

## **WILLIAM PARSONS RECEIVES 2022 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**



William (Bill) Parsons earned his bachelor's degree in History and his masters in Teaching of History in the Community College from Western Michigan University in 1967. Bill retired as director, administrative and human resources, Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone, P.L.C., in 2007, a position he had held since 1984. Prior to that, he served as the administrative manager of Brown Coleman and Dement (1979-1984), and was employed in the personnel and trust departments of the former First of America Bank (1971-1979). During his career, Parsons has held membership in the State Bar of Michigan; American Bar Association, legal administrators' section; and the Association of Legal Administrators. He is the author of a chapter titled

"Fundamentals of Human Resources," in *The Lawyer's Handbook*, 3rd edition, 1993.

In addition to his career, Parsons is a member of the WMU President's Circle Pyramid Society; a life member of the WMU Alumni Association, serving on its board of directors for 2009-2010 and its executive and distinguished alumni award committees; and a member of the Lee Honors College Advisory Board. He has also served on the Kalamazoo Valley Community College Advisory board and is involved with the United Way and March of Dimes. Parsons has made WMU gift pledges to the Lee Honors College, the Department of History and the Mike Gary Athletic Fund. In 2005, Bill created the Sarah E and William J Parsons Endowed Scholarship for the Lee Honors College. The scholarship is awarded to a full-time student of at least junior standing who is enrolled in the Lee Honors College; preference is given to students who plan to study abroad.

During the College of Arts & Sciences' Alumni Achievement Award Ceremony in October 2022, Parsons received a state proclamation acknowledging his receipt of this award. "IN SPECIAL TRIBUTE, Therefore, this document is signed and dedicated to offer appreciation and honor to William Parsons as he receives the Distinguished History Alumni Award. May William know of our admiration and best wishes." This proclamation was signed by State Senator Sean McCann, State Representatives Julie M. Rogers, Christine Morse, Matt Hall, and Beth Griffin, as well as Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist II.



Pictured From left to right: L. Borish, C. Koretsky, J. Parsons, W. Parsons, and S. McCann

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**CHAIR'S WELCOME - DR. LINDA J. BORISH**

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our friends and supporters of the Department of History, to our annual newsletter! This year we are navigating our way on campus (and amidst campus construction), to offer our history classes and to have some of our meetings and events in person for the Department of History. We have been pleased to feature the Hamner lecture this fall on campus after an absence of two years. You can read about this year's Hamner lecture in our newsletter. Our faculty continue to contribute to the mission of the Department of History, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the University community in meaningful ways.

As a department, we have our ongoing efforts in aspiring to outstanding work in our teaching, research, and service at WMU. Some of our faculty and students are featured in this newsletter as you will read about the excellent endeavors pursued by our award-winning emeriti, faculty and students. In addition, one of our history alumni is honored for the Alumni Achievement Award in History and this recipient and I attended the College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Achievement Award ceremony in October, held in person for the first time in a few years. We are heartened by these accomplishments of our faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni in the Department of History.

Our department will welcome a new history colleague in time to join our first-rate faculty. Our department has been authorized to search for a new faculty member as we are pleased to be involved in a national search for a U.S. Public Historian at the Assistant/Associate rank. The hiring for this position will ensure that we continue to augment our strong Public History program at the undergraduate and graduate levels. We look forward to the opportunity of having a new colleague join our community of historians at WMU.

Please visit our Department of History website <https://wmich.edu/history> for further updates on our history programs and the impressive activities of our faculty and students that extends beyond the pages of our newsletter. I hope you can visit campus and come by the Department of History to talk with me or other faculty members. I invite you to contact me if I can be of assistance or you have thoughts to share with us.

On behalf of the Department of History I wish you and yours a happy and cheerful holiday season!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda J. Borish".

Dr. Linda J. Borish

**H. NICHOLAS HAMNER LECTURE SERIES**

The H. Nicholas Hamner Lecture Series made its return this fall after a two-year absence due to the pandemic. Dr. Q. Edward Wang (Rowan University), delivered the talk, "Was 1492 a Turning Point in World History? An Analysis in Historiography." This talk looked at the historical significance of the "Columbian Exchange" and examined how it gave rise to new perspectives on food plants, demographical change, and environmental challenges in global historiography. Contributions for this event also came from the WMU Light Center for Chinese Studies.

Dr. Q. Edward Wang, a native of Shanghai, received his education partly in China and partly in the United States. He is a professor of history and founding coordinator of Asian Studies at Rowan University. He was also Changjiang Professor of History at Peking University in China between 2007 and 2022 and a board member of the International Commission for the History and Theory of Historiography between 2005 and 2022. Since 2008, he has served as editor of *Chinese Studies in*

*History*, a quarterly journal published by Routledge. An internationally recognized expert in the fields of comparative historiography and Chinese cultural history, Wang's publications in English include the following: *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (2008 and 2017, coauthored with Georg Iggers); *Chopsticks: A Cultural and Culinary History* (2015); *Inventing China through History: The May Fourth Approach to Historiography* (2001). Most recently, he edited *Historiography: Critical Readings* (2021) in four volumes.



## **HISTORY ALUMNI ADVISORY COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING**



The History Alumni Advisory Council had its meeting on October 13, 2022. Various issues were discussed such as the current faculty areas of specialty, the new authorization to hire a U.S. Public Historian that is in process, enrollments, and other topics. Our History Alumni Advisory Council had the pleasure of meeting with Dr. Carla Koretsky, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Koretsky shared an update on the Dunbar Hall renovation, to be opened in January 2024, and some of the features planned for the building, and she provided information on the President of

WMU's Empowering Futures Scholarships for students. If you would like information on our History Alumni Advisory Council please contact Dr. Linda J. Borish.

Pictured from left to right: (front row) Gary Kent-Bracken, Hon. Charles Binder, William Parsons, (back row) Emilee Johnson, Lauren King, Lucy Kent-Bracken, Thomas Vance, Dr. Carla Koretsky, and Dr. Linda J. Borish.

## **AWARDS**

### **DR. ELI RUBIN**



In March 2022, Professor Eli Rubin received a grant from the Peter J. Schmitt Endowment for Experiential Learning to visit the Getty Museum and the Wende Museum in Los Angeles in order to study new methods of preserving historical artifacts made from plastic. Plastic items are relatively new in the field of preservation and restoration, because they were not in widespread use until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Museums and preservationists have therefore little experience in how best to handle historical plastic. The Wende Museum, a museum dedicated to preserving the material culture of the former communist Eastern Europe, has a large collection of plastic goods, because the material was widely used in communist countries to substitute for a lack of more traditional materials, as Dr. Rubin's first book, *Synthetic Socialism*, detailed. The Wende partnered with the Getty, whose science department has been pioneering new methods for identifying and preserving plastics. Their use of the FITR (Fourier-Transform Infrared Spectroscopy) machine, led by Anna Laganá, is helping the Wende preserve its extensive collection of everyday items made from plastic in the former East Germany and other communist countries. Dr. Rubin was able to share his findings with Dr. David Benac's class on Historic Preservation (HIST 4100), and to connect Laganá and her team with another museum working on an exhibit about plastics in Amsterdam. He also agreed to serve as a consultant as the Wende-Getty project progresses.

### **DR. SALLY HADDEN**

Professor Sally Hadden received the 2021-2022 College of Arts & Sciences Faculty Achievement Award in Community & Professional Service. At the ceremony, Department Chair Dr. J. Linda Borish recognized Hadden for her many contributions to the History Department, WMU, as well as her service to the community in co-founding Feed the Fight Kalamazoo at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Borish also noted that Hadden had been extremely active in



professional historians' organizations, with many years of service to the American Society for Legal History, the Southern Historical Association, and the American Historical Association. Hadden will end her five years as Director of Graduate Studies in the History Department in July 2023. Dean Koretsky hosted this award ceremony for the College. Pictured from left to right: Dr. Linda J. Borish, Dr. Sally Hadden, and Dr. Carla Koretsky.



## GRADUATE AWARDS

**RUTH AARDSMA-BENTON** – awarded the Dr.



Nora Faires Travel and Research Award, the Judith F. Stone Award, and the Ernst Breisach Award for European History. "This past spring, I was honored to receive the Dr. Nora Faires Travel and Research Award, the Judith F. Stone Award, and the Ernst Breisach Award for European History.

With these awards, I was able to travel to Germany to conduct research for my dissertation, which will examine prostitution in East Germany during the 1970s and 1980s. During the three weeks I spent there, I worked in an archive that holds the files of the secret police, or Stasi, and visited and documented locations that are significant to my research in the cities of Berlin, Leipzig, Rostock, and Dresden. The trip was very fruitful, and I am excited to continue my analysis of what I found, share it with others, and incorporate it into my dissertation. This opportunity would not have been possible without those who have established and contributed to these awards and the support and guidance of the faculty of the history department. I cannot thank them enough."

**HARRISON COMPTON** –

awarded the D.C. and Zoa D. Shilling Award. "I am honored to have received the D.C. and Zoa D. Shilling award this past academic year. When I found myself not able to continue my studies in Chinese language, the History department was there



for me. The award provided me the support and resources to continue my studies in Chinese language. I am grateful for the History department, Dr. Linda Borish, and Dr. Sally Hadden for going above and beyond helping me receive the award."

**KYLIE HAMM** – awarded the Russel Writing Award



and the Department-Level M.A. Research and Creative Activity Award. "I want to thank the department for bestowing upon me the Russel Writing Award and the Department Level M.A. Research and Creative Activity Award for my master's thesis, Gendered Language in the Catalogues of

Saint Mary's Academy, 1860-1871. It means a lot to me to have my research and writing read and recognized by the department. I gained so much from my two years in the History Master's Program and to have the same people I respect and learned from award my work is an honor."

**MELISSA PADUK** – awarded

the A. Edythe Mange Distinguished Scholarship. "I'm so grateful to have received the A. Edythe Mange Distinguished Scholarship from the History Department, which provided me with the resources to complete and defend my Lee Honors College thesis project, entitled "A Walk Through Western Michigan University's History".



## UNDERGRADUATE AWARDS

- Andrew Cochran – Dr. Dale P. Pattison Award and Dr. H. Nicholas Hamner Undergraduate Support Award
- Eric Cramer – Bert Nash Scholarship and Dr. Dale P. Pattison Award
- Adrian Gleason – Timothy Stoepker History Completion Scholarship
- Alexa Gravitter – Dr. Smith Burnham Prize in History
- Nathan Halder – Dr. Dale P. Pattison Award
- Joanne Jeya – Margaret MacMillan Undergraduate Writing Award
- Paige Schoon – A. Edythe Mange Distinguished Scholarship

## PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR

### HANNAH GERROD

Hannah Garrod was raised in Richland, Michigan, before moving to Kalamazoo to pursue her education. She earned her associate's degree from Kalamazoo Valley Community College and transferred to Western Michigan University to pursue a Bachelor of the Arts in History with a minor in German. During her time at Western Michigan University, Hannah earned membership to Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi, and she also joined Phi Alpha Theta during her senior year. She received several awards, including the Dale P. Patterson award, the Ana Gabor Study Abroad Award, and the Presidential Scholar Award in History for 2022. Hannah is currently pursuing her passion of becoming an Archivist. She will be attending Simmons University in order to pursue her master's in library and information sciences with a focus in archival management.

## PROJECTS BY DEPARTMENT MEMBERS

### DR. DAVID BENAC



In the past year, Dr. David Benac has been addressing public audiences about the history of our understanding of climate change and the roots of disinformation and misinformation on the topic. A recipient of this year's WMU Climate Change Teaching Fellowship, Benac joined a panel on CSPAN, organized by the American Security Project, to explore the dangers disinformation poses to national security, and was featured in a recent issue of "WMU in the News." "It's a concept that if you give people enough of the right information, they will make the correct decision. But we know that doesn't always happen. [...] The reason the overwhelming majority of scientists agreeing on this topic doesn't change public opinion is because scientists have driven the conversation from the beginning. Even today, we don't talk about what is the right political or moral type of action to take. We're debating whether or not the science is accurate."

### DR. LUIGI BERTO



In 2022, Dr. Luigi Berto was offered a position on the Academic Board of Centro Studi Longobardi (Center for Lombard Studies). He has also published three new books.

*Old Stories and Contemporary Issues in Films about Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Idealistic Thinking, Sex, Lies, and Video Political Agendas* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2022). "Following a historical approach, *Old Stories and Contemporary Issues in Films about Antiquity and the Middle Ages* examines the periods in which films are produced and the eras to which they refer. To show that the absence of a solid historical basis can damage the propagation of good intentions, films that contain political propaganda and stereotypes are examined alongside those that promote tolerance, the condemnation of war and violence,

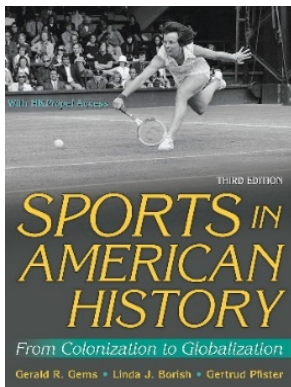
and women's rights. For example, analysis of films such as *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), *Spartacus* (1960), and *300* (2007) reveals a variety of agendas such as White-Supremacist video agendas during the War in Iraq, European Communism, and the promotion of anachronistic ideals in 1950s America."

*Ethnic Identity, Memory, and Use of the Past in Italy's 'Dark Ages'* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2022). This volume examines the Italian peninsula in the early Middle Ages by focusing on research fields such as ethnic identity, memory, and use of the past. Particular attention is devoted to the way some authors were influenced by their own 'present' in their reconstruction of the past.



*History of the Venetian Dukes (1102-1229) with an Appendix of Brief Venetian Historical Texts, edition and translation into English* (Venice: Centro di Studi medioevali e Rinascimentali 'E. A. Cicogna', 2021). The twelfth and early thirteenth centuries were a crucial period for the emergence of Venice as one of the major powers in the Mediterranean. Taking advantage of the conquest of the Holy Land and the weakening of Byzantine naval power, the Venetians' policy in the eastern Mediterranean aimed both at strengthening their position in that area and acquiring new markets. In order to do so, they demonstrated their readiness to use force. The goal of this volume is to present the edition of the Latin text and the English translation of the *Historia ducum Venetorum* (*History of the Venetian Dukes*) which describes this period. It is the first Venetian historical text composed after the Fourth Crusade, and it is also the only extant chronicle composed in Venice after the beginning of the eleventh century.

## DR. LINDA J. BORISH



Dr. Linda J. Borish recently received a College of Arts and Sciences Discovery and Dissemination Award for research on Charles L. Ornstein, the Jewish Welfare Board, and the Boycott of the 1936 Nazi Olympics.

She also co-authored the Third Edition of *Sports in American History: From Colonization to Globalization* (2022), with Dr. Gerald R. Gems and Dr. Gertrud Pfister. This comprehensive resource explores sport through various historical periods—including premodern America, colonial times, and the modern era. *Sports in American History*, Third Edition, features critical new content that will provide a framework for understanding how and why sport intersects with many facets of American society: examination of how women, racial minorities, and ethnic and religious groups have influenced U.S. sporting culture; highlights of contemporary issues affecting sport in the twenty-first century, including the Covid-19 pandemic; social justice movements; changes in name, image, and likeness policy; and sports technology; reorganized content about sporting experiences in early America that highlight the most influential moments; updated People and Places features and International Perspective sidebars that introduce key figures in sports history to provide a global understanding of sport; full-length articles from the scholarly journal *Sport History Review*, delivered online through HKPropel, that supplement the article excerpts and associated discussion questions found in the text.

*Sports in American History*, Third Edition, is unique in its level of detail, broad time frame, and focus on the evolving definitions of physical activity and games. Primary documents—including newspaper excerpts, illustrations, photographs, historical writings, quotations, and posters—provide firsthand accounts that will not only inform and fascinate students but also provide a well-rounded perspective on the historical development of American sport. Time lines of major milestones in sport and society provide context in each chapter, and an extensive bibliography features primary and secondary sources in American sports history.

-Human Kinetics Publisher



## DR. ÁNGELA PÉREZ-VILLA



Dr. Ángela Pérez-Villa was invited to present at a British Academy Conference about the social history of the law in nineteenth-century Latin America, which was held in person at the University of Oxford, UK, in October 2022. Dr. Pérez-Villa presented her paper “Women as Litigants in Early Post-Colonial Southwestern Colombia” in one of four panels titled *Plebeian, Slave, and Women Litigants in Post-Colonial Latin America*. Dr. Pérez-Villa’s paper, which was based on her extensive research in Colombia, was well-received by the audience and will be considered for publication in the proceedings of the British Academy.

## JOSHUA SIMON, PH.D. STUDENT



Ph.D. student Joshua Simon had two manuscripts published in October 2022, both of which stemmed from graduate work at Iowa State University prior to enrolling at WMU. One is titled “Radical Structural Change in North American Dress and Textile Museums and Collections: Critically Analyzing Social Justice, Oppression, and Empowerment” (*Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*). In this paper, Simon and his co-authors analyzed museums and collections' guiding principles (including mission and diversity statements) for social justice-related and marginalizing language. Their work also examined how the social justice-focused language materialized within exhibitions via titles and descriptions.

The second manuscript is titled “Art, Media, and Fashion: Negotiating Queerness and Catholicism through Depictions of Saint Sebastian, from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present” (*Journal of Homosexuality*). This work is derived from my thesis and focused on the role dress had historically and continues to have contemporarily in constructing Saint Sebastian as a queer icon. Several themes emerged from the artworks and media examined, including ambivalence in how Sebastian's fleshy body was depicted, with a focus on placing him in the context of one of his executions, as well as the inclusion of overt queer signifiers in contemporary works and media surveyed.

## RECENT GRADUATES

**DR. MATTHEW PENIX, PH.D.** – Dr. Penix is an adjunct history instructor at Eastern Michigan University.

Dissertation Title: "German Imperialism and Applied Orientalism: Germans in Ottoman Lands, 1850-1918."  
Advisor: Dr. Eli Rubin

**ALENA BUCZYNSKI, M.A.**

(Thesis Option)

**NORA HAFEZ, M.A.**

**KAITLIN MANN, M.A.**

**MORGAN PELTIER, M.A.**

**IAN PROVOAST, M.A.**

## HISTORY EMERITI

### DR. MICHAEL NASSANEY RECEIVES STATE AWARD

In September 2022, Dr. Michael Nassaney received the 2022 Michigan State History Award in Distinguished Professional Service. Nassaney has introduced archaeology in southwest Michigan to an audience of academic scholars, students of all ages and the general public. In the late 1990s, he initiated an archaeological investigation of



the Fort St. Joseph site in present-day Niles, Michigan, which continues today. His work has revealed details of the lives and combined cultures of colonial French newcomers and the resident Native Americans. The Fort St. Joseph Archaeology Project has become a model for the intersection of academic and public history. Nassaney has mentored dozens of students and has produced and contributed to books, journal articles, papers, public lectures, museum exhibits and more.

Dr. Nassaney is the editor of *Le Journal*, the quarterly publication of the Center for French Colonial Studies, and the editor of the book series, *The American Experience in Archaeological Perspective* (University Press of Florida) that has led to the publication of 25 books which examine how archaeology contributes to an understanding of America's hidden histories. He is also the Chair of the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission, appointed by the governor of Michigan.

-Historical Society of Michigan News Release

-Institute for Intercultural and Anthropological Studies webpage

## **HISTORY ALUMNI**

### **SHARON FERRARO APPOINTED TO STATE-LEVEL BOARD**



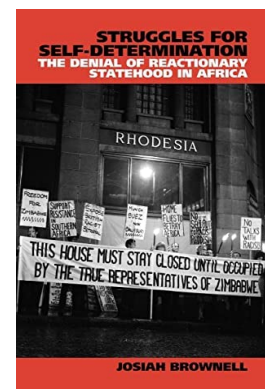
Sharon Ferraro was appointed to the State Historic preservation Review Board by Governor Gretchen Whitmer in February 2022. Ferraro most recently served as the historic preservation coordinator for the City of Kalamazoo and has previously worked as an adjunct professor at Western Michigan University. She received her B.A. in History from WMU in 1991 and later earned her M.S. in preservation planning from Eastern Michigan University. Ferraro was the 2020 Winner of the WMU Alumni Achievement Award for the Department of History.

The Michigan State Historic Preservation Review Board is established in state law under Executive Order 2007-53, and in federal law under National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Members of the Review Board are appointed by the Governor, and is composed of professionals in the fields of architecture, American history, architectural history, cultural geography, prehistoric and historic archaeology, historic preservation, and related disciplines. The Board reviews and approves each National Register nomination prior to submission to the Keeper of the National Register; has appellate jurisdiction under the Local Historic Districts Act, as amended, and provides general advice, guidance, and professional recommendations to the State Historic Preservation Office on matters related to historic preservation. Review Board meetings typically are held triennially (January, May, and September).

-Michigan Economic Development Corporation Website

### **JOSIAH BROWNELL PUBLISHES BOOK**

History alum Josiah Brownell recently published a second book, *Struggles for Self-Determination: The Denial of Reactionary Statehood in Africa* (2021). "Katanga, Rhodesia, Transkei and Bophuthatswana: four African countries that, though existing in a literal sense, were, in each case, considered by the international community to be a component part of a larger sovereign state through which all official communications and interactions were still conducted. This book is concerned with the intertwined histories of these four right-wing secessionist states in Southern Africa as they fought for but ultimately failed to win sovereign recognition. Along the way, Katanga, Rhodesia, Transkei, and Bophuthatswana each invented new national symbols and traditions, created all the trappings of independent statehood, and each proclaimed that their movements were legitimate expressions of national self-determination. Josiah Brownell provides a unique comparison between these states, viewed

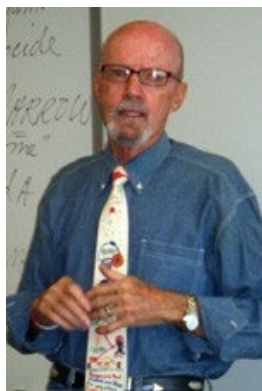




together as a common reaction to decolonization and the triumph of anticolonial African nationalism. Describing the ideological stakes of their struggles for sovereignty, Brownell explores the international political controversies that their drives for independence initiated inside and outside Africa. By combining their stories, this book draws out the relationships between the emergence of these four pseudo-states and the fragility of the entire postcolonial African state structure.”

-Cambridge University Press

## DR. DONALD NICHOLS PUBLISHES BOOK



History Alum Dr. Donald Nichols self-published *A Perspective on Memory: An Artist with Alzheimer's* (2021). “The first sign that Alice A. Nichols (1939–2020) was entering a five-year bout with Alzheimer’s was her trouble with spelling. A note to get groceries, for example, read “Buoy food.” Before long the other dreaded symptoms came: memory loss, disrupted sleep, mood swings from euphoria to outbursts of uncharacteristic anger, loss of body control, wandering lost in the neighborhood, the occasional burst of lucidity and language, etc. Early on in this experience my friend Don Nichols “resolved in my remaining years to tell the world about the tragedy of Alzheimer’s,” in the hopes of raising awareness, providing support to others, and demanding more resources for research, prevention, and treatment.

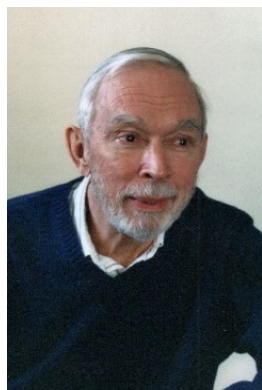
There is almost nothing about Alzheimer’s that Nichols does not cover in his deeply personal book, which appears to be an edited version of a daily diary that he kept — including the very different perspectives of the caregiver and their suffering loved one. The complexities of insurance bills and the mountain of paperwork. The complicated regimen of medicines. Numerous 911 calls. The necessity of adjusting expectations and modifying your behaviors and routines accordingly. The importance of being connected with friends and neighbors who can help, the healing power of humor, the call for compassion, “the absolute feeling of helplessness,” the emotional rollercoaster of stress and sadness, the loss of privacy when you need total strangers in your house to help, and “the dreaded H-word” (hospice) when the inevitable end is near.

This book is difficult reading. It is a deeply personal perspective on what Alzheimer’s does to people and their caregivers. In his case, Nichols was buoyed by his Christian faith, a close family, connectedness to friends and neighbors who helped, and his career as a psychologist and professor that helped him understand his own experiences.”

-Review by Dan Clendenin

## OBITUARIES

### EMERITUS - DR. GEORGE BEECH



George Thomas Beech died Sunday, June 26, 2022, in Kalamazoo, MI. He was born November 9, 1931, in Lansing, MI, son of John L. and Lilian M. (Woods) Beech. After growing up in Lansing MI, he attended Michigan State University, earned a PhD at Johns Hopkins University, and then found a career as a professor in the History Department and Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University. He took sabbatical leaves in France and loved travelling with his wife after retirement. He loved classical music and played the piano for many years. He was a devoted father and a loving grandfather. He loved historical research and was truly a history detective for European medieval history. Two items he was especially proud of are: deducing the provenance of the Eleanor of Aquitaine rock crystal vase, and a theory for the origins of the Bayeux tapestry. George was preceded in death by his parents; sister, Helen Beas; brother, David Beech; and grandson Daniel Garcia-Beech. On June 19, 1954, George married the former

Beatrice Hibbard who survives. Also surviving are their children, Valerie Beech (David Phillips), Rebecca Beech, and

Theresa Beech (Jeffrey Divers); grandchildren, CPT Evan Phillips (Tyler Loughran), Zoe Phillips, Sara Garcia-Beech, and Cory Phillips; his sister, Anne Beech (Rab MacWilliam); and nieces and nephews.

-Dr. Beech's Langeland Obituary

## EMERITUS - DR. LEWIS CARLSON



Dr. Lewis Carlson, a professor of American History, a rare perfect blend of profound intellect, the greatest of decency, a quick wit, and a towering humanitarian passed away on February 6, 2022 at his Lakeway, Texas home. He was 87. His legacy of inspired teaching, celebration of human connections, his concern for the greater good and relentless investment in community and family stands as testament to how one ought to live.

Kindness was central to his being. He often quoted Kurt Vonnegut, "There is one rule that I know of...you've got to be kind." And he was every day of his life. Not one to anger or complain, always one to see the good in others, bolstering us with his words, he was a beacon of serenity in a chaotic world. For him, we are first and foremost fellow human beings. He saw the person before the race, the religion, the nationality, the political persuasion. He believed good and decent people can come together and find common ground.

His eclectic group of friends will remember him for his love of lively conversation, peppered with sardonic humor, and if a dog or trout stream were in the mix, so much the better. He had a gift of inspiring more wit, intelligence, and reflection than we thought possible of ourselves. His advice on living a good life, "Remain patient, read books, imbibe in fine spirits, continue to enjoy family and friends. Have confidence that you can do anything and be of good cheer."

A political satirist, his correspondence made us laugh and consider the foibles, outlandishness, and questionable actions of our political leaders. Least we despair, he advised, "Dear friends, I am left with the suggestion that we outsiders drink more and better wine while giving passionate and supporting squeezes to those we love."

As Alzheimer's took his beautiful mind and timelines disappeared, cogent thoughts twisted, and his immense power with words diminished, what remained was his love and concern for his family as he continued to inquire about his grandchildren's happiness and sought reassurance that he had done all he needed to do to take care of his family. There was never self-pity nor complaint. "That couldn't have gone better," was his refrain after seeing his neurologist, when in truth further mental decline was noted. This was not a denial, but a philosophy – meet life where it finds you, see the good and act upon it.

Abhorring war, but recognizing valor, he wrote *We Were Each Other's Prisoners: An Oral History of World War II American and German Prisoners of War* (1977) and *Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War: An Oral History of Korean War POWs* (2002). He also edited or co-wrote several memoirs with other POWs from these wars. His body of work speaks to the resilience of the human spirit, the human will to survive and the courage to endure. Other publications include his memoir, *Van Gogh's Right Ear: Dissonant Chords for the Progeny* and *Tales of Gold: An Oral History of the Summer Olympic Games*, co-authored with John Fogarty.

He valued a sense of community and was active with the Lakeway Friends of the Park and an early supporter of the dog park. In 2011, his history of Lakeway was published, *Lakeway: A Hill Country Community*.

He was born August 1, 1934 in Muskegon, Michigan to Robert Levine and Margaret Carlson. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan. He then served two years in the U.S. Army, stationed in Germany, staying on to study at the University of Heidelberg. He obtained his PhD in history from Michigan State University. From 1965 to 1968, he taught at Ferris State College, where he challenged the administration by defending the black students' campaign for civil rights. He then embarked on a long career at Western Michigan University. He frequently lectured and wrote of the evils of racism and in 1968 was one of the first to teach a course on African American history. In 1973, he won the Distinguished Teaching Award.

He is survived by his loving wife of 61 years Simone Carlson, his daughter Ann Strand and her husband Chris, grandsons Greg Thomas and Bryce Thomas, and daughter Linda Levine, grandson Jake Dietz and granddaughter

Megan Dietz and her husband Eric Ormsby. The family wishes to thank our caregiving team who enabled us to keep him at home, Cynthia Sanchez, Jennifer Paz, and Lorena Palomares. Memorial contribution may be made to the Alzheimer's Association or ASPCA.

-Dr. Carlson's Dignity Memorial Obituary

## **PHI ALPHA THETA – WMU CHAPTER**

President – Abigail Ward, Vice President and Treasurer – Dean Wetzel, Secretary – Lucas Laaksonen, Student Representative – Charles Porter, Webmaster – Moira Cooper



**Pictured from left to right:**  
Charles Porter, Lucas Laaksonen, Dr. Ángela Pérez-Villa, Lily Anderson, Moira Cooper, Abigail Ward, Sam Eiler, and Dean Wetzel

"Over the course of this year, we have not only seen a dramatic increase in membership and overall interest in Phi Alpha Theta, but also a more developed sense of community and ownership within our membership base. We have been working to turn this organization into something our students are proud of and excited to participate in, and we are excited to see the results of our projected growth. So far, we have held events dedicated to academic growth and events dedicated to networking, and have encouraged our members to attend various events put on by the History department. On November 5th, we took our first trip of the year, visiting the Grand Rapids Public Museum and the Gerald R. Ford Museum in Grand Rapids. In the spring, we plan on attending the PAT Midwest Regional Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. The future of the organization looks incredibly bright, and we are excited to showcase the wonderful things our members have in store going forward!"



**Dr. Ángela Pérez-Villa,**  
Faculty Advisor

-Abigail Ward, PAT President

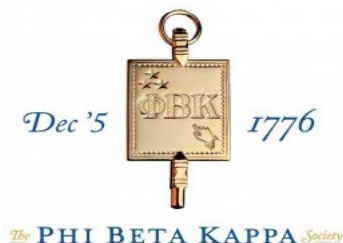
## **HISTORY GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION**

President – Ryan Hagel, Vice-President – Joshua Simon, Treasurer – Harrison Compton, Secretary – Junghyun Kim

"HSGSO would like to thank the Department of History for its continued support of our organization, particularly its warm welcome to our committee representatives. This semester, we have been looking to continue the rebuilding of the social component of the organization after COVID-19. We are currently making preparations to bring back a Spring Speaker next semester to further the connection we have with Phi Alpha Theta."

-Ryan Hagel, HSGO President

## **PHI BETA KAPPA – WMU CHAPTER**



Phi Beta Kappa is the nation's most prestigious honor society, known for recognizing academic excellence on 290 select campuses across the nation. More than 500,000 members come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. On campuses and in communities, such as WMU, the work of the Society now attests to the lifelong value of an education that fosters scientific inquiry, liberty of conscience, critical thinking, and creative endeavor for all.

-Phi Beta Kappa website



## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

For more regular updates from the Department of History, we invite you to follow us on social media. On all of these platforms, you can connect with fellow students, faculty, and alumni, hear about the latest events and speakers at the department, and follow a curated collection of major historical news and discoveries!

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WMUHistory>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/wmuhistory1>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/wmuhistory/>



**Dr. Eli Rubin and Dr. Nathan Tabor,  
Social Media Co-Coordinators**

## **MICHIGAN HISTORY DAY 2022, DISTRICT 6 COMPETITION**

Western Michigan University's Department of History hosted the Michigan District 6 competition of the National History Day contest on March 12, 2022. District 6's contestants represent schools from the state's southwestern counties. This was the eighth year that the History Department has hosted the competition. After holding the contest in a virtual format in 2021, the contest returned to in-person on campus. Student participation in the contest rebounded from 2021. About 150 students in grades 4-12 competed in the district event.



**Dr. Wilson Warren,  
Co-Director, District 6**

Students enter the contest as individuals or as part of a group of up to five members. Individuals or groups develop projects in one of five contest categories: exhibits (poster displays), websites, dramatic performances, documentaries, or papers. Students' projects also need to address the annual theme, which in 2022 was "Debate and Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences." The top 3 place winners in each category and age group at the district level then qualify for the state contest, which was also held virtually this past April.

As in previous years, our district qualifiers did very well at the state contest. A total of 22 individuals or groups from District 6 finished in the top 3 at state. For students in grades 6-8 (junior division) and 9-12 (senior divisions), the top two place-winners in each category from the state contest qualified for the national contest, which was also held virtually in June. A total of 25 students from District 6 qualified for the national contest this year.

At nationals, our District 6 qualifiers did quite well. Two entries finished in the top 10 at the National History Day contest this summer. Three students from Our Lady of the Lake Catholic High School in St. Joseph—Hannah Hysell, Josephine Marsh, and Mary Catherine Riley—finished in second place in the Senior Group Performance category. Their entry was titled "San Antonio ISD v. Rodriguez: Shaping the Future of Public Education." Hysell, Marsh, and Riley were part of a Junior Group Performance that finished eighth at nationals in 2021.

Five students from Providence Christian School in Kalamazoo—Connor DeVries, Hailey DeVries, Nicholas DeVries, Lydia Nieuwenhuis, and Cali VanDyke—placed sixth in the Junior Group Website category. Their entry was titled "The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Diplomatic Tightrope." Conner and Hailey DeVries as well as Cali VanDyke were part of a Junior Group Website entry that finished ninth at nationals in 2021.



Myles Daugherty and Nic Sheppard from South Haven High School finished in the top 20 with their Senior Group Exhibit titled “Debate and Diplomacy: The Acquisition and Creation of the Panama Canal.” Their exhibit was selected to represent Michigan at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History Showcase.

Victoria Moody from Baseline Middle School in South Haven finished in the top 30 with her Junior Individual Performance titled “Big Annie: Leading the Way in Copper Country.”

The 2023 District 6 History Day contest will take place at WMU on Saturday, March 11. This year’s theme is “Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas.”

## **GIVE THE GIFT OF COLLEGE GRADUATION**

Paying for college is hard. Students today face a myriad of challenges, even as WMU continues to deliver an affordable, high-quality university education. Rising college costs mean families struggle to contribute. Students who are first generation college students, students from underrepresented groups, and students from low-income families disproportionately struggle to pay for college.

- Today’s average college tuition is 31x more than thirty years ago.
- In 1969, the average cost of a four-year public school was \$329.

Today that same education costs an average of \$10,230, an increase of 340% when adjusted for inflation. The struggle to pay for college often becomes more difficult in the final years of college. Family savings are often depleted, and scholarships for the first two years of school are no longer available. Sometimes, students are forced to leave college, thinking they’ll quickly return. Yet, life realities often mean they never return to college. More commonly, students attempt to work full-time while taking classes. Students balancing full-time work and a full course load often struggle and frequently fail classes, wasting their efforts, time, and money.

- A student who drops out of school for even one semester, only has a 30% chance of ever finishing their degree.
- Only one-quarter of low-income students who enroll in postsecondary education receive bachelor’s degrees.



**Jessica Hermann-Wilmarth**  
**Chief Development Officer**

Average completion scholarship awards are \$4,000 but the difference between graduation and leaving school without a degree can be as little as \$1,000.

You can help a fellow history major complete their degree. There are lots of ways that you can make a gift to the history department.

- Make a gift online or use the form included in this newsletter. [www.wmualumni.org/give](http://www.wmualumni.org/give)
- If you’re 70% or older you can make a gift from your IRA. You can give the gift of graduation while also saving on taxes!
- Include the WMU History Department in your estate plans and leave a gift for future Broncos.
- Give through volunteerism. There are opportunities to work on WMU’s historic transformational campaign or to connect with fellow alumni.

Let’s have a conversation! To discuss the ways you can give back and give the gift of graduation, give Jessica Hermann-Wilmarth, Chief Development Officer, a call at 269-387-8873 or [Jessica.a.hermann-wilmarth@wmich.edu](mailto:Jessica.a.hermann-wilmarth@wmich.edu).

**IN APPRECIATION: DONORS FROM NOV. 2021 TO OCT. 2022 (LIFETIME GIVING AMOUNTS)****Burnham Macmillan Society  
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Your support is vitally important. Donations help us take advantage of ongoing and new opportunities to not only enhance the teaching and research of the department, but to assist students in achieving their educational and professional goals. To learn about funds that benefit the history department and our students, please visit [www.wmich.edu/history/giving](http://www.wmich.edu/history/giving). Thank you for supporting the Department of History!

Please direct donation questions to Dr. Linda J. Borish, Chair: [linda.borish@wmich.edu](mailto:linda.borish@wmich.edu) or (269) 387-4649.

# THANK YOU!

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☐ I have made a bequest to WMU History and would like to discuss it with the department.

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\*\*Credit cards can be processed at <https://secure.wmualumni.org/s/give?funds=D314>

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