CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to extend greetings once again to the readers of History at Illinois. This issue reports two years' worth of activities of the department, the department faculty, and alumni. It also includes on page three a new departmental photograph, the last such record for posterity having been taken more than a decade ago in 1974. Comparing the 1985 picture with the one from 1974 shows that there have been changes in the last decade. The outward and visible signs include the appearance of some new faces in the place of old ones (to say nothing of refinements in tie widths or hemlines — and hairlines and waistlines — with regard to those faculty who were recorded in both instances). The steps on which the faculty stand are those of the newly renovated Foellinger Auditorium, the site this spring for the commencement activities of the School of Humanities. As for the particular scholarly activities from which the assembled faculty were wrested for the taking of the picture, some of these at least are indicated in the pages that follow.

In discussing departmental change, special notice should be made here of retirements, resignations, and new appointments. Professor J. Leonard Bates retired from the department last spring. Professor Natalia Belting will retire at the end of the summer. Paul Drake has gone to the University of California at San Diego to an endowed chair in Latin American Studies in the Political Science Department. David Ransel is becoming the new editor of the American Historical Review, a position which will take him to the University of Indiana. We will remember fondly having these colleagues with us, while looking forward to further interactions with them. New to the department this year were Professor James Barrett in American history and Professor Megan McLaughlin in medieval history. Professor Nils Jacobsen will be joining the department in the fall in Latin American history. The department hopes also to announce soon the appointment of a distinguished, senior-level appointment in early modern European history, to begin in fall 1986.

Among other changes in the department, the present chairman is stepping down in August 1985 to devote more time to research. Professor William Widenor will become the new chairman. The editor of History at Illinois has urged me to use the occasion of this column to make some parting observations based on four years of experience heading the department. It occurred to me that this would be an excellent opportunity to offer a revised version of W. S. Gilbert’s “I’ve got a little list,” starring selected individuals from the higher administration, the greater memo-writing and questionnaire-generating bureaucracy, certain student organizations, and the Office of Space Utilization (to mention only a few of the possible sources). I have, however, resisted the temptation.

What I would like to say as out-going chairman is that I am very impressed by the talents of the departmental faculty and I am optimistic about the department’s future. It seems to me that the job of departmental chairperson, at least under present university circumstances, lends itself more to bricolage than to engineering with comprehensive blueprints, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. (Organic evolution, at any rate, proceeds in the same way.) A department such as ours, exhibiting a wealth of talent and a diversity of interests and methodological orientations, should prove capable of adapting and playing a significant role at this university as it enters a period of major challenges to traditional conceptions of what higher education and universities are — or ought to be — all about.

I would like to thank again all those alumni who have reported on their recent accomplishments, and also the alumni and friends who have generously contributed to the Department of History’s General Endowment Fund. Thanks also to Professor Wally Farnham for again editing History at Illinois.

Richard W. Burkhardt, Jr
Chairman

WIDENOR IS NEW CHAIRMAN

The search for a chairma replace Richard “Chip” Burkhardt, who decided not to stand for another term, resulted in widespread agreement upon the appointment of our colleague William C. Widenor. Bill has been in the department since 1974 and an associate professor since 1981. Before he entered academia, he was for several years a foreign service officer in the State Department.

Professor Widenor’s considerable academic achievements have been noted over the years in History at Illinois. It is enough to recall that his Henry Cabot Lodge and the Search for an American Foreign Policy (Berkeley, 1980) received the Organization of American Historians’ Frederick Jackson Turner prize. In 1984 he was a visiting associate professor at the University of California—Berkeley. His service within the
LOOKING BACK:
A CAREER IN TEACHING

by J. Leonard Bates

The following remarks are derived from a talk I gave on the evening of May 11, 1984, on the occasion of a splendid retirement dinner with Chairman Richard W. Burkhardt, Jr., of the History Department presiding. I greatly appreciated all that the Chairman, colleagues, former students, and others did to make this occasion possible. Clark Spence introduced me with compliments of surpassing generosity and entertained us all in his usual, inimitable style.

Our late esteemed colleague, Charles Nowell, said on the occasion of his retirement in 1969 that he had made much money in his teaching career but had had some fun at it and was doing almost exactly what he wanted to do anyway. Those are my sentiments, too, as I look back over a period of some forty years in college teaching. Nearly everyone reading this is doubtless associated with history in some way or another, and there may be an interest in how I came to enter this field. I had the good fortune, as most of us do, to grow up in a home where some history books were available. At Wake Forest College I majored in English and minored in history but found the history courses really interested me a bit more. Almost by accident I ended up in the fall of 1941 on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to enroll as a graduate student in history. I had not been fascinated with a summer job in a building and loan office—surely there was something better than that in store for me. Graduate school was worth a try.

During the fall of 1941 I found two companions, you might say—the profession of history and Dorothy P. Bares, a fellow student. North Carolina was crucial to us just as Illinois is to so many of you. We had some good professors, made life-long friends, and were lucky enough eventually to go on to teaching jobs at the University of Maryland; this, however, was after the war had intervened. My opportunities to read some history while serving in the Navy, along with the passage of the GI Bill, brought me back to the UNC campus in the fall of 1945.

By 1947, after my two years of course work, one professor argued that I should stay in Chapel Hill until the dissertation was completed. Another recommended just as strongly that, if I had an offer, as I did from Maryland, I should take it. We decided to go, and soon thereafter when jobs were much harder to find the correctness of our decision was apparent, and we were fortunate indeed to be in the Washington area.

Meanwhile, I had found Senator T.J. Walsh of Montana for a dissertation topic. His papers were in the Library of Congress, some five hundred boxes of them, a rich collection that I had learned about from Howard K. Beale, one of my professors. Beale was a well known scholar of that time who moved on from Carolina to the University of Wisconsin. Another adviser on the dissertation until he died was A.R. Newcomb, a fine gentleman and a scholar of the early national period and of North Carolina history. I finished my work, finally, with Fletcher Green, noted as the adviser of some one hundred history
AN APPRECIATION

CHARLES E. NOWELL —

by Lawrence Huml (Ph.D., 1969)

A long-time history faculty member and a former department chairman, Charles E. Nowell was a much-loved and respected member of the department. His contributions to the field of history were significant and his influence on students and colleagues alike was profound.

Charles was known for his dedication to teaching and research, and his passion for the subject of Mexican history was evident in his courses and publications. He was a masterful lecturer, able to convey complex ideas in a clear and engaging manner.

Charles was also a mentor and friend to many students, offering guidance and encouragement throughout their academic careers. His commitment to his students extended beyond the classroom, and he was always available to offer advice and support.

Charles's legacy lives on through the many students he influenced and the contributions he made to the field of history. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

DEATHS AMONG OUR ALUMNI

THE 309 CONTROL PANEL

For historians at Illinois, all roads lead to 309 Gregory Hall. The 309 Control Panel, a beloved tradition, has been a fixture on the third floor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's 309 Gregory Hall. The panel is a symbol of the excitement and camaraderie that characterizes the history department.

The 309 Control Panel is a place where historians can gather to discuss their research, share ideas, and catch up with old friends. It is a space that is both informal and intimate, providing a place for historians to connect and build relationships.

In 2010, the 309 Control Panel was renovated to create a more modern and functional space. The panel was expanded to include additional seating and a more comfortable atmosphere. The renovation was made possible through a grant from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Office of the Chancellor.

The 309 Control Panel continues to be a beloved tradition at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and it is a testament to the strong sense of community that exists in the history department.