

Alumni Update, June 2007

Hello All and Happy Summer–

It's been so long since my last note (January!) that some of you may be wondering whether I've fallen asleep at the wheel (or worse); for lots of others, this note makes no sense – what's going on? Let me explain, as the delay and the puzzlement are somewhat connected.

When I became Chair last July, I set as one of my goals to reconnect with our far-flung network of alums. I run into lots of you at ASA or other professional meetings, but typically that's little more than a perfunctory "hey, how's it going," and so unfulfilling. ASA's DAN (Departmental Alumni Night) could be an opportunity for catching up on news, but DAN never has worked well for us, and in any event not everyone goes to ASA. So I started sending out these occasional chitty-chatty notes, using the contact information Linda Burkhart (our graduate program coordinator) had in her data-base. But coverage was terribly spotty, so we've been hard at work searching out email addresses from the web. Between that detective work and help from the Hopkins office of alumni relations, the distribution list for this note is almost doubled! That's great progress, but it slowed things down (that and end of semester distractions).

The broadened coverage means that many of you never got my first note, which explained why I've launched this venture. Rather than recap all that now and risk boring those who know the story, I'll have my earlier notes posted on the Department's homepage (under "Alumni notes," or some such thing). Those of you who are curious can go there, and while there please browse around to get caught up on other recent happenings in the department.

Mentioning ASA's DAN, I am pleased to announce the Department will be hosting its second annual DAN-alternative reception in New York (Salvatore Babones, 2003 PhD, once again has stepped forward to help with planning and logistics, the latter possibly including help sneaking liquid contraband up to the suite). Our first go at this in Montreal was a huge success, with grads from every decade from the 70's forward stopping by. This year we're hoping to do even better, including, I hope, some on this mailing who predate my tenure in the department – that effectively means the decade of the 60's, as I arrived in 1972. We've booked a suite at the Hotel Michelangelo (152 West 51st St) for Saturday August 11 (I'll send the room number when it's assigned; use my name if you ask at the front desk). We'll party from 9:00 – 11:00ish, with drinks and lavish desserts provided. Hope to see lots of you there.

The reason I know some really old-timers are getting my notes is that a couple replied to my last one, which for me was a big thrill. Allan Mazur (1969) and Sy Spilerman (1968) wrote back, and I know Marty Levin (1967) gets them because Marty and I break bread regularly at the Southern Sociological Society meetings (Marty stepped down this year as the Society's Secretary/Treasurer after many years of good and faithful service). However, unlike his contemporaries Allan and Sy, Marty never has deigned to write back. For shame, but maybe I can force the issue – Marty claims to be the department's first Ph.D. student, or at worst tied for first (he came with Jim Coleman in 1959 when Jim was recruited from Chicago to found the department, at that time named the Department of Social Relations). Does anyone want to challenge Marty on that for bragging rights? Also, I know there are some big professional

changes pending for Marty, but I can't go public with them without his permission -- whadda say Marty?

Incidentally, when Sy wrote in January he mentioned having spent the previous summer in Israel (during the war) doing collaborative research with Ari Gottlieb and that he might be going back again – if so, I certainly hope the return visit offers less in the way of unwelcome high drama. In our exchange of emails, Sy, Allan and I also reminisced some about Binnie Bailey, who retired in 2002 after 42 years in the department. Everybody on this distribution knows Binnie; in fact, since Binnie arrived a mere six months into the department's existence, she very well could be the sole experience that all of us share from our time at the Hop! I'm pleased to be able to report that Binnie is thriving in retirement, and deservedly so. But old habits are hard to break, and she hasn't cut the cord altogether – Binnie stopped by just last month for the department's commencement reception, looking, as usual, well tanned and full of vitality.

So what else do I have to share? How about an amazing coincidence? Just as I was about to take a break from working on this note and head off to the pool for my mid-day swim, I get a call from Pam in the office that someone from my past is looking for me (yes, that's the same Pam most of you remember – more on that below). The "someone" turns out to be Henry Perry (1977), who does this sort of thing to me every couple of years – that is, drop in unexpectedly. Henry is a marvel, I love him dearly, and we go back a long ways. Hardly any of you will know or remember this, but I came to Hopkins in 1972 as the Sociology liaison to something called the Md-PhD Program in the Social Sciences, a cooperative venture between the departments of Sociology, Psychology, and Psychiatry. Initially my primary appointment was in Psychiatry (how's that for odd!), and I didn't move into a tenure line position in Sociology until two years later, when a vacancy opened. The program only lasted the duration of its five year start up grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and during that time the Sociology track had just a handful of students – by memory, Henry, John Lane, Darryl Mathews, and Park Dietz (I'd love to hear from all of you). It's too bad the Program couldn't sustain itself, but despite being short-lived, it had a lasting impact – Henry continues to dabble in Sociology, it brought me to Hopkins, and it found me a lifelong friend.

Henry (PhD, MD, MPH) is the Carl E. Talyor Professor of Equity and Empowerment, Health at Future Generations, a nonprofit educational institution that teaches (they have an M.A. program) and enables equitable and sustainable community change in four countries: Afghanistan, China, India and Peru. Henry is their public health guru and he was in town to give a talk at a conference for implementers of child survival programs around the world, sponsored by the USAID Child Survival Program. And while here, he dropped the news that he and his wife Mirlene will be moving back to Baltimore this summer for at least a year – very exciting.

I hadn't intended to go on at such length about Henry, but it's not every day the unexpected happens, at least not the unexpected of such magnitude. My intention had been to refer everyone to the February issue of the American Journal of Public Health for Henry's article on the long-term impact on mortality of programs at Haiti's Hospital Albert Schweitzer, where Henry was CEO before moving to Future Generations.

I also heard from Robert Manning (1989) a while back. Bob is Research Professor and Director of the Center for Consumer Financial Services at the Rochester Institute of Technology. You

may well have seen Bob on the tube at some point talking about his big hit book *Credit Card Nation*, which probes the breadth and depth of credit card debt. I recall watching CNN a while back, and there he was talking about the crisis that looms if something isn't done. Well, Credit Card Nation has spawned a documentary on the topic, *In Debt We Trust: America Before the Bubble Bursts*, with both Bob and movie getting lots of coverage since the movie's release in February – good for you Bob!

It also was fun seeing Pam Stone (aka Cain -- 1979) at the Eastern meetings in Philly a couple months back (I was on a panel on Race, along with Aaron Pallas, 1985). Pam, who is on the sociology faculty at Hunter College, looks great, and I have reason to think she's doing great too, as just recently I received an invitation from the Institute for Women's Policy Research to attend a special session/launch party in DC for Pam's new book, "Opting Out: Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home." I wasn't able to attend, but the lineup for the session was primo, with a couple members of the House of Representatives in attendance – good for you too Pam!

Ricky Takai's (1981) wife Sandy was kind enough to send along an announcement of Ricky's receipt of a Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Service for his lifetime contributions (25 years and counting) at the Institute for Education Sciences and, before then, other DoE offices. Ricky now serves as Associate Commissioner of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance – good forwell, you get the idea.

And who says you can't come home again? This past year three alums stopped by to share their experiences working outside academic sociology in our AKD-sponsored occasional brownbag series "Doing Sociology Outside the Academy": Kerri Kerr (2002), Director of Research at New Leaders for New Schools, Tom Dial (1986), Director of Research for the National Education Association, and Teresa Knott (1992 MA), Supervising Coordinator for the School Performance Program Improvement and Family Support Branch of the Maryland State Department of Education Division of Student and School Services (wow – that's a mouthful! Teresa wins the prize hands down for longest title!). These sessions are fun and useful at the same time. They are useful in a horizon-expanding way, in that they show what can be done with sociology beyond the obvious. The fun comes in reconnecting, so if you're in the area and would be interested in doing one of these sessions, please let me know.

But not all the news I have to share is cheery. This past spring, Barb Larcom (1990) was caught in a house fire and had to be hospitalized – an electrical fire apparently; to escape she had to climb through a bathroom window onto the roof. It all sounds quite scary, and Barb's lungs, etc. suffered some nasty smoke damage. Thankfully, she reported making good progress when I last checked in with her. If you're concerned and would like to reach Barb personally, her email is blarcom@bcpl.net.

Mentioning meetings and people seen in passing, I crossed paths with Adia Harvey (2004) and Mark King (2006) at the spring Southern meetings in Atlanta. Adia (at Georgia State) and Mark (at Morehouse) are recent PhDs, but they've both grown up quickly -- they looked so professional, and both seem to be doing quite well. Also, from half-way around the world in Malaysia, Kai Lit Phau (1994) sends greetings, along with a link to his homepage "Brain Food":

<http://phuakl.tripod.com/index.html>. Kai is an associate professor at the Monash University School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

Thinking back to Mark and Adia, it's no surprise that our recent graduates make a good impression, as they leave here well prepared. And many jump-start the process by getting out and about on the meeting circuit while still students. Our current crop was well represented on the program at the Easterns and the other spring meetings (e.g., AREA and the Pop meetings) and they will be out in force again in NY – the details will be on our Website shortly (<http://www.soc.jhu.edu/>); please try to drop by one of their sessions that fits with your NY schedule.

There's one student presentation coming up soon that I want to mention because it's not at a meeting lots of us are likely to attend: Travis Gosa is on a panel later this month at Harvard's conference on The Achievement Gap Initiative. Travis will be presenting some of his dissertation research on the oppositional culture content of Hip Hop lyrics (he's doing a content analysis of some 3000 songs). Here are several more recent student presentations of the “off the beaten path” variety: Jake Lowinger was invited out to Berkeley to share his dissertation research on labor strife in Croatia; Amy Holmes presented some of her dissertation research on U.S. military bases in Germany and Turkey at the German Historical Institute of London; and Savas Karatasli gave talks on Ottoman – Turkish studies and student unrest in Turkey at CUNY and at the March IGS meeting. These mentions are just a sampling; we want to brag on our students and there's a lot more posted on our website.

I hope all of you continue to have warm memories of your time here, and feel the program set a good foundation for you. There's been a good bit of change in the faculty makeup recently (which in my time frame means a decade or more), what with Ed McDill and Doris Entwisle retiring, Chris Chase-Dunn leaving for Riverside and before him Alex Portes (and Patricia Fernandez-Kelly) to Princeton. But we've gotten really fine support from the Dean and the department remains rock solid. If you haven't paid attention to recent comings and goings, please check out our website and look through the faculty profiles -- I think you'll be impressed, and pleased.

It's kind of scary to contemplate, but I now find myself with the longest tenure on the faculty, followed closely by Andy Cherlin. Between us, there's almost 70 years of service to the Hop, but it hasn't gotten stale and we're both doing well. Last year Andy took over as head of the Hopkins Population Center, which keeps him plenty busy, and of course I'm department Chair, but somehow we're both able to keep up with our big research projects (for me, The Beginning School Study, now in its 25th year; for Andy the Three City Welfare Reform Study) and we even were able to hold hands (figuratively) in the April issue of ASR, where we had side by side articles (followed by Joel Andreas in the next issue with an article on Charisma during the Chinese Cultural Revolution). Other good news, and accomplishment, would include Katrina McDonald's receipt of tenure following publication of her terrific book *Embracing Sisterhood*, Mel Kohn's ongoing collaborative research in China (with NSF support) and reprints of some of his older classic work and more recent books into a whole host of languages, translations of Beverly Silver's award winning book *Forces of Labor* into Korean and Chinese (counting English, that makes 7 languages), Lingxin's Hao's profusion of recent books (*Color Lines*,

Country Lines: Race, Immigration and Wealth Stratification in America; Quantile Regression; Inequality Measures), the successful launch of the Baltimore Education Research Consortium under Steve Plank's leadership, Rina Argawala's, Stefanie Deluca's and Katrina McDonald's deservedly flattering faculty profiles in various Hopkins publications (Rina, a 1996 Princeton PhD, is the department's most recent hire), and just last week our celebration of Pam Stichion's (aka Skalski) 35 years of service to the department. But there's also a dark cloud hovering, as Pam probably won't make 36 years – at the surprise party we sprung on her, Pam dropped the bomb that she and her husband will soon be relocating to Florida. Pam will be sorely missed and we wish her the best. She's brought sunshine to the main office all these many years and some of you may want to drop her notes of appreciation: stichion@jhu.edu.

That's it for now, and except for a proper announcement about the upcoming ASA party, you probably won't hear from me again until fall. But I want to hear from you – please check in with newsy tidbits you'd like to share, professional AND personal. And a favor – the attachment lists missing alums. We are eager to fill out the distribution list, so please send along any contact information you have for those on the list.

Best to All –

Karl

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