

SWAAG NEWSLETTER

The Annual Newsletter of
the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers

June 2004

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Letter from the Chair

This is the part of the job that I really was not looking forward to doing. About what should I write? I could, I thought, write about the environment or Iraq or Afghanistan...all highly topical and I've been doing work on industrial recycling and remanufacturing...but all that seemed a little pedestrian. Then by some good fortune, Dr. **Paul Marr** from Shippensburg University gave a talk at UNT on transitions in the Tarascan Region of Michoacan, Mexico. My first reaction was "wow!" what an interesting talk...a "kind of" old fashioned regional geography lecture. Upon talking with my colleagues, the same sentiment was aired. This got me thinking about why such a diverse group of geographers found the topic so interesting...and eureka I found my topic. Place(s) and geographers. What we human,

physical and technical geographers share at the most basic level is simply a curiosity about place. From out my window to over the seas.

So what is place? Rather than use one of the academic definitions floating around, I thought I would use a circular definition and say, "A place is a piece of space that geographers find interesting" ...reminiscent of (what I think was) Peter Haggett's somewhat controversial comment, "Geography is what geographers do".

Now while my definition is a little tongue and cheek, I'm sure most of you will relate to my reasoning. For example, when a student comes up to you after a field trip and says something like "I never looked at [that] place like that before". Or your "non-geographer" significant other's continued frustration at never knowing what or why you take a particular photograph. Or being identified by a local as a "geographer" at an AAG meeting

because of your camera and the way you look up, down, and around the street rather than simply traveling to your destination.

So there is something unique to the way geographers look at places I think. I remember being asked by an English professor years ago what it was that I liked about city streets in Ireland and I replied “the hustle and the bustle”. But now, having just returned from a visit to Jakarta (my first real trip to the lesser developed world) I think it’s more. In Jakarta all five senses were operating in overtime. Absolutely fascinating! So, I think there is something that unites us around this curiosity about place. A provost once said to me that he thought geographers were “the free spirits of the academic world”. I’m not sure he meant it as a compliment but I took it as one.

Don’t get me wrong now. I am not calling for a return to the older *histoire-géographie* tradition in Europe or the regional geography of the U.S. Paul’s talk did not fall into the

trap of regional uniqueness (or what used to be called ‘idiographic’ analysis). Interwoven were themes of economic geography: the demise of the older more complex regional economy where economies of scope were operating; the arrival of a new transportation system resulting in the demise of scope economies and their replacement by spatially diffuse economies of scale. Which I wonder, provides a more robust economic base?

Geography has matured, developed an analytical, scientific language and contributed much to social scientific and natural scientific theory in the past half century. But as I think about my travels this year and gaze ahead to Nacogdoches in the fall my curiosity is peaked once again as I try to remember my impressions of the town from my first visit during my first SWAAG meeting many years ago and what the next visit will bring.

Donald I. Lyons, Chair

Minutes of the SWAAG 2003 Business Meeting: Stillwater, Oklahoma, October 24th, 2003

Chair Fiona Davidson calls the meeting to order at 4.25.

Davidson recognizes **Brad Bays** and the faculty, staff and students of Oklahoma State University for hosting an excellent meeting.

Paul Matthews made a motion to approve the minutes of the 2002 business meeting as published in the 2002 newsletter with no changes. Seconded by **Bill Doolittle**, the motion carries.

The Chair welcomes AAG president **Alec Murphy**. **Doug Richardson** sends his regrets as he is busy trying to recover from Hurricane Isabel.

Paul Matthews reports on AAG council activity. The council met recently in Kalamazoo. He reports the mood was upbeat. Our finances are in the black again, although we haven’t made up the previous negative balances. Membership is also up, although there is a need to continue to work on this because of the up-and-down nature of student memberships. Much praise was due to Doug Richardson for both the membership and financial improvements. The nature and society section of the Annals has a new editor (**Karl Zimmerer**). The Annals will go electronic shortly. Incoming President **Victoria Lawson** has a new initiative, a “Healthy Departments workshop” will be offered in June for department chairs. A diversity task force has also been formed.

Alec Murphy talked about why we need the AAG, arguing that the challenge is to have broader thinking. AAG is important not just because of journals and meetings, but also networking with other professional groups, JIG, institutional foundation for new initiatives, institutional presence at the table with universities, research granting entities, government and outreach activities like sustainable development, promoting the discipline (e.g. career brochures). **Murphy** also talked about the 2004 meeting. We are going to lay a plaque at the first meeting place and will have a birthday celebration. Each AAG member will receive two free books and there will be plenary sessions where everyone gets together each day. Also, **Murphy** pointed out that the cost increase this year is temporary and related to the longer meeting and to the celebration activities.

Secretary **Don Lyons** reported on the elections of **Michael Yoder** as SWAAG treasurer and **Paul Matthews** as regional councilor. SWAAG's 2004-05 officers are: Don Lyons, chair; John Tiefenbacher, secretary; Michael Yoder, treasurer; and Paul Matthews, regional councilor.

Brad Bays reported on the 2003 meeting's attendance: 119 people registered at the meeting. The meeting might have run a modest deficit.

Future SWAAG meeting sites: Nacogdoches (2004), Fayetteville (2005) and possibly the University of New Orleans (2006). A site for 2007 has not yet been chosen or offered.

The Nacogdoches meeting will take place from October 21st to 23rd. Need more information from **Darrel McDonald**. The closest airport to Nacogdoches is Longview, Texas. It is served by American Eagle Airlines. Houston is 2.5 hours drive, Dallas 3 hours, and Shreveport approximately 2.5 hours.

New business:

Bill Doolittle suggested a number of smaller departments take the lead in hosting SWAAG over the next number of years. He provided an extensive list to the incoming chair.

A motion by **Brad Bays**, seconded by **Paul Matthews**, to house the SWAAG website for the foreseeable future at OSU was carried. The website will be linked to the journal also.

It was reported that **Fred Shelley** volunteered to develop an archive of meeting attendance and locations.

John Tiefenbacher gave the treasurer's report and also reported on the status of journal. There needs to be a better system of identifying SWAAG members who have paid dues, and AAG members who reside in the region. **Tiefenbacher's** service as editor of the *Southwestern Geographer*, the region's scholarly journal, will come to an end in 2004 after 8 years (2 successive four-year terms). We will have a call for editor this year. Applications can be made to the executive committee of SWAAG.

Student awards were awarded by committee chaired by **Alyson Greiner**. Winners were announced at banquet following the business meeting as follows: 1st place graduate student paper: **Riju Stephen**, Baylor University; 2nd place graduate student paper: **Chie Sakakibara**, University of Oklahoma; Two 1st place undergraduate student papers (tie): **Mikaila Bell**, Texas State University

and **Melanie McCalmont**, Baylor University; and 1st place poster: **Derek Wu**, Texas State University.

Paul Matthews moved for adjournment. Meeting adjourned at 5:30.

Congratulations to SWAAG's World Geography Bowl Team's Performance at 2004 AAG Meeting

The SWAAG World Geography Bowl team, led by **Sumanth Reddy** from the University of North Texas (UNT), was successful again this year at the AAG meeting in Philadelphia. This year's team placed third (with a 6-2 won-loss record), missing the final round by only 5 points. **Chris Dalbon** of Louisiana State University won the event's most valuable player, averaging 41.3 points per round. Also deserving of congratulations is **Joseph Oppong**, Associate Professor at the University of North Texas, for serving as the faculty coordinator of this year's team. In New Orleans in 2003, the team also captained by Sumanth Reddy won the national championship. Congratulations to the 2004 team: **Chris Dalbon** (LSU), **Sumanth Reddy** (UNT), **Peter Osei Adjei** (UNT), and **Curtis Denton** (UNT)!

Call for Papers for SWAAG 2004 at Nacogdoches, Texas

This fall's SWAAG meeting will be held in conjunction with the Mid-South's chapter of the American Society for Photogrammetry & Remote Sensing (ASPRS). The dates will be November 10th to 12th for papers and field trips set for the 13th. There will be two featured speakers (most likely at luncheons but not finalized at this moment): **Dr. Vickie Lawson**, AAG Vice President, University of Washington, will speak on Friday and an incoming officer for the ASPRS will speak on Thursday.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE (subject to minor changes): The conference will start with a poolside ice-breaker on Wednesday evening followed by registration on Thursday. Paper sessions will be held Thursday afternoon with an emphasis on RS/GIS, but will also include the student paper sessions; Friday will have paper sessions (concurrent if necessary) with a business meeting then a Texas Bar-B-Que. Saturday morning we will have one formal guided field trip (under final development and soon to be announced on the web page (<http://www.sfasu.edu/geography/>) and in an email-distributed announcement) and the option for two self-guided (with field guides provided at \$5 dollars each) one of historical Nacogdoches and the other a trip through the Mast Arboretum, Ruby Mize Azalea Garden and Pineywoods Native Plant Center. Both self-guided tours are close to conference hotel, particularly the historic Nacogdoches tour.

The conference will be held in the Fredonia Hotel (a block of rooms has been set aside) use SWAAG to get the rate.

The initial deadline for submissions of paper titles, abstracts and registration materials will be September 15th.

Please note: For students to be eligible for the student paper or poster competition, they should apply during registration to take part in the competition. Their papers and posters will be scheduled separately from other papers and posters so that judges may be present at all competitors' presentations.

Also note: In addition to the conference registration costs, registrants must also pay the SWAAG membership fee (\$10.00 for faculty and professionals and \$7.00 for students). Seven dollars of each membership fee are used to subscribe to *The Southwestern Geographer* (each attendee will receive the next edition of the journal upon publication). The remaining \$3.00 from faculty and professional members' registration fees will be applied to funds supporting the annual student paper competition awards.

For more information regarding the 2004 SWAAG meeting and registration details contact Darrel McDonald, Department of Political Science/Geography, P.O. Box 13045, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, TX 75462-3045.

Editor Sought for *The Southwestern Geographer*

The Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers (SWAAG) seeks applications and nominations for Editor of *The Southwestern Geographer*. The new Editor will be appointed for a four-year editorial term that will commence on January 1, 2005. The appointment will be made by October 31, 2004.

The *Southwestern Geographer* is the research journal of SWAAG and is a vehicle for the publication of research manuscripts of interest to members of the region. Since its inception, the journal has published research by scholars residing within the SWAAG service region, or by those presenting their research at SWAAG meetings and by researchers whose interests lie within the region. In particular, the mission of the journal has been to serve as a publishing venue for young faculty and graduate students seeking to publish their work. In addition, a special function of this journal is to provide an "institutional memory" for the region by publishing essays describing the history of the discipline within the region, including, but not limited to, histories of the various Geography departments that make up SWAAG.

The Editor of this journal will solicit, review and accept for publication research articles appropriate for this journal. The Editor will accept manuscripts from across the breadth and depth of intellectual activity in Geography.

In support of these goals, each Editor candidate should possess a distinguished record of scholarly achievement, a broad perspective on the discipline of geography, respect and affection for its diversity, and an ability to work constructively with authors during the review process. Institutional support for the new Editor (in particular linkage to skilled personnel with desktop editing, production and printing of publications) is crucial. The Editor bears primary responsibility for the logistics of processing manuscripts and for assembling and coordinating the publication and distribution of each issue of the journal. Currently, the Editor also maintains subscription roles composed of not only SWAAG members but also university libraries and other non-members.

Production of the journal is paid for by the division through subscription sales. Payment for labor, for production for instance, has been supported in part by the division as well. The Editor and the host department do not assume the cost of supporting the production of the journal except for the commitment of labor and serious attention to the production of a quality journal.

A letter of application that addresses both qualifications and a vision for *The Southwestern Geographer* should be accompanied by a complete curriculum vitae. Applications should be submitted no later than September 1, 2004. **Send applications to Donald Lyons, Chair of SWAAG, Department of Geography, University of North Texas, Denton, TX 76203-5279. Applications may also be submitted electronically to Don Lyons at dlyons@unt.edu.**

Coming Soon! Volume 7 (2003) *The Southwestern Geographer*

Please note that the 2003 volume of the *Southwestern Geographer* has not yet been published due to low volume of submissions. However, the journal should achieve “critical mass” by the end of this summer and should be published by late August. This issue will include several research papers and a history of the Department of Geography at Oklahoma State University written by **Alyson Greiner**. Attendees to last year’s SWAAG meeting in Stillwater, and those SWAAG members not in attendance who have paid their 2003-04 dues, will receive the journal upon publication.

The Southwestern Geographer

A CALL FOR PAPERS

Journal of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers

The Southwestern Geographer is the flagship journal of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers (SWAAG). SWAAG is composed of geography departments and AAG members residing in the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. SWAAG’s journal highlights geographic research by geographers in the region, research about the region, and research presented at meetings held within the region.

The journal editor is presently seeking research manuscripts that fit one of the following criteria: articles written by geographers and members of SWAAG and AAG, articles on topics germane to the southwestern United States and northern Mexico, and articles based on research presented at SWAAG meetings. In particular, submissions by emerging scholars

(recently-appointed faculty and/or students) are strongly encouraged, but others will not be excluded.

All research manuscripts will be peer reviewed. To be included in the next volume (Volume 8) of this annual publication, manuscripts must be submitted as soon as possible. There is never a deadline for submission and manuscripts will be accepted at any time.

Manuscripts should not exceed 8000 words and should be submitted to the editors in hard-copy form. Please provide three copies of your manuscript for review. The style of the journal follows the style guidelines of the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Please remove name and address from title pages, abstracts, and notes of submitted manuscripts and please do not include acknowledgements or “authors” on maps or figures in the manuscript for review. Please consult either the most recent issue of the *Southwestern Geographer* or the *Annals* for citation, cartographic, and manuscript style. If accepted for publication, final, revised manuscripts and illustrations should be submitted in electronic form.

For further information please contact the editor at: John Tiefenbacher, Editor of *The Southwestern Geographer*, Department of Geography, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX 78666. E-mail: tief@txstate.edu, Phone: (512) 245-8327.