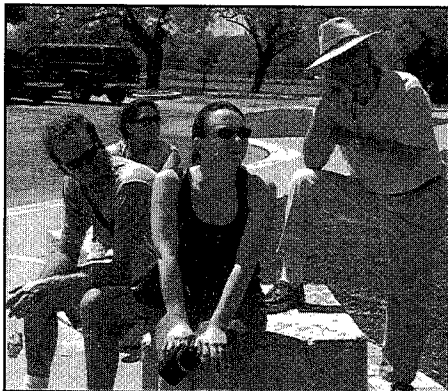


Out of the Classroom and

by Mayra Lucero

In the fall of 2006, twelve students enrolled in Dr. Charles Macune's History 596SW: "Colloquium in the History of the Greater Southwest." From the first day, Dr. Macune spoke of the possibility of traveling to Texas to conduct research. Over the next fourteen weeks, he provided us with the necessary historical background and familiarity with the appropriate secondary literature to prepare us for the spring research/writing seminar and two-week trip to Austin, Texas. As part of this process, we made class trips to the Reagan Presidential Library and the Mormon Church's Family History Center in Los Angeles. Dr. Macune also helped the class write research grant proposals (a first for many of us) that would help raise the funds needed for the trip.

We discovered in the 2007 spring semester sequel, History 681: "Seminar in the History of the Greater Southwest," that we would be spending two weeks in Texas with all expenses paid. The trip promised to be a great learning experience in conducting archival



Listening to our tour guide at Concepcion Mission. Far back to front: Nixa Sanchez, Geoff Kida, Angela Nguyen and Dr. Charles Macune.



San Jose Mission. From Left: Joe Dixon, Andrea Palacio, Nixa Sanchez, Angela Nguyen, Alex Morales, Geoff Kida, Dr. Charles Macune, Mayra Lucero, Gary Parker, Sharon Rosen, and Nelson Aguilar.

research and working with one's peers. From the day Dr. Macune confirmed that we would be going to Texas, he planned every single detail. It was such a wonderful itinerary, combining research with sight-seeing that no tour company could match. As a native Texan, Dr. Macune proved himself the perfect instructor and tour guide.

We arrived in Austin on March 31, 2007 and had our first meal at an authentic BBQ restaurant that left us anticipating what was to come. The next day we ventured to the Alamo. After seeing the fabled sight and hearing about the gallant Americans who fought and perished there, we made our way to the San Antonio River Walk. We hopped on a tour boat and learned more about this site that was modeled after Xochimilco, Mexico. Having dinner on the River Walk was a great way to top the evening as we all enjoyed the al fresco dining and seeing the other tourists on their guided boat rides.

The first of April found us at the University of Texas archives. To be able

to research a topic that we had been studying for a semester in the midst of such an awe-inspiring research staff was overwhelming. After a tour and orientation session, we were each off in our own little research worlds. That evening we attended a wine and cheese reception at the Administrative Offices of the Center for American History at the historic Arno Nowotny

Building where we mingled with the gracious staff who welcomed us with open arms. From that day on we were on our own, each of us researching, looking through pamphlets, pictures, records, manuscripts, and microfilmed newspapers. We stopped only for lunch and then returned to work. Dr. Macune would



During a day trip to Blue Bell Creamery. From Left: Angela Nguyen, Sharon Rosen, Geoff Kida, Mayra Lucero and Dr. Charles Macune

make his rounds discussing our findings with us and insuring that we took our breaks and did not overextend ourselves. Each night he made sure we experienced every food selection that Austin had to offer. Some of us succumbed to sickness,

Into the Promised Land



Our last dinner at Wagner Dormitory and Dining Hall. From left front to back: Mayra Lucero, Joe Dixon, Nelson Aguilar and Alex Morales. From right-front to back: Geoff Dixon, Nixa Sanchez, Angela Nguyen and Gary Parker.

but we rallied together and helped the fallen, two of whom ended up in a local hospital.

A week into our trip, we took a break from all the research at the UT archives and went sightseeing for the day, venturing out into the rain and cold to visit the LBJ ranch. From there we traveled to a little German settlement called Fredericksburg where we stopped for lunch and did some shopping. On the way back to Austin, we took the scenic route along the Bluebonnet Loop and encountered something quite unfamiliar to southern Californians—snow! We stopped to capture the moment standing in miles and miles of bluebonnets with snowflakes falling all around us. It was truly a memorable moment.

On April 8 we left the big city behind and traveled 80 miles east of Austin to our next destination: Round Top, Texas, population 77! For the next week we would call the Winedale Historical Center and Conference Center home. Comprised of historic antebellum plantation houses in the heart of the original Spanish and Mexican frontier land grant, Round Top provided an inspiring locale as we began preparing first drafts of our research that would eventually become part of our theses or papers to be presented at later conferences. Dr. Macune did manage to sprinkle in tours of the nearby homes and the famous

Blue Bell Creamery and flower garden.

One of the trip's highlights occurred on April 12th when we spent the day in San Antonio and toured the San Antonio Missions National Park. Mr. Casta™o, our amazing tour guide, vividly recreated the time period the missions dated from, giving us both a his-

torical and anthropological account of life in the Old Southwest. As we walked among these historical sites that have become part of the romanticism of Texas history, the presence of the missions' former inhabitants was almost palpable. The influence of the missions lived on in the people who populated the surrounding area as they took pride in their history and worked to preserve their culture.

On our last night we gathered in the parlor with Dr. and Mrs. Macune to report on what we had accomplished during our trip. Students discussed their various research projects, the topics of which included Afro-American Migration from Texas to Southern California; Texan Indian policies; Jewish History in Texas; the Texas Pecan Shellers' Strike of 1938; Immigration Recruitment Strategies in Texas, 1821-1836; and Single Women's Land Rights in 19th Century Texas. We all realized just how far we had progressed since the fall semester. As the night wound down and we began a final match of Trivial Pursuit, we experienced one more thing Texas is famous for—its electrical storms. Out of nowhere the skies opened up, heavy rain fell, and lightening flashed. Undaunted

by the freakish weather, we rushed out to the porch and tried to capture it on our cameras. Little did we realize that the storm would delay our flights the next day, but it was well worth the experience.

In looking back on this amazing trip, the students involved agreed that they had further developed their skills as historians and researchers. As Nixa Sanchez stated, "We all learned how to conduct research at different institutions." But that was not all, Alex Morales added, "I gained valuable experience, knowledge, and friendships." Learning does not occur exclusively in the classroom, and throughout this trip Dr. Macune showed us that traveling was an equally vital part of our education. With him at the helm, it was more than a research trip, it was an adventure. As our host and a proud native son, Dr. Macune revealed to us a Texas that one would not find in a travel book.

Twelve students participated in the



Sunset at Winedale.

"2007 Promised Land Trek," and each returned a little bit different. We all gained a greater understanding of the ins and outs of conducting research, discovering that finding just one item can change a topic. We encountered unexpected sickness and different temperaments, but in the end we all enjoyed an experience that expanded and enriched our professional talents, historical understanding, and career possibilities. □□□