Meet Professor Emeritus Mark Van Aken

Professor Emeritus Mark Van Aken celebrated his 90th birthday on April 9, 2012. His personal milestone represents something of a milestone for the History Department too, for he was one of our founding members.

Professor Van Aken was born in Indiana in 1922 and raised in Coldwater, Michigan. He was a student at the University of Michigan when the United States entered World War II, and he participated in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) there. After receiving his B.A., he entered the Navy as a Lieutenant and served on a submarine chaser in the Pacific for the duration of the war.

When peace was restored, he returned to the scholar’s life, and he spent some time teaching in English and Spanish in Argentina before deciding to go on for his Ph.D. Although he was accepted by Harvard as well as UC Berkeley, he opted for the West Coast, because Berkeley had a better library and more reputable professors in his field of interest, Latin America. Berkeley proved to be an excellent choice: there he met and married his life partner, Dolores Gomes.

Professor Van Aken earned his Ph.D. in 1955. He taught briefly at Memphis State University, where he found the president’s attitude toward the prospect of desegregation disturbing, so he returned to the West. He had spent a year teaching at Berkeley and a couple more years at San Diego State when the opportunity arose to join the faculty at the newly established State College for Alameda County, the original name of CSU East Bay. Classes met at what had been the Hayward High School campus on Foothill. The university was tiny at the beginning: the first faculty members in the Humanities numbered some half dozen or so, and Professor Van Aken was the entire History Department (soon to be joined by Professor Dick Rice), as well as an instructor of Spanish. The Department grew rapidly, however, and Professor Van Aken
witnessed the expansion of the department from one or two members to 25, and the move from Arts and Education and Music buildings to the newly constructed Meiklejohn Hall.

America was booming in the post-war years and universities were growing. There were not enough qualified people to staff the open faculty positions, and schools often filled their vacancies by luring faculty away from other universities. Not surprisingly, Professor Van Aken was courted by Duke University. He laughs when he recalls the sequence of events. He was in the process of hiring new faculty for the History department at Hayward, and so he constantly received applicants’ letters of recommendation from universities all over the country. When a letter came from the chair at Duke offering him a position in the History Department there, he assumed it was just another recommendation. Without reading it or replying, he filed it away with the rest of the applicants’ materials. The chair at Duke waited vainly for a response, and finally followed up with a phone call, and Professor Van Aken had to admit that he had not paid any attention to the letter. Moreover, although he was interested in Duke, he had a problem: he was supposed to begin a sabbatical from Hayward at the same time that Duke wanted him to teach. But university wanted him, and the administration was willing to start him out with a sabbatical there.

For all of Duke’s accommodation, North Carolina seemed something of a backwater to the Van Akens. They missed the Bay Area, and after three years, they left Duke to return home. Our founding member spent most of the rest of his career at Hayward, except for a brief period of time when he had a grant to teach in Buenos Aires.

Mark Van Aken is the author of several books. The University of California Press published his dissertation research under the title Pan-Hispanism: Its Origin and Development to 1866 (1959). His book King of the Night: Juan José Flores and Ecuador 1824-64, also from the University of California Press, appeared in 1989, and was translated into Spanish as El Rey de la Noche in 1995. Los Militantes, on the student political movement in Uruguay, was published only in Spanish (1990).

The Van Akens are currently enjoying their retirement at their home in Castro Valley, and they maintain their ties with the Hayward History community. You will often meet them at History-sponsored events such as recent the Spring Speaker series.

**In Memoriam**

We are sorry to report the death of Professor Emeritus Leon “Lee” Lejeune Cummins on March 30, 2012, in San Diego, California. He was 87.

Like many of his contemporaries Professor Cummins served in the military during World War II, enlisting in the Marines while he was still in high school and serving in the Pacific as a radar technician. When the war ended, he returned to school. In 1964 he completed his Ph.D. at UC Berkeley, where he had also been an undergraduate.

In 1963, Professor Cummins came to what was then called the California State College at Hayward, where he specialized in US-Latin American diplomacy. He also served a term as Chair. His book, Quijote on a Burro; Sandino and the Marines: A Study in the Formulation of Foreign Policy (Mexico City, 1958; Spanish translation, 1983), explored US-Nicaraguan relations in the early twentieth century. His colleagues remember him as a kind person, who was especially helpful to junior faculty who joined the department.
Professor Cummins taught until 1994, spending the last of those years in the Faculty Early Retirement Program. When he left teaching, he moved to Guerneville, where he had a cabin, a garden and orchards, before finally returning to San Diego, his home town.

Annual Awards:

The History Department is pleased to announce this year’s scholarship recipients:

**Luis DeGuzman**—The Evelyn Whitman Rice Scholarship for an Outstanding Major in History

**Aaron Johnson**—The Gerard C. and John M. Stanley Scholarship in History,

**Adam Fitch** and **Catherine Alexander**—The Kwon-Irish Award for Graduate Students

**Adam Fitch**—The Evelyn Whitman Rice Graduate Award

The Department also offers prizes of $100 for outstanding work in our “capstone” courses, HIST 4030 (*Historiography*), HIST 4031 (*Historical Research Methods*), and HIST 4032 (*Introduction to Public History*). A prize of $50 is awarded to an outstanding student in a World Civilizations course (HIST 101, 1015, 1016, 1017).

For HIST 4030, funded by the Daniel Gilliard Endowment:

**Doug Halperrn** and **Katherine Schoenrank**.

For the best papers in HIST 4031, funded by the Evelyn Whitman Rice Endowment:


**Sean Gallagher**: “The Fullness of her Wealth and of Her Bounty: An Economic Analysis of California Union Democrats in the Civil War”

**Ami Jones**: “Judy Chicago: Agency in Pursuit of Greatness”

**Jeffrey Sommer**: “The Yippee Media-Mythos”

**Michael Vandenbusch**: “The Rise of Richmond, California 1941-1945”

For HIST 4032, funded by the Evelyn Whitman Rice Endowment:

**John Hemmerich**.

For World Civilizations, funded by donations in memory of **Professor Emeritus John Morby**:

**Jason Frederick**.

Congratulations to all the winners on their excellent work!

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**Would you like to help future historians like these? Join our honor roll of donors.**

**In Memory of Professor Richard B. Rice for the Evelyn Whitman Rice Memorial Scholarship Fund:**

| Mr. William and Ms. Patricia Bullough | Mr. David W. Rice |
| Mr. David P. Darlington | Dean Alan M. Smith |
| Mr. Alfred E. Deltorchio, Jr. | Prof. Judith M. Stanley |
| Mr. and Ms. R. Andrew Enzminger | Prof. Mark and Ms. Dolores Van Aken |
| Prof. Herbert Graw | Prof. William G. Vandenburgh |
| Ms. Dorothy Mock | Prof. Robert and Dr. Marina Whitman |
| Prof. Forrest A. Plant |

**In memory of F. Daniel Gilliard for the Daniel Gilliard Award in Historiography:**

| Prof. Richard J. and Ms. Dolores Orsi | Prof. Richard Raack |
To the Judith M. Stanley Scholarship in Women’s History and the Gerard C. and John M. Stanley Scholarship in History:
Prof. Judith M. Stanley

In Memory of Professor Lejeune Cummins
Mr. William K. Sato

For the History Department Scholarship Fund:
Mr. Daniel R. Cabrales
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Prof. Bruce A. and Ms. Pearlene Glasrud, Esq.
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Mr. and Ms. Garald A. Mosher
Mr. Warren E. Rosengren
Ms. Emily T and Mr. Douglas R. Statler
Prof. Mark and Ms. Dolores Van Aken

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Mr. and Mrs. R. Andrew Enzminger
Dr. Monica D. Fitzgerald
Prof. Bruce A. and Ms. Pearlene Glasrud, Esq.
Ms. Frances G. Joyce
Mr. Andrew R. Knight
Mr. Walter H. Knoll

Ms. Kathleen Krentz
Mr. George C. Mancuso
Ms. Jennifer A. and Mr. Jeff McCort
Mr. and Ms. Garald A. Mosher
Ms. Louise F. O’Dea
Prof. Henry F. Reichman and Ms. Susan Hutcher, Esq.
Ms. Emily T. and Mr. Douglas R. Statler
Prof. Judith M. Stanley

Your contributions are always welcome. Please specify if you wish your donation to be applied to a memorial fund (Dan Gilliard, John Morby or the Rice Endowment), or to the Public History or History Scholarship funds. Contact Professor Dee Andrews at dee.andrews@csueastbay.edu for further information.

Spring Speakers

We had a stellar line up in our annual speakers series. On February 28, to commemorate Black History Month, Professor Sonya Douglass Horsford of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, presented a talk entitled “Learning in a Burning House: School Desegregation and the Disintegration of the American Dream.” Her title comes from Martin Luther King’s expressed fear that economic inequalities were undermining the gains of the Civil Rights movement; unless the country showed concern for the plight of poor people, he said, African Americans were “integrating into a burning house.” His words inspired Dr. Horsford, a professor of Education, to investigate the complex relationship of race, power, and money in the public schools since desegregation, and she proposes a series of policy changes which, she argues, would go far to ensure student success in our deeply troubled urban school districts. Dr. Horsford’s talk was co-sponsored by the Department of Ethnic Studies and the College of Education and Allied Studies.

Professor Emeritus Gerald S. Henig spoke on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911, in a presentation to commemorate Women’s History Month. The fire, which took the lives of 145
immigrant women, horrified the people of New York and started a movement to reform working conditions and safety regulations in the nation’s factories. A century later, Professor Henig reminded us, we can see reflected in the tragedy and its aftermath many of the same debates that persist to this day: the role that immigrants and women play in the workforce, the extent to which government should regulate business, and the place of labor unions in the American economy. The University Libraries co-sponsored this event.

**Professor Emeritus Richard Raack** returned to Hayward on May 30th to talk about his recent research on “Hitler, Stalin, and the Coming of World War II.” In his research in the Russian archives, Professor Raack found a copy of Stalin’s mid-August, 1939 speech to the Politburo, in which he explains his reasons for making a pact with Hitler. The document has rarely been discussed, and never in English; Hitler’s explanation of the deal is, by contrast, well known to historians. Professor Raack has published a number of articles in Russian, German, and Polish, and is at work on a book on the beginnings of the Second World War.

![Professor Raack](image)

Professor Raack’s presentation was preceded by a gathering to thank the donors and to celebrate the end of the fund raising campaign that permanently endowed the Daniel Gilliard Fund in Historiography. All the events were very well attended, drawing current faculty and emeriti, alumni, and students.

**Message from the (Ex-) Chair: Nancy Thompson**

I am stepping down as chair of the History Department after an extraordinarily interesting and rewarding three-year term. It doesn’t seem so very long ago that I set out in this Newsletter my hopes and concerns as the newly installed chair. I was taking over in a time of unprecedented budget cuts, and we had no idea what the future would hold. I remember when the dean interviewed me about my potential appointment, she asked me about my vision for the department. “My vision?” I replied. “I just want to hold things together in the face of the current storm.”

I was perhaps a little pessimistic. We as a department have done better than just hold together. My big project for this term was our five-year review (quite a task), and the exercise gave me an opportunity to reflect on the changes in the last five years. We’ve weathered the storm well. Our outside reviewer agreed. To be sure, we have been dealing with extraordinary challenges. Our faculty numbers are fewer than they have been for decades, our classes are larger, and institutional support for scholarly endeavors has shrunk to a trickle. At our very lowest point, two years ago, we were laying off cherished and valuable long-term lecturers, combining classes, and hoarding paper.
Fortunately things have improved since then, although we’re all too aware that the really tough times could return. And yet—and here’s the takeaway for me—despite the difficulties, morale is high. We’re accomplishing great things. We’re figuring out how to manage big sections creatively to keep students engaged. We’re involving graduate students in those bigger sections to provide them with hands-on experience in the classroom. We’re rethinking the curriculum to decide what skill sets are essential for a history major, and we’re monitoring student progress to see how well we meet our goals. Our public face is more prominent now, thanks to the work of student interns placed in museums and historical societies around the Bay Area. In short, we’re learning to be flexible.

Don’t get me wrong: we don’t like being broke. I think most of would agree that smaller classes promote the individual attention needed by our particular students, many of whom are first-generation college-goers and some of whom come to us inadequately prepared for college-level work. I think we would also agree that students are better served when they have lots of different course options in a number of historical fields. But I think we’ve done a good job of adapting to the new reality. We’re still student-centered. We’re still carrying on our research agendas. We’re still doing our part to keep the University running. We have a great group of supporters (that’s all of you who keep in touch through this newsletter, donate to our scholarship funds, or come to campus for talks). Finally, our students tell us in exit polls that they are well satisfied with the education they receive, and for us, that’s the opinion that matters to us most.

**Book Club**

Thanks to graduating senior **Nora Morton**, who organized the first meeting of a History Book Club. As she notes, “At various points in history lectures, references have been made to popular novels that have had an influence on society and can give unique historical insight into a particular era. Since primary and secondary sources are the usual texts required in reading for history courses, novels with historical significance are rarely read. By meeting once a quarter or twice a year, students would be given an opportunity to not only learn the deeper impact of such literature, but also have the chance to socialize with their peers in a semi social atmosphere.” So she drew up a “bucket list” of books that made an impact on the people of their day and invited faculty and her fellow students to add to it.

**Professor Khal Schneider** volunteered to host the first discussion. The book selected was Tom Wolfe’s *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, the story of Ken Kesey and his band of Merry Pranksters at the beginning of the psychedelic movement. A group of students and faculty members met to hear Professor Schneider introduce the era and to share their impressions of the book and its relevance to the youth culture of the Sixties. It was an interesting exchange of ideas, and those present agreed that the experience would be well worth repeating.

**Spotlight on the Faculty**

There are big changes in the History Department! **Professor Nancy Thompson** has completed her term as Department chair. The position will now be filled by **Professor Jessica Weiss**. We also have two newly tenured Associate Professors: **Professors Linda Ivey** and **Khal Schneider** got the good news this quarter that their applications for tenure and promotion had been approved.
Professor Khal Schneider reports that the article he co-authored with Dr. Kevin Adams of Kent State University won the Society for History in the Federal Government’s James Madison Prize. The article, “Washington is a Long Way Off: The ‘Round Valley War’ and the Limits of Federal Power on a Northern California Indian Reservation,” appeared in the Pacific Historical Review in November 2011. Professor Schneider is taking sabbatical leave for Fall and Winter quarter to continue working on his book.

Professor Nancy Thompson, outgoing Chair of the History Department, has been appointed Director of Liberal Studies, beginning in September 2012.

Dr. Kevin Kaatz’s book, Early Controversies and the Growth of Christianity, is just out as part of the Praeger Series on the Ancient World (Santa Barbara: Praeger Press, 2012). He is also completing a manuscript for a book titled Voices of Early Christianity: Documents from the Origins of Christianity; publication for that work is expected in 2013.

Dr. Benjamin Klein, who teaches the history of Early Modern Europe, has just published an article in a very different field. He and co-author Tim Hodgdon wrote “From Innocence to Experience: Irwin B. Klein and ‘the New Settlers’ of Northern New Mexico, 1967–71,” which appeared in the New Mexico Historical Review 87 (Winter 2012). The article explores the work of photographer Irwin B. Klein (Dr. Klein’s uncle), who documented the life of the counter culture in the hippie communes of the Southwest.

Ms. Mary Ann Irwin, one of our lecturers in California History, has received a grant from the John and Marcia Goldman Foundation to support her summer writing project, a book about San Francisco’s Emanu-El Sisterhood for Personal Service (1894-1969), a Jewish women’s organization dedicated to community service.

News from Current Students

Three students graduated with University Honors this year: Milly Eastburn, magna sum laude; Sean Gallagher, cum laude; and Ed Saincome, cum laude.

Jonathan Christian, who came to Hayward as a freshmen (B.A., 2009), is under contract with the Livermore Heritage Guild for a book on Livermore to be published by Acadia Press. The book, which grew out of Jonathan’s master’s project in Public History, will appear as part of Acadia’s Images of America series.

Olga Kachina, who is completing her Master’s degree project, became a brand-new American citizen this spring. She was selected to participate in the Ashbrook Center Presidential Academy Summer Institute for Social Studies Teachers. The summer institute was held in Philadelphia June 17-June 22, 2012.

Alumni

Joe Rosa (BA, 2011) writes, “Life has been great, interesting, and productive. Since graduating I have moved to San Francisco and got a promotion at my job with Costco. I haven't used my degree in any way, although I still keep up with history as a hobby. One thing I find funny, I
miss being a student.” *(But, Joe, don’t forget! every time you think critically, and every time you write a good sentence, you are using your History degree.)*

**Marcelle Levine** (B.A., 2010) will be heading off to the University of Portsmouth, England, in Fall to do a Master’s program in French Colonial Africa.

**Suzanne Ota**, (M.A., 2010) reports that she found her first teaching position as an adjunct instructor of World Civilizations at the Tripler Army Medical Center, which is associated with Chaminade University, a private Catholic college in Honolulu. She says that she had a small class, many of whom were in the military, and she really enjoyed the teaching experience.

**Bennett Stark, Ph.D.** (M.A., 1975) writes:
“I enjoy getting the History Department newsletter. I received my M.A. in history in 1975 so I am familiar with a number of the faculty—indeed a number about whom obits have recently been written. I received my Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I am a Visiting Scholar at Agnes Scot College in Decatur, GA. My partner, Myrtle Lewin, is an emeritus professor of mathematics at the college.

“A lengthy article of mine ‘A Case Study of Adaptive Systems Theory, Sustainable Global Governance: The Singular Challenge of the Twenty-first Century’ was published in July 2009 at the University of Ljubljana WISDOM. The article deals with a compelling issue—the survivability of civilization in this century, employing a framework that has been used in the physical, biological, and social sciences. The article can be accessed by Googling the title. A summary of the article can be accessed at [www.cooperationcommons.com](http://www.cooperationcommons.com).”

He adds, “The M.A. program at Cal State prepared me well for graduate studies at UW-Madison. The classes were designed the same way--substantial writing and abundant student discussion, i.e., no lectures.”

It’s always a delight to hear from our alumni, especially those from earlier days—back when we were Cal State Hayward, or even Alameda County State College! Won’t you let us know what you doing? Drop me a line:

Nancy Thompson, * Newsletter Editor, at nancy.thompson@csueastbay.edu.*

No picture, then, and no history can present us with the whole truth, but those are the best pictures and the best histories which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole. He who is deficient in the art of selection may, by showing nothing but the truth, produce all the effect of the greatest falsehood.

*Thomas Babington Macaulay*

This newsletter is offered as a public service to the History community at CSU East Bay. Address questions or comments to Nancy Thompson, ed., (510) 885-2166 email: nancy.thompson@csueastbay.edu