



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Alumni Profile: Marlys Hersey
- Publications, Presentations, and Accomplishments
- Important Upcoming Dates

Graduate English Program Newsletter

reMARKS

Alumni Profile

Marlys Hersey

Q: When did you graduate from Boise State? What was your emphasis?

I graduated in May 2001. Master's in English, with emphasis in Rhetoric & Composition.

Q: What are you doing now in terms of either further academic work or a career?

I am self-employed as Editor (and graphic designer and journalist and photographer and business manager and website manager....) of a monthly regional newspaper in far west Texas: *The Big Bend Gazette*. My then-boyfriend, now-husband and I bought the *Gazette* 5+ years ago and have been sustaining ourselves in this business ever since.

It's a real treat to be able to publish some new writers and expose some oft-overlooked news stories. Our publication is a combination of investigative journalism, human interest stories, cartoons,

coverage of all sorts of cultural events, and fictional short stories and personal essays.

Q: How has the M.A. in English helped you and prepared you for your current line of work?

One of the biggest gifts of getting an MA in English was simply gaining much more confidence in my abilities as a writer and editor - and realizing that the only way most writers and editors and teachers of writing become good is by simply doing it, over and over and over. Practice. And being open to suggestion.

Having a quirky monthly newspaper in a quirky part of the country (very rural yet largely progressive, and the few towns in the region are very far from one another) has forced me to stretch my writing style, my political assumptions, my cultural biases, has challenged my

knowledge base.

Having a deadline every month has forced me to simply get things done. Some pieces -- and entire issues -- turn out way better than others, of course. Then we have to live with less than ideal articles -- or mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. -- in print, in circulation, amongst neighbors for an entire month. Putting my own and others' writing out for public consumption every month, and then hearing feedback from readers (or not!), has made me a less cautious writer.

Q: Do you have any advice for current students on how to make the most of their M.A. experience (or anything you know now that you wish you would have known then)?

Make the graduate program work for you. Go with your deep-seated interests. If you

Alumni Profile Continued...

Marlys Hersey

are most interested in getting published or becoming more hire-able, find faculty to help you make that happen.

I found it hard not to get bogged down in teaching composition courses, which I loved for a while, but I now see detracted from my own writing and reading, albeit necessarily and understandably. And teaching was fascinating. But initially the teaching was a means to support my habit, so to speak, of being a grad student in English, a writer, a reader; it's hard to keep your eyes on the prize when you have piles of student essays to read and 50-100 individuals a week for whom to perform and come up with meaningful assignments and with whom you need to interact thoughtfully.

I am guessing this has changed some by now, but I wish all of us grad students in the MA & MFA programs at the time ('99-01) had gotten more mentoring in terms of getting published (academic and creative works, both) and going to conferences. Doing an independent study in the personal essay was one of the highlights, for me. And editing the *Idaho Review*, just to understand what was involved in creating a publication from start to finish, and how different the personal preferences were amongst even a small group of editors.

Publications, Presentations, and Other Accomplishments Boise State University English faculty and students

Dr. Russell Willerton, Assistant Professor of technical communication, has published several peer-reviewed articles including "Writing Toward Readers' Better Health: A Case Study Examining the Development of Online Health Information" published in *Technical Communication Quarterly* 17.3 (July 2008) and "Proceeding with Caution: A Case Study of Engineering Professionals Reading White Papers" published in *Technical Communication* 55.4 (Nov. 2008).

Elizabeth Chilbert, Graduate student, presented a paper called "Humor in Hemingway's Farewell to Arms and Torrents of Spring" at Ohio University's conference on "Work, Play, and Humor in English Studies." She is also presenting a project tentatively called "The Writer's Tollbooth: Gaining Access with Personal Tokens" at the International Writing Center Association Conference in Vegas.

Congratulations to Tom Hillard, Assistant Professor of English, who was recently elected to the Executive Council of the Western Literature Association.

Are You Publishing, Presenting, Or Have An Accomplishment You'd Like To Share?

Contact Hailey Grist at

haileygrist@u.boisestate.edu to include your information in the next edition of **reMarks**.

Publications, Presentations, and Other Accomplishments Continued Boise State at the Western Literature Association Conference

Christy Vance, MA student, presented "Paradise Sought, Found, and Lost: Californian Temperament Scrutinized in Didion's 'Golden Land'" on the "Revisiting Didion's and Pynchon's Wests" panel. (Pictured Right)



Christy Vance

Mark Hartvigsen, MA Graduate, presented "Something Complete and Great: Interactions with Land in Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*" on the panel "Willa Cather's Narrative Artistry." (Pictured Below)



Mark Hartvigsen

Marc Dziak, MA Graduate, presented "On Wearing Aprons" on the "Memory, Places, and the **** That Makes Us Laugh" panel. He also presented "A Curious Undertaking: Immigrant & Ethnic Representations in Frank Norris's *McTeague*" on the "Using the West in Literary Realism & Naturalism" panel.

Jacky O'Connor, Associate Professor of English, presented "Documentary Theater as Community Healing in Los Angeles" on "The Contemporary Frontiers of Drama" panel.

Tom Hillard, Assistant Professor of English, presented "Roanoke, the Lost Colony, and the Making of a Western American Literature." (Pictured Right)

David Scott, MA student, presented "The Laramie Project: Creating an Ethic of Care Through Narrative" on "The Contemporary Frontiers of Drama" panel.



Tom Hillard

Publications, Presentations, and Other Accomplishments

Boise State at the Western Literature Association Conference

From Boise to Boulder: A Look Back and Forward

With four current or former graduate students, two faculty members and one professor emeritus in attendance, the BSU English department made a strong showing at the Western Literature Association conference in Boulder, CO in early October. Range of interests and wealth of creativity were much in evidence: David Scott's seminar paper on *The Laramie Project* and papers culled from M.A. theses recently completed by adjunct faculty member Mark Hartvigsen and recent graduate Marc Dziak, on Willa Cather and Frank Norris respectively, joined Christy Vance's presentation on Joan Didion's California in garnering questions, comments, and applause. A personal essay Dziak wrote for Bruce Ballenger's creative non-fiction class was awarded the WLA's Willa Pilla prize for most humorous presentation. Professor Tom Hillard spoke on the Roanoke Colony as part of a panel about defining the West; he and his fellow panelists all quoted from the seminal scholarship of longtime WLA member and retired BSU faculty member Jim Maguire, and the man himself joined in the rousing discussion that followed.

Our department's foundational strength in Western studies was reflected and expanded in the diversity of authors and texts examined; our place in the West, both geographical and cultural, was vibrantly illustrated. Original scholarship eloquently demonstrated the high quality of our M.A. program and its students, while the professional camaraderie of the experience suggested that the connections we make here at home and in the larger academic community will continue to support and promote our work as scholars and teachers. Indeed, what became abundantly clear over the course of the weekend was that our attendance and participation at this conference embodied the rich past, the active present, and the bright future of our department and its people.

Jacky O'Connor



Christy Vance, Jacky O'Connor, Marc Dziak, and Mark Hartvigsen

Special thanks to Dr. Jacky O'Connor for the photos.

Upcoming Important Dates

- November 3, 2008: Spring Semester registration for continuing students begins (check BroncoWeb for your appointment).
- November 24-30: Thanksgiving Holiday
- December 15-18, 2008: Fall Semester Final Exams
- December 19, 2008: Commencement
- January 19, 2009: Martin Luther King, Jr./Idaho Human Rights Day Holiday (No classes - university offices closed)
- January 20, 2009: Spring Semester 2009 Classes begin
- April 3, 2009: Last day for final oral thesis or project defense for May graduation.
- April 10, 2009: Last day to submit final, signed copies of thesis or project to Graduate Dean's office for May graduation.
- May 11-14, 2009: Spring Semester Final Exams



reMARKS is a monthly publication of the English Graduate Program at Boise State University.

Faculty advisor:
Dr. Matthew Hansen

Contributors:
Hailey Grist
David Scott
Heather Jennings

Contact:
haileygrist@u.boisestate.edu

MA in English Website

<http://www.boisestate.edu/english/ma/>

Look here for deadlines for the M.A. program, future course offerings, M.A. program forms, travel policies, financial support and academic resources, links to professor profiles, the M.A. student handbook, links to campus organizations, and more.