

Volume 5, No. 2
November 2013

Newsletter of the Austin Peay State University Retirees Association

In this issue

The wonders of Peru
Aleeta Christian 1

A busy fall season for
APSURA 4

Review of Vanished
Kingdoms by Norman
Davies
Richard Gildrie 6

Publication infor-
mation 7

Entrepreneurial Peruvi-
an: "One coin to pet my
lamb."

Photo by Anne Powers

Special note:
Our very successful
seminar "Straight Talk
about Retirement" oc-
curred as this issue was
going to press (see pho-
to on p. 7). We will
have a full report in
the February newslet-
ter.

AP164/11-13/400

Austin Peay State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The Director of Affirmative Action has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies and can be reached at 601 College Street, Browning Bldg. Room 7A, Clarksville, TN 37044, 931-221-7178, nondiscrimination@apsu.edu.

The wonders of Peru

Aleeta Christian

What causes us to do what we do, go where we go? When did we realize the world is so big, people aren't usually exactly like us, and that we can fly and fly and fly, trek and trek and trek, look and look and look?

When I was 10 years old, my family got the 22 volumes of the *World Book Encyclopedia*. I began spending hours lying on my stomach, gazing at the faraway places with strange-sounding names, the people of the world dressed in their native garb. This was the beginning of a dream that captured me and held fast, even tighter in my retirement days. In the last 21 years I have seen with my own eyes a great many of these people, dancing, twirling, selling souvenirs, working, farming, all over the world.

My September destination is a good example: Peru, a surprisingly exotic place in our own time zone. Anne Powers, a teacher, artist, photographer, my friend of over 40 years, and I, like -minded travelers, joined a group of 15 of various ages—we weren't the oldest!—and a very capable guide, Edwin, to see Peru, primarily Machu Picchu and the Amazon basin.

I immediately learned I needed a hiking stick—really a pair. Three or four legs were a lot better than two. Peru is a country of endless steps, no two the same height or even level. Usually handrails were not very substantial or even available. It is a country built of stone, and several very different and equally interesting civilizations on top of each another.

Peru is also very beautiful. Lima, the capital, is situated on a curving Pacific coastline, and then only a short 2½ hour flight away, we were 10,000 feet above sea level in Cusco, the capital of the Incas. This city of almost a million, nestled in the Andes, provided three days of visiting ruins of the 1500s—battles between Spanish conquistadores and Incas at Sacsaywaman, and a worship location at a settlement site in the Sacred Valley village of Ollantaytambo.



Continued on page 2

Master stone men built these sites helped by their only beast of burden, the llama. Edifices were so perfect that a “knife could not be inserted between the big boulders.” After altitude acclimation, the group’s primary destination, Machu Picchu, lay at the end of a local train ride.

No one knows what Machu Picchu actually was. A retreat? a secondary residence for Inca royalty? a worship center? Because it was located deep in the Andes mountains, the Spanish never suspected or saw it. But it is a treasure, one of the new ten wonders of the world. It is so spectacular it almost glows like a gem, a complete, seemingly untouched ruin. I looked, savored, dreamed, climbed, and meditated there. Pictures do not really convey its beauty.

I now think the Inca civilization was the greatest of ancient American civilizations. It was certainly the biggest. In 1532 the conquistador Pizarro rode with his few hundred men into the Inca empire, and at the time it included over 10 million people. Even though the Incas had no written language, they were able to establish an organized kingdom from modern Ecuador to Chile, east to Bolivia and Brazil.

A Cuscon woman working Alpaca, and a blind Cuscon harpist

Photos by Anne Powers



I was very surprised to learn that in just a few years, under ten, in the Conquistador period, the Inca population was reduced to about 600,000. However, on my tour I came to realize that we were not looking at European/Spanish descendants of the conquerors, but rather at colorful Incas, everywhere. And these people are still speaking their native tongue Quechua instead of Spanish. Ironically, the “conquerors” had not conquered after all!

After experiencing Machu Picchu, our group flew to the Peru Amazon basin to experience the jungle, the people, the river, and a rustic lodge (with a pet tapir and anaconda). We hiked through the jungle and fished for piranha—to eat!—and watched pink dolphins jump.

Muddy riverbanks on the Amazon were a challenge to negotiate, but visiting a settlement of Yagua natives opened our eyes to a way of life only possible in this dense jungle. The Yagua culture probably won’t last because the government is providing schools, clean water and health services. These good efforts will certainly benefit the Yagua, though they will destroy their uniqueness. Our local guide, a clever, knowledgeable naturalist, was proud to tell us that his mother came from the local tribe we visited. On a night hike near the lodge, the group was certainly glad that his exper-

tise allowed him to instantly recognize a Fer de Lance snake on the path—an asp, the most deadly snake in this hemisphere.

Anne and I left Peru laden with memories—the beauty of the land, the size and diversity of the large cities Cusco, Iquitos, and Lima, the distinct characteristics of peoples, the surprise of the food—native quinoa, many varieties of potatoes, and above all the national delicacy, guinea pig. We will savor an experience which will dance in our heads a long, long time.



Machu Picchu



Yagua schoolchildren

*Photos by
Anne Powers*



A busy fall season for APSURA

This has been a busy three months for APSURA, beginning with the August convocation and picnic, followed by the Rotary Sunrise Century bike ride, another electronics workshop, and continuing through a very successful luncheon and Greenway walk in October. On Nov. 3-4 we travelled to Fall Creek Falls for an informative meeting of the Tennessee Higher Education Retirees Association, and we have just completed our seminar for new retirees on Nov. 12. The December Choral Holiday dinner and concert, President Hall's open house, and our special excursion to Nashville for the Grant/Gill/Nashville Symphony concert still lie ahead.



A number of APSURANS attended the Aug. 21 convocation and picnic. We found this year that current employees as well as retirees were accustomed to seeing our APSURA tables at the picnic, and they quickly gathered around to greet old friends and make new

ones. This was a big change from the first year, four years ago, when we most often heard questions such as "What the heck is APSURA?" from onlookers. This time we more often heard "When can I join," and we were of course happy to tell them. We let them know that the final year of employment is a suitable time to submit the membership form. If they sign up then, APSURA can help them bridge the big gap between employment and the new world of retirement.



APSURANS again helped staff rest-stops on the 100-mile Sunrise Century bike ride on Aug. 31, joining exchange students and other newcomers to this enjoyable job. Over 1000 bikers participated this year, and many of them stopped at the first rest-stop, which we staffed. One minute we would be quietly standing by ourselves on Webb Rd., surrounded only by corn and soybean fields, and huge barrels of water, Gatorade, and tables of pretzels and bananas. The next minute we would be inundated by hundreds of colorful bikers in various states of exhilaration and exhaustion, rapidly filling



*APSURANS
enjoying the
picnic follow-
ing the convo-
cation on Aug.
21*

*Working the
Webb Rd.
rest-stop at
the Sunrise
Century Bike
Ride, Aug.
31*

their water bottles and excitedly telling us of their adventures along the way. We all had a great time, and the Sunrise Rotary Club thanked us for our efforts with a \$1000 check for our scholarship fund.



On Sept. 3 APSURANS enjoyed another exploration of the mysteries of smartphones and tablets under the capable tutelage of Bob Privett. We learned more about the current migration of the APSU email accounts, and we downloaded some new applications and practiced a few that we had begun working on last time. We are beginning to talk about developing a Facebook group and learning how to use Twitter, though we feel most of us are too longwinded to confine ourselves to 140 characters per tweet.

The turnout for our fall luncheon on Oct. 22 exceeded our expectations, with 38 in attendance. The food was up to the usual Looking Glass standards, and the round tables in the banquet room facilitated good conversation among friends. The speaker was newly-elected state senator Mark Green, who talked of his assignment as an Army Ranger medic to stay with Saddam Hussein during the first 24 hours of his captivity in 2003. Sen. Green portrayed Hussein as being as

haughty in captivity as he had been when in power. Most of Green's other comments were also non-political in nature, though he did mention legislation he has proposed to aid seniors via elimination of the Hall tax on dividend income.

Dr. Wayne Chester proved to be a goldmine of information on the flora along the Greenway during our Oct. 26 walk. We actually walked only about half a mile, as Wayne found things of interest every few steps. We learned which trees were native and which non-native, which were ancient and modern, and which smelled and tasted good and which did not. This was a most enjoyable journey. Most of us reconvened at Silke's for brunch following the walk.



Senator Mark Green and attendees of APSURA luncheon on Oct. 22



On Nov. 3-4 we met with representatives of retiree associations from ETSU, UTK, and UM to discuss matters of common interest, including providing retirees with programming that meets their needs and interests, and maintaining the momentum of the organizations through attrition and changes in leadership. The board of your APSURA volunteered to organize next year's meeting, which will again be held at FCF.

As this newsletter was going to press, our Nov. 12 seminar for those retiring soon took place with resounding success. Approximately 40 attendees

welcomed a panel of experts including Angie Judish of HR, Kanika Coleman of TCRS, Rich Levine of TIAA-CREF, Kathy Ellis of Raymond James, Ron Smith of Social Security, and psychologist Dr. Lu Annette Butler, who discussed the retirement procedure, transitioning to retiree income and insurance, and the stresses of retiring and retirement. Attendees were very appreciative of the panelists' solid information and helpful answers to their questions about this major transition period in their lives.

Listening to biologist and APSURAN Wayne Chester on the Greenway, Oct. 26

Panelists
 Rich Levine,
 Kanika Johnson, Angie
 Judish,
 Kathy Ellis,
 Ron Smith,
 and Lu Annette Butler

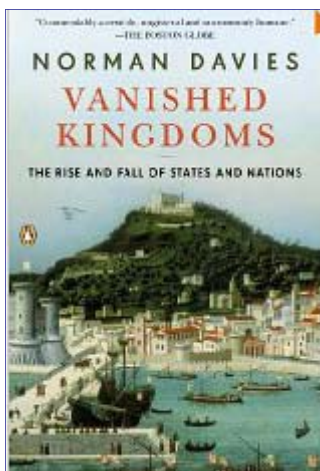
HR/APSURA
 seminar for
 those retiring soon,
 Nov. 12



From the bookshelf

Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012). Review by Richard Gildrie.

When historians stray from well-travelled paths, fascinating, even important, stories can emerge. So it is with this book. The author, a noted Oxford historian, has long been known for scholarly eccentricity, most obviously his contention that Poland is more important than France in understanding Europe's past and prospects. Perhaps an arguable proposition but definitely unusual. Yet, however odd his interpretations, his work has centered on Europe's major states, mainly those that can still be found on maps.



The states which still exist, as he points out, are the victors in the Darwinian "struggle for existence" that largely defines political history. Professor Davies has decided to uncover the stories of "vanished" states, a task he calls "historical salvage." He describes himself in this work as "a beachcomber and treasure-seeker, a collector of flotsam and jetsam, a raiser of wrecks, a diver of the deep, scouring the seabed to recover what was lost" (p. 11).

What he found is astonishing. He tells the story of fifteen European states ranging from the fifth to the twentieth centuries of which I, a supposedly professional historian, knew little or nothing. Furthermore, these accounts are hardly esoteric or inconsequential. Interesting in their own rights, they cast new light on the main tracks. Sometimes one can learn much about the survivors in history by studying the vanquished. The deeper point is that all states are mortal and therefore all victories, all survivals, are ambiguous and provisional. Also, the vanished often leave important traces that shape even the present.

A prime example is Alt Clud, the Kingdom of the Rock, which ruled the Firth of Clyde from the fifth to the twelfth centuries. Its main fortress was atop a long extinct volcano, Dumbarton Rock, whose modern name is derived from Gaelic "Fort of the Britons." From here a Romano-British aristocracy guarded the

seaways and protected lush farmlands of southwestern Scotland from Saxon, Viking, and other invaders for over seven hundred years until it finally succumbed to the horrific wars between Norman England and the emerging Kingdom of the Scots to the west. Its prosperity came in large part from shipbuilding and commerce, a way of life it bequeathed to the shipyards of Dumbarton and the commerce of Glasgow. Its influence, among other things, helped assure the persistence of Welsh society and culture. The saga of Alt Clud is not only truer but better than that of Camelot, but hardly anyone knows it.

The story of Burgundia, which flourished through various permutations for over a thousand years, is more familiar but no less fascinating. Stretching from just south of Paris to Marseille, it bid fair in the Middle Ages to emerge as a stronger state than France or the Holy Roman Empire. But it was riven by external foes and dynastic conflicts and accidents. It too left a distinctive regional culture, literature, art, and dialect that helped shape modern Europe.

A final example is the convoluted history of Estonia, like Poland a state that appears and disappears while its people, language, and society persist against enormous odds. Professor Davies uses its story in part to describe the greatest disappearing act of our times, the collapse of the Soviet Union. Concentrating on Estonia provides an immediate and illuminating perspective on an obviously momentous event in modern world history. The point of view from Tallinn is vastly different than those of Moscow or Washington.

Another valuable facet of the work is the author's frequent and sensitive use of epics, songs, poetry, and folk tales from these "vanished kingdoms" to give the reader a better sense of their understanding of themselves as peoples and nations. Superb maps and lavish illustrations also help. At bottom, this is a book about the diversity and persistence of the human spirit amidst prosperity and catastrophe.

Publication Information

The APSURA Newsletter is published quarterly by the Austin Peay State University Retirees Association. A supplement to the Newsletter, the APSURA NewsNotes, is published monthly to update APSURA members on time-sensitive coming activities and events, both those in which APSURA is participating officially and others recommended by APSURA members. Both the Newsletter and Newsnotes are available at www.apsu.edu/retirees-association.

We invite APSU retirees to send us specific information about coming activities and events you believe will be of interest to APSU retirees. Please send to Christa Beckner at ayyez5m@yahoo.com, to Hester Crews at crewsh@charter.net, to Jim Clemmer at clemmerj@apsu.edu, or to APSURA at the physical address below, and include exact dates, times, locations, deadlines, costs, etc. We also welcome the submission of original articles for possible publication in the Newsletter, especially descriptions of your accomplishments, travels, discoveries, and other experiences as APSU retirees.

Submissions are limited to 500 words and a maximum of three high-resolution photographs. Send texts as regular email (no tabs) or Word attachments to Jim Clemmer at clemmerj@apsu.edu with photographs sent individually as separate jpg files. Or you may submit typed manuscripts and good-quality photo prints to APSU Retirees Association, Box 4426, Clarksville, TN 37044.

Officers

*Aleeta Christian, President
Hester Crews, Vice-President
Nancy Irby, Treasurer
Christa Beckner, Secretary*

Directors

*Ann Harris
Lu Annette Butler
John Butler
Jim Diehr
Mitch Robinson
Phil Kemmerly
Al Bekus (ex officio)*

Publicity Director

*Jim Clemmer
clemmerj@apsu.edu*

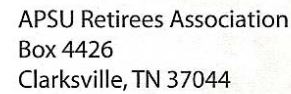
Address

*APSU Retirees Association
Box 4426
Clarksville, TN 37044*

On the Web

www.apsu.edu/retirees-association

See our website for current and past issues of our Newsletter and NewsNotes, a retirement checklist, and information on retiree benefits.



() Retired faculty or staff

() Associate member

Dr._____ **Mr.**_____ **Ms**_____ **Mrs.**_____ **Other preferred title**_____

Additional donation for Scholarship Fund _____ **Lifetime Membership () \$500**