Reflections of a Traveling Scholar, Part I

By Mark Canada

When I was wrapping up my graduate career back in 1997, I was ready to be done. Specifically, I was ready to pick up that Ph.D. and all the prestige that would come with it. The prestige never came, but a job did—even better, a job at UNCP, where I have worked with some wonderful students, as well as some of the most dedicated, accomplished, and delightful teachers anywhere. So when I was faced with the prospect of leaving all of this behind for a semester, I did the natural thing. I bolted.

Perhaps I should explain.

When I took a semester off of teaching last spring, I wasn’t so much leaving something as moving toward something else—namely, an opportunity to immerse myself in my scholarship. For several years, I have been interested in the relationship between American journalism and American literature. Having studied journalism at Indiana University and worked for newspapers before becoming an English professor, I had experienced this relationship in a personal way, and I knew that dozens of American writers, from Benjamin Franklin to Stephen Crane to Tom Wolfe, had experienced it, as well. I had had the opportunity to teach a couple of courses in the subject, but my various responsibilities as a teacher and a department member had left me with little time to do more than give a presentation on Thomas Wolfe and journalism, publish an article on the same topic, and take a lot of notes.

Enter directed academic leave, a program that allows one UNCP professor each semester to spend a semester off campus focusing on a scholarly project. For someone who keeps his overnight bag in the car, the notion of working off campus was rather appealing. For the past two decades, I have been taking my family, students, and sometimes just my self on trips all over the United States—to Boston and Philadelphia, along the Lewis and Clark Trail, up to Hemingway’s haunts in Michigan, and down to New Orleans, where Blanche Dubois rode the streetcar named Desire.

In January, my family and I set off for California, where I planned to comb through the special collections at the Huntington Library outside Los Angeles and the University of California-Berkeley, home of the Mark Twain Papers. Along the way, we stopped in New Orleans, where Blanche Dubois rode the streetcar named Desire.

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of Twain, Henry David Thoreau, Henry James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Walt Whitman, Frederick Douglass, and Rebecca Harding Davis. It was research, to be sure; indeed, when I was working on my manuscript later, I was amazed how much of these materials I was able to use. The research was fun, too, though. After all, sneaking a peek at the “real thing”—even if it is simply a thank-you note that James scrawled to a friend—can be pretty heady stuff for someone who has spent most of his life studying literature from afar.

More than an opportunity to travel, my academic leave meant plenty of time to read and to write. I needed it. Because of the scope of my project, I have to read or re-read hundreds of stories, articles, novels, and poems by virtually every major writer who lived in the nineteenth century. One semester is not enough to do all that work, but I made a dent in it. Thanks to a daily regimen of writing, as well as an obsession with taking notes, I also managed to complete a manuscript of the book, as well as two articles. I also gave two presentations, one at the Joint Journalism Historians Conference in New York and another at a Henry James colloquium in Salem, Massachusetts.

To someone outside academia, a semester away from teaching sounds like a vacation. It isn’t. Over the course of the spring, as well as the summer, I put in perhaps 1,000 hours. I won’t say that it wasn’t fun, though. That’s the beauty of having a career you love. Having my family along with me for most of the traveling, furthermore, made the time especially enjoyable. When I wasn’t ensconced in some library trying to decipher Thoreau’s scribblings or holed up writing a chapter, we were out exploring the sites along the way: the French Quarter, the Grand Canyon, a redwood forest outside San Francisco bay, a California ghost town, the Painted Desert, the Alamo and downtown San Antonio, a church on a reservation outside Albuquerque, the Vietnam Memorial and National Mall, and dozens of other sites along the way. For our children, whom Lisa and I homeschool, it was one gigantic field trip.

No one learned more than I did. Indeed, it was like returning to graduate school for one glorious semester and immersing myself once again in the world of ideas. Now that I’m back in the classroom, I continue to draw on the experience as my students and I immerse ourselves in our own world of ideas. It’s a wonderful place to be.

My Experiences with Sigma Tau Delta

By Kristin Meurer

I first came to UNCP as a transfer student in August of 2004. The previous spring I had graduated from Fayetteville Technical Community College where I earned my Associates of Arts in General Education. At FTCC I had been very involved with student activities and I had been a member and the treasurer of the Rho Beta chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta (the National English Honor Society for
Two-Year Colleges) since the spring of 2002. As a member of Sigma Kappa Delta, I had the opportunity to help organize the first annual Books for Baghdad book drive, which has since become an annual SKD event, and a great one at that. That same year I was also able to participate in a children’s book drive in cooperation with the Episcopal Farm Workers Ministry to benefit the children of Migrant Workers. I, as well as my fellow chapter members, made a real effort to give back to our community.

Also, as a member of Sigma Kappa Delta, I had the opportunity to apply for several of the various awards and scholarships that the national organization gives out each year. In fact in 2004 I won the first place poetry award for my poem “Distorted Reflections,” and I also won an Academic and Service Award, as well as the Sigma Tau Delta Transfer Scholarship, which is awarded to one Sigma Kappa Delta member who is transferring into a four year English program. These awards and scholarships have helped make it possible for me to continue my education.

So when I came to UNCP in 2004 I knew that I wanted to remain active in my community and to become involved with student activities on campus. However, I didn’t know anyone when I started classes that semester and I found that it was difficult to get to know other students and instructors outside of class, especially since I commuted three days a week from Fayetteville.

In the fall of 2006 I joined Sigma Tau Delta (the International English Honor Society for Four-Year Colleges and Universities), and that same semester I was elected President of the Sigma Xi chapter. As President I wanted to breathe life back into an organization that I whole-heartedly believed in, and I wanted to set an example for fellow majors and to show them that anything is possible. In the previous semester I had taken Dr. Roger Ladd’s Senior Seminar on Chaucer where I had the opportunity to research Robertsonianism and apply an exegetical perspective to Geoffrey Chaucer’s Clerk’s Tale for my seminar paper. That following fall a great opportunity presented itself in the form of a “Call for Papers” from the National Organization of Sigma Tau Delta. So I submitted my Chaucer seminar paper, “A Return to Robertsonianism: An Exegetical Approach to Chaucer’s Clerk’s Tale,” to the annual Sigma Tau Delta Conference, which was held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania that year, and to my surprise it was accepted for presentation.

That spring I made my way to the annual Sigma Tau Delta Conference in Pittsburgh where I had the opportunity to meet English majors and English professors from all over the country. I also had the opportunity to hear some excellent speakers including David Rakoff, author of Don’t Get Too Comfortable (2005) and frequent contributor to NPR’s This American Life and the New York Times, as well as Sharon Olds, one of the greatest American poets to date and author of Strike Sparks: Selected Poems (2004) and The Wellspring (1996). I was also able to attend presentations given by Sigma Tau Delta members on topics as varied as “British Literature: Vindications: Wollstonecraft and Shelley” to “Careers in Publishing” to “American Literature: Looking for Love: Fitzgerald, O’Connor, and Steinbeck” and “MySpace and You-
Tube: The Disintegration of Intellectual Property.” Finally, I was able to present my own work in a panel presentation on Chaucer where an interesting intellectual debate ensued over the role of contemporary theory in medieval studies. Participating in the 2007 Sigma Tau Delta Conference was an invaluable and rewarding experience which I believe will help me in the future as I plan to continue my education as a graduate student in an English Ph.D. program.

While all of these experiences were great individual benefits of my membership in Sigma Tau Delta and Sigma Kappa Delta, I have to say that one of the most valuable aspects of my involvement in these organizations was the opportunity to develop real leadership skills as an officer for both the Rho Beta Chapter at FTCC and the Sigma Xi Chapter at UNCP. As an officer I was able to participate in the governing body of each group and to help make important decisions for each chapter like developing fundraising events, community service events, and planning our trips to the national Sigma Tau Delta/Sigma Kappa Delta joint annual conferences. I was also able to gain confidence in myself and in my abilities which has helped me continue to be successful all these years later, and, most importantly, I have developed friendships that will last a lifetime.

English Faculty Activities


**Mark Canada,** during his directed academic leave last spring, worked on a book, *The Story and the Truth*, which deals with the intersections of American journalism and American literature in the nineteenth century. Over the last year, he also wrote an entry on Benjamin Franklin for a student encyclopedia of American literature and gave two presentations: “The Story and the Truth” at the Joint Journalism Historians Conference in New York, New York, in March and “The Portrait of a Journalist: Henrietta Stackpole and the Failings of the Press” at the Reading Henry James Colloquium in Salem, Massachusetts, in May. He is the chairman of the Program Committee for the South Atlantic Modern Language Association conference (Atlanta, November 2007), and the president of the Central Carolinas Phi Beta Kappa Association.

**Youngsuk Chae** joined the UNCP English faculty this fall. She earned her PhD in English from Pennsylvania State University, University Park in May 2005. She came to UNCP from George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. Dr. Chae’s research and teaching interests include critical race/ethnicity studies, multicultural American literature, contemporary American fiction, postcolonial literature, and Asian American literature. These research interests are showcased in her book, *Politicizing Asian American Literature: For a Critical Multiculturalism*, which Routledge brought out in October 2007.
Teagan Decker also joined the UNCP faculty this fall. She earned her Ph.D. in English (Language and Rhetoric) from the University of Washington, Seattle in spring 2007. Her dissertation was titled *From Social Justice to Diversity: Tracing the Discourses of Affirmative Action.* While at UW last year, Dr. Decker served as the Research Assistant/Coordinator for the 8th Biennial Conference on Forensic Linguistics/Language and Law, held July 12-15, 2007. Some recent work that reflects her research interests are her article “Academic (un)Seriousness: How Tutor Talk Plays With Academic Discourse,” in the December 2005 issue of *Writing Lab Newsletter* (volume 30, issue 4), and her book chapter “Diplomatic Relations: Peer Tutors in the Writing Classroom,” which appeared in the collection *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring* (Ed. Laurie Grobman and Candace Spigelman: Logan, UT, Utah State University Press, 2005). This collection won the IWCA Outstanding Scholarship in a Book Award. Dr. Decker presented the paper “Locating Global Englishes: Navigating Language Boundaries with Non-Native Speakers of English” at the International Writing Centers Association Conference in Minneapolis, in October 2005.

Ginny Pompei Jones presented “Arriving at College-Level Writing through a Gender Communications-Themed Course” at the annual North Carolina English Teachers’ Conference in Charlotte in November 2007. The presentation was based on her teaching the first half of the ENG 1050-1060 composition sequence as a theme-based course. Dr. Jones discussed the theory underlying her approach of adapting ethnographic methods to students’ research writing and demonstrated how the assignments work in tandem with the course’s theme of gender communications. The audience was comprised of secondary and college-level teachers interested in revising the way they teach students to write research papers or the way they approach scholarship.


Walt Lewallen gave a paper at the National Popular Culture Conference in Boston (April 5, 2007): “Solaris: Limning the Unconscious with Trauma.” He is currently working on a paper on the poetry of Sharon Olds.

Melissa Schaub’s article “‘Worthy Ambition’: Religion and Domesticity in *The Daisy Chain*” appeared in the spring 2007 issue of *Studies in the Novel* (volume 39, number 1).

Pat Valenti continues to consult on the development of a Nathaniel Hawthorne Museum at the House of the Seven Gables in Salem, Massachusetts. On
June 5th and 6th, she and two other scholars worked with staff at the Gables on the themes, artifacts, and text for each room of the proposed museum. On 5 July, Dr. Valenti returned to Salem where she gave a public lecture on “Sophia Peabody Hawthorne: Artist.” This lecture focused on Sophia’s paintings and drawings housed at the House of the Seven Gables or relating to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel by that name. On 20 September 2007, Dr. Valenti sponsored four graduate students at the annual conference of the North Carolina Association of Teacher Educators in Raleigh, North Carolina. Thommasania Craft, Dalija Brecher, and Paul Somers presented posters on graphic novels; Shaun Krencicki’s poster focused on poetry and the development of empathy in middle grades students. These posters reflected research begun in EED 552, The Teaching of Literature, during the spring 2007 semester. Dr. Valenti also continues to be actively involved in Women Writing Women’s Lives (http://web.gc.cuny.edu/womencenter/wwwl/), a group of biographers who meet monthly and rotate presentations on their craft. In addition to working on the second volume of Sophia Peabody Hawthorne: A Life, Dr. Valenti is venturing into writing fiction, having discovered some very interesting letters among her mother’s papers. On February 4th 2008, Dr. Valenti and Alix Kates Shulman will co-present at WWWL on the biographer’s or memoirist’s impulse to write fiction. The presentation is titled: “Fiction Is Safe; Non Fiction Is Safe.”

This issue of the ETL Beacon is pleased to spotlight the activities of Richard Vela, who won UNCP’s Dial Award for Scholarship and Creativity on May 4, 2007.

Dr. Vela has previously won the Dial Teaching Award (1998), and the Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching (2000). But the Dial Award for Scholarship focuses on achievement in research excellence, which is one of Dr. Vela’s passions. He believes strongly that even though UNCP is a “teaching university,” scholarship is vital to a professor’s success in the classroom. “If we are not going to meetings and presenting and writing, then what exactly do we have to give to our students?” he asks. “At some point, students have a right to current, relevant teaching, teaching that reflects the present state of thinking on issues. Without professional involvement, we cannot really provide that kind of teaching.”

With that attitude, it is no mystery why Dr. Vela was chosen for this year’s award, and in 2007 he has, as always, been prolific in his scholarly activity. Although he says he has had a slower than normal year because of persistent illness this fall, he published two book reviews in Literature/Film Quarterly, and presented four papers at conferences, including several on film adaptations of Shakespeare.
currently preparing “John Huston’s Mexico” for publication. The essay, which he presented at the John Huston Centennial Conference in Galway, Ireland, is one of several papers he has written on films about Americans south of the border.

Scholarly activity encompasses more than writing and conference presentations, however. Dr. Vela is an active member of the profession in other ways, including his work as a contributing editor to *Literature/Film Quarterly*, which means reading manuscripts on a regular basis, mainly those having to do with Shakespeare or Latin American film. In addition, he is Area Chair for Shakespeare on Film and Television for the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association, for which he recruits panelists, reviews proposals, and organizes panels. He himself appeared as a guest panelist at several conferences. In April 2007, for example, he spoke for the Popular Culture Association Conference in Boston on the theme of “What Editors Want” (he reports that he is asked to be part of two or three panels a year on this topic at different conferences). This fall, he spoke on a panel at the Literature Film Association meeting at the University of Kansas in October 2007 on “The Current State of Adaptation Studies.” Dr. Vela is especially pleased to report he has done his first “blurb” for a book cover, being asked to provide a 35-word recommendation for the jacket of Carolyn Jess-Cooke’s new book, *Shakespeare on Film: Such Things as Dreams Are Made Of*.

Research often requires travel. Dr. Vela travels a lot himself, and gives students the opportunity to do literary travel as well. He spent a week in London, England at Winston House, which is UNC-Chapel Hill’s European Study Center, during August 2007. The trip was sponsored by Chapel Hill, and other UNC institutions had representatives there. He reports that Winston House is “an amazing classroom facility with up to the minute technology and an exciting future,” and he hopes to take a group of students to London in the future, as he did in summer 2005, “if only the American dollar can get a bit stronger.” He did take students to the American Shakespeare Center, Blackfriars Theatre, in Staunton, VA. He and Holden Hansen made the trip in November 2007, for the third year running. About a dozen students took part in a two-hour workshop on “Linguistic Clues in Shakespeare’s Plays” and saw “original practice” productions of *The Winter’s Tale* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Dr. Vela’s main reaction to receiving the Dial Award is gratitude. “I am glad that the University is supporting research and creativity. We all owe Adolph [Dial] a debt of gratitude for having set up this fund several years ago. His name is also on our building, and he served the University for several years as a professor.” Dr. Vela gives credit to his many colleagues who engage in research and creativity: “Having looked at the number of publications, especially recently, by our faculty (eleven books in 2007, three from ETL—Lewis, Porrúa, Imoro), I think I was probably more fortunate than anything else. Many more faculty than ever before deserve this award.”
University Theatre Productions

University Theatre’s first 2007 spring show, The Dining Room by A. R. Gurney directed by Chet Jordan, was presented on the main stage of the GPAC on February 21, 22, and 23. The second spring show, The Good Doctor by Neil Simon directed by senior Theatre student Kate Donovan, was presented on the main stage of the GPAC on April 18, 20, and 21, with a special matinee performance on May 21.

Also in April, Natalie Fields and David Underwood lent their talents to assist in the production of The 1940s Radio Hour, the first musical directed at UNCP by Hal Davis, the new director of the Musical Theatre program.

University Theatre’s fall 2007 show, Lend Me a Tenor by Ken Ludwig directed by Holden Hansen, was presented on the main stage of the GPAC on October 31 and November 1, 2, and 3 and was an associate entry in the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival. Scenes from that production are illustrated below.

University Theatre’s first 2008 spring show, in February, will be Antigone by Jean Anouilh, directed by Chet Jordan. The second spring show, co-produced with the Musical Theatre program, will be the Mary Rodgers-Marshall Barer musical Once Upon a Mattress, directed by Hal Davis.
Reflections of a Traveling Scholar, Part II

BY VADIM ZYUBANOV

My experience at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke has been incredibly positive. I would like to thank the English, Theatre, and Languages Department for inviting me to come for one semester and for being so good to me, helping me with even the most minor difficulty.

I have enjoyed my time at UNCP. I have learned a lot about the system of education in the United States. Although it is different from what I am used to in Russia I recognize merit in both types of academy. What I liked the best about the American education system is the freedom students have in choosing their own academic plan. The campus is beautiful. It offers students many opportunities for developing their abilities. There is a gym, a pool, a great library, a concert hall and a cafeteria.

I also value my experience teaching Russian this fall semester. My students did very well; they were devoted to Russian in spite of all the work they had to complete. I thank them for working so hard. I used the Oral Language Laboratory which I found useful for making the class entertaining and effectively motivating. I can see the potential for ESL classes. The Sony Soloist System and the computers are great tools for developing foreign language skills.

I am proud to have helped the foreign language faculty understand how to use all the features of the oral language laboratory. I hope the lab will continue to function for at least the next ten years.

As a faculty member I appreciated the freedom each instructor has in designing and carrying out his teaching duties. I believe this increases the instructor’s productivity and gives students many different venues for learning.

During my stay here, I had the opportunity to visit several cities. Washington impressed me the most with all its museums, monuments and parks. I particularly had fun at the Madame Tussaud Wax Museum where I took some pictures of some “famous” people. My visits to other places such as Raleigh, the Biltmore House in Asheville, the NC Zoo in Asheboro, and many different beaches have made my life here very rich and active. And all of that happened thanks to the people around me. I am very grateful to them. I am leaving with a feeling of having received a really good welcome.

I have a great desire to come back, and to continue the collaboration between Tomsk State Pedagogical University and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. I believe we can further develop our relationship through future faculty as well as student exchanges. I hope to have some of you visit Tomsk. I will be really glad to show the style of life in Tomsk and in Russia generally.

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Language Faculty Activities

José Gómez co-organized the III Second Languages and Minorities Symposium. This event was held at UNCP on March 26, 2007. See: http://www.uncp.edu/news/2007/2nd_language.htm for more information. Dr. Gómez will also be co-organizer of the next Second Language and Minorities Symposium, to take place on March 7th, 2008. He took part in the International Book Fair in Guadalajara Mexico, where he interviewed several contemporary Colombian writers as part of a book project he is currently working on. In the same event he took part in an International Seminar on Foreign Language Teaching.

Peter Imoro published Cultura e ideología en cuatro novelas de Manuel Puig (Madrid, Editorial Pliegos, 2006). Dr. Imoro’s article “La traiición de Rita Hayworth: doxa y deseo femenino en el diálogo telefónico entre Mita y Choli” appeared in the Spring 2006 issue of Confluencia (Volume 21, number 2).


Movin On Up! Early in the Fall 2007 semester, offices for the Director of Composition and the Spanish faculty moved upstairs in Dial to the suite formerly occupied by the Political Science Dept., which has moved to the BA Building. Offices for two English faculty members, Youngsuk Chae and Jan Gane, are also on the second floor, across the hall from the Composition/Spanish suite.

On the first floor of the Dial Building, the space formerly occupied by the Composition program now houses Undergraduate English Education. Across the hall, the space that was the yearbook office awaits conversion to another use following the yearbook’s move to the new UC Annex. Most other offices remain unchanged—for now.

Jan Gane returns from class to her new office on the second floor, across from the Composition/Spanish suite.

José Gómez meets with Enrique Porrúa in Dr. Porrúa’s new office.
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