Dear Students, Alumni, and Friends of American Studies,

I’d like to extend a warm welcome to you all as we launch the first edition of “Main Currents,” our new annual newsletter for the Department of American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

Our title pays homage to V. L. Parrington, “Main Currents in American Thought,” published in 1927, and to our own undergraduate course sequence, “Main Currents in American Culture,” which was originally inspired by Parrington’s sweeping Pulitzer Prize-winning interdisciplinary exploration of American social thought and culture.

It has been a busy, productive year in the department. As of July 2006, we no longer reside in Garrison Hall. We are temporarily stationed in Burdine Hall, a 1970s-era brick building with small, thin windows reminding the computer punch cards of old on the north side of campus. Garrison is currently receiving much-needed repair work, but when it is completed in January 2008, we won’t be returning. In order to mark our new digs, we have painted our office walls a constellation of vivid colors: magenta, periwinkle, teal, green, gold, aqua, and more. Please visit us in our new temporary home!

After much deliberation, we implemented several revisions to the graduate curriculum in Fall 2006. Given the fact that our graduate student body matriculates from a range of disciplines, we added a required two-semester course sequence in American cultural history (appropriately entitled “Main Currents in American Culture”) that entering students complete in their first year. We hope that this sequence will create a common intellectual foundation for our new students, and will accelerate their readiness for our legendary Ph.D. oral qualifying examination, or “Orals,” as we all know it.

Over the past two years, we have also completed an internal and external review of our department—a process mandated by the University once each decade. In Spring 2007, we hosted three prominent external reviewers who thoroughly evaluated all facets of our department. The reviewers readily recognized our graduate program as one of the best in the nation. They also provided invaluable suggestions for future programmatic initiatives. It was a real pleasure to showcase the accomplishments of our students and faculty. Earlier in Spring 2007, the Chronicle of Higher Education ranked our department #2 in the nation in its ranking of scholarly productivity among faculty. We are delighted to see our department receive this kind of empirical recognition of its longstanding excellence. At the annual meeting of the American Studies Association each year, I am always so proud of the overwhelming presence of UT students and alumni from all over the world. The pages inside are a testament to the scholarly richness and vitality that defines our wider UT-American Studies community.
My interest in children’s culture in general, and children’s literature in particular, came somewhat belatedly as I was seeking out a dissertation topic. Interested in the literary Left, I became curious to learn what happened to this movement—usually looked at in the context of the “red decades,” the 1930s—in the more repressive political atmosphere following World War II. What sparked my dissertation topic, and, ultimately, my book, was learning that a number of radicals escaped the McCarthy-era blacklist by writing children’s literature (along with other marginalized forms such as science fiction, detective fiction, and horror).

Given what I knew about the spread of McCarthyism in schools—the challenges to “subversive” textbooks, the dismissals of “rad” teachers, it seemed more than curious that children’s literature would represent a realm of left-wing influence during the Cold War. But it also made perfect sense. By writing for children, radicals could influence the future. Why they would be able to publish children’s books at the height of the red scare was another question, one that would drive much of my research as I took on the task of writing a dissertation, and, ultimately, a book. Although I had never given a great deal of thought to children or children’s culture, I would come to see childhood as a particularly rich lens for examining the political dimensions of cultural production in the mid-twentieth century.

Learning from the Left: Children’s Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States (Oxford University Press, 2006) is a history of the childhood books in terms of the history of the Left. Over the course of my research, I interviewed scores of authors, illustrators, librarians, editors, booksellers, and others in the children’s literature field. I pored over documents in archives all over the country; and I read hundreds of children’s books. I also read journals in the fields of publishing, education, librarianship, and children’s literature; and I examined whole runs of radical publications like the New Masses and the Daily Worker, as well as Parent’s and Progressive Education. Ultimately, I was able to argue that as a form largely controlled by women and geared toward the young, children’s literature was never seen as important enough to merit much attention. Thus it became a key outlet for radicals’ utopian vision in the years following World War II.

While I discovered an astounding number of popular children’s books that had been authored by radicals, the vast majority of these were not actually fiction: most were books dealing with scientific or historical subjects. In other words, these were the kinds of books that kids would have checked out of their school libraries to supplement what they were learning in their classes and in school textbooks. And here I came to the greatest irony of all: Cold War educational imperatives—specifically, civic education programs and defense-related initiatives bolstering studies in science and math—actually created markets for the kinds of books that radicals were especially interested in writing. Through books about science leftists could teach children critical thinking and give them a sense of control of their surroundings; and through historical books they could recover the history of common people, the history of workers, women, and minorities that was left out of most school textbooks. Federal and state funding for social studies materials used in (anti-communist) civic education programs and for science texts—that, in theory, could help Americans surpass the Russians—actually helped radicals become key producers of post-war American children’s literature.

“Sometimes one book, or even one sentence in a book, sets off a lightbulb.”

JULIA MICKENBERG
Assistant Professor of American Studies

FACULTY

Julia Mickenberg
Jeffrey L. Meikle
Professor of American Studies and Art History

Although Learning from the Left came out a year ago, I am currently working on another book that grew out of it. With Philip Nel of Kansas State University I am editing a collection of out-of-print radical children’s literature, which we’re calling Tales for Little Rebels. The book will include texts ranging from the Socialist Primer (1907) to “The Princess Who Stood on Her Own Two Feet,” taken from Ms. Magazine’s “Stories for Free Children,” the inspiration for Free to Be You and Me (1972). Ideally these selections, placed in their proper contexts, will be a valuable resource for scholars and parents—as well as children. More broadly, I also hope that both Learning from the Left and Tales for Little Rebels will inspire other scholars in American Studies to give children’s literature a second look.

My recent book Design in the USA was harder to write than I had expected. It marked my first (and probably last) experience with a work commissioned for a series (the History of Art series at Oxford University Press). I thought it would be easy to write a survey of the history of American design over the past two centuries. After all, I’d already written one book on the subject—even if it covered only two decades. As it turned out, in the honorable American Studies tradition of “jack of all trades, master of none,” there was still a lot to learn. Even more challenging, the editor’s instructions asked for a text that undergraduates would find entertaining but that would also be a “must-read” for experts owing to its new interpretations.

At times I felt like a hack, scrounging through stacks of secondary sources and writing to order. At other times, it was exhilarating to be giving intellectual shape to a narrative that extended over such a vast sweep of time. The imperative to be highly selective in terms of specific examples of design made it possible—and necessary—to generalize expansively, maybe even provocatively, in ways that scholars rarely have the freedom to do. While I’m pleased with how Design in the USA turned out, I’m putting design history aside for the moment to focus on two other projects. The first might be considered an excursion into the history of the postcard. The book I’m currently writing will illustrate a large number of these often stunning images and attempt a cultural interpretation that will take them beyond the status of ephemera. While the relatively few serious studies of postcards use them as documentary evidence of the everyday life they illustrate, I’ll be trying to get behind their iconography. Why were they portraying these particular subjects in precisely these ways? And what can we make of the unique aesthetic of the cards themselves?

A second project is in the early conceptual stages. I plan to reexamine the writers of the Beat generation, not reinterpreting them against their own era but examining how their ideas and approaches were taken up and transformed by writers, artists, filmmakers, and other cultural producers of the past forty years or so. The goal is an eclectic, perhaps eccentric contribution to interdisciplinary cultural history. As different as these two projects may seem, connecting them is an interest in how the always problematic concept of “American-ness” has been constructed and represented.
CARY CORDOVA
American Studies Ph.D Alumna, Assistant Professor of American Studies, Dickinson College

Recently, I described former UT Professor Bob Crunden to a couple of my new colleagues here at Dickinson College. Famously smart and grouchy, Crunden served as one of my first encounters in graduate school in American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. “Never use the word ‘interesting,’” he commanded. “The word is meaningless!” According to Crunden, the word served more as a comfortable hedge, than a thoughtful, critical response. His passionate vehemence against a single word amused me, but slowly, seeing his point, I found myself eschewing “interesting” from my lexicon. In sharing this story, I simply expected to entertain my new friends and share one of those small, treasured, painful lessons of graduate school. A few weeks later, my colleagues returned to me to declare how they, too, were sending the word “interesting” into exile and commanding their students to do the same. Oddly, I felt as if Bob Crunden were suddenly standing next to me, perhaps even laughing at his fête accompli.

Whether meditating on a turn of phrase, or developing an approach to teaching, the ghostly presence of graduate school continues to echo in my everyday life. In graduate school, it is easy to become consumed with the solitary life of reading and writing, but in hindsight, I would argue that it was my interpersonal encounters that made the most profound impressions on my scholarship. Whether it was paradigm dramas in the classroom, shared revelations at the coffeehouse, late night conversations about art and music, or the huge swath of oral histories circling in my brain, the work that I developed in graduate school was the child of my community. Increasingly, “community,” as an idea and an experience, became ever more important in my consciousness.

While my indebtedness to my professors in my writing and teaching is palpable, perhaps less obvious is the impact of a more expansive community. At the time, I started my dissertation, San Francisco’s so-called “dot-com boom” was in full swing. Watching this new gold rush spur dramatic changes in my hometown heightened my concerns about gentrification and the displacement of working-class communities. In particular, the city’s predominantly Latino Mission District neighborhood appeared to be a class and race war-zone, as rising rents and questionable real estate transactions forced a massive exodus of working class people from the city. A wave of articles, books, and films attempted to grapple with these issues. However, none seemed to deliver an in-depth history of the Mission’s Latino art movement, which I craved because it had been so personally meaningful and, as I hypothesized, so widely influential in U.S. Latino cultural production. This, to me, seemed like a project worthy of my passion.

I was drawn to oral history as a way of widening my community and vision. In developing my research, I reached out to artists I knew only through articles and personal referrals, which led me in unanticipated, but rewarding directions. I discovered that each interview served as a new lens for understanding the world, and that together, my interviews constructed a precious, if uneven, glimpse into the past. Rather than attempting to force these stories into a single trajectory, I learned to document the lyrical convergences and tenuous alliances. The power of such moments has made me reflect on the power of scholarship in everyday encounters and the need to communicate, not only with peers, but with people outside the academy.

I knew, from the time that I arrived at UT Austin, that I wanted to make a contribution to Latino Studies, in part, to better understand myself. But what I did not foresee was how the evolution of my research, particularly in terms of methodology, would bear an uncanny resemblance to my contemporary encounters in and outside the classroom. My dissertation on the political and cultural transformations of Latino art in San Francisco was inextricably connected with a series of graduate school explorations in visual culture, borderlands history, cultural geography, and oral history. Having greater consciousness of this reflexivity has made me re-appreciate networking and community building, not simply because it is professionally advantageous, but because it is intellectually enlightening.
As I realized that building a home for my scholarship could not be accomplished through just the act of individual research, I started to reevaluate my training as a scholar. How often did I engage in collaborative learning with my peers? How many conversations did I conduct about my research outside of the academy? How did sharpening my ability to recognize other scholars’ pedagogical facilities transform a hostile, or “writing,” environment to creative approaches or alternative perspectives? I once felt quite awkward upon meeting a scholar whose book I had torn apart in a graduate seminar. Encountering the congenial, erudite human being behind the book suddenly made me feel quite juvenile about my approach to her book. Since then, I have sought to balance my critical lens with greater appreciation for what scholars, now my colleagues, and part of my community, do well.

Now, finding myself in a new home at Dickinson College, I am contemplating the ramifications of this new community on my scholarship, and how I might proactively rebuild my new intellectual home. Former UT professor Shelley Fisher Fishkin loved the word “palimpsest,” which refers to the ancient practice of reusing manuscript paper by continuously erasing and writing, and thereby making layers of invisible and visible texts. The word aptly illustrates the process of human experience, and the ways in which our social context is pivotal in the production of our knowledge. It

NATE BLAKESLEE
American Studies MA Alumnus, Senior Editor
“Texas Monthly”

A paperback edition of my first book, “Tulia: Race, Cocaine, and Corruption in a Small Texas Town,” came out last October. The book, about a cocaine bust that incarcerated over 10 percent of the black population of a small Panhandle town, is based on a story I broke in 2000 for The Texas Observer, where I was working as a reporter and editor. The story was a sort of perfect storm of drug war malfeasance: dirty cops, bogus drugs, and racially tainted prosecutions, all funded by a federal grant program that had become a form of pork for rural sheriff’s offices. The Observer story garnered a great deal of attention, and I left the magazine in 2003 to write a book on the same subject as a Soros Justice Project fellow. Thirty-five persons were tried for drug trafficking were sentenced to 10 years in prison, 17 were convicted of conspiracy, and 6 were acquitted. In the aftermath of the scandal, the statewide drug task force system was disbanded. The book was also a chance to write about a town in decline, which is the story of our time for much of the Great Plains.

Nate Blakeslee

The story was a sort of perfect storm of drug malfeasance: dirty cops, bogus drugs, and racially tainted prosecutions, all funded by a federal grant.

Anthony Lukas Book Prize and was named a “Notable Book of the Year” for 2005 by the New York Times, which was gratifying, since very few people actually bought the book. Waiting for the proverbial movie, I guess. I was lucky enough to have a great story to tell in this book, with plenty of dramatic courtroom showdowns, genuine Texas characters, and a more or less happy ending. Beyond that, however, the book was a wonderful opportunity to write about race and public policy, which was my area of study when I was in the APS program in the mid-1990s. I dug into the history of the drug task force system that brought us the Tulia scandal, trying to explain how a program designed to go after drug dealers had devolved into one that often instead targets drug users, mainly people of color, and the ways in which the history and context of Tulia

8

These days I am a senior editor at Texas Monthly and a contributing writer for The Texas Observer. I live in South Austin with my wife, Karen. Stop by any time.
Phil Tiemeyer
Phil Tiemeyer is a Ph.D. Candidate in American Studies. His dissertation is entitled Manhood up in the Air: Gender, Sexuality, and Corporate Culture in 20th Century America.
ROBERT ABZUG is in the last writing and revising stages of a major biography of Rollo May, the American psychologist, one that focuses on questions of the interpenetration of religion and psychology in the understanding of everyday life and emotions in modern American culture. In the last two years, he has presented papers at the American Psychological Association and the Bavarian Institute for North American Studies (Munich), published reviews and articles in Journal of Religion, Journal of Church and State, Journal of American History, and the Gilder-Lehrman Center’s American History Online. He will be presenting papers on ritual and symbol in the modern language of emotions at the annual meeting of Cheiron in Dublin, Ireland in June 2007, and also in June a paper about film and the Holocaust at a Holocaust Symposium in Aspen, Colorado. He has also participated in the making of two documentaries and helped plan the recent symposium on the life and times of Norman Mailer at the HRC. Finally, since January 2006 he has been a member of the editorial board of Rhetoric and Public Affairs.

JANET DAVIS. This past year, Dr. Davis kept out of mischief as chair of the Department of American Studies. She also completed three book chapters that will be published next year. Her work on the transformation from animal power to motor power was virtually complete. Dr. Davis also (finally) completed all remaining revisions to her edited and annotated edition of Tiny Kline’s memoir. “Give ‘Em the Flash!”: The Memoir of Tiny Kline, Burlesquer, Circus Queen, and Tinker Bell, will be published by the University of Illinois Press in 2007. Dr. Davis’s work on popular entertainment and animal welfare will be featured in upcoming issues of Journal of Religion, Journal of Church and State, Journal of American History, and the Gilder-Lehrman Center’s American History Online.

Dr. Engelhardt’s AMS 390 American Foodways celebrates the successful completion of the first leg of the Central Texas BBQ Trail with community partner the Central Texas BBQ Association and regional partner the Southern Foodways Alliance. The edited volume culminating out of the students’ class projects will be published by the University of Texas Press.

ROBERT ABZUG with Rollo and Georgia May, 1993. Abzug will be completing his biography of May this summer.

ELIZABETH ENGELHARDT. This past year Dr. Engelhardt went through the tenure review process with the result that she will be promoted to associate professor with tenure. In addition, Dr. Engelhardt conceived, presented on, and had accepted for publication an article on the fad for moonshine literature at the turn of the previous century. She put together a workshop series on girls, studies, leadership, and democratic participation for a college internship program. For this coming semester, Dr. Engelhardt will be embarking on designing a partnership with an Austin-based organization and the Southern Foodways Alliance to gather stories of central Texas food in one of our graduate seminars.

STEVEN HOELSCHER continues his work as Graduate Advisor in the department, bestowing friendly and free advice to all those who seek his counsel. He is the proud disclaimer supervisor to three Ph.D. students who completed their degrees this past year—Pauline Adema, Cary Combs, and Jay Adams (in the department of geography)—and the instructor of seminars on American urbanism, space and place, and cultural landscape, as well as the department’s introductory lecture course on American studies. His publications include book chapters in Race and Landscape in America (Routledge 2006);
and The Blackwell Companion of Museum Studies (Blackwell Publishers, 2006); as well as entries for Cultural Landscape, Historical Geography, Imaginative Geographies, Text/Textuality, and Topophilia in The Encyclopedia of Human Geography (Sage Publications 2006). Whenever possible, he rides his bike to campus.


Dr. Mark Smith and Shirley Thompson are teaching a new two semester graduate course this year based on Main Currents in American Culture. Spinning off his research interests in drug taking, he also offered a new undergraduate seminar on Deviance in America in the fall emphasizing the cultural construction of deviance. On the research front, he has decided to deal with the mass of his book on drug addicts by writing several articles. Right now he’s working on an article noting that well-to-do drug addicts at the turn of the century were treated with the same drugs as women in labor in a procedure called Twilight Sleep. He is also exploring the conflicts between Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous during the latter’s founding years in the 1950s. Trying to get into the archives of an institution whose key is anonymity has not been easy especially when the official policy is the reverse.

Dr. Shirley Thompson has recently completed her manuscript “Exiles in Their Own Skin: How Creole New Orleans Shaped America,” scheduled to be published in the Spring of 2008 by Harvard University Press. Dr. Thompson is eager to move forward on a new project, “Claiming Ownership: African Americans and the Problem of Property,” which explores the regimes of work and recreation and the patterns of production and consumption that issue from the peculiar conjunction of personhood and property in African American history and culture. She has been supported in this new project by post-doctoral fellowships from the American Association of University Women and the American Council of Learned Societies. Dr. Thompson will be a Spring 2007 fellow at the UT Humanities Institute where she will further develop “Claiming Ownership.” On a related note, Dr. Thompson has been consulting with Texas Parks and Wildlife (and working with former AMS student, Erin McClendon) on the development of “Journey to Freedom,” a public history exhibit and websites examining the complex practices of slavery and freedom in East Texas and Western Louisiana, a zone often referred to as the “frontier” of slavery. Rich in material culture, the project focuses on the state’s recently acquired Levi Jordon plantation historic site. Visiting the undeveloped grounds last summer (including the remnants of slave cabins which former slaves and their children had been forced to drop everything and leave) helped to rejuvenate her sense of purpose and commitment to document the painful struggles of the past and making them relevant to the students and challenges of today. Dr. Thompson is developing two new courses related to my new interests: “Slavery Across the Generations,” which examines fictional, auto-biographical, legal, artistic, and material representations of slavery; and “People, Places and Things: Property in American Culture.” The happiest news is personal: in May of 2004, Dr. Thompson married Dr. Stephen Marshall who teaches in UT’s Government Department. And, in March of 2005, they welcomed their delightful and very busy son, Solomon Hale Marshall, into the world. He’s growing like a weed.
**Graduate Student News**


**Kimberly Hamlin** presented papers at the annual conferences of the National Women’s Studies Association, the American Studies Association, and the History of Science Society. She also co-founded, along with UT alum Carolyn de la Pena, a Science and Technology Caucus within ASA. In May 2007 Kimberly won the Women’s and Gender Studies Dissertation Award for her project, “Beyond Adam’s Rib: How Darwinian Evolution Redefined Gender And Influenced American Feminist Thought 1870 - 1920.”

**Andrew Jones** received one of the 2006 Liberal Arts Graduate Research Fellowships. His proposal is entitled “Transatlantic Developments: Exploring Michael Omerod’s Archive,” and focuses on a British photographer who photographed the U.S. landscape from 1975-1992.

**Carly Kocurek** presented a paper on the A/V Geeks Archive at the Film & History Conference on the Documentary Tradition this past November, and presented a paper about Alexey Vayner’s “Impossi-ble is Nothing” at the SW/TX PCA/ACA in February. She has also been involved with FlowTV and had a great experience helping out at the first Flow Conference in October.


**Robin O’Sullivan** presented a paper on “Compost and Consumption: The International Organic Food Movement” at the American Society for Environmental History (ASEH) conference in Atlanta, Georgia (held Feb 28-March 3, 2007).

**Allison Perlman** has accepted a renewable lecturer position in Visual Studies at Penn State-Erie (the Behrend College).

**Phil Tiemeyer** has accepted a tenure-track job as Assistant Professor of US History at Philadelphia University.

**Jacqueline Smith** is researching her Master’s project on early twentieth-century African American women’s relationship to photography. In addition to her research, Jacqueline is also involved in several on and off-campus projects. Jacqueline is a member of the American Studies Graduate Student committee and a member of the Black Graduate Student Association’s Community Engagement Com-mittee. Additionally, she is assisting with the planning of ‘S. All Leavens A Mark: Confronting Sexual Violence in Com-munities of Color,’ an upcoming conference sponsored by the Center for African and Af-rican American Studies at the University of Texas. At the end of March, she will present her work at two conferences in the Austin area, the SXSW Sequels Conference at the Uni-versity of Texas at Austin and a conference to prepare minority youth for college.

**Anna Thompson Hajdik**’s interests revolve around symbolic ideas about farming and rural life and culture in America and how those ideas in turn relate to tourism. She received a fellowship from the Winterthur Museum and Estate to study Henry Francis du Pont’s role in the Winterthur farming operation in August, 2006. She was lucky enough to spend a month out in Delaware researching at the Winterthur archives. This past fall, Anna received funding from the Otto Bremer Foundation in associa-tion with the Center for Rural and Regional Studies at Southwest Minnesota State University. This funding was used to study Laura Ingalls Wilder tourism in two towns in the Upper Midwest — Walnut Grove, Minnesota and De Smet, South Dakota.

**Sasha Vliet**’s essay, entitled: “Bboy Style on the Eastside—Austin, Texas,” was pub-lished as a chapter in a cultural studies textbook by Longman in October of 2006. She received a fellowship from the American Studies Association to work on her dissertation. Sasha and her husband are expecting their first child in October.

**Tracy Wuster** presented the paper “‘Our Fellow Savages’: Mark Twain and the Hawaiian Islands” at the Annual Conference on the Study of Religion at Princeton University for 2007-2008.

**Allison Perlman** has accepted a renewable lecturer position in Visual Studies at Penn State-Erie (the Behrend College).

**Phil Tiemeyer** has accepted a tenure-track job as Assistant Professor of US History at Philadelphia University.
IN MEMORIUM

Dr. Hal Rothman
Professor of History, University of Nevada–Las Vegas 1959–2007

The Department mourns the loss of Hal Rothman (PhD, 1985), who passed away on February 25, 2007, at his home in Henderson, Nevada, after a fourteen-month struggle against amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s disease). He was forty-eight years old and a distinguished professor of history at the University of Nevada—Las Vegas. In recognition of his remarkable scholarly career on Nevada and the American West, Hal was awarded the Harry Reid Silver State Research Award in 2004 and was also inducted into the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame. Possessed with an indefatigable degree of energy (and able to bicycle twenty miles and lift weights all before 8:00 AM each day), Hal wrote or edited more than a dozen books, including, Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West (2002), and Neon Metropolis: How Las Vegas Started the Twenty-first Century (2002). As ALS gradually paralyzed his entire body, Hal wrote his last book, Blazing Heritage: A History of Wildland Fire in the National Parks, with the help of his beloved family and a dedicated team of graduate students, who sat with him for hours, transcribing his spoken words onto a computer. The book was published posthumously in April with Oxford University Press.

Hal is survived by his wife, Lauralee, and their children, Talia and Brent. You can make a donation in his name by going on line to: https://netcommunity.unlv.edu/NETCOMMUNITY/SSLPage.aspx?pid=293 In the designation drop down box choose - Dr. Hal K. Rothman Fund in History.

Dr. Kurth Sprague
American Studies Professor Emeritus 1934–2007

Bill Stott, Professor Emeritus of American Studies and English remembers former American Studies Professor Kurth Sprague.

Kurth Sprague was an associate professor in American Studies from 1988-95, teaching seminars on the influence of King Arthur and medievalism in American literature, art, and films, and “How to Write about Culture.” Among the qualities that made him such a special teacher were his gentleness, his sense of humor and explosive laughter, and his reverence for and encouragement of clear prose. A master of prose himself, he saw no reason that others shouldn’t become as competent as he, and he was willing to do all the coaching students would work to take in.

He was a close friend of AMS faculty and staff—very much one of our team. When Bob Crunden died suddenly in 1999, Janice Brad-ley Garrett, our Administrative Associate, arranging how we dealt with death just as she did our teaching lives, had him MC the memorial service.

A great bear of a man, enthusiastic and life-lover, Kurth was also, as I knew him, a cynic who saw the truth behind most shams—but a cynic of such sweet heart, that, knowing the truth, he did his best to protect those of us who shouldn’t see it—even at the cost of his having to play the straight man. If he was Falstaff, as others have suggested, he was the gentleman Falstaff never was.
Supporting American Studies

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Department of American Studies. Your gift will support graduate studies fellowships, graduate research and conference travel, undergraduate research, student research paper awards, and faculty development.

You can also make your gift online. Please go to https://utdirect.utexas.edu/nlogon/vip/ogp.WBX. Select the College of Liberal Arts from the drop-down menu. Then select the American Studies Department.

Future editions of Main Currents will include an alumni update page. Please send us any professional or personal news you would like to share. Thank you.

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