

St. Andrews by the Lake

Alumni Newsletter



January-February 2015

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Reflections on the Sciences and the Humanities at St. Andrews

We are very pleased to announce this year's recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Award. Dr. George Howard '73 and Dr. Ginny Jackson Howard '75 each exemplify the qualities we've come to expect and treasure from our alumni -- dedication to service, high ideals, and achievement in multiple disciplines. Ginny and George both hold professor positions at the University of Alabama at Birmingham [UAB] in the Departments of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, respectively.

While Ginny or George alone would have been deserving, it is particularly gratifying that they work as a team -- not only in their personal lives but in their professional lives as well. Their present research has a dual focus; identifying the contributing factors to the higher risk of stroke death among people living in the southeastern US and in African-Americans, and coordinating national and international randomized clinical trials, primary in stroke. With their colleagues they have published extensively with the result that our global understanding of the causes of a debilitating event like stroke have been materially improved.

The Howards are the leaders of the REasons for Geographic And Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) study (<http://regardsstudy.org/>), funded by the National Institutes of Health [NIH]. This study follows over 30,000 people from the general population who are 45 years or older, approximately one-half African-American, and recruited from all 48 of the contiguous US states. The findings from this study have provided insights into a broad array of factors for stroke risk: the role of diet, biomarkers in the blood, novel risk factors, novel roles of traditional risk factors, sociological factors, and exposures. Through their work we are closer to solving the mystery of the factors that contribute to this immense public health burden.

Equally exceptional is their dedication to their discipline and strong embrace for their vocation. We asked them a few questions about their work, relationship, and their undergraduate experience.

Your post-graduate publications are both extensive and comprehensive. You have focused on the prevention of stroke and racial and geographic differences in stroke. What factors contributed to your choice of that area of research?

Ginny: While stroke has a huge public health "footprint," it does not fall equally on all people. It has been well known for over a half century that blacks and residents of the southeast US are disproportionately affect. These differences are huge, with the risk of stroke in blacks between the ages of 45 and 65 about 300% higher than in whites.

George: I am from Tarboro, NC which like Laurinburg, is in the "buckle" of what is known as the "stroke belt," with the highest death rates about 300% higher than in areas like New York City. Tarboro is also over 50% African American. So naturally I was drawn to understand why these huge disparities exist.

UPCOMING EVENTS



MLK Celebration
January 19, 2015



Alumni Council Meeting
February 20-21,
2015



Admitted Students Day
February 28, 2015

Ginny: Luck played a major role in our getting here. George and I were both very fortunate to have our first jobs working at Bowman Gray School of Medicine, which is now known as Wake Forest University. George started working in the Stroke Center right after graduate school and I first worked in cancer clinical trials and then moved over to the Stroke Center when the director needed an experienced project manager for a new stroke prevention clinical trial he was writing a grant for.

George: I have to say that going to work there had to do more with finding a job than studying a particular disease; however, as we worked there we grew more and more devoted to reducing the burden of stroke... and we have been doing that for over 40 years now. Stroke it is a disease that takes every precious thing from a person and from the person's family. Both of our mothers have died from stroke, and it is hard to describe what it does to a person and to the person's family. Anything that we can do to reduce the impact of this disease on others is a wonderful privilege.

A problem such as stroke has complex social, genetic, and environmental bases, and cannot be viewed through a single lens. An awareness and knowledge of the social sciences would be involved, among others. What other disciplines have you applied to your work?

George: You could not be more right, we are certainly in the era of "team science." The day of the Renaissance man or woman working alone is long gone. Today's science is about assembling teams with broad experiences and training to work on these problems together.

Ginny: As such, leading science is networking and finding partners. For example, one of my grants is about childhood exposures such as education and family life factors during childhood and how these affect the risk of stroke when the child becomes an adult. The team for this study includes a social scientist from Harvard, a social epidemiologist from the University of California San Francisco, a demographer from Emory, a health behaviorist/survey design expert from University of Arkansas and psychologists from UAB.

George: At the other end of the spectrum is a study that I have been working on that is assessing environmental exposures such as air pollution, and how that affects stroke risk. Because the people in our REGARDS study are from all 48 of the contiguous states, getting good measures of air pollution from all 48 states is a hard thing to do. But we were lucky to partner with scientists that include both space scientists, environmentalists, and computer scientists from NASA who can measure different components of air pollution from satellites. Remarkably, these scientists can provide measures of air pollution at anyone's house on any day of the year. We have linked these data back to the people in our study to see if these environmental exposures affect stroke risk.

Ginny: So basically our research involves collaborators in almost every field, and then our findings need to be disseminated and implemented, working also with policy makers, public health practitioners, and state health department personnel. It is hard to think of a field that is not involved.



Save the Date!
Alumni Weekend
April 17-19, 2015



Religion & Science
Roundtable
March 17, 2015



Open House
Sophomore &
Junior focus
March 21, 2015



Alumni Weekend
April 17-19, 2015

You both graduated in the 1970s and entered graduate school. What preparation did St. Andrews provide that helped in that transition?

Ginny: Both George and I were math majors, and so we could not overstate the completeness of our training in this field from professors including Drs. Somerville and Morgan. But I think it is more important that the more broad SAPC experience and the entire SAPC faculty taught us how to think, and how to be flexible in what we were studying. I was also a psychology major, and was lucky to take courses with professors including Dr. Alvin Smith that focused on research methods. This was a great “kick start” for many of my graduate school courses but also my writing. The extensive Christianity & Culture writing experience I still credit with my being able to write succinctly for publication and grant writing. When I was in college, I never imagined that my career would involve so much writing but writing with a focused message is a critical piece of any job. At St. Andrews, I was also fortunate to be able to take independent study courses in both my math and psychology majors. That also prepared me to be accountable to myself and the challenges of graduate school.

George: While I completely agree with Ginny (I should add... always a good thing to do), for me personally I completely owe my admission to graduate school to Bill Somerville. I spent most of my time at SAPC during the height of the Vietnam War, and my draft number was 33... so clearly I was going to Vietnam immediately after graduation. For me, I thought it would be a far finer thing to be an officer in the Navy than a private in Army, so I enlisted and went through Officer Candidate School in the summers while at SAPC. However, I graduated in the spring of 1973, the year that we exited from the war. In April before my graduation in May, it became clear on very short notice that I would not be going into the Navy after all. With weeks before graduation and not having looked for a job (after all, I knew what I was going to be doing), I was panicked and went to Bill for advice. I have to say that I had never considered graduate school, and didn't really know what had to be done to be admitted. At this point (now early May) admissions for the fall were closed and it was too late to take GREs. However, Bill got in his car, drove to Chapel Hill, and on his return... I had been admitted to the master's program in Operations Research. I honestly don't know how in the world he did this, but he not only prepared me for the transition... he actually “transitioned me”!

What interdisciplinary aspects of your undergraduate experience have proved useful in your work? What aspects do you wish you'd had more of?

George: Well, I think Ginny was right earlier when she said that the entire SAPC experience taught us how to think. I will add that is also the great thing you learn as a math major ... the logic of problem solving.

Ginny: So much of our work is this same kind of problem-solving. We work in large and complex studies and nothing ever works like you had planned it. So success is about considering the alternatives and moving forward.

George: I was also a Business major at SAPC, and this was critically important when later I had the opportunity to be the Chair of Biostatistics at UAB. Whether a person likes it or not, academics is also a business, and there were great challenges to managing the department. At the time I was chair, Biostatistics expanded to about 27 faculty and 100 staff, and had a budget in excess of \$15m, so it was basically a mid-sized business.

Ginny: It is hard to think about what we wish we had more of; I feel that I was generally well-prepared.

George: However, I do wish I had the chance to take C&C again, now that I know how cool it was.

Memoirs of a Geek: The Black Mountain College Festival, 1974

By **James M. Putnam '76**

Visiting Professor in Computer Sciences



In February of 1974 I had just started my third semester at St. Andrews. I was familiar with the Black Mountain College experiment. My father did some of his graduate work at Rollins College while John Andrew Rice, founder of Black Mountain College, served on the faculty there. But the main figure of interest for me from BMC was R. Buckminster Fuller.

I knew about Bucky Fuller and his popularizing of the geodesic dome, his architectural inventions, particularly his vision of the Spaceship Earth. The mathematician in me really got into its geometry. It was also visually appealing to me.

When word of the upcoming Black Mountain Festival at St. Andrews got out in late 1973, I did what any right-thinking proto-nerd would do and built about three geodesic domes of various sizes. I heard the festival participants would build bigger ones and there was talk about one being a greenhouse. A second, larger dome was built between the LA and Vardell Buildings.

Bob Middleton '75, headed up the greenhouse project, which was to be situated behind Farrago. We piled into a pickup truck with some donated materials, including three big panes of glass from the LOF plant in Laurinburg.

When the time came, we tacked a sketch up on a board and had the greenhouse built in an afternoon. About ten people, including faculty and students, showed up to help. When we nailed the last board in place and got inside it, it looked like it might work. Bill Loftus, then a newish French professor, enlivened the proceedings with a series of awful puns; we became friends and are to this day, forty years later. I hate puns, but you couldn't help but like Bill.

A few days later, Fuller spoke to a crowd in the auditorium of Scotland High School. Already in his late 70s, he looked somewhat frail up on the stage. But he spoke with an enthusiasm and a profound depth about his subject matter that was mesmerizing.

His talk was on subjects as diverse as ecology, nuclear magnetic resonance (going so far as to perform a dance that demonstrated proton spin reversal), and the World Game. He moved so quickly from deep subject to deep subject that I was only able to keep up with him for brief intervals.

I was spellbound. I completely lost track of time, and it was three hours later that Bucky shook himself briefly, said that he'd talked enough and started to walk off the stage.

The audience got to its feet and applauded for a good three minutes. Bucky stood there and after the applause died down, he looked genuinely puzzled and said, "Thank you, but you're only applauding yourselves, you know." And then he vanished.

The whole Black Mountain Festival experience was profoundly moving for many of us, faculty and student alike. But now, in my early 60s I can trace many of my aesthetics and imperatives back to a three-hour lecture by a small man in black suit and black glasses with an unstylish black elastic strap holding them on his balding head who wasn't too proud to be seen dancing like a proton in a high school auditorium in rural North Carolina.

New Faculty: Biologist and Psychologist Join the Science Department at St. Andrews



This past fall, Tracy S. Feldman joined the Natural and Life Sciences Department as Assistant Professor of Biology. Feldman attended Bard College in upstate New York as an undergraduate and says that the small liberal arts college experience changed his life for the better.

In addition to his BA in Biology, Feldman holds an MS in Zoology from the University of Florida and a Ph.D. in Biology from Duke University. He has previously held teaching positions at The University of Wisconsin and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Feldman's favorite subject to teach, if given the opportunity, is species interactions. "I love the intricate stories woven into the natural world, and would hope to have the opportunity to share my enthusiasm for those stories," he said. "I also love the idea of teaching a class following the ecological and sociopolitical consequences of everyday manufactured objects."

If not a college professor, Feldman would be working in environmental education, doing environmental/botanical consultant work, or be working in music. Outside of his academic life, Feldman is a musician, skilled in violin and guitar. He's also a singer-songwriter and performer. You can learn about his music at his website: www.tracysfeldman.com/music.html. "I love spending time with my family, photography, spending time outdoors, human-rights work, and reading fiction," Feldman said.

Also joining the faculty this past fall as Assistant Professor of Psychology is Dr. Jennifer Gianico. "I was seeking employment at a small liberal arts school that focused on teaching undergraduates," Gianico said. "St. Andrews reminded me of the undergraduate education I received. I wanted to share my experience with current students."

Gianico attended Siena College in Loudonville, New York where she earned a Bachelor of Arts, Magna Cum Laude in Psychology and a minor in Spanish. She went on to attend University of Albany, SUNY for both her MA and Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology.

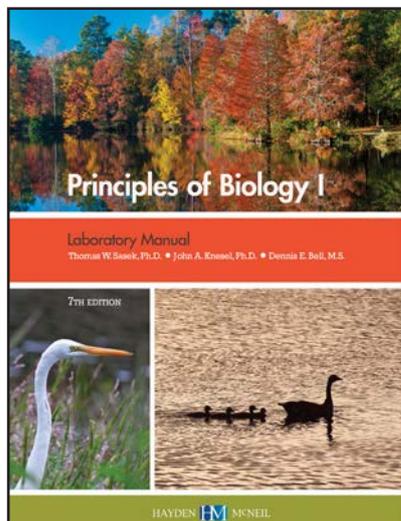
Gianico's research interests include emotion and cognition, autobiographical memory, and tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon. Tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon is experienced when a word feels 'stuck,' but recall is imminent. "It's very frustrating, you feel annoyed, and often ask others for help," Gianico said. "Most people, across languages and cultures, have experienced it."

Gianico has said that if she could teach any course she would teach research methods in Psychology. "It is a very hands on course – students get to see how psychology is 'done,'" said Gianico. "It is the course that really opened my eyes to the possibilities in my future. Many students who 'hate' research come to at least appreciate it after taking this course." In her spare time, Gianico is a bargain shopper, a crafter, and a DIY enthusiast. She loves traveling and prefers to take car trips, so she can bring her dog on the road with her.



Another Coffman Photo, Another Cover

Rooney Coffman is St. Andrews University's Director of Logistics and Photography. He has been a presence on the St. Andrews campus for over four decades. Science students at St. Andrews have all been touched by Coffman's attention to detail in his care for the science facilities and equipment, his dedication to St. Andrews, and his positive attitude with everyone with whom he interacts.



“Through serving students and helping them learn what to do in lab, Rooney has certainly had an impact on many alumni and their preparation for the world of scientific work,” said President Paul Baldasare. In addition to all of his responsibilities in the Science Department at St. Andrews, Coffman also serves as the campus photographer.



Rooney recently had one of his photographs published on the cover of the program for the National Association of Scientific Materials Managers [NAOSMM] Conference Trade Show. He has photographed the Trade Show for the past two years.

This past April, many of Rooney's photographs were framed and hung on the walls of the Nucleus, a gathering place for science majors located on the lower level of the Morgan-Jones Science Building. The newly framed photographs were debuted last year during Alumni Weekend. You'll be able to see them at Science at St. Andrews this coming April.



SHARE CALL FOR POSTERS

Alumni, faculty (present and former), and students are invited to submit posters to the **S**cience **H**omecoming and **R**esearch **E**xposition (SHARE).

Please submit a title and brief description or abstract (~500 words) of a research project or topical review by **February 14th, 2015**. Multiple submissions are welcome.

To submit or for further information please contact:

Dr. Bonnie Draper
910-277-3955
draperbd@sa.edu

Class Notes

Nancy Davies, '71 was named by the *Richmond Boomer Magazine* as one of their 2014 Boomers & Shakers.

Jay Jerome '71 is in the Department of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. He has recently been elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Merri Alexander '74 is now the Senior Director for Strategic Partnerships at Montreat Conference Center in Montreat, NC.

Anne Acker McNair '76 and **Bill McNair '75** have accepted positions as Co-Directors of Music at First Presbyterian in Savannah, Georgia beginning in February. Anne will serve as Director of Music, and Bill as Organist.

Gray Eubank '76, pictured right with Laura Dern, lives on the Oregon Coast, and still works in film, especially when something is shooting in Portland. He most recently had a small part in the movie "Wild".

Kim Becknell Williams '83 is a columnist for the Charlotte Observer, and has written for the Observer for 18 years. She is also finishing a book entitled *Gym Etiquette 101*. She hopes to see its publication in 2015.



Chrissie Sabia Linz '91, Amy Cox Bradley '91, Susan Yeaman Deal '91, Gracie Hemmer-Beaumont '90, Laura Molonario '92 and Pam Whitfield '91 are pictured in photo [left]. It was taken during the October 17-19 Brunnenburg Reunion last fall on the farm of **Susan Yeaman Deal and Kris Deal '88** in Culpeper, VA.

Amanda Knoll '07 and husband Chris welcomed their first child, a son named Grayson Tyler Knoll, born on December 7th. He was 7 pounds, 13 oz, 20.5 inches long.

Perry Morris '09 and **Jarrold Hall '10** are legally creating small-batch moonshine and whiskey and are licensed as Southern Grace Distilleries, Inc.

Jessica Bitz-Richards '11 recently became engaged to Charlie Schaefer.

Kathryn Farley '14 is currently working at Silvera Law Firm in Dallas, TX serving as their Office Services Coordinator.



IN MEMORIAM

Julia Marie Smith Hamel '53 died on December 18, 2014.

Madge Garrison White '53 died suddenly on October 22, 2014, in Charlotte, NC.

Doris Mozingo Yates '55 of Winston-Salem passed away on November 6, 2014, at Brookridge Retirement Community.

Ann Stephenson Warmath '55 died November 2, 2014 in Greensboro, NC.

Horace Bertram "Bill" McInnis '67 passed away on December 5, 2014. He lived in Laurinburg. At St. Andrews, Bill was MVP on the Golf Team.

William C. (Bill) Wyatt '68 died on December 19, 2014 in Columbia, SC. His wife, **Jane Hayman Wyatt**, is a member of the Class of 1971.

Marsha Coggins Ferebee '78 died on November 29, 2014 in Charlotte, NC.

Trae Brookins '95 died on January 4, 2015 in Durham, NC. His wife, **Rebecca Stacy**, graduated from St. Andrews in 1996.

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Upcoming Alumni Events: Tallahassee, FL and Winston-Salem, NC

Want to reconnect with St. Andrews friends and make new ones, too? Come to an alumni get-together. Our next gathering will be in Tallahassee on Thursday, February 12 at the home of **Christy Williams '86**.

On Thursday, February 26, Winston-Salem alumni will get together “after hours” at the office of **Curtis Leonard '80** in the Piedmont Federal Savings Bank Building.

President **Paul Baldasare '77** will be at both events to give folks an update on what is happening on the St. Andrews campus. Look for an invitation in your mailbox!

We always have a good turn-out at these alumni get-togethers, and they are always a lot of fun! For more details about our upcoming gatherings, or if you're interested in hosting one in your town, please contact Ellen Thompson at alumni@sa.edu.

St. Andrews bytheLake Alumni Newsletter



St. Andrews by the Lake is a publication of the Alumni and Development Office of St. Andrews University. We welcome your feedback and ideas for future newsletters.

To contact the Alumni Office or for information on giving to St. Andrews, call Ellen Thompson at 910-277-5665 or email thompsonje@sa.edu.



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