

The CCWH Newsletter

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The Newsletter for the Coordinating Council for Women in History

MESSAGE FROM CO-PRESIDENT, EILEEN BORIS

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It seems that the AHA just took place. The CCWH was active there, with a well-attended cocktail party in honor of the outgoing and incoming editors of the *Journal of Women's History* and the outgoing and incoming members of its Board of Trustees!! We were there giving mock interviews to job seekers. Many of you also came to lunch to hear Linda Kerber discuss the changes in women's status within the profession and the continuing challenges. This important commentary, published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, will re-appear with responses from other historians in a forthcoming issue of *The Journal of Women's History*! Our academic sessions were well-attended. In short, CCWH

played the kind of facilitating role that it has come to be noted for at the AHA.

Now we invite you to join the CCWH at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women! For the first time, the Berks is going West—to Scripps College in Claremont, California on June 2-5. Under the theme, "Sin Fronteras: Women's Histories, Global Conversations," over 200 panels will present the latest work in the field. Particularly notable are the large international contingent, the numerous comparative sessions, and the number of panels addressing the histories of women of color. Angela Davis is giving the keynote on Saturday late afternoon. Friday night plenaries address borders



Eileen Boris
CCWH Co-President

and borderlands, while a special showing of the film, "Señorita Extraviada: Missing Young Women"—followed by a discussion with filmmaker Lourdes Portillo—is on Saturday evening. There are panels recognizing retiring historians Judy Yung and Nell Irvin

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IN ANOTHER'S SHOES, SO TO SPEAK

BY: ROSA MARIA PEGUEROS



Rosa Maria Pegueros is an Associate Professor of Latin American History and Women's Studies at the University of Rhode Island.

The long-awaited National Museum of the American Indian opened in Washington, D.C. so when a meeting in the nation's capital came up, I immediately made reservations for a visit. As a professor of Latin American history whose students enthusiastically study the Aztecs, Inca, and Maya, I was eager to see how these groups would be portrayed.

How fate intervenes in our lives! About a week before my trip, I tore my Achilles heel

tendon: How could I tour the museum with a lame leg? My family urged me to borrow a wheelchair so I called to ask if they had loaner wheelchairs available. They did, so I went ahead with the visit.

The exterior of the building is spectacular. The golden-toned walls of Kasota dolomitic limestone curve into the suggestion of sand dunes and aridity. The interior hints at nature's gradual smoothing of stone, with rounded spaces and naturally-lighted,

open rooms.

However, wheeling around is hard, even in a brand new and supposedly accessible building, especially when maneuvering on the carpeted areas. It takes a considerable amount of strength to keep control of the chair going down a grade. As the day wore on, I wondered if I just should have waited until my foot healed, or come with someone who could push me. Going back up that

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PRELINGER AWARD UPDATE

ARTICLES FROM RICKIE SOLINGER AND KATHLEEN SHELDON

The editorial team asked past Prelinger Award winners to send updates about their professional lives and work. Here are two responses, one from Rickie Solinger and the other from Kathleen Sheldon. Additional updates from past Prelinger recipients will be featured in our next issue.

Rickie Solinger

Since 2000, my Prelinger year, I have been thinking ceaselessly about *King v. Smith*, the Supreme Court case at the center of my proposal. Specifically, I've been thinking about what happened when African American women in the Southern states became eligible for welfare benefits during the Civil Rights Movement, as the apartheid labor system, along with *de jure* segregation, was under assault and dying. I've been building the case that welfare eligibility publicly marked African American women as legitimate *mothers* of their own children. Plus, by putting cash-money in their hands, the welfare system also marked these women, in ways officially denied them by apartheid, as independent persons.

Since 2000: I edited, with Gwendolyn Mink, *WELFARE: A Documentary History of U.S. Policy and Politics*, in part to understand the matters in Selma, Alabama and elsewhere that gave rise to *King v. Smith*. Equally helpful to thinking about all this, I have just completed a long-promised history of reproductive politics in the United States, *Pregnancy and Power*. I curated "Beggars and Choosers: Motherhood is Not a Class Privilege in America," a photography show that opened at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and has been hosted by sixteen campus galleries so far. Each of these projects has, wholly or in part, stemmed from – and deepened – my investigations of the issues embedded in *King*.

More than ever, I think being a historian is thrilling and important. I am grateful to the Prelinger committee for supporting my efforts. This support is crucial to a person like me who works outside of the academy and who still wants to be part of the profession.

Kathleen Sheldon

Winning the Catherine

Prelinger Prize in 1999 gave me a boost of support at a crucial time. I was feeling very discouraged about my work as an independent scholar. For the decade since completing my Ph.D. I had taught as a part-time adjunct, but I had decided to no longer seek such work. In 1996 I published an edited book, *Courtyards, Markets, City Streets: Urban Women in Africa*, but an article had been politely rejected from a journal in which I hope to publish. I had been working on a history of women in Mozambique, but I found myself at an impasse with a severe case of writer's block.

I won the prize in 1999, completed the manuscript in 2000, and it was published in 2002. *Pounders of Grain: A History of Women, Work, and Politics in Mozambique* has since been very well reviewed, with comments such as "A significant contribution to southern African historiography and women's studies ... thoroughly researched, logically organized, and clearly written." Another reviewer mentioned that "it would make an ideal college textbook," and it has already been used successfully in several classes.

I continue to be active as an historian and independent scholar. In April 2005 I published the first comprehensive reference book on African women, the *Historical Dictionary of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Last year I was elected to the Board of Directors of the African Studies Association. The Catherine Prelinger Prize was a very timely and concrete sign of encouragement from feminist historians, and I cannot thank the CCWH enough.

THE 2005
PRELINGER
WINNER
WILL BE
ANNOUNCED
ON JULY 1,
2005.

MESSAGE FROM CO-PRESIDENT, EILEEN BORIS

(Continued from page 1)

Painter and a session honoring the late Gloria Anzaldúa. Teaching sessions will consider Asian American Women's History and national standards. Three sessions focus on US events of forty years ago: the War on Poverty, the Voting Rights Act, and the Immigration Reform Act. Marriage, transgender identity, and class are topics of some of the many roundtables. Public history and status of women, especially work and family issues,

also are on the program. Two sessions present filmmakers discussing their documentary projects; there are also screenings of these films and new releases from Women Make Movies. Visit <http://www.humanities.uci.edu/history/berkshire/> for the entire program and registration.

With the Western Association of Women Historians, the CCWH at the Berks will run a graduate student tea on Friday from 3 to 5. In keeping with our new project, we are sponsoring a roundtable on Saturday, from 11 to 1, "Mentoring the Next Gen-

eration." (see page 5) At lunch on Friday, we've invited representatives of other women's history organizations to meet with us to discuss common concerns. The board will meet on Thursday evening. In all, this plans to be a very busy Berks. See you at Scripps!

On another note: These remain precarious times. The latest is the attack on the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. The Bush administration has zeroed out its appropriation. The NHPRC funds many docu-

mentary projects, including some that preserve the papers of women. For more information, and how you can act, go to the website of the Society of American Archivists: www.archivists.org/

See you at
the Berks!!!

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN HISTORIANS

BY AMY ESSINGTON

I first came to know the Western Association of Women Historians (WAWH) as a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University. I attended the conference in 1999 with several other students from CGU. Over the past six years, I have gone from uncertain-new-member-attending-her-first-professional-conference to treasurer, web master, membership coordinator, newsletter co-editor, and executive secretary. I have spent many hours working to sustain and grow an organization that has given a lot to me. I follow in the pattern of many dedicated, hard-working individuals who have sustained and grown the organization during its thirty-six year history. The WAWH is a unique organization that offers its membership more than just another professional organization; it offers a community of people.

Founded in 1969, the WAWH promotes the interests of women historians both in academic settings and in the field of history generally. Drawing scholars from the Western states and now serving over 400 active members from around the world, the WAWH is the largest of the regional women's historical associations in the United States.

The first annual conference of the WAWH was at the Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove, California. Grace Larsen and Linda Kerber, who met in the San Fran-

cisco Bay area, developed the idea of a Berkshire-style conference on the West Coast. Grace Larsen was the first president and Linda Kerber the first secretary-treasurer, as well as newsletter editor. The first meeting was a grass-roots effort as Linda Kerber created a list of women who were teaching in west coast colleges and universities. Eleven or twelve people, who came mostly from the Bay area or Sacramento, attended the first meeting. Sister Angus Murphy traveled the farthest, making the journey north from San Diego by bus. Originally called the West Coast Historical Association, the organization name changed to the West Coast Association of Women Historians in 1970. In 1980, the present name was established.

In the three-plus decades since the first meeting, the annual spring conference has become a place for the presentation of scholarly work, new research, and the discussion of teaching methods, writing, and other issues of importance to women scholars. Sessions devoted to the work and interests of graduate students are encouraged. Recent conferences were at the Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove, The Huntington Library, Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, University of California, Berkeley, and University of California, Santa Barbara. The 2005 conference will be at the Black Canyon Conference Cen-

ter in Phoenix, Arizona. Future conference will be at Asilomar (2006), at the University of San Diego (2007), and at the University of Vancouver in British Columbia (2008). One of the unique aspects of the WAWH is the feel at the conference. Long time and new members meet each year and welcome one another to give and hear scholarly presentations. Graduate students can learn to negotiate their first conference or find a place to give a first paper in a supportive atmosphere. Published authors have presented their books at sessions-in-the-round and at panels. Natalie Zemon Davis and Leila Rupp gave keynote addresses in recent years. Nancy Cott will address the conference in 2005 and Deborah Gray White will speak in 2006.

In addition to the annual conference, the WAWH offers four awards and prizes, publishes a newsletter, *The Net-worker*, and offers an email list for communication on a variety of subjects. The WAWH awards four awards and prizes to deserving members each year at the annual conference. The Judith Lee Ridge Prize awards \$100 for the best article in the field of history. The Sierra Prize awards \$250 for the best monograph in the field of history. Barbara "Penny" Kanner prize awards \$500 to the best scholarly bibliographical and historical guide to research focused on women or gender history. The

Founders' Dissertation Prize awards \$1000 to support writing of a dissertation. There is a membership requirement for each award.

The newsletter, *The Net-worker*, serves as the primary means of communication between the board and the membership. Published three times a year and available in either print or email format, the newsletter contains regular news of members, information on jobs, awards, calls for papers, and resources, reports by committee representatives, and articles on issues of concern to the historical profession and to women historians in particular.

The WAWH encourages the participation of independent scholars who consistently play an integral role in the organization. In addition to academic historians, WAWH also welcomes literary scholars, and art, theater, and film specialists. Members can purchase a printed directory that lists all current members, with contact information and research interests. Anyone who wishes to become a member of the WAWH is welcome. The WAWH is a 501(c)3 organization. The organization's web site is www.wawh.org. I hope you will take some time to learn more about a unique organization and become a member, if you are not one already.

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IN ANOTHER'S SHOES, SO TO SPEAK (CONTINUED)

BY ROSA MARIA PEGUEROS

(Continued from page 1)

grade, to return the chair, was simply impossible. I had to get out and hobble up the hill pushing the machine.

The museum was crowded and most people simply did not see me—they'd walk into me or trip over me or bump me on any and all sides. I found myself in a line which I thought was to a theater but turned out to be for the museum's restaurant, the *Mitsitam* Native Foods Cafe. It was lunchtime and I was hungry; besides, I was *there*, better to eat now than to have to make my way all the way back through the crowds. Struggling with a wheelchair makes one very efficient.

How do you navigate a cafeteria in a wheelchair? Very, very carefully. I started saying "Look out, look out!" just so I wouldn't end up wearing somebody else's lunch. I realize that I wasn't at their eye level but fer 'evins sakes—don't people have peripheral vision? I mean, there I was, rolling around, occupying a fair amount of space, and they didn't even see me!

The throng seemed prohibitively dense, so I backed out to the entrance of the *Mitsitam* trying to figure out what to do next. I could get out and push the chair, putting the tray on the seat and leaning so as to favor my sore foot. I could ask for help, but I didn't know how that would be received. What if I asked the wrong person? Finally, a young woman who was directing traffic said that she'd help me if I could wait a little while. So I waited and when the flow of hungry visitors let up a

bit, she called another colleague to direct traffic while she helped me.

She was Latina, with a notable accent, so I spoke to her in Spanish and her face just lit up as she slipped into Spanish herself. I think it was a northern South American accent—Peru, Bolivia, somewhere in that region. It was clear she was happy to hear someone else who spoke Spanish. While I waited, I'd studied the extensive menu but as we made our way through the displays of food I couldn't see the offerings from my perspective in the chair, so I picked a delicious-sounding Buffalo chili with Southwest fry bread from the menu and hoped it would be as good as its description.

She seated me at a table and I was on my own. Keeping with the recent trend in museum cafes, it was quite tasty though I must say that it could have been chili with ground beef and I wouldn't have been able to tell the difference. The raspberry tart I chose for dessert was scrumptious. I was refueled and ready to tackle the exhibits.

If I had to be in a wheelchair permanently, I would develop serious biceps. It is h-a-r-d work! I made my way slowly around the fourth floor, exhilarated by the exhibits. They have collected some amazing things, including natural objects formed into tools; Christian Bibles in the native languages of the indigenous peoples that they used to convert them. There was the beautifully crafted and painted Moche pottery. There were

some beautiful examples of the goldsmith's art from Mexico and South America which must have been recovered from hidden caches since the Spanish melted 99 % of the gold they stole. The legends on the exhibits were meticulously researched and full of rich detail, as well as being calligraphically exquisite.

To my delight, the indigenous people from all of the Americas were included. I had been afraid that it would be confined to the peoples north of the Rio Grande. To see artifacts from all of these people, from the Inca to the Inuit, was absolutely amazing. Seeing them together it was easier to imagine the common ancestors who first made their ways across the Bering Strait, either across the land bridge as has been taught traditionally, or in boats as in more recent theories; the great stream of life.

Getting around the exhibits was tricky: Narrow passages lead to dead ends which were not easy to turn around in but doing so was a picnic compared to navigating in the bookstore. It was simply impossible. It was mobbed, with very little elbow room. I had no choice but to stand up and use the chair as a walker. It was too crowded even for that but I had to check out the books before I left.

The sole disappointment about the museum itself, aside from issues affecting the disabled, was that they had no books on the pre-Colombian Andean peoples; none! The University of Pennsylvania

Museum bookstore, in Philadelphia, has the best offerings I have seen, and I was expecting it to be as good as theirs. The Inca, at their zenith of their power, ruled an empire that stretched from the southern border of modern Colombia, all the way to what is now Santiago, Chile. That's 2500 miles! It was the greatest centralized empire of the Americas before the Spanish came.

The unexpected eye-opener for me was to try to see the museum through the eyes of a disabled person in a wheelchair for a full day. I had not realized how invisible people in wheelchairs are. Nowadays, many people with ambulatory disabilities no longer struggle with having to propel their chairs with their hands and arms; they now have battery-operated scooters but they still face the public's disregard. It was quite intimidating to be bumped into, tripped over, and having to fear ending up with someone's lunch or hot coffee on my head because I had become invisible. And I didn't even try to access the rest room!

I look forward to returning to the NMAI after my foot heals so that I can see all the things I missed, and enjoy another unique meal. I realize that I am lucky that I can look forward to a *walking* visit. Others are not so fortunate. I hope that the museum will be able to resolve the accessibility issues soon because it is a treasure for all Americans to enjoy.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Carol DeBoer-Langworthy, a visiting lecturer in English at Brown University, has been awarded the H.D. Fellowship in American Literature at Yale's Beinecke Library for the coming academic year. She'll

use it in January 2006 for research leading to a literary biography of the American modernist writer Neith Boyce (1872-1951).

The CCWH Newsletter would like to share news from members. Please send information about your latest book, museum exhibit, or other accomplishments to weaverk@susqu.edu.





Carol Gold
CCWH Catherine Prelinger
Award Chair

In the early part of *Pride and Prejudice*, when Elizabeth Bennett is still enthralled with Mr. Wickham, her aunt, Mrs. Gardiner, cautions her, "You are too sensible a girl, Lizzy, to fall in love merely because you are warned against it." After some light banter Elizabeth agrees, "I will do my best," not to fall for Wickham. Austen then comments that this is "a wonderful instance of advice being given ... without being resented." Mentoring – we can all use advice, but most of us have difficulty accepting it.

So I have been thinking of mentors not as sources of advice, but rather as sources of information. Mentors are rather like libraries – neutral sources of information, available when needed, best when used. I see mentors as the place of first resource, entry-level information sources. Mentors should be the first people mentees go to when in need of information—everything from how to win-

ON MENTORING, PART 3

CAROL GOLD

terize your car to the institution's culture on tenure. Which is not to say that the mentor necessarily has all the answers (although everyone in Fairbanks knows about winterizing cars), but that she will (and should) know where to go for the answers.

Mentors need to be available; no question is too trivial or too small, because it establishes a good relationship. How do I find a good hairdresser? Do I really have to attend this Open House? Mentors also have to be proactive in anticipating questions. One needs to ask about arsenic in the water in Fairbanks (arsenic often appears together with gold), and about road maintenance and fire protection, which are not available in all parts of the area. "Outsiders" would rarely think to ask such questions. (I'm using Fairbanks examples, but I'm sure every community has its issues.)

A perhaps more important area has to do with institutional culture. Every institution is somewhat different. When I was in Minnesota, for instance, it was not considered quite appropriate to buy a house *before* one received tenure. It showed *hubris*. In Fairbanks, on the other hand, we tend to be rather suspicious of anyone who has *not* bought a house or settled in within the first two or three years. Not to have done so de-

notes, to us, a lack of commitment to Alaska, implying an unwillingness to remain. There is no way new colleagues could figure this out on their own; they need to be able to ask about it, and mentors need to be able to anticipate these issues.

Much more delicate are issues of personal behavior – the shoals on which I foundered in Minnesota. How do you tell people what clothes to wear? I have decided that, awkward as it is, mentees have to be provided with the necessary information; it is then up to them how to make use of it. Another example, this time from Fairbanks. A couple of years ago a young woman was hired on a tenure-track faculty line; she was a smoker. She joined a group of women who regularly smoked out on the fire escape. However, the other women were two adjuncts and two secretaries. By joining them, this woman put herself perceptually into their category – not-tenure-track faculty. I wish we were not class conscious, but we are—and she needed to know that. Indeed later, when she had troubles with her all male department, many other women faculty did not realize that she had a doctorate and was a regular, full-time, tenure-track faculty member. I'm not going to suggest that was the only reason she lost her job (which she did), but she did not connect up with a supportive

network until it was too late. And I have (sadly) heard colleagues comment that they do not tenure people whom they do not know. Junior faculty need to know if/when such ideas persist. Mentors need to provide sufficient information so that mentees can make fully informed decisions on their own behavior. So, summing up, what is the role of a mentor? She should be available; she should be knowledgeable about the institution and its culture; she should be able to anticipate needs; she should be a good listener and sounding board. A mentor should also know when to retreat and/or change direction, when she does not have the answers, when someone else might provide additional support (perhaps someone outside the department or discipline). And a mentee should be able to take advice (she doesn't always have to follow it), and to accept the proffered help in growing and developing in her own direction. There is no one roadmap; the mentor-mentee relationship has to be flexible enough to accommodate different personalities, different institutions, different situations. Mentoring is not an easy job, but it can be very rewarding. Mostly importantly, it helps us to prepare the next generation of historians.

THE CCWH AT THE BERKSHIRE CONFERENCE

Saturday, June 4
 11:00a.m.-1:00p.m.

Session: Roundtable: Mentoring the Next Generations: Women Historians and Mentoring Relationships
 Chair: Jennifer Scanlon, Bowdoin College
 Carol Gold, University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Francoise Hamlin, University of Michigan. Elizabeth Pleck, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Women have in many ways altered the academy and the world of public history, but women entering the historical profession still find themselves experiencing difficulties as they navigate the transitions from undergraduate to graduate student, from student to professional, and through the professional ranks. Graduate students may or may not find the mentoring they need to help them find their voices and their confidence as they plan and write dissertations. New pro-

fessionals face questions about workload, service and teaching obligations and expectations, and appropriate research trajectories that may seem daunting and confusing. Mid-career women may need advice yet again, as they feel "stuck" at the associate professor level or in mid-career appointments in public history. Mentoring relationships can help women identify and reach goals, understand their professions more fully, ask questions safely, develop new skills and knowledge, broaden networks, and achieve professional

success. This CCWH roundtable will explore ideas about mentoring and outline possible plans for more formal mentoring networks among women historians. The participants, from recent graduates to seasoned historians, will offer testimonials about career mentoring, explore the skills that make mentoring relationships work for both parties, and engage the audience in a discussion of how CCWH and the many other affiliations of women historians might use a wealth of experience to foster success.

FILM REVIEW: *TUPPERWARE!*

BY EDWARD SLAVISHAK

A 1950s Tupperware advertisement asked readers, "Why is Tupperware sold only in the home?" The answer, emphasizing the importance of product demonstrations, ended with an idyllic vision: "everyone who has ever been to a Tupperware party loves the comfort of buying in a living room. It's the nicest way to shop." Laurie Kahn-Leavitt's *Tupperware!* treats the appeal of Tupperware as a given; the company's blend of innovative products and home-based selling simply won over generations of consumers. This film, part of the PBS *American Experience* series, thus considers not why Americans filled their cupboards with burping-seal containers, but instead how the company offered visions of success to its mostly female workforce. As much labor and gender history as the history of popular culture, *Tupperware!* trains its lens on those who built the company and mastered the art of selling in a living room.

The film is divided into three sections. The first third details Tupperware's inception in the postwar era. As an entrepreneurial marriage of inventor Earl Tupper and saleswoman Brownie Wise, the company quickly became known for its popular products and spirited representatives. One of Wise's first moves as the head of sales was to build a headquarters—a

"monument to salesmanship"—in Kissimmee, Florida. Surrounded by manicured lawns and gurgling fountains, Wise created a vivid public image for Tupperware Home Parties that was buttressed by her staff's savvy promotional techniques.

The middle section of the film turns its attention to the "army of Tupperware ladies" who represented the consumer's point of contact with the company. Kahn-Leavitt gives former dealers and distributors much of the screen time, as they explain the miles they drove, the schedules they kept, and exaggerations they made in the name of higher sales figures. Despite their husbands' initial hesitation (and the potential embarrassment of having to dress as Gold Rush miners or pirates during conventions), workers had opportunities for advancement. Dealers became managers; managers became distributors. Promotion brought with it increased recruiting responsibilities and a uniform—"white gloves, hats, high-heeled shoes, and panty hose. An air of style and privilege were crucial to Wise's image of casual success.

The most moving section of *Tupperware!* is the final act, which presents Tupper's ousting of Wise in 1958 as an economic calculation meant to

improve the sale value of the company. Kahn-Leavitt chronicles the pair's escalating turf wars. The turning point came in 1957, when Tupper bristled at Wise's suggestion that her sales department was too efficient for his production department. Over the course of the next year, Tupper fired Wise, sold the company, divorced his wife, renounced his citizenship, and bought an island in Central America. Wisely, though, Kahn-Leavitt gives the workers the final word. Anna Tate, a former dealer, states, "It's meant a lot to thousands and thousands of women who were able to go out and make a good living for themselves and their family that never dreamed that it would turn out that way." If Tupperware promised its customers the "nicest way to shop" in the 1950s, it also seemingly offered the nicest way to sell.

Herein lies the film's minor weakness: although Kahn-Leavitt's emphasis on Wise's rise and fall frames the Tupperware story as a tragedy, everyone else involved presents glowing reports of the company's heyday. Recognition of dealers' difficulties, including the possibility of not meeting sales quotas or alienating friends and neighbors with sales pitches, would give the reader a better sense of the everyday problems that accompanied the home party plan. As is, Kahn-

Leavitt provides an overly simple take on the experience—it was lucrative for Tupper, shattering for Wise, and ideal for everyone else. All conflict seems to have surfaced higher up the corporate structure, and Kahn-Leavitt certainly presents an insightful view from the top. If the film were to provide as comprehensive a look at the working life of Anna Tate as it does for Brownie Wise, its confluence of work, gender, and 1950s suburbia would fully emerge.

Ultimately, *Tupperware!* works well in survey courses or advanced courses in gender history, business history, or popular culture. Students might focus on the most bizarre scenes—especially footage of the elaborate "Jubilees" in Kissimmee—yet the underlying portrait of the company's gender-coded limits resonates well. When the son of a distributor explains the lack of women surrounding Wise in the upper echelons by noting that "bankers don't talk to women," the viewer gets a palpable sense of the boundaries at play in a company ostensibly run by women.

Edward Slavishak is an Assistant Professor of American History at Susquehanna University. His book *Bodies of Work: Civic Display and Labor in Industrial Pittsburgh* will be published by Duke University Press.

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

The Conference on Illinois History is the state's largest meeting devoted to the history of the Prairie State. More than two hundred fifty attended the 2004 conference, which featured traditional academic papers, local history studies, teacher workshops, and roundtable discussions. This year's luncheon and dinner speakers (pre-registration required by October 21, 2005): CARL J. EK-

BERG, DARROCH GREER, and EDNA GREENE MEDFORD. To ensure that you receive a registration form and program for the conference, contact Donna Lawrence, IHPA, 1 Old State Capitol Plaza, Springfield, IL 62701, by email at donna_lawrence@ihpa.state.il.us, or phone 217/785-7933. Details will be posted as they become available at www.Illinois-History.gov/conference.htm

The 2nd Biennial WGHOM Conference will be held Friday, June 2 and Saturday, June 3, 2006 at Maryville University in St. Louis. The conference theme is "At the Crossroads of Women's and Gender History."

The program committee welcomes proposals from historians, independent and interdisciplinary scholars, and graduate students. Submit

abstracts (300 word maximum) for individual presentations or proposals for panels or workshops to Dr. Paula K. Hinton at phinton@ntech.edu or via mail: Tennessee Technological University Dept. of History Box 5064 Cookeville, TN 38505 September 15, 2005

(EN)GENDERING SUCCESS

BY: PAMELLA LACH, CCWH GRADUATE STUDENT COORDINATOR

The end of the academic year is the ideal moment for graduate students to re-evaluate their priorities and career goals. Inevitably, some choose to leave their programs before completion, while others opt to apply their M.A.s and Ph.D.s to other arenas. Take “Mary,” for instance, who decided she’d be happier working in a local museum rather than struggling to define significant research questions. Then there was “Lisa,” who after receiving her Ph.D. in women’s history, began applying for jobs with the federal government and in the non-profit world. In fact, five years ago I decided to enroll in a doctoral program to make myself more marketable to museums and archives. While I would never discount the possibility of becoming a professor, that was not my original motivation for pursuing a Ph.D. But from Day 1 of Graduate School, I detected a tacit assumption that I was here to become a “professional” historian (i.e. a tenured professor at a major research institution). There are countless other people like me who risk “failure” for secretly wanting to work in a museum, archive, library, local historical society, the private sector, or who plan to teach secondary school.

For many of us, our love of history competes with other intellectual, professional, and personal interests. On top of divergent career goals, many students, particularly women, leave academe, with or without a Ph.D. in hand, because of a dismal job market, financial concerns, or familial obligations. But focusing too much on these personal causes obscures a larger problem for women, an “invisible problem” made all the more urgent in the wake of Harvard President Lawrence Summers’ controversial remarks linking women’s lower participation in the sciences to genetics. Unsettling as those comments were, they did push me to contemplate the historical and gendered constructions of success within the academy.

In a March issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Megan Pincus Kajitani and Rebecca Bryant argued that our definitions of success are far too narrow. In “A Ph.D. and a Failure,” they bemoaned how academic culture labels as a “failure” anyone who does not seek out and eventually obtain a tenured professorship. Kajitani and Bryant urge us to broaden our measures of success to include those who seek nonacademic employment. But

they neglect to interrogate how success is gendered. It is no accident that the rigors of the Ivory Tower clash with many of the social and cultural demands placed on women. Countless studies have shown the price women, more than men, must pay for juggling careers with domestic duties. All too often women are forced to choose between family and tenure in an environment that is still hostile towards its nontraditional members. And while a disproportionately higher rate of female history Ph.D.s are finding academic employment than men (54.9 percent compared to 48.8 percent according to the February issue of the *AHA Perspectives*, though these statistics do not account for adjunct positions), I wonder if an even greater percentage of women choose to leave academia before graduation or after initial employment. Barbara Lovitts’ *Leaving the Ivory Tower: The Causes and Consequences of Departure from Graduate Study* recognizes that female attrition is greater than males’ but notes that there is still no reliable data to confirm our anecdotal knowledge.

These questions, and the lack of evidence one way or another, points to the extent to which “success” is defined and

understood in male terms. As the historical field professionalized, it created hierarchies of knowledge that devalued public historians and other “female” service positions. This legacy implicitly denigrates historians who follow “alternative” career paths, many of whom happen to be women.

While no one has yet to offer definitive solutions to this problem, much of the literature on the subject emphasizes the importance of mentoring women both as graduate students and as academic and nonacademic professionals. As a graduate of a women’s college that ran several mentoring programs, I can personally attest to the benefits of having peer and professional mentors; some of my mentoring relationships are still strong many years later. True, mentoring alone won’t dismantle the financial and institutional hurdles we face as women in the historical field, but it may help change attitudes about the choices women make within and beyond academia. Part of mentoring, then, must entail redefining success in multiple ways that provide women with more career choices without risking private shame.

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