

Bringing history home

By Melissa Martin
Of the Emerald

Like Indiana Jones in Raiders of the Lost Ark, University history professors leave briefcases and classrooms behind for adventure in foreign lands and great discoveries that will revolutionize textbooks.

Jonsie battled snake pits, huge boulders and savage tribes to acquire the prized archaeological piece that would make his museum famous.

One University history professor shares wine with a Basque shepherd in Northern Spain before driving three hours to the farmer's field to examine stones inscribed with Latin messages about past lifestyles. Another professor dines on turtle, eel and white rice all summer.

But unlike Jonsie, the work University professors do in other countries is not always glamorous. They spend months in European and South American libraries studying colleagues' research and diving into ancient records.

"The primary reason for research is to understand things from the inside out and to write about them in a fresh way," says History Prof. Jeff Needell.

"It keeps his mind active and forces him to be a better teacher."

RALPH FALCONERI — JAPAN

University history professors must travel because of the "insufficient history library" on campus, says history department head Ralph Falconeri.

"We often find ourselves traveling overseas to meet scholars there and do our own research," Falconeri says.

He travels to Japan every year to keep himself and students informed on the rapid changes taking place. Falconeri revises his Japanese slide show for his classes each fall.

"If we don't keep up we will be falling by the wayside," he says.

JOHN NICOLS — SPAIN

Professor John Nicols describes his time in Spain this summer as "spiritually rejuvenating." Nicols is one of 65 scholars who research Latin

inscriptions on stones for Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. After 10 years the scholars comprise a volume of their findings and move on to another country. So far, 50 to 60 volumes covering Mediterranean countries have been made and sell for \$400 to \$600 each.

This summer, Nicols analyzed Latin on more than 12,000 stones and recorded the messages that dealt with cultural values.

The research begins by talking to the village priest or teacher and finding out which farmers have potential research stones. He gets to know the farmer over a glass of wine before he goes to the field.

One method of reading the messages on the crystalized stone is to pour water on the inscription so that it forms a puddle over the impressions.

Reading the Latin stones gives Nicols, "insights into values that one doesn't find in other documents." His work deals with "hopes and aspirations of private individuals."

But Nicols faces obstacles created by the government.

"Politics is devastating," he says.

THOMAS BRADY — GERMANY

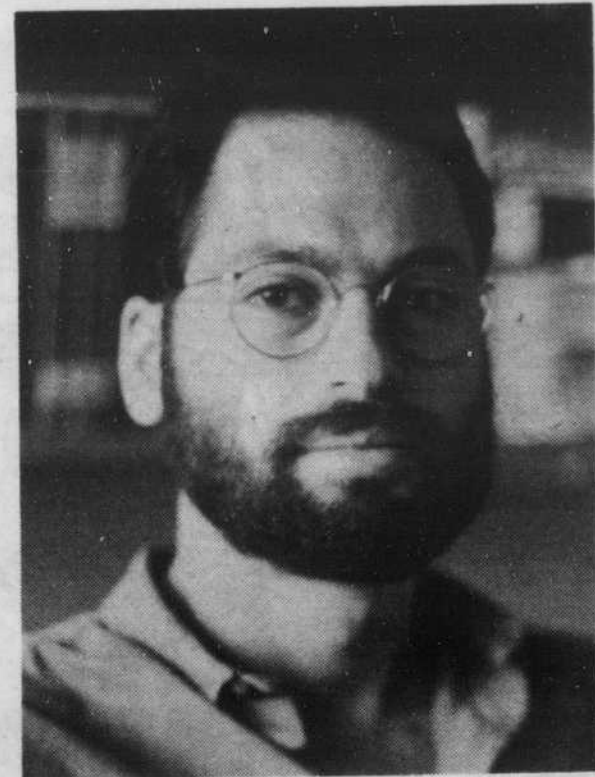
Last July, Professor Thomas Brady prepared and read a paper for the International Luther Research Congress in Erfurt, Germany. More than 270 scholars from 25 different countries attended.

"I stood in the very spot" where Luther studied to become a monk, Brady says. On that spot Brady read his 15-page paper which took four months to research. Brady says "a lively discussion" followed. The Congress asked Brady to do the paper two years ago.

Erfurt is home of the monastery where Luther spent most of his time. It was restored for the jubilation, Brady says.

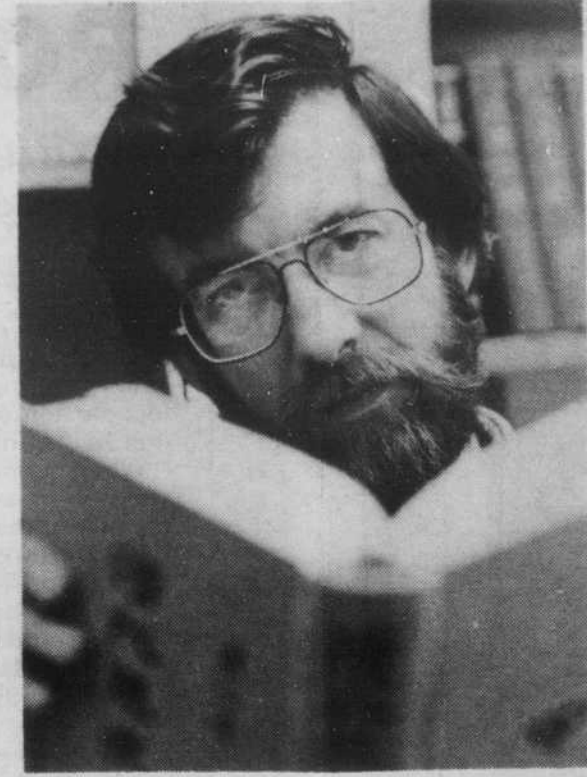
The jubilation, part of the Luther Congress that meets every five or six years, consisted of lectures, concerts, scholarly gatherings and debates.

"People used to believe history couldn't be taught properly except with a thick European accent," says Brady, who, as an undergraduate, had teachers that were World War I refugees.



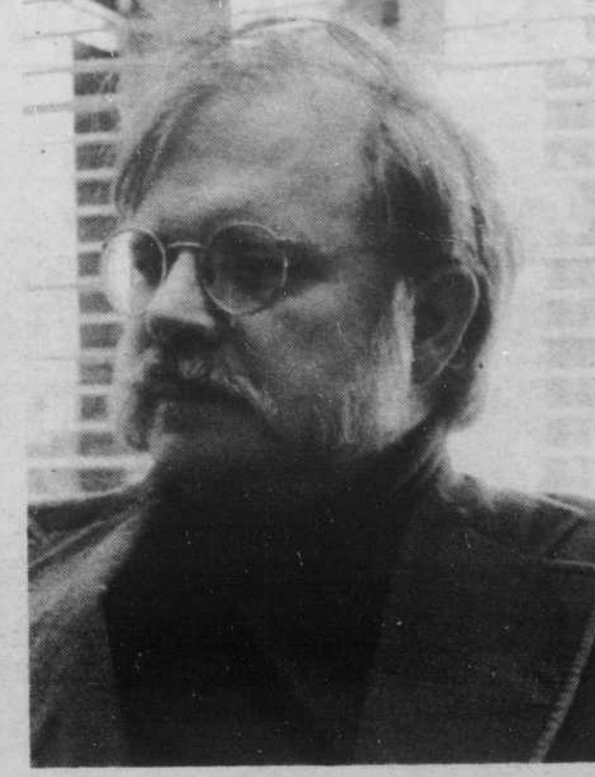
'The primary reason for research is to understand things from the inside out and write in a fresh way'

— Jeff Needell



'The pace in China is something we are not used to. In many ways America is in a rut'

— Joe Esherick



'People used to believe history couldn't be taught properly except with a thick European accent'

— Thomas Brady

Brady's trip this summer helped him understand current political situations — improvements in church-state relationships — between East and West Germany, he says.

"An extremely important political event was going on and it surfaced at this conference," Brady says. The state actually sponsored the conference.

Because Brady lived in East and West Germany and knew at least a third of the people at the conference, he says each day was a "series of intensive fifteen minute conversations," with old friends. He was mentally exhausted.

"One of the world's neatest people," accompanied Brady this summer. His wife, Katherine, administrator of Hospice of Lane, is also an historian.

JOE ESHERICK — CHINA
Joe Esherick, who is not teaching fall term, spent most of the summer in China with professors from UCLA, the University of Washington and Sophia University in Japan. This is Esherick's fourth visit to China and he says the country is constantly changing.

JEFF NEEDELL — BRAZIL
When Needell returned from Brazil after a summer of research in Rio de Janeiro, he brought six boxes of ancient books and six rolls of microfilm to continue his studies.

But he also brought home a renewed compassion for the nation that is facing its fifth year of

observed the people and their agriculture, village, community and kinship relationships, commerce, handicrafts, water control and the state involvement in politics.

Because China is not ready to let foreigners stay in the villages, the scholars drove to the village everyday. They tried to blend in with light blue shirts and khaki pants, Esherick says.

He calls his time in the Chinese village "two of the most productive research weeks of my life." Spending time with the people dispelled cliches. Esherick says he finds in textbooks.

The professors want to write a popular history about the life of the common people. But their research just "scratches the surface," Esherick says.

Traveling in order to research "allows us to bring vitality to teaching," the Oxford graduate says. And students can catch the excitement the professor feels about the recent trip and foreign research.

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But he also brought home a renewed compassion for the nation that is facing its fifth year of

drought in the northeast and floods in the south.

The people are eating field mice and snakes, Needell says, and Brazil expects to see a generation of children with brain damage because of the malnutrition.

"I was never dealt with in a hostile fashion. They never blamed me for the role of my government or American business," he says.

People are talking about three things in Brazil — economics, drought and floods, Needell says.

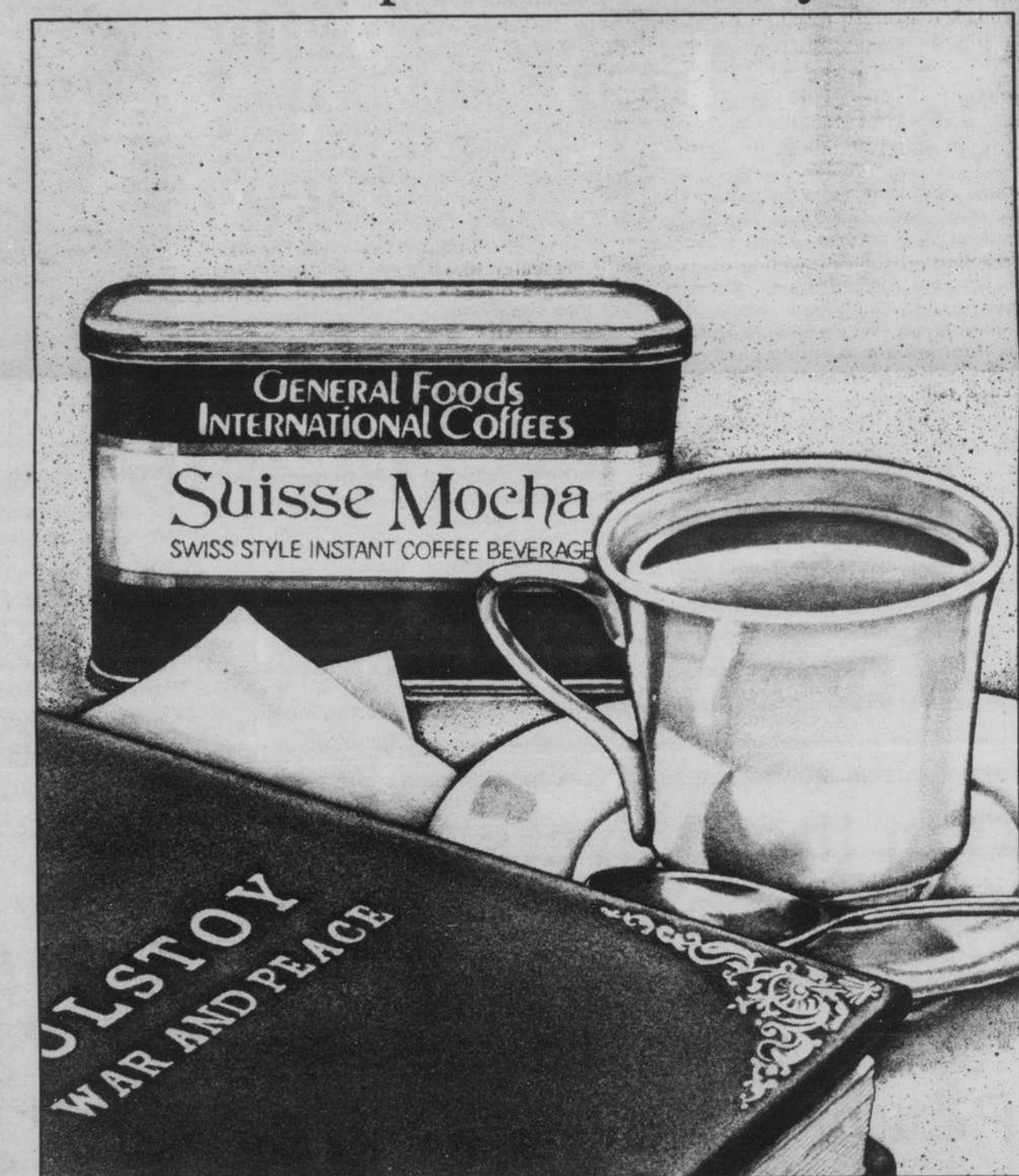
Needell is studying the private papers of a late 19th century engineer to find out why he designed the plans when Rio de Janeiro was reformed and what the elite and intellectuals thought about the issue.

The Yale and Stanford graduate spent six to 10 hours a day in archives, museum libraries and the national library hand copying all the material he needed because it couldn't be xeroxed or typed. Needell says he loved it but admitted he was tired at the end of the day.

When history professors travel they bring life to textbook pages. They also experience lifestyles in countries they love as their own.

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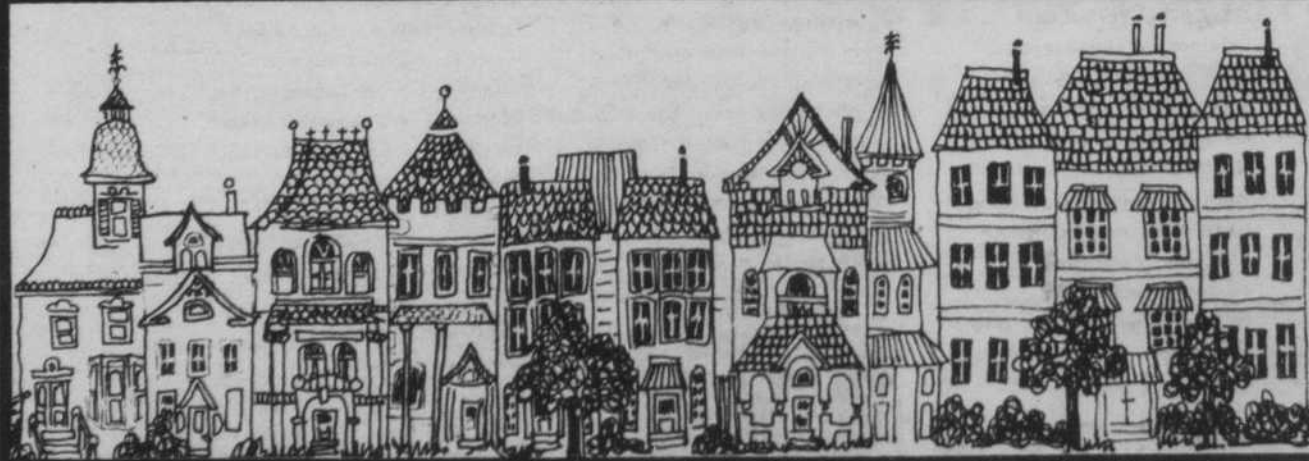


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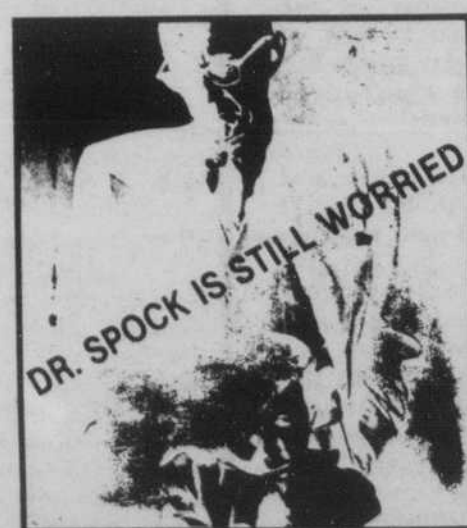
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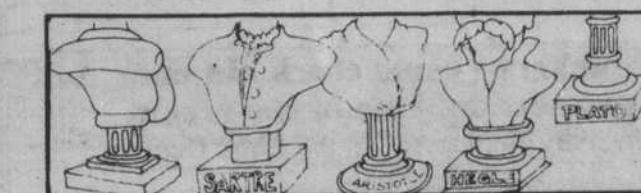


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