



NEAA NEWSLETTER

The 2007 Annual meeting hosted by Ithaca College provided the usual good blend of interesting papers, intriguing new films, good food, and interesting discussions. I overheard one participant telling another that this conference was great because not only were there discussions in the sessions, but those discussions were also taking place in the halls and outside as people enjoyed coffee and the beautiful weather. Thanks to Jack Rossen, Brooke Hansen and their team of organizers!

At the Members meeting in Ithaca, there was discussion about issues of participation and membership. The scale of the NEAA meeting and the openness have always attracted my participation. The meetings bring together students, faculty, avocational anthropologists, and applied anthropologists in a friendly and engaging environment that seems designed to break down barriers that sometimes develop at

larger meetings or in more institutional settings. However, in recent years it has become harder to recruit institutions to host the meeting, and attendance and continuing membership among professionals and students has declined somewhat. Alan Hersker and the students of the SUNY Potsdam Anthropology Club have offered to undertake a survey this fall to discover reasons behind declining participation, and to identify ways that the Association can be more beneficial to anthropologists in the Northeast. The results of this survey will give us some good data to ensure the Association continues to flourish and that the opportunities presented by the annual meeting become well known throughout the region.

I'm happy to report that the University of Massachusetts, Amherst will host the meeting in 2008 - watch this space for further details in the fall!

Amy Gazin-Schwartz

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Message from the Editor

Another academic year has past. It is amazing to me how the semesters really do fly by...well, not during grading but all the other times! In fact, I am still in awe that I just completed my seventh year at Roger Williams and will be on sabbatical leave for the 2007-2008 academic year. Many of us at schools with high teaching loads are not able to dedicate as much time to research as we would like so this is a coveted opportunity. I love teaching but as I started conducting interviews this summer, I realized once again how I love being in the field and how much anthropology and its tools can really contribute. During my absence, Alan Hersker has agreed to take over the newsletter. He asked that I remind you that, as always, we welcome submissions and we are still searching for Contributing Editors in Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology.

In this issue of the newsletter, along with the President's Message by Amy Gazin-Schwartz and a Conference Recap by Jack Rossen, you will also find a special thanks to John W. Cole who has stepped down as Treasurer for the NEAA. The Executive Committee and membership-at-large would like to thank John for all he has done to grow and support the organization. Although he has given up his "formal" role, we will continue to benefit from his wisdom and experience ... now, though, he doesn't have to worry about the checkbook! THANKS JOHN!!

Thanks also to Jack Rossen, Brooke Hansen and everyone at Ithaca College for hosting another great NEAA conference. This year I was a bit weary of the six hour drive to Ithaca but once I got there, as always, the conference was great and Ithaca was a fun place to explore.

Have a great summer everyone! See you all next year!

Jessica Skolnikoff

NEAA NEWSLETTER VOLUME 29 NUMBER 3

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THANKS TO JOHN W. COLE

Two long-time NEAA members express their thanks to John Cole for his years of service to the NEAA.

By John Omohundro, SUNY Potsdam

John's retirement as treasurer and database manager of the NEAA brings to a (temporary?) conclusion a long period of service to our organization, so I submit this brief memoir with gratitude and affection.

I met John through his writing long before I met him in person. When I was a new assistant professor, in the mid-70s, attempting to combine my expertise in ethnic studies with a new interest in ecology, I read his *The Hidden Frontier: Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley*, co-authored with his professor and friend, Eric Wolf.

Theirs was the work I was looking for— an early essay in the new field of political ecology and a star in European ethnography, which was beginning to gain status after a century of fieldwork by Americans in more exotic locales. Eric and John showed that events and behaviors in the villages of the Tyrol could not be understood as the expression solely of village customs or local environmental conditions, but also as the products of history and interaction with the larger spheres of Italy and Austria. If such a finding sounds “duhh!” now, then we can thank John for helping to make it so.

John was no doubt on the scene when I attended my first NEAA meeting in 1980 at UMass-Amherst, his home campus, but I spent all my time in a double session on maritime anthropology, into which I was hoping to take my new interests. The following year, at Princeton, I'm sure John was there as well, because Eric Wolf was the keynote speaker, adumbrating the ideas that would become *People Without History*. I didn't mix as much as I should have, because I was hunting out the perfect diner in that heart of diner-land. So again John and I missed meeting.

The first time I met John in person, he was the luncheon speaker at the 1986 NEAA, also hosted by UMass-Amherst. Instead of discussing his current research, John spun a fantasy, “Professor P----- and the Fourth Dimension,” accompanied by original drawings, of an ambitious assistant professor, overworked and multitasking, who dashes between tasks so fast he eventually collides with himself and disappears, somewhat like the spontaneously-combusting bookseller in Dickens' *Bleak House*.

That luncheon talk made clear to me that the NEAA was not just a small version of the AAA, and that John wasn't afraid to try something unusual under its auspices. In retrospect, I can also see why he was an organizer of his university's faculty union (the Mass. Society of Professors), eventually becoming its president, and served on the board of directors of the Massachusetts Teacher's Association (an NEA affiliate).

John has been one of the most regular attendees and presenters at the NEAA conferences in the last twenty-plus years. He is one of a handful of anthropologists from PhD-granting institutions who regularly attend, and one of a few officers who continue to attend after their terms conclude. He has organized for the conferences many panels on European ethnography, showcasing his graduate students' work. He has participated in the judging of immense stacks of student prize papers.

Upon arriving at NEAA meetings, as soon as I collected my registration materials I would go looking for the nearest coffee lounge or bar where John, often accompanied by his wife Ellan, was anchoring a klatch of other regulars, telling stories about mutual professional acquaintances, recounting fieldwork adventures, or generating an anthropological spin on current international happenings.

John has served as NEAA vice president (1996-1998), president (1998-2000), then database manager/treasurer. He has been a faithful regular at the semi-annual executive board meetings, sometimes hosting them—with fine food— at his farm in Vermont, which functions both as his retirement home and a source of more ethnographic anecdotes.

As a board member, John has been particularly helpful in recruiting new talent to the board, working his wide network of colleagues and UMass alumni. He has been a strong advocate for strengthening the bi-national character of NEAA, urging Canadians to host meetings and to serve as officers. He has also been a political conscience of the organization, drafting resolutions addressing injustices to and by northeastern scholars and institutions.

Although retired from UMass-Amherst in 2001, John continued for several years to teach a few courses a year, at both St. Michael's College in Burlington and Norwich University, Vermont ("the oldest private military academy in the U.S."). In 2002 he received an honorary doctorate in political economy from University of Trent (Italy). He's finishing a paper for the AAA meetings this November—and he has also remained active in NEAA, for which we should all be grateful.

By Grace Morth Fraser, Plymouth State University

My memories of John Cole go back to the 1970's when I was a graduate student; in fact, I believe I arrived at UMass/Amherst as a graduate student one year before he did as a professor. I was fortunate to be a teaching assistant for John and to experience his dynamic pedagogical style. He also was persuasive (and daring) enough to ask his TA's. to become actors in one of his very large introductory classes. He tried to turn us into thespians but we were really awful. Although I never was able to take a course from John, his interest in all students was readily apparent: when I returned from the field he loaned me his office in which to transcribe and work on material.

My collaboration with John as part of the NEAA began in the 1990's. I was Treasurer of the organization in 1996 and 1997 when we were struggling to separate from the AAA. He became President in 1999, served his two year term and then assumed the Treasurer's position in 2002. When I became President in 2003 I was most grateful that John was handling the finances of the organization. He went through many circles of fire to clarify and to clearly establish our tax

status with the state of Vermont and the IRS. His daughter helped to set up a computer based accounting system and his reports to both the Executive Board and to the Annual Meeting always were impeccable.

As you may know, the Executive Board meets three times a year and we have had some memorable meetings. One that comes to mind is sailing the Ottawa River on the “Arctic Char” thanks to Brian Given (President 2001/02) in 2002. John was the only soul to leap into the river for a swim. When we met in Burlington we invariably had lunch at the Indian restaurant just off the UVM campus and one little known fact about John is his mastery of Indian cooking. At the meeting in Albany in 2006, I wanted a group photo and it was John who livened our serious faces by assuming a prone position.

Thank you, John, for all that you have done for the NEAA over the years. We all have benefited from your wisdom, humor and loyalty.

CONFERENCE RECAP

The 47th annual meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological association was held in Ithaca and hosted by Ithaca College from April 20 to 22, 2007. The meeting theme was “New Visions for a Collaborative and Engaged Anthropology: The New Adventures of Old Anthropology.” Our goal was to highlight the innovative ways that anthropologists in all of the sub-disciplines are working together with people they may have formerly studied as subjects. A total of 147 people attended and there were 71 presentations given and 14 posters presented. The sessions covered all four sub-fields of anthropology, and many showcased the conference theme. There were also roundtable discussions on teaching and a career advice workshop. First-run ethnographic films were aired throughout the conference. Particularly impressive was the student participation. More than two-thirds of the presentations were made by undergraduate students, and many people commented on the consistent high quality of the presentations. On Friday we had a downtown reception with a jazz quartet and then moved up the hill to campus for Saturday and Sunday. The banquet keynote speaker was Meredith Small (Cornell) who gave a spirited and engaging talk, “The Natural History of Human Infants.” Ithaca showed some rare warm and sunny spring weather, too.

Jack Rossen
Ithaca College

NEAA SURVEY OF THE MEMBERSHIP PROJECT

At the membership meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association at Ithaca College this spring, several people expressed their concern with declining participation in the annual conference. This follows several years of difficulty in recruiting an anthropology department to host the conference each spring. Many members offered their opinions, but everyone agreed that we need to address these questions in a systematic way. Several students from SUNY Potsdam agreed to work on this project.

We will attempt to collect data from all public and private colleges and universities with Anthropology Departments in the service area of the NEAA. Time and volunteer-staff permitting, we will expand our data collection to include colleges and universities that offer anthropology courses but do not have departments of anthropology and to independent scholars. There will be three phases of data collection. In Phases I and II, we will conduct phone interviews with past and present board members of the NEAA and Anthropology Department chairs. In Phase III we will distribute a quantitative survey instrument to confirm our findings from Phases I and II and to solicit suggestions to revitalize the annual meetings. Interns will prepare a formal report and recommendations that will be presented to the executive board of the NEAA at their January 2008 meeting. This report will also be circulated among the general membership of the NEAA.

If, over the course of the next few months, you are contacted by a member of the project team, please take the time to help us. With everyone's input, we can make the NEAA even better and more responsive to the needs of our members! If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to get in touch with me.

Alan Hersker
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Network with Professionals in Your Field! Build Your Resume!

We are currently looking for Contributing Editors for Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology for the NEAA. If you are interested, please contact Alan Hersker, SUNY Potsdam,
herskeal@potsdam.edu

2007 Student Paper Awards

~~~~~*The M. Estellie Smith Graduate Paper Prize*~~~~~

**Anna Jaysane-Darr and Rose Beatriz Stimson (Brandeis University)** *Leave the Bones and Catch the Land: Development and Implications of Interactive Ethnography*

How can the anthropologist reproduce and represent the art of a refugee population online without decontextualizing the work and further exploiting the artists? What are our responsibilities as caretakers of a body of artworks that are also artifacts of a specific cultural heritage? This paper examines the exhibition and website *Leave the Bones and Catch the Land* as examples of interactive, engaged ethnography, where paintings by southern Sudanese refugees tell the story of the collective experience of Sudan's Second Civil War. With reference to literature on activist research, community-engaged learning, and exhibition practices, we analyze the development process, the content and presentation of the website, and its success as an interactive site. In partnership with the Sudan Education Fund and an affiliation with the Southern Sudanese Cultural Documentation Center, the Museums and Public Memory class at Brandeis worked with members of the local southern Sudanese community to curate two exhibitions of paintings by southern Sudanese refugees in Kakuma, Kenya. This led to the development of a website, a space where a virtual exhibition, comprehensive history, forum for dialogue, and suggestions for participation and activism could form an online destination for the southern Sudanese diaspora and the community at large.

**Honorable Mention: Emily S.K. Anderson (Yale University)** *Identities in Context and Change: How Archaeologists Can Better Engage with Their Human Subjects*

~~~~~*The John Omohundro Undergraduate Paper Prize*~~~~~

Jacob Applebaum (Dartmouth College) *Natural Disasters in the Pacific: Ongoing Problems and Unique Responses*

With world populations increasing, more people than ever are moving into disaster-prone areas. This, along with the increasing frequency of disasters due to climate change, means that the study of the cultural effects of disasters has never been more important. Unfortunately, it remains a relatively underdeveloped field within anthropology. This paper examines the effect of natural disasters on Pacific islands, focusing in particular on disaster preparedness and response. The small size and vulnerability of Pacific islands make them especially important case studies to anthropologists working to understand the effects of disasters. I consider ways in which disasters are defined culturally and through the media, and ways in which relief agencies can work within local cultural frameworks to provide timely and effective relief without creating a long-term reliance on relief supplies. I will examine the problems associated with various responses to natural disasters, and use my own research on the aftermath of disasters.

Honorable Mention: Kitawana Hoover (Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania) *Engendering an Ohio Hopewell Habitation Site: Methodological and Theoretical Approaches*



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MEMBERS RECEIVE 3 ISSUES OF THE NEAA NEWSLETTER PER YEAR AND A REDUCTION ON FEES TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE