Difficult Dialogues continue in film

UAB has been selected by the Ford Foundation as one of 15 higher education institutions to receive a $60,000 grant for the project “Building Community through Dialogue and Ethnographic Films.”

The grant is a follow-up to the first $100,000 Difficult Dialogues grant awarded to UAB as one of 27 institutions funded in 2006. The new grant competition was open only to select recipients of the first grant. “The Ford Foundation grants confirm UAB’s leadership in developing innovative curricula and collaborative co-curricular programs to help prepare our students to be engaged, knowledgeable and responsible citizens at both the local and global community levels,” says Marilyn Kurata, Ph.D., director of core curriculum enhancement and principal investigator for both grants.

Ethnographic filmmaking has taken root at UAB in recent years and is offered to students as a service-learning course. The course encourages students to explore the meaning of community at the group/collective level and the individual level and to create films examining issues affecting the Birmingham community, including housing, education, health care, immigration, poverty and the environment. Some of these films were shown recently at the Sidewalk Film Festival.

UAB will use the new funds to fuel student events that use ethnographic films as a springboard for meaningful and constructive dialogue on controversial topics. The first of those will be a Film for Thought event, building off of the Food for Thought series, which featured open-image forums in which students, faculty and staff come together to discuss issues of importance in today’s society. There likely will be other Film for Thought events next semester.

“With the variety of cultures, lifestyles and personalities at UAB, learning from one another helps us to better understand each other,” explains Christopher Reaves, Ph.D., the director of the Office for Undergraduate Research. “Many universities are trying to get students to speak about difficult issues, and it’s a challenge. It’s important to develop models like Food for Thought and now Film for Thought that communicate to students that the university campus is the place to have open exchange of different opinions. Our campus, with its rich diversity, is a great place to do that.”

Supports varied efforts

The grant also will support the Diversity Week Film Scramble in the first semester of 2009, the continuing development of an Intergroup Dialogue program and additional development workshops on facilitating difficult dialogues.

The final component will be community town hall meetings that use ethnographic films to bring town and gown together to discuss community issues.

Co-investigators for the grant include Thomas Alexander, director of Student Programs, and Michele Forman and Rosie O’Reirre, program administrators in the Center for Urban Affairs.

“Knowing the multiple communities that make up Birmingham is the first step toward exercising civic responsibility thoughtfully.”

Center for Urban Affairs. They will oversee the ethnographic film components.

Mark LaGory, Ph.D., professor of sociology, will oversee the Intergroup Dialogue. Reaves will oversee assessment.

Reaves hopes to incorporate the use of an audience-response system into some of the discussions that will take place on campus. Audience-response systems feature a hand-held remote control, or clicker, that students use to convey their responses to questions in a way that is anonymous.

“This is a good way to get instant feedback and see if students understand a concept or are divided on an issue,” Reaves says. “The clicker system helps keep anonymity, but you can use the responses to assess purposes and drive conversations, which is the ultimate goal.”

State of the University is this week

President Carol Garrison will highlight the university’s progress during the past year and discuss prospects and challenges that lie ahead during the annual State of the University Address, hosted by the UAB Faculty Senate. The address is set for 3:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 16 in the Hill University Center.

Dentistry, sociology collaborate

A new collaboration between Dentistry and Sociology will arm dental students with the knowledge to better assess and respond to the social causes of poor health and disease.

The goal is to teach first-year dental students the importance of investigating each patient’s personal and social circumstances to provide the most thorough care possible. “We need to teach our students more about life and real-world interactions and the factors that contribute to a person’s health-care decisions,” says Michael McCracken, D.D.S., Ph.D., associate dean for education and curriculum development in the Department of Prosthodontics. “Every decision a patient makes regarding their health care is wrapped up in their background and decisions they have made in their life.”

Mark LaGory, Ph.D., chair and professor of sociology, says patients’ social backgrounds affect their overall health in a
Annual benefits open enrollment under way

The annual benefits open enrollment period is under way, which means that all benefits-eligible UAB employees should be making final decisions related to medical, dental, vision, voluntary AD&D insurance coverage and flexible spending accounts (FSAs) before 5 p.m. CT Friday, Oct. 31.

To participate in open enrollment, employees may make all elections online at www.shps.com, or by using a touch-tone telephone and calling 1-800-225-0162. If additional help is needed, customer service representatives will be available to answer questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. CT Monday through Friday. Please remember that in order to comply with federal laws regulating benefit plan participation and to retain those pre-tax features which are desired by UAB employees, changes will not be accepted after the close of open enrollment; again, that deadline is 5 p.m. CT Friday, Oct. 31.

You must participate in open enrollment if you are:

• Changing your level of coverage as it relates to the single/employee plus up to 2 dependents/family option
• Adding or deleting dependents
• Changing from basic to comprehensive level of coverage – or vice versa – with the dental plan
• Dropping existing medical, dental and/or vision coverage
• Enrolling or changing voluntary AD&D coverage
• Participating in the flexible spending account (FSA) program for 2009

Dental plan enhancements

There will be no changes to the dental plan for 2009. Premium increases for UAB medical plans and plan design changes

The cost of healthcare is rising nationwide as a result of inflation, advances in healthcare and increased use of the benefits. UAB faces many of the same health-care issues of our nation, state and city. Premiums will increase for all three medical plans: Viva UAB by 6.5 percent, Viva Access by 8 percent, and Blue Cross Blue Shield by 10 percent.

Pharmacy plan changes are also being implemented that include increased generic drug utilization. Pharmacy co-pays will be increasing slightly in order to offset growing pharmacy costs, and a new co-pay level for specialist visits is being introduced under the medical plans.

Vision Insurance with VSP

Vision rates have remained level since introduction of the VSP plan in 2006. This year, VSP rates will increase 10 percent for 2009. In addition, the out-of-pocket co-pays for VSP will increase by $5.

Flex Accounts

UAB will continue to offer flexible spending accounts (FSAs), which allow you to set aside money from your paycheck before it is taxed to pay for certain health care and dependent care expenses. Employees must re-enroll in the FSA program during open enrollment to participate for the 2009 plan year.

Voluntary AD&D

The voluntary AD&D program is now an open enrollment benefit. During open enrollment you may enroll or change your coverage. The plan is offered through MetLife.

To find out more

All elections will be effective Jan. 1, 2009. New premiums for medical, dental, vision and voluntary AD&D will be reflected in your January 2009 payroll. FSA deductions will also be reflected in your January 2009 payroll.

Annual open enrollment materials are available on the UAB Human Resource Management Benefits Web page; go to www.uab.edu/benefits and click on Annual Open Enrollment. This area includes links to the providers’ home pages as well as provider directories. Informational materials are also available on the SHPS Web site. Any questions concerning annual open enrollment should be directed to an HR consultant or directly to the UAB Benefits Department at 934-3458 or by e-mail at benefits@uab.edu.

UAB Resource Center to explore domestic Oct. 22

The UAB Resource Center will host a luncheon presentation on the “Cycle of Domestic Violence” on Wednesday, Oct. 22, from noon to 1 p.m. in Suite 330 of the Resource Center.

The program is offered at no charge and is open to all UAB employees and their family members. Attendees are invited to bring their lunch to the session. Call 934-2281 to register; space is limited.

Recognizing and understanding the cycle of domestic violence is important for all members of the UAB community in order to offer support to victims, whether those impacted are patients, friends, family or co-workers.

The Resource Center is the UAB Employee Assistance Program, providing counseling and wellness programs for UAB employees and their family members. For more information about this program or the services offered by the Resource Center, call 934-2281 or visit www.uah.edu/eap.

Stephanie Galbreath of the YWCA is the guest speaker.

‘09 Ireland Prize noms now being accepted

Nominations for the 2009 Caroline P. and Charles W. Ireland Prize for Scholarly Distinction now are being accepted.

A nominee must be a full-time, regular UAB faculty member who is a resident of the schools of Arts & Humanities, Natural Sciences & Mathematics or Social & Behavioral Sciences. Candidates must have notable achievements in their field, have gained national and/or international recognition of peers and have demonstrated talents that contribute to the elevation of the arts and sciences at UAB and in the Birmingham community.

A brief letter of nomination by the person submitting the candidate and a curriculum vitae of the nominee should be forwarded to Claire Ped. Ph.D., associate provost for Faculty Development and Faculty Affairs, Administration Building Room 374. The deadline for receipt of nominations is Monday, Jan. 5, 2009.

UAB Resource Center is a charitable organization whose mission is to support the UAB community in times of need. To donate visit www.uab.edu/irelandprize.
McClintock to focus on Antarctic climate change in Discussion Book Dialogues

James McClintock, Ph.D., has seen animal and plant life struggle for survival during his research trips to the Antarctic Peninsula. He believes the struggle has been brought on by a global rise in temperatures.

“The Antarctic Peninsula where my research colleague UAB biologist Charles Amézeg and I work may be the eued canary in the mine when it comes to climate change,” McClintock says. “Conditions there are changing very quickly, including an increase of about 3 or 4 degrees centigrade in air temperature in the past 30 years.”

McClintock, an endowed university professor of Polar and Marine Biology, says that warming air is affecting the continent in increasingly visible ways. He will examine “The Ecological Impacts of Climate Change on the Antarctic Peninsula” in a Discussion Book Dialogue, Thursday, Oct. 16. The event is from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Blazer Hall Life Center. It is free and open to the public.

McClintock, former dean of the UAB School of Natural Sciences & Mathematics and professor of biology, is an expert in invertebrate chemical ecology, reproduction, nutrition and physiology, particularly in marine invertebrates. He also is an expert on Antarctica and travels there frequently to study the ecology and chemical defenses of marine invertebrates. He also is an expert on Antarctica and travels there frequently to study the ecology and chemical defenses of marine invertebrates.

McClintock is co-author of an article that appeared in the recent July-August edition of American Scientist in which he and his colleagues charge that the Antarctic Peninsula is warming faster than anywhere else on Earth, threatening the rich but fragile ecological community.

McClintock says the changes are dramatic and immediate. One example he cites is the recent discovery of king crabs that may soon threaten the delicate, thin-shelled marine invertebrates.

“Last year for the first time ever, as the sea temperatures are warming along the Antarctic Peninsula, deep sea king crabs were discovered moving up on to the Antarctic continental slope,” McClintock says. “The theory goes they have been excluded from Antarctica because they don’t do well in the cold. But as the water is warming, the physiological barrier that keeps them away is being released, and they’re starting to migrate up on to the shelf. These are large king crabs with large crushing claws. The concern of course is if they move into these communities they’re going to radically alter the whole sea floor community as they crush these shell invertebrates known to have very thin, fragile, poorly calcified, shells.”

There are other signs of warming. McClintock says the number of Adélie penguins that inhabit islands off the western shore frequently visited by McClintock is dwindling dramatically.

“As the air warms along the Peninsula it becomes more humid, which means more snowfall later in the season,” McClintock says. “The Adélies are arriving at the usual time to lay their eggs, but following egg-laying they’re getting buried in the snow; the eggs are not making it because they’re not adapted to being covered with snow or submerged in melt water.” McClintock says McClintock will discuss other climate change issues surrounding Antarctica at the Discussion Book dialogues, including a reduction in krill (small shrimp that form the base of the food web), the changing patterns of the chinstrap and gentoo penguins, the migration of fur and elephant seals and the affect of too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere on the ocean’s acidity.

Log on to www.uab.edu/antarctica2001 to learn more about McClintock’s trip to Antarctica earlier this year, and visit www.uab.edu/discussionbook for a complete list of Discussion Book activities. You also can read the American Scientist article at http://www.americanscientist.org/issues/feature/2008/4/earth-responses-to-climate-change-on-the-antarctic-peninsula.
Research, care are tools to combat rising COPD deaths

A recent article authored by UAB Professor Emeritus Dick Briggs Jr., M.D., suggests chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is increasing in prevalence and mortality, especially among women, and will be the third leading cause of death in the world by 2020.

The article appeared in a recent American Journal of Medicine, in which Briggs was guest editor. Another article in the journal, co-authored by Mark Dransfield, M.D., assistant medical director of the Lung Health Center, argues that preventing a worsening of patient symptoms is critical to maintaining both the quality of life of patients with COPD and their functionality.

“The increasing incidence of COPD worldwide is due to the increasing prevalence of cigarette smoking in the developing world and Asia,” Dransfield says. “Although fewer Americans are smoking now compared to the 1970s, we are just seeing the peak effects of the prior popularity of the habit.”

COPD is a lung disease commonly caused by smoking in which the lungs are damaged, making it hard to breathe. The disease can be treated, but cannot be cured. In COPD, the airways — the tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs — are partly obstructed, making it difficult to get air in and out.

Most people with COPD are smokers or former smokers. Breathing in other kinds of lung irritants like pollution, dust, or chemicals over a long period of time also may cause or contribute to COPD.

UAB is positioning itself as a leader in diagnosing and treating the disease, and numerous faculty and staff in the Lung Health Center are researching ways to effectively combat the disease.

“UAB is involved in multiple large clinical trials of COPD, including both National Institutes of Health and pharmaceutical-sponsored trials,” Dransfield says. “These range from Phase I and II pilot studies to large-scale randomized trials to assess clinical efficacy of new and existing therapies. At present, 12 such trials are ongoing through the Lung Health Center, and recruitment is continuous. UAB is viewed as a national leader in both the clinical care of COPD patients and patient-based research.”

Under diagnosis an issue

Part of the trouble for patients is that the disease is under-diagnosed and therefore not properly treated. Dransfield says this happens for multiple reasons, including the belief that cough, sputum production and shortness of breath are normal for smokers.

“In addition, many physicians view COPD as a self-inflicted disease with few effective therapies and are thus not enthusiastic about testing for airflow obstruction,” Dransfield says. “Simple spirometry, or measurement of lung function, is all that is required to diagnose the disease, but it is underutilized.”

The lung-function test known as FEV1 has long been considered the best way to monitor the progressive illness, but Dransfield says in his American Journal article this practice is outdated and likely compromises patient care.

“FEV1 correlates poorly with patient symptoms and quality of life, and therapies can be effective even in the absence of FEV1 changes,” Dransfield says. “The impact of COPD is better assessed by multi-dimensional indices, including lung function, severity of dyspnea, exercise capacity and body-mass index.”

Since there is no cure for the disease, those with COPD — especially smokers — have to alter their lifestyle to improve their conditions

The major intervention proven to affect the natural history of the disease is smoking cessation and inhaled medications can improve symptoms and quality of life.

Pulmonary rehabilitation also is a very effective intervention to improve patients’ symptoms, but Dransfield says it is under-utilized.

Several critical clinical trials have recently been completed, and there is hope the results will provide clues to help combat the disease.

“We hope they will show that inhaled therapies can delay the decline in lung function associated with COPD,” Dransfield says. Visit www.uab.edu/lunghealthcenter for more information on COPD and other lung-related diseases.

Physics expands international training with NSF grant

Physics researchers Andrei V. Stanishevsky, Ph.D., and Yogeesh K. Vohra, Ph.D., have received a $414,000 National Science Foundation award to support international collaboration in nanomaterials research.

Stanishevsky and Vohra are studying these materials that have wide-ranging applications because their smoothness and hardness offer promise for use in cutting and surgical tools and other biomedical devices.

The award is provided through the Material World Network through the NSF Division of Materials Research.

“The funding is a first of its kind in physics for UAB, which will begin a closer collaboration with our partners in Europe,” says Stanishevsky, associate professor at UAB.

“There is a large potential for our students’ and the university’s growth in global training and future collaborations.”

Scientists and students from the UAB Department of Physics’ Center for Nanoscale Materials and Bio-integration will partner with peers from Poland’s Technical University of Lodz and its European Union supported Centre for Excellence. The international component of the study makes it very unique, he says.

Approximately 20 UAB students will participate in the Material World Network project. The work will be conducted during a three-year period.

Reaves and O’Beire were the instructors for one of the Exploring Birmingham freshman seminars created as part of the first Difficult Dialogues grant.

The students in the class got an intimate look at Birmingham through the course. They engaged in activities such as riding the DART, eating at local restaurants, touring local neighborhoods and visiting places such as Park Place, SoHo Square, the Southern History Archives and the Civil Rights Institute, among others. They analyzed these components and their relationship to community culture and lifestyle.

They looked at community planning and the environment’s impact on quality of life, and were introduced to service learning. The class also volunteered at Glen Iris Elementary School.

“We really saw the students engage in the community and learn about Birmingham,” Reaves says. “They had to get out of their comfort zone and learn about parts of the city that they weren’t aware existed or had never engaged.

“They took a critical look at the history and design of Birmingham and how that affects our quality of life and the living conditions we experience today,” he says.

“Knowing the multiple communities that make up Birmingham is the first step toward exercising civic responsibility thoughtfully.”
Robots, research elevate urology’s status under Amling

After 20 years in the Navy — and a long list of accomplishments that included achieving the rank of captain — Christopher Amling, M.D., decided it was time to retire from the U.S. Armed Forces and begin his civilian life.

The urologic cancer specialist began looking for positions at academic institutions across the country three years ago, including UAB.

“I found that UAB offered the best opportunity, resources and infrastructure to develop one of the country’s Top 10 urology programs,” he says. “That challenge attracted me here.”

Since joining the Comprehensive Cancer Center in 2005, Amling has been meeting that challenge head-on as the senior scientist and director of the UAB Division of Urology by hiring new faculty and establishing a program in robotic surgery.

Under his leadership, UAB was among the first institutions in Alabama to offer the da Vinci® robot in surgery to prostate cancer patients, and it has become one of the largest robotic surgery programs in the Southeast. The robot now is used to treat several different cancers, including bladder cancer, and UAB is the first center in Alabama and the Deep South to perform this procedure.

Amling says the department is fulfilling the charge it was given when he was hired — to grow a respected clinical program in urology in the country. “We are definitely on track to become one of the premiere urology programs in the country,” Amling says.

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“We are definitely on track to become one of the premier urology programs in the country,” Amling says. “For the first time we were named this year as one of the nation’s Top 50 urology programs, coming in at No. 36 in U.S. News and World Report rankings. As we continue to offer state-of-the-art clinical care, grow our faculty and further develop our research programs, I’m confident that our national stature will continue to grow.”

Amling also has expanded the Cancer Center’s research enterprise for urologic cancers, offering more clinical trials and conducting new outcomes research to broaden the scope of clinical and basic research.

“We have made significant strides in this area during the past three years,” Amling says. “We have developed research databases to facilitate clinical research and significantly increased our participation in clinical trials. Our urologic research laboratory, led by Jim Mobley, M.D., focuses on proteomics in urologic cancers and utilizes state-of-the-art mass spectrometry instrumentation. This was started from scratch and now is an active laboratory for us and for others at UAB needing this expertise.”

A satisfying challenge

Though his schedule does not allow much free time, Amling enjoys spending it with his family, including Barbara, his wife of 24 years, and his three children, Melissa, Caroline and Thomas. He met Barbara in his native Oregon, and they were married during his last year of medical school.

“Being in the military, I’ve asked my family to go here and there, and they’ve been very flexible,” Amling says. “I think there’s a lot of value in seeing different parts of the country. Every place is a new adventure, with the opportunity to experience something and learn from it. We look back on it as a good thing.”

In acknowledging the challenges of his work, Amling also stresses its benefits.

“There are a lot of sad moments in cancer, but there are a lot of situations that enable me to affect patients in a really positive way,” he says. “To go home at the end of the day and feel good about what you do is an important part of any job, whether it’s medicine or anything else. It’s a challenging job, but it’s a satisfying one.”

UAB’s Division of Urology, under the leadership of Christopher Amling, was named at one of the Top 50 urology programs in the country this year by U.S. News and World Report. “As we continue to offer state-of-the-art clinical care, grow our faculty and further develop our research programs, I’m confident our national stature will continue to grow,” Amling says.
Dixieland jazz and shrimp boil in the Haskell Courtyard one hour before the show.

THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA & PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND
Sharing the stage for the first time in “Down by the Riverside,” music dedicated to New Orleans.

October 18
Saturday, 8 p.m.

Birmingham Music Club presents
TURTLE ISLAND QUARTET &
the ASSAD BROTHERS*

October 19
Sunday, 7 p.m.
Prelude discussion, 6 p.m.
The world’s finest guitar duo shares the stage with our favorite jazz/classical ensemble.

Sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Wyatt Ruchton Haskell, Alabama State Council on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, & WBHM.

Pre-show dinner menu at Icon Restaurant. (205) 251-2021 for reservations.

KD LANG with Opening Act
DUSTIN O’HALLORAN
From her Grammy-winning solo recordings to amazing duets with Tony Bennett, kd lang’s voice has always captivated us.

October 25
Saturday, 8 p.m.

Sponsored by Protective Life Corporation, Reg’s Coffee House, Live 100.5, & Icon Restaurant

GARRISON KEILLOR
Back by enthusiastic demand, Lake Wobegon’s most popular ambassador, weaves a tapestry of his own with stories made famous on NPR’s A Prairie Home Companion.

October 28
Tuesday, 7 p.m.

Sponsored by WBHM.

*UAB Faculty & Staff Receive a Discount on this show!
Special Lectures

Monday, Oct. 13

Wednesday, Oct. 15
7 pm UAB Writers' Series. Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge will read from her latest book. This event is free and open to the pub-
lic. Hussey Recital Hall. For more info, call 4-4250.

Thursday, Oct. 16
11:30 am Discussion Book Dialogues. The ecologi-

cal effect of climate change on the Antarctic peninsula, Endowed University Professor James McClintock (Polar & Marine Biology), Blazer Hall Lecture Life Center.
3:30 pm English. An evening with Kim Sunée, author of the memoir "Tao of Humble: Love, the Search for Home," a cultural critic. The Department of English Recruiting Scholarship. Sunée, who is food editor for Cottage Living magazine, will give a brief reading and introduce recipes from her book. Afterwards, she will sign copies of her book. For more information, or for reservations, contact Mary Beth Van Zandt at 5-6964 or email at mvanzandt@uab.edu. The Fish Market.

Thursday, Oct. 23
20 Noon Reynolds Historical Lecture: "China: a beacon of light in an age of environmental crises: A call to reflection and pros-
gress during the past year and discuss prospects and chal-

lenges that lie ahead. Hill University Center.

Friday, Oct. 17, 24
11:30 am Arabic Conversation Table: Blazer Hall. Ms. Dima Zeiden, dzn009@uab.edu or foreignlangs@uab.edu.


3:30 pm Paternoster: A call for anyone who

\text{speaks German; Lucy's Coffee Shop. For info, foreignlangs@uab.edu.}

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Jean Bodon will show his award-winning documentary “Howling With the Angels” in the Library of Congress Oct. 22. The film explores the truth about Bodon’s father, who was recruited to join the Nazis after Hitler’s army marched into Prague in March 1939. His father fled and joined the Czech resistance movement.

Bodon prepares to show film to Library of Congress

A professor’s award-winning 2006 film is receiving a new honor — it’s being shown in the Library of Congress. The powerful documentary “Howling With the Angels” explores the truth about Jan Bodon, a young, blond-haired, blue-eyed captain in the Czechoslovakian Army in World War II who was recruited to join the Nazis after Hitler’s army marched into Prague in March 1939.

Bodon quickly fled and joined the resistance movement and later was selected to help in the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the notorious “Butcher of Prague.”

The film by his son Jean Bodon, Ph.D., a winner at the Chicago International Film Festival, will be shown at the Library of Congress at noon Wednesday, Oct. 22. The event is free and open to the public. Tickets are not required, but seating is limited.

The event is free and open to the public. Tickets are not required, but seating is limited. Bodon will attend the screening and answer audience questions.

Bodon, who teaches television production, cinema and broadcasting in the UAB Department of Communication Studies, spoke recently with the UAB Reporter about the film, its impact on those who have seen it and its impact on his life.

Q. What does it mean to have your film selected to be shown at the Library of Congress?

B. Aside from being the largest library in the world, it also is also one of the most recognized cultural institutions in the world. The Library of Congress describes itself as the “treasure house of the world’s knowledge.” To be a minute part of this house is indeed very flattering. I am truly very touched.

Q. What motivated you to make this film?

B. I wanted to get to know my father, who passed away 23 years ago and who kept so many secrets. I wanted to know his secrets. This of course is the essence of documentary filmmaking: to investigate, discover and show. When you make any type of movie, you have to fall in love with the characters. Through this discovery process, my love for my father grew even more; it was like bringing him to life again. It was like having a cup of coffee with him, one more time, and it has been like this every day for two years.

Q. How difficult was it to retrace your father’s footsteps and gather the information you needed?

B. The most difficult elements were dealing with the emotions, to be a son again. The emotions were often morbid. The film is nostalgic yet with a touch of happiness or love. Technically, the gathering of the information was not easy at first. I had to find people who may have known my father or who had lived through similar experiences. Most of the people that I had to find were about 90 years old from an original pool of 3,000 people — an unlikely statistical possibility.

Indeed the Czech brigade that fought in WWII had only 3,000 members; many died during the war’s battle, others were executed by the Soviet system, and the survivors were getting very old. Well, I was terribly lucky. I just finished a documentary on a Jew who was incarcerated in Buchenwald during WWII because he was a Jew and a socialist. Blum survived the concentration camp and upon his return again became the head of France. I also recently started shooting a documentary on Orta Benga, a pygmy who was displayed with primates at the Bronx Zoo at the turn of past century — the ultimate racist act. I find a way to stay pretty busy.

Q. How has this movie impacted your life?

B. I am very grateful that UAB provided me with a grant to discover who I am and to be able share it with others. That is what filmmaking is about. Indeed, films are often autobiographical. Like any person, one needs to share “its own history” with others. I am sharing what my father never had a chance to share. I feel like I am giving my daughter a bit more than a photo album about her grandfather.

Q. What impact has “Howling With the Angels” had on others?

B. That. I do not know. Making a film is like a relationship, you find the subject matter — this is like falling in love — then, you get married (shooting and editing the film), then, you give it to a distributor, and it’s like breaking up. The film is out of my hands, it is there for others to love it, hate it or ignore it. I just can’t tell how they feel. I wish I knew.

Q. What other projects are you working on?

B. A. I am interested by stories about people who succeed in spite of what life throws at them. I just finished a documentary on former French premier Leon Blum, who was incarcerated in Buchenwald during WWII because he was a Jew and a socialist. Blum survived the concentration camp and upon his return again became the head of France. I also recently started shooting a documentary on Orta Benga, a pygmy who was displayed with primates at the Bronx Zoo at the turn of past century — the ultimate racist act. I find a way to stay pretty busy.

Editor’s note: Jean Bodon has worked as a feature film director and producer and a director of documentaries and television commercials. His works have been shown on HBO, Showtime, Cinemax, the Movie Channel, TLC, and many other cable systems and networks throughout the world. His work also includes a book on Charlie Chaplin and “Cinema: An Introduction,” preface by film director Robert Wise. Bodon is a judge for the International Emmy Awards. For more on Bodon and “Howling With the Angels,” visit www.uab.edu/CommunicationStudies/bodon.html

Academically, I had to become well versed in Czechoslovakian history as well as getting visual documents on my father and Czechoslovakia during that period. I found a great researcher from my father’s hometown who found documents, people and addresses. I also was able to get very interesting war documents at Kings College in London. Most of the historical archives came from the Spielberg Film Archives in Washington, D.C.

A. There is indeed very flattering. I am truly very touched.

Q. What else do you want people to know about your grandfather.

B. My wife, daughter and I took the camera to London; we were invited by the Queen to the Horsemen’s Parade, saw her and started our interviews with the veterans. About 20 of them were there. They were wonderful and pointed me in the right direction, which was Scotland, Wales, France, Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovakia — a great journey; a journey that started for my father 70 years ago when Hitler led the 1938 Munich conference, which was the beginning of WWII.

Q. How has this movie impacted your life?

B. I am very grateful that UAB provided me with a grant to discover who I am and to be able share it with others. That is what filmmaking is about. Indeed, films are often autobiographical. Like any person, one needs to share “its own history” with others. I am sharing what my father never had a chance to share. I feel like I am giving my daughter a bit more than a photo album about her grandfather.

Q. What impact does “Howling With the Angels” have on others?

B. That. I do not know. Making a film is like a relationship, you find the subject matter — this is like falling in love — then, you get married (shooting and editing the film), then, you give it to a distributor, and it’s like breaking up. The film is out of my hands, it is there for others to love it, hate it or ignore it. I just can’t tell how they feel. I wish I knew.
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