

Alumni Update – Spring 2016

Greetings:

I've been shamed, and properly so. I've also been crazy busy, but that's no excuse. In rapid succession I heard from Bob Manning (1989) and Robert Nathenson (2014), both wanting to know what's up with the Alumni Updates. Or, more properly, what's not up with them.

My notes absolutely have stretched out and that's altogether on me. Whoever would have thought that retirement could be so demanding? Certainly not I. But this isn't about me (well, a maybe a little, but that's for later), so let's jump right into it. But I should tell you that some of the "news" I have to share is feeling rather stale at this point – it happens when my little tidbits sit too long.

With that little preamble, I wish I could launch with something altogether upbeat. Sadly, that's not the case. Don Von Eschen's (1967) department chair Axel van den Berg wrote to let me know that Don passed away late last year. Binnie Bailey, learning of the news, shared this remembrance with me (as well as with Don's colleagues back at McGill):

"Don and (his wife) Liz were part of the wonderful 60s at Hopkins, along with Maurice, Guy LeCavalier, Ray Breton, Marty Levin, Jerry Kirk and of course our beloved Chair, Jim Coleman. It was Jim who brought our wonderful graduate students from Canada to join in the small and new Hopkins Department of Social Relations. Art Stinchcombe was also a member of the faculty, and Jim and Art worked closely with the graduate students, encouraging their individual programs of study. Don, Maurice and Marty were especially active in the Route 40 sit-ins in the 60s, and we all joined in singing in the coffee shops where they played, and marching for civil rights for an end to segregation. They were truly memorable and glorious days, and Don was such an important part of the department and its growth. He was kind and gentle, softspoken, respected, and very well liked. As department administrator I became very close to all the graduate students, but I must admit I had my favorites, and Don was surely one of them."

I never met Don, but from Binnie's account I have no doubt that he was a very fine fellow indeed.

Let's lighten it a bit now with a couple rather more uplifting reports.

It is my great pleasure to share the news of Susan Dauber's (1993) marriage to Tracey Fuchs this past January. Susan, as some of you know, is a Best Bud and I delight in her happiness. Here is how she replied when I asked if she wanted to pen the announcement or leave it to me: "you compose." That's what she said, but I defer – no way I could have captured the spirit of hers:

"Tracey Fuchs - the Michael Jordan of field hockey. You compose - I am too busy vacationing in Colorado. Being married to an athlete has introduced me to all kinds of sports. Now I ski and play ice hockey! Not well but I'm game for anything."

Sounds awesome!

And this from Wei-ting Chen (2014), reporting in from sunny California, sounds awesome too:

"First on the work front: Baptiste has been working as an Associate at Exponent since October 5, and is so far loving his new job. I have continued to work for my employer back in Atlanta as a contractor for the CDC doing health communications work. Honey and Dante, our first set of children (THEIR KITTENS), have gotten really good at finding different sunny spots to lounge around the house (so not much has changed for them, really).

We've been reconnecting with friends on weekends, checking out some of my old haunts, and discovering new places together, like hiking in Redwood Regional Park with Honey a couple of weekends ago (see picture). We are getting reacquainted with the bounties of California too - fresh local strawberries in October? Yes please!

In addition to getting settled in, we've been busy preparing for the arrival of baby "Choudrillier"! This kid is due to arrive on December 28, 2015 (I WARNED ABOVE ABOUT MUCH OF THIS BEING OUT OF DATE!). So far, we know that it likes to punch me in the ribs between my REM cycles at night, and that the baby definitely has Baptiste's sweet tooth. We are not finding out the sex of the baby and have decided to go with a gender-neutral name that works in English and French. Let's hope it comes on time - I am starting to feel like I am running out of space for all the amazing ethnic foods we have around us!"

Such happy reports being a smile – good for you and yours Wei-ting!

Here's a nice little note from Hank Becker (1973), who is at a different place from Susan and Wei-ting in his life-course journey, living happily retired in the Southern Part of Heaven (AKA, Chapel Hill, NC). He dropped me a line about summer learning research, which he knows is a topic near and dear (as an aside, with friends at the National Summer Learning Association I am wrapping up an edited volume on the topic, due out in October of this year by Teachers College Press. It includes chapters by Barbara Condliffe (2014) and Aaron Pallas (1985). Keep a watch out for it).

"Every time I think of what Chapel Hill must have been like 40 years ago, I think of you. The old timers say it's just not the same as it was—a tautology since it's certainly not! But we love it just the same."

I did my graduate work at Chapel Hill from 1968 to 1972, and one lasting effect, in addition to helping get me launched on what was a most rewarding professional journey, is that I still bleed Carolina Blue in basketball season. The Heels play tonight, having made it to the round of 32. This note, in fact, is my way of burning off some of that nervous energy!

And mentioning older-timers, here's a note from another, Sherif Elhakim (1972):

"Greetings from an (old) Egyptian mathematical sociology student of Jim Coleman (RIP), and dear Doris Entwisle. I graduated in 1972 (Phd). My thesis (based on anthropological fieldwork) was about a mathematical model of conflict resolution in Darfur, Sudan. At that time, we were programming University of Cambridge (uk) computers by TELEX from Baltimore. And on another point, us students of JHU Social Relations, we learnt to program FORTRAN to run on the 16K, Main Frame Computer, which the Sociology Department (with its nine doctor students and nine professors) proudly claimed for most its time. I will never forget our well prepared punched cards, submitted for results, but 24 hours later just receiving error messages. Ask (ex education minister of Norway) Gudmund Hernes, to confirm this, he was my younger colleague at the time. Many thanks to JHU. I was senior advisor to the Egyptian Government on national development planning projects, and advisor to the the World Bank, and many other Arab Governments, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan. I was also Professor of Sociology at the American University, Cairo, Egypt, and Founder and Principal of an Egyptian Socio-Economic Consulting firm (40 employees)."

Ah, the technology of the day. I arrived in 1972, just when Sherif was moving on, and I most certainly remember the agony of submitting SPSS jobs overnight at the mainframe computer installation only to arrive the next morning to find a very thin stack of computer output owing to a keypunch error! And mentioning keypunch cards, I had an interesting experience in one of my last undergraduate education classes. It was my "Reading Coleman" class and I always brought along my tattered copy of the EEO

Report for that section of the syllabus. Turns out I had an equally old keypunch card in it that I used as a page mark. I can't say why it occurred to me to pull it out and ask if anyone in the class knew what it was, but I did. And not a single student had a clue! Really makes you feel old; maybe even ready for retirement.

I want to thank Sherif for his note, but I gather he hadn't heard of Doris's passing. The reality of that pains me still – dear friends for at least 40 years and collaborators for more than thirty of them. Our book *The Long Shadow* has been awarded the 2016 Grawemeyer Prize in Education. Linda Olson and I will be heading down to Louisville, Kentucky in April for the grand celebration, but Doris's absence will be hanging over both of us – such a loss; such a shame.

Fast forwarding to the newbies, as mentioned above, Robert Nathenson has checked in. Robert is one of my last doctoral students, second to Lingxin, of course, who did the heavy lifting in guiding Robert through a terrific dissertation project:

"Lots has been going on. But first, I wanted to send you my baseball article, which was recently published in *Chance*, <http://chance.amstat.org/2016/02/parity-in-baseball/>. I know that you are an Orioles fan so I think you will really enjoy it. It's about the decline of parity in baseball. I've seen some newspaper articles over the last few weeks talking about either anticipated parity across teams or anticipated inequality, but none have taken my approach.

Ok, here are a few details. My wife and I got married on October 11, 2015 outside of Jacksonville Florida. It was just the best day. We spent our honeymoon in late December and early January in Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. It was great. So great.

My postdoc concluded in January when I took a position at Picwell, a health economics/health insurance startup in Philadelphia. Though the postdoc gave me time to make many connections with researchers who have become my coauthors and allowed me to develop several research projects (one of which is with Benjamin Zablotsky (ANOTHER OF OUR IES FELLOWS. BEN DID HIS DEGREE IN THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH) on autistic children aging out of the pediatric health care system), the postdoc itself really wasn't a good fit. The new job is going well. I am on the analytics side and so I spend a substantial portion of my time thinking through and implementing research projects, such as a person's willingness to pay to select a health plan that has their primary care physician in-network when choosing between different health plans. I also have a number of research articles in the pipeline, including a R&R to *Milbank Quarterly* titled "Spanish-Speaking Immigrants' Access to Safety Net Providers and Translation Services Across Traditional and Emerging U.S. Destinations," which continues one of the themes from my dissertation. I received my first grant, an internal Penn grant for \$14,000 for a project on the Provision of Charity Care for Nonprofit Hospitals. I'm presenting that work at the American Society of Health Economists conference in June. There's more but I've blabbered on long enough."

A nice report, with lots to celebrate. But, please, never apologize for blabbering away, at least not when writing to me. One person's "blabber" is another person's exciting news, and that's what our Alumni Updates are about!

Bob Manning is the other of the two Robert's who nudged me into action. Faithful readers of these updates will know that Bob's peripatetic life is never dull, and it will hardly surprise to learn that Bob could well be on the move again:

"I am waiting for decision regarding B-School Deanship in Dubai; I am one of three finalists. This week, I had interview for Deanship at SUNY--Brockport--outside Rochester. It is probably my best chance to return to US this year. My research is finally coming together so pressure to get these three surveys completed by time I leave--hopefully end of June. One is the first study of college students and credit

cards in a Muslim society. It is quite surprising how consumption is on steroids here and I will include a composite measure of religiosity on debt. Let's see if they create enough interest to return to US or more resources to remain in Gulf."

Stay tuned. Bob is one of my more faithful correspondents and no doubt I'll have his forwarding address to report in my next note!

And to wrap-up this edition, Sylvia Golombek (1990) reports that she has stepped out for a time to take a breather (that's what I thought I was doing -- wish I had asked Sylvia for advice!):

"I left YSA last December after a 12 year tenure as its Sr. VP. I am taking a breather from full-time work and don't miss the daily commute to DC, the tight schedules, and the management and supervisory responsibilities. So this is an opportunity for me to look for more flexible, consulting opportunities and doing new things or reconnecting with issues I've always been attracted to such as sustainable cities, urban design, creative place making, and building equitable communities. I'm also a very active Board Member on the Maryland Humanities Council, taking a MOOC on Human Centered Design (as a member of a 4-person team, with the other three in Argentina), and started a blog: <https://sbgolombek.wordpress.com/>"

And let me end with a clarification. Joking aside, I don't want to leave the wrong impression. I am busy yes, but busy in ways altogether satisfying, even fulfilling. It's all fun, but my kind of fun, which means much of it looks a lot like what I was doing while on payroll, but without the benefit of those huge checks: a bit more traveling with Kathy, a more regular and more rigorous workout routine (alternating days between swimming and resistance work for muscle tone), more time for fun reading, still going on the road for book talks, my continuing involvement with the National Summer Learning Association (I serve on NSLA's Board and Chair its Research Advisory Committee), and the biggie, my efforts to launch the Thurgood Marshall Alliance, a local school improvement initiative to support schools that are committed to diversity along lines of family income and race/ethnicity. I've been working close to full-time on this for maybe 8 months at this point. It's hard, but I feel as though the pieces are starting to come together. Stay tuned – if we can pull this off and do it well, I am convinced it has the potential to be a really big deal. Who would have ever thought it – me taking a stab at Applied Sociology!

Drop me a line if you would like to know more about the TMA: karl@jhu.edu (they've let me keep my vanity email address!). And drop me a line even if could care less about the TMA – let me know what's a happening with you so I can share it with your friends.

That's it for now.

Best to All, in Solidarity,

Karl