

# The University of Iowa American Studies Newsletter

February 2002



## In Memory of Gladys Talcott Rife

I'm in my office on a bright, warm February afternoon thinking about Gladys. As I tuck the final clipping – an obituary – into a very thick file of newspaper clippings on Gladys Talcott Rife, I know that I am committing some kind of shabby last ritual. Gladys, who died February 11 at age 87, was our proudest alum, our best correspondent, and perhaps the most memorable graduate student who ever matriculated in American Studies.

From this fat file punctuated by Gladys' own school-teacher penmanship, Gladys smiles out at me from a number of the accumulated photos. In a 1988 front page *Iowa City Press-Citizen* story, she proudly wears her cap and gown while getting her PhD in American Studies at age 73 – the oldest person ever to earn a PhD from Iowa. In a *Des Moines Register* story, she holds a coffeepot while standing at the wooden stove in her railroad depot museum in Fayette, Iowa. In a profile by her hometown Mt. Vernon newspaper, a middle-aged Gladys smiles softly from a corner armchair.

Gladys began to take graduate courses in American Studies at Iowa in 1975 when she was head of English, Speech and Theater at Mt. Vernon High. When she retired from 30 years of school-teaching in 1979, she began to pursue her PhD full-time. She had already accomplished three or four times as much as most people do in a lifetime: she was a teacher, newspaper columnist, wife and mother of five, and beginning museum owner and curator.

When she contracted polio in 1948, an event that she said momentarily "slowed her down somewhat," she started a column for the weekly newspaper in Lone Tree, Iowa, a column that continued and then spread to the *Iowa City Press-Citizen* and lasted for ten years. Gladys' column was not only about rural farm life, her husband "Babe" (often referred to in the columns as "FH" for farm husband), and her five children, but about politics, insight, and her philosophy about life. One example from 1957: "There's something peculiarly reassuring and homey for us in seeing herds of stock cows with their calves spread out possessively over a fall pasture – some peaceful promise of nature's ordered continuity seems to abide with them. For us they provide something to counterbalance the day's headlines." Another classic comment: "Actually, there's nothing wrong with thinking except it's lonesome work."

In her graduate career, Gladys specialized in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century American cultural history, material culture & museums, and women's studies. As a retired schoolteacher 65 years old when she took 45:200 and 45:201, the methods sequence that sinks or at least stresses out most students one third her age, Gladys not only survived but passed both with As. She had to slow down her progress toward her PhD, however, in 1980 because she was busy moving and preserving the railroad depot she and her husband had purchased in 1965. She got it on the national historic register and opened it as a museum in 1980.

Gladys completed her dissertation in 1988 on a subject close to her heart, "Iowa's Rural Women Columnists." She continued to run the Fayette Depot Museum, published parts of her dissertation, contributed to oral history archives at the State

Historical Society, served as a panelist and speaker for women's and senior clubs in Iowa, helped establish the core gallery for the Linn County History Center in Cedar Rapids and did significant research there on pioneer women and farming between 1840-1930.

And Gladys stayed in touch – despite losing one of her daughters to cancer and her own bout with cancer. She wrote to say that nothing made her happier than when in 1998 Mt. Vernon honored her as Citizen of the Year. Last year when I became chair, Gladys personally wrote to reintroduce herself (as if anyone could ever forget her) and to offer encouragement. Despite her own failing health, Gladys wrote regularly to remind us all to visit her beloved Depot Museum, which she described as a PRESERVED AND ADAPTED SOCIAL HISTORY MUSEUM. JADE ROAD, OFF HWY. 150, 2 MILES NORTH OF FAYETTE (which is a few miles north of Oelwein which is northeast of Waterloo).

To paraphrase Gladys herself, she made education – her own and others – the vocation of a lifetime. In a paper she wrote in 1980, she outlined her goals: “to build a better understanding between farm people and other groups, to educate people in general on the importance of education, and to make them aware of the joy of living.” And, finally, she will always be a role model for us. To the interviewer who asked her at age 74 if it really is never too late to follow your dream, she said simply, “Certainly one’s judgment is enhanced by age.” Thank you, Gladys, for that, and for so much more.

## Congratulations

Laura Baker, Elliott Blake and Taylor Lake held successful PhD defenses in December; Kristin Solli passed her comprehensive examinations in February; and Sam Graber, Sharon Lake, Patrick Naick, Eriko Ogihara, and Patrick Oray were admitted to candidacy.

### STUDENT NEWS



Mary Anne Beecher will deliver a keynote lecture at the "Designing Domesticity: Decorating the American Home Since 1876" symposium at Kent State University. Her lecture is entitled "Rx Design." Mary Anne also recently published "Promoting the 'Unit Idea.' Manufactured Kitchen Cabinets, (1900-1950)" in the Summer, 2001 issue of the APT Bulletin (The Journal of Preservation Technology) and "The Mythical Making Martha" in the Summer, 2001 issue of American Studies. She is currently teaching in the Department of Architecture at the University of Oregon.

Kevin Quirk will be presenting a paper called "The Subject of Literature: The Reception of American Psycho"

at the conference on Craft, Critique and Culture held at the UI from April 12-14.

Jennifer Pustz spent part of January recovering from a very busy holiday season at Bruce more and the other part getting some new projects going. They will be opening a new temporary exhibition in the Visitor Center on March 24<sup>th</sup> entitled "Through the Eyes of Children." It will explore the lives of children at Bruce more and beyond in roughly the first third of the twentieth century. She is involved with the project on a lot of levels: writing label text, selecting photos and artifacts and working with the graphic designers. She will be presenting a paper, "Working at the 'Big House': Servants at Bruce more, 1907-1937", at the Iowa History Forum in Des Moines on April 6. A preview of her presentation was featured in the recent issue of Iowa Historian, the newsletter of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

Kristin Solli's paper titled "Twangin' the Vernacular: Country Music and National Identity in Norway" won The International Association for the Study of Popular Music U.S. Branch annual Graduate Student Paper Award.



Harvey DuMarce “As an alumnus of the University of Iowa, I enjoy reading the American Studies newsletter. I got my MA there in American Studies in 1996. I have nothing but

good memories of the people in American Studies: Lauren R, Jane D, and Rich H. I never had a chance though to take any classes from John Raeburn.

After graduating from UI, my family and I returned home to South Dakota. We live on the Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Reservation in the northeast corner of the state. I am now the Dean of Instruction at the Sisseton Wahpeton Community College, one of five tribal colleges in South Dakota. But I also continue to teach courses in American Literature and Native American literature. I also teach Dakota History. We are an emerging institution just like an emerging nation. I love my job, teaching, and my students.

I really have come to value the things I've learned in American Studies at Iowa. My three professors in the program have given shape to my perspective on this whole business of American culture. I remain fascinated with American culture but from a distance and with a dose of skepticism about it all.

I am a National Endowment for the Humanities fellow. I was awarded an NEH fellowship in the summer of 2000 and spent the summer at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. We studied Texts of the Imagination and the Founding of the Jamestown Settlement. I was specifically interested in the mythology that surrounds Pocahontas, issues of race and culture in regard to Jamestown as the first English settlement in North America.

Right now, winter has set in here. There is an aspect to the land that I love so much. The prairie here in the winter is stark but beautiful. There is a blanket of whiteness that stretches to the horizon. There is nothing to impede one's vision. There is a spiritualness to the land that I am rediscovering too.

We usually like to return to Iowa City and the university in April of each year to attend the annual pow wow. We will do the same again this coming April. I hope to stop in at American Studies to say hello."

**James Hall (PhD. '92)** recently had two books published: Mercy, Mercy Me: African American Culture And The American Sixties (Oxford, 2001), and (edited) Approaches To Teaching Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass (MLA, 1999).

**Judy Nolte Temple** (formerly Lensink, PhD '87) was named President of the Western Literature Association at their October 2001 meeting. Temple will host the WLA 2002 in Tucson October 9-12 and urges American Studies people working on literatures west of the Mississippi to submit a proposal.

Proposals are due June 15, as are full papers for students interesting in competing for the J. Golden Taylor Prize for best conference graduate paper. Conference website is [www.coh.arizona.edu/english/WLA2002](http://www.coh.arizona.edu/english/WLA2002), or email [WLA2002@email.arizona.edu](mailto:WLA2002@email.arizona.edu)



**Jane Desmond** presented a paper on transnational American Studies at the meetings of the Chilean Association for American Studies in Santiago, Chile in November. Of special interest was the group's discussions of September 11th, including a presentation by a Chilean architect who had designed plans for a memorial to U.S. victims which he hoped to build in Santiago.

While on leave on the Global Scholar research award this semester, Desmond will attend the biannual meetings of the European Association for American Studies in Bordeaux, France (yes, dusting off that French), and while there will participate in the board meeting of the International Association for American Studies. She has also just been named a co-editor of the new U.K.-based journal "Comparative American Studies," and encourages interested faculty and advanced graduate students to think about submitting any of their work that has a comparative focus.

In June, Jane will travel to Japan for two weeks to represent the U.S. American Studies Association as one of two mid-career scholars selected through a national competition. In addition to speaking at the Japanese American Studies Association meetings, she will lecture at several Japanese universities.

But it's not ALL about transnational work. In February Jane conducted research for her new book on animals at the national week-long "Zoo School," the training institute of the American Zoological and Aquarium Association. Alongside animal curators, science educators, facilities designers, and CEO's of zoos, she studied the latest trends in exhibit design. Participant/observation research has rarely been so much fun, and yes, she is now thinking about a career change....

**Rich Horwitz** has much to report.

*Conferences:*

Thanks to a grant from CGRER (The Center for Global and Regional Environmental Research) Rich has been, among other things, studying American responses to the prospect of global warming. He is especially interested in communication or the lack of it among scientists,

policymakers, and the general public. In the fall, he presented a paper on "Relations Between 'Folk' and 'Expert' Knowledge of Climate Change," at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society in Anchorage, AK. He will present more of his findings at two upcoming conferences: "Facing and Effacing the Facts of Global Warming" at the annual meeting of NEASA (the New England American Studies Association) in Boston, April 26-28; and "Global Warming, Scientists and 'Stakeholders'" at the European Conference of the International Society for Literature and Science (SLS) in Aarhus, Denmark, May 8-12.

#### *Publications:*

In cooperation with the U.S. American Studies Association, Grolier Publishing Company has at long last published the *Encyclopedia of American Studies*, edited by George Kurian, Miles Orvell, Johnella Butler, and Jay Mechling. Rich is pleased to have contributed one of the two entries aiming to characterize the field as a whole, "American Studies: Approaches and Concepts." A version of the essay is available on-line at <<http://twist.lib.uiowa.edu/rhorwitz/asconcepts.htm>>

He is pleased (so far!) with responses to his new textbook, *The American Studies Anthology*. A sample of some flattery from major scholars can be found on the WWWeb at <<http://twist.lib.uiowa.edu/rhorwitz/endorsements.htm>>. Maybe more important, students recently gave the text high marks in one of the department's courses ("Sources for American Studies," 45:20 in the Fall). He hopes that other American Studies students and instructors will find the text valuable and will let him know if they want to share ideas for making it yet more useful. Also available on-line are a table of contents <<http://twist.lib.uiowa.edu/rhorwitz/asaccontents.htm>> and a version of the opening chapter, "The Roots of American Studies" <<http://twist.lib.uiowa.edu/rhorwitz/rootsas.htm>>

And there is one other late-breaking bit of news: the infamous "pig book" -- *Hog Ties* (published in 1998 by St. Martin's Press/Palgrave) will come out in a new, paperback edition in fall 2002. It will have a new publisher The University of Minnesota Press and a new subtitle: "What Pigs Tell Us About America."

#### *Grants:*

Rich is currently working on two funded projects: As a collaborator on a National Science Foundation (NSF) incubator grant, "Modeling Biocomplexity and Socio-Economic Decision-Making Under Uncertainty in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem: A Proposal to Develop an Interdisciplinary Team." (The geographer and climatologist David L. McGinnis, now at Idaho State

University, is principal investigator.) And he continues as principal investigator on an interdisciplinary seed grant from the Center for Global and Regional Environmental Research (CGRER), "An Ethnographic Study of Climate Considerations in Regional Agricultural Decisions." He has also joined two interdisciplinary teams in submitting major grant proposals: As a co-principal investigator on a National Science Foundation Grant (\$1,917,993 over 5 years) -- "Complexity Across Borders: Coupled Human and Natural Systems in Yellowstone Northern Elk Winter Range," and as principal investigator on a grant (\$72,775) administered by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) in association with The Coastal Institute, to develop an emergency response plan for the RIDEM.

#### *Service news:*

In addition to the usual array of U of I duties, Rich Horwitz has been serving as a reviewer for a number of agencies this year, helping them decide how to give away their money (which, he says, "is way more fun than raising it"). Among the more interesting assignments, he says, are panels for the Fulbright Senior Specialists Program, the Marsden Fund of the Royal Society of New Zealand for the Advancement and Promotion of Science and Technology, and the Division of Public Programs of the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities. He also enjoyed serving on the Folk Arts Advisory Panel for the Iowa Arts Council of the Department of Cultural Affairs. After a dozen years, he has stepped down from the editorial board of *American Studies*.

#### *Next year:*

In 2002-3, Rich will be on leave from the University of Iowa. He will be working in Rhode Island as a Senior Fellow of The Coastal Institute and hold visiting appointments in American Civilization at Harvard and Brown Universities.

**Rob Latham** was recently selected to receive a Faculty Scholar Award for 2002-05 on the basis of a proposed book project entitled New Waves Rising: Science Fiction and the Critique of Technological Culture. The book will examine so-called "New Wave" science fiction of the 1960s and '70s in terms of its relationship to contemporary technoculture discourses, ranging from sociological critiques of technocracy (e.g., Roszak, Ellul, Mumford) to theories and practices of the artistic avant-garde that have engaged with technology (e.g., McLuhan, Burroughs, Warhol). Some of the debates and texts this book addresses will form a central part of Rob's Spring 2003 graduate seminar on Technoculture Studies. Rob's first

book, Consuming Youth: Vampires, Cyborgs, and the Culture of Consumption, a cultural study of consumer youth culture in the U.S. since the 1970s, will be published by the University of Chicago Press in March 2002.

## Floating Fridays

**March 1** Dr. Sonia Torres, Associate Professor at the Institute of Letters, Universidade Federal Fluminense in Rio de Janeiro. Vice-president of the International American Studies Association; former president of the Brazilian Association of American Studies. "Remembering the Alamo, Dismembering the Cowboy."

**March 29** Chrys Poff, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of American Studies, University of Iowa. "America's "Unsettling" Ruins: The Abandoned Mining Town and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Western Ghost Town."

**April 9** Albert E. Stone, Professor Emeritus, American Studies, University of Iowa. "American Studies as a Way of Life."

**April 19** Jackie Stewart, Assistant Professor, English, Cinema & Media Studies, African & African American Studies, University of Chicago. "Along the Stroll: Mapping Chicago's Black Film Culture, 1905-1920."



**The State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI)** announces a grant program for the 2002/2003 academic year. SHSI will award research up to eight stipends of \$1,000 each to support original research and interpretive writing related to the history of Iowa or Iowa and the Midwest. Preference will be given to applicants proposing to pursue previously neglected topics or new approaches to or interpretations of previously treated topics. SHSI invites applicants from a variety of backgrounds, including academic and public historians, graduate students, and independent researchers and writers. Applications will be judged on the basis of their potential for producing work appropriate for publication in *The Annals of Iowa*. Grant recipients will be expected to produce an annotated manuscript targeted for *The Annals of Iowa*, SHSI's scholarly journal.

Applications for the 2002/2003 awards must be postmarked by April 15, 2002. Download application guidelines from their Website ([http://www.iowahistory.org/grants/shsi\\_grants/research\\_grants.html](http://www.iowahistory.org/grants/shsi_grants/research_grants.html)) or request guidelines or further information from:

Research Grants  
Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs  
State Historical Society of Iowa  
402 Iowa Avenue  
Iowa City, IA 52240-1806  
Phone: 319-335-3931  
e-mail: mbergman@blue.weeg.uiowa.edu

### Cultural Survey Position Announcement



The City of Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Arts Alliance and New Mexico Arts seek to contract with an ethnographic and/or folkloric researcher to conduct a thorough and inclusive survey of the cultures that reside in the Albuquerque metropolitan area. The successful candidate will report to the Executive Director of the Arts Alliance and be directed by the Folk Arts Coordinator at New Mexico Arts, a Division of the State of New Mexico Office of Cultural Affairs. Duties include: the supervision of at least one assistant ethnographic fieldworker or intern, working with members of the Heritage Council of the Arts Alliance to conduct a series of public meetings with members of the different ethnic communities in the Albuquerque metropolitan area, and follow-up with members of each of these communities to document their cultural traditions in greater detail. All documentary materials will be compiled by the researcher and used to produce a final report highlighting the status of each of these ethnic community's cultural practices. The Heritage Council and the Folk Arts Coordinator will be responsible for reviewing this report for content and accuracy.

Meeting and office space and operations needs (telephone, computer, Xerox, etc.) will be provided by the Alliance. New Mexico Arts will provide the use of cameras and recording devices and will provide film, developing services, and audio tapes for the researcher and assistants. All materials, field notes, tapes, etc. will be turned over to the Archives of the Albuquerque Museum at the end of the project period.

The Heritage Council is made up of representatives from most the ethnic communities that reside in the Albuquerque metropolitan area. Members of the Heritage Council have been trained in ethnographic documentation techniques to assist in this endeavor and can act as community scholars and/or informants for the various communities.

The project is expected to last up to six months and will pay the successful contractor \$15,000-\$20,000, depending upon experience. Interested parties must apply by Friday, March 29, 2002 to:

The Arts Alliance  
PO Box 27657  
Albuquerque, NM 87125-7657

For more information, call the Alliance at 505-268-1920 or email New Mexico Arts' Folk Arts Coordinator Claude Stephenson at [cstephen@oca.state.nm.us](mailto:cstephen@oca.state.nm.us).

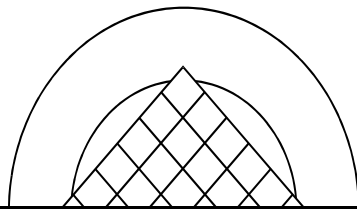
### IFUSS Events — Spring 2002

**March 1** Sonia Torres, Floating Friday, 704 JB, 4:00

**March 8-10** Crossing Borders Convocation  
Rich Horwitz, Kristin Solli, and Deborah Lombard from American Studies will be presenting.

**April 25** Dr. Makarand Paranjape, 4:00-5:30 p.m.  
315 Phillips Hall. "Re-presenting India: Indian English and its Con/texts"?

Dr. Paranjape is a Professor of English in the Centre for Linguistics and English, School of Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India. Dr. Paranjape received his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. The talk will be co-sponsored by IFUSS and SASP (South Asian Studies Program).



### **American Studies Department**

*Faculty:*

Lauren Rabinovitz, Chair  
Jane Desmond (on leave)  
Richard Horwitz  
Rob Latham  
Kim Marra  
John Raeburn  
Laura Rigal

*Staff:*

Carrie Louvar  
Laura Kastens  
(newsletter editor)  
**The University of Iowa**  
701 Jefferson Building  
Iowa City, Iowa 52242  
319-335-0320  
Fax: 319-335-0314  
[american-studies@uiowa.edu](mailto:american-studies@uiowa.edu)

### **American Popular Music**

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The series will include brief, well-written, well-designed, classroom-friendly books that will be useful to students and teachers and accessible to general readers. Although the series is open to a diverse range of approaches, including interdisciplinary studies, the editors are particularly interested in manuscripts and proposals in the following areas:  
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Fax: 617-287-5699  
Email: [paul.wright@umb.edu](mailto:paul.wright@umb.edu)

**Visiting Assistant Professor in American Studies  
at The University of Iowa  
2002–2003**

Visiting assistant professor in American Studies for 2002–2003, to teach the first–year undergraduate course in American Studies in Fall/Spring and one advanced undergraduate course each term. PhD in American Studies required by August 2002. Teaching experience in an introductory American Studies course desirable. Please send by March 1, 2002, a letter of application, curriculum vitae, abstract of dissertation, three letters of recommendation, and evidence of teaching accomplishment, to:

Professor John Raeburn  
Search Committee Chair  
American Studies Department  
701 Jefferson Building  
University of Iowa  
Iowa City, IA 52242

The University of Iowa is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply.

*American Studies Alumni*

*We'd love to hear what you're doing, where you're living/teaching, what you're publishing and/or writing, interesting events in your life. Please take a moment to drop us an email ([laura-kastens@uiowa.edu](mailto:laura-kastens@uiowa.edu)) and we'll include your news in the April newsletter.*

*In addition, this summer we'll publish a directory of MA alumni students as we did with Ph.D. alumni this past summer in a special edition of the newsletter. If you received your MA from The University of Iowa American Studies Department, please help us out and drop us a line letting us know where you are and what you're doing, as well as the year you received your MA.*

*Lastly, let us know if it's OK to give your email address to old friends who may ask for it. We've had some requests!*

*The American Studies Department  
The University of Iowa  
701 Jefferson Building  
Iowa City, IA 52242*