to follow Rule #1: effective teaching means getting out of the way and letting the materials pull the student along by sheer innate interest. But Rule #2 lies just below the surface: pick the right materials and so structure the classroom that the conversation there steadily brings out that interest, shapes it, and surrounds it all with an atmosphere of serious, yet not lugubrious engagement. Henry showed us that history was important but not all-important, and so was susceptible to some tugs and play, a looking at it in this way and then that way. That came through in the essay question I chose (we had to answer 2 out of 3, as I recall) on the final exam: was the Reformation really a reform or a revolution? Can’t remember which alternative I argued; probably pulled a both-and. The point is that, by the end of the course, Henry had us ready to take on a question like that, to make an argument for an interpretation by use of evidence and counter-evidence, on a question of no little importance for our beliefs and identity. Obviously, the course made quite an impression, but I remember nothing dramatic that Henry did or said in it. His greatest accomplishment was to serve the material and the students, and to let that suffice. Suffice it did, and more.

There’s not space here to relate all the rest of Henry’s life and accomplishments, from his boyhood on a Wisconsin farm to his service in World War II to his long stint as chair in a department full of strong and cantankerous people, from being a father to seven children to being a leader at his church to long years of service to the Christian community in Rehoboth, New Mexico. A lot of that is public. This is private: as it turns out, there were significant family connections between Henry and me. He was from the same hometown (Sheboygan) as my mom (I knew that), and in fact had married one of her cousins (didn’t know that till later). But Henry played neither fear nor favor on this front, which turns out to have been one small gesture of his finest qualities: wisdom, kindness, and respect. He didn’t play Dutch bingo on me; he let me be just Jim, a serious student with lively interests and some passionate if rough-hewn questions. He gave me some of what I wanted and more of what I needed.

To which I say, thank you, Henry. If there’s someone who deserves that welcome to good and faithful servants which the Scriptures promise, it’s Henry. I can just see him flicking off that compliment coming from me with a smile and little shake of his head. But from the Lord—that’s a different story. We’ll catch it later.

-James Bratt
Frank Roberts, who served as history professor, dean and off-campus programs director at Calvin College from 1969 to 2001, departed this life on Good Friday, 2013. For hundreds of students, alumni, faculty and staff, Frank showed them the core of what Calvin College is all about: Christian humanism in the Reformed tradition.

Frank came to teach at Calvin in 1969, bringing with him an education in history, theology and church history that ranged from Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary to Vanderbilt University, where he did doctoral work on German Pietism with the renowned German church historian, Wilhelm Pauck. Frank’s history course on the Renaissance and Reformation was the main chance for two generations of Calvin students to see the seedbed of the Reformed tradition. Frank emphasized the ways in which the Reformation was rooted in the advances in biblical, historical, and literary scholarship that marked the Christian humanist movement of the Renaissance era.

How to understand Frank’s career and contributions? He was an utterly reliable, go-to guy. Repeatedly Frank answered calls from leaders at Calvin and beyond to take up important tasks. He served as history department chair more than once. He led in the founding at Calvin of the Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, and he was its first acting director. He served as dean of the arts, languages and social sciences. When the Conference on Faith and History, a North American guild for Christian historians, needed a journal editor and editorial offices, Frank accepted the assignment and made arrangements to host it at Calvin. In retirement, Frank also served as coordinating secretary for the Association of Reformed Institutions of Higher Education. And on another special assignment, he laid the foundations for a sister-city relationship between Grand Rapids and Perugia, Italy.

Frank was an early adopter of IAPCHE (International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education) at Calvin. This happened principally because he had become the college’s main diplomat for international relationships. Initially that meant building and sustaining connections in Western Europe, working closely with the college’s French, Spanish, and Germanic studies programs, for example, to place students and eventually to build off-campus semester programs. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, it meant building relationships in Russia and East-Central Europe, working closely, for example, with the group that founded the Russian American Christian University in Moscow, where Frank also did some teaching. At a critical moment, Frank lobbied hard to sustain Calvin’s interest in IAPCHE. I am so grateful that he did. Christian higher education is springing up all over the world, and thanks to Frank’s persistent advocacy, Calvin is in a remarkable position to partner with others in this strategic field.

Via Frank’s IAPCHE contacts, he saw the need for us at Calvin to expand our understanding of what it means to be Christian humanists: the question is now not merely to ask what Jerusalem has to do with Athens, or with Paris or Amsterdam or Oxford, but with Beijing and Jakarta, Nairobi and Sao Paulo. So after he was finished with his deanship, Frank became director of Calvin’s off-campus programs. He saw the need to expand our horizons to the global South and East, and he led in establishing additional programs in Hungary, Ghana, China, and Honduras.

If anyone was equipped to be a champion for the Europe-centered thought, world, and legacy that has been Calvin’s roots, it was Frank. He was a great scholar of Reformed Christianity, and an ardent teacher of its riches. But Frank would insist that this sturdy faith tradition was not owned by Geneva and Grand Rapids. It is active and relevant around the world. Frank made the turn, the one so needful in our day, toward the global South and East, the new front lines for Christian thought and cultural engagement.

So we celebrate Frank Roberts’ witness. Frank was a dear friend of mine, and here’s how I feel just now, at his passing. When William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, passed on to Glory, there was a vigil the night before his funeral. The sexton came in late to close up, and he saw a man kneeling at the General’s casket, pleading with God: “Do it again, Lord, do it again!” We thank the Lord for Frank Roberts. Do it again!

-Joel Carpenter
Continued from page 1:

“...as I did prior to this class, to change your thinking or to think in other ways, taking another perspective, you will miss part of the picture and remain closed minded.”

I learned that students in a required core course can become enthusiastic about historical perspectives and methods, and that doing so can change the way they view the world. Truth be told, I think that I had a really good group this semester. But this semester I also found a new way to open doors for some of them, to think about new things and in new ways. It depends on them, and on me.

Bob listed the “Top Ten Things Students Teachers Teach Me,” in his address to graduating student teachers in May, at their commissioning ceremony. This was # 1:

To be a teacher is to be a student, a learner. A teacher cannot just pour out knowledge on students. A teacher needs to learn from the students in order to teach them. Your students are the best methods book you will ever read. Listen to what they will teach you every day.

Later in his top ten list, Bob talked about us teachers “being commissioned to mirror Christ’s love to another group of His image-bearers,” our students, and the “presence that students experience” in their relationships with us, their teachers. What had he learned from his students over the years?

Your reputation looms larger than your facility with the facts. Presence is the part of a class the students most likely will remember for years. In the end, what students really want from us are two simple things: to be treated justly and to be treated respectfully. The highest compliments—the evaluation that really matters—will come in two short sentences: one direct—“You were always fair”, the other left-handed—“You never made me feel dumb.” If students can say that, they have glimpsed the face of Christ in us.

Not bad for a year’s work, or a lifetime’s.

---

History Online

Did you know that you can keep up with the department in multiple ways? As always, our website, www.calvin.edu/academic/history/ is kept up-to-date with lecture information, scholarships, and all relevant updates from the department.

Don’t miss any information from the department by following and liking our other online pages!

Follow our blog: www.historicalhorizons.org

“Like” us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/calvincollegehistory

Follow us on Twitter: @calvinhistory

Return to Page 1