

Annual Report 2014-2015
The Institute on World War II and the Human
Experience

Department of History
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Tallahassee, Florida

The Institute on World War II and the Human Experience is dedicated to preserving the history of this conflict. The Institute maintains one of the largest archives at an American university that documents the human dimension of the Second World War. Housed on the Florida State campus in the Bellamy Building, the Institute serves as a resource for scholars, teachers, students, and the general public. Director Dr. G. Kurt Piehler is currently writing a monograph that examines the religious life of the American G.I. in World War II.

The past year has been a time of tremendous momentum at the Institute. With the addition of new collections related to nearly every theater of the war and the continuation of digitization efforts, the Institute aims to continually expand its scope and impact in research, teaching, programming, and outreach. Scholarly publications, award-winning graduate research, and public exhibits have been created through work and research at the Institute on World War II, and in the next year, undergraduate students will have increased opportunities to work with and learn about some of the unique collections in the archives.

RESEARCH

- As a result of diminishing storage space, the Institute has been forced to become more selective in what we can add to our permanent collections. With important exceptions, the Institute will privilege documents, especially letters, diaries, memoirs, and photographs since these sources are the most valuable to historians of the Second World War. Despite this shift in policy, the Institute continues to add significant new holdings. For instance, among the collections we accepted this past year was the correspondence of Frank M. Walrath, Jr. who served in the U.S. Navy during the war. His letters offer insight into his struggles with what would be known after the Vietnam War as Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). We continue to add to our photographic holdings; among the notable collections added were Miller A. Trammell's of Papua New Guinea and John S. Morton's of the Philippines. Complementing the Oliver Austin photographic collection that we accepted last year, the Institute acquired Jim Schell's collection of cartoons depicting the occupation of Tokyo. War Ration books from the Ronald D. Risner collection will go into the "travel trunk" (a permanent exhibit that will circulate among K-12 students).
- Through the generosity of Duane Bohnstedt, the Institute acquired an extensive collection focusing on the 460th Bomb Group of the 15th U.S. Army Air Force deployed in Italy. This collection has a dedicated endowment fund, the Duane and Betty Bohnstedt 460th Bomb Group

(H) Collection that will allow the Institute to fully organize and catalogue it. In 2015-2016, undergraduate assistant Jordan Bolan will take the lead in processing this collection beginning with inventorying the entire collection, rehousing it in appropriate archival boxes and writing a catalogue record.

- The Institute has expanded efforts to improve the visibility of our collections to scholars, students, and journalists. Led by Graduate Assistant Hillary Sebeny and Administrative Assistant Anne Marsh, the Institute created a new overview brochure of our mission and key research holdings. To promote greater scholarly use of our collections, the Institute joined with Fordham University Press staff in a booth at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in January 2015. Kurt Piehler, Anne Marsh, and Jordan Bolan distributed our new brochure to historians and graduate students attending the largest gathering of historians in the country. We hosted a champagne and coffee toast to celebrate Panteleymon Anastasakis, an FSU alumnus, and the publication of his first monograph, *The Church of Greece Under Axis Occupation*.
- The Institute is widely used by undergraduate and graduate students for their research papers, master's theses, and dissertations. Among the topics they have explored are women in the Marine Corps, gendered perceptions regarding intelligence agents and spies, and the history of veterinary care. Although the Institute is not a museum, we do welcome visitors and, by appointment, offer tours of our holdings. The Outdoor Women's Adventure Club was among the groups that visited the Institute in 2014-2015.
- The Institute together with Oxford University Press hosted a one-day Writers' Conference on January 4, 2015, bringing together a number of scholars who will contribute to the *Oxford Handbook of World War II* that Kurt Piehler is editing. The book will feature contributions from over 35 scholars; the Writers' Conference served as a workshop for attending authors and began a conversation on the future of World War II scholarship and the shape of the future for the Institute. Among those able to attend this gathering at the New York offices of Oxford University were Panteleymon Anastasakis of the City University of New York, Michael Bryant of Bryant University, Annika Culver of Florida State University, R. M. Douglas of Colgate University, Regina Gramer of New York University, M. Houston Johnston of Virginia Military Institute, Eugenia Kiseling of the U.S. Military Academy, John Kinder of Oklahoma State University, Ricky Law of Carnegie Mellon University, Andrew Stewart of King's College London, David Woolner of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute. Professor Piehler also invited several scholars and graduate students to participate in the proceeding including Professor Nicholas Molnar of the Community College of Philadelphia, Oliver Burtin of Princeton University, and Sarah Myers of Texas Tech University. Professor Michael Gambone of Kutztown University offered formal comments on the draft essays submitted for the Oxford Handbook. The Institute wants to acknowledge the support of Nancy Toff, Vice President of Oxford University Press, for co-sponsoring this event.
- In partnership with Dr. Judy Barrett Litoff of Bryant University, the Institute is organizing an international conference for January 2016 that focuses on comparative home fronts in World War II. The Institute issued a call for papers for this conference in Fall 2015.

- Professor Piehler is an active scholar in addition to his overseeing the Institute. During the past year he continued to work on his book examining the Religious Life of the American GI in World War II. Funding from Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University permitted him to spend two weeks conducting research at the Schlesinger Library. The Schlesinger Library, dedicated to documenting American women's history, had a treasure trove of correspondence, diaries, and other materials documenting the military service of women in the Second World War.

TEACHING

- The Institute Director, Professor Kurt Piehler, is a member of the History Department at Florida State University and teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses. With support from the Undergraduate Office of Research, Professor Piehler developed a new honors course over the summer of 2014, The American GI in War and Peace. In structuring this class, Professor Piehler wanted to emphasize experiential learning while at the same time seeking to develop the research and writing skills of some of Florida State's brightest students. During the fall semester Professor Piehler offered this course that had students work extensively with three of the Institute's collections, selecting the most important letters. As a result, selected portions of the Wayne and Anne Coloney Collection, the Hazel Lois Bowman Collection, and the John Brosky Collection are now accessible on the Institute Website: ww2.fsu.edu. Already students from other universities have begun to use these collections.
- In an effort to encourage greater use of the collection by undergraduate students enrolled in larger classes, students in Professor Piehler's World War II course transcribed and annotated documents from the Institute's collections and from the William Lee Museum. This assignment proved revealing regarding the abilities of many advanced undergraduates to conduct extensive research in published as well as Internet based sources. In the first summer session in 2015, in a class focusing on U.S. History, 1920-1945, Dr. Piehler again integrated "crowd sourcing" that tasked students with transcribing and annotating the papers of Joseph Pettengill. To foster a better understanding of the resources of Strozier Library, Professor Piehler developed a scavenger hunt assignment where students working off a list had to locate and copy a range of primary and secondary sources available at Strozier.
- In the 2014-2015 academic year, Jordan Bolan, the Institute's Undergraduate Research Assistant, completed her second year and helped with various projects throughout the year. She planned events for visiting scholars, edited the museum catalog, helped digitalize documents, organized the publicity for the museum exhibit highlighting the Institute's collections, as well as assisted with Dr. Piehler's research.
- Professor Piehler mentors undergraduate students who want to create intensive independent projects focusing on World War II. In Spring 2015, Shelby Blankenship completed a Direct Independent Study (DIS) for credit and worked with digitalizing and annotating the Wilson Brooks Collection. Donated by Brooks' son Robert, the bulk of this collection is a series of war crimes investigations conducted by Brooks in 1945 and 1946.

- An active member of the History Department graduate program, Kurt Piehler serves as an advisor for eight graduate students. He places a great emphasis on his students' securing outside funding to support their research. In 2014-2015 Kyle Bracken secured travel grants from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and the U.S. Army War College. Allyson Stanton in 2015 won a spot in the prestigious West Point Summer Seminar in Military History designed to foster excellence in the teaching of American military history. Held at U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York, this seminar draws on graduate students and junior faculty from across the United States and features lectures by distinguished military historians, staff rides to Civil War battlefields, an overview of historical weapons, and presentations on pedagogy.
- In May 2014, Lt. Colonel Sean Klimek completed a doctorate under Professor Piehler and wrote a dissertation focusing on the development of airborne doctrine in the interwar years. Colonel Klimek received funding from the U.S. Air Force to complete his doctorate and returned to teaching at the Air University in June 2015. Lt. Colonel Klimek's accomplishment is all the more laudatory because he completed his coursework, qualifying examinations, and dissertation in three years.
- The Institute is always interested in partnering with other institutions to reach pre-collegiate students and their teachers, both to encourage greater use of our collections and to promote a better understanding of the history of World War II. The Institute sponsors a modest cash prize for the best project examining the history of the Second World War entered into the Florida statewide competition for National History Day. On May 1, 2015, the Institute offered a one-day seminar organized by the Rutgers Institute for High School Teachers at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Focusing on the theme "Teaching the U.S. Occupation of Postwar Japan: The Oliver L. Austin Photographic Digital Archive," Professor Piehler offered an overview of the American occupation of Japan and how to incorporate into their teaching the Oliver L. Austin Photographic Collection, a digital archive housed at the Institute. If the funding can be secured, Professor Piehler would eventually like to offer similar seminars to pre-collegiate teachers in every county in Florida and every state of the United States.

OUTREACH

- The Institute continues to collaborate with Fordham University Press on several initiatives. The Institute Director, Kurt Piehler, has edited a World War II series with Fordham since 2003. Beginning in 2012, the Institute has sponsored an annual Veteran's Day program with Fordham University Press in Manhattan. This year's program added another layer as the program was co-sponsored by the Friends of the National World War II Memorial and featured the noted naval historian Craig Symonds. Funding for this event was made possible by the Harold Baumgarten and Samuel M. Gibbons Endowed Fund for World War II.
- *The Human Experience*, an exhibit organized by the Institute, ran from February 13, 2015, through March 30, 2015, at the Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts. This drew upon 410 individual documents and artifacts and also included 93 photographs from the Ringling Museum and the Private Collection of Patrick Rowe. The exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts also included the Ringling Museum of Art exhibition entitled *Witness to War: Selected*

Photographs from the Institute on WWII and the Ringling Museum's Coville Collection, curated by Christopher Jones. Opening night garnered an attendance of over 500 individuals; during its seven-week run, nearly 9,000 members of the University and broader public viewed the exhibit. In organizing the exhibit, Anne Marsh played a pivotal role in identifying documents and artifacts to highlight several key themes that Dr. Kurt Piehler, as Guest Curator, sought to illustrate, including the role of the United States as the Arsenal of Democracy and the American Perspective on a Global War. Volunteers Elizabeth McLendon and Sharyn Shields proved instrumental on all aspects of the exhibit, especially the final placement of objects. The Institute is grateful to Dr. Allys Palladino-Craig for the invitation to allow the Institute to serve as guest curators at the Florida State University Museum and acknowledges the financial support for this exhibit by the State Partners Grants of the Council on Culture and Art, the 2015 Peace on Earth Gift, and the Opening Nights Festival of Florida State University.

- Accompanying the exhibit was a color catalogue produced and published by Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts under the editorial guidance of Dr. Allys Palladino-Craig. This catalogue included several essays, including one co-authored by Piehler and Richard Siegler. Funding for this catalogue was made possible through support from the FSU Museum of Fine Arts and a competitive Arts and Humanities Program Enhancement Grant from the Council on Research and Creativity at Florida State University. This catalogue was widely distributed to members of the Museum of Fine Arts, major contributors to the Institute on World War II, and those whose documents and artifacts were featured in the exhibit. The Institute has widely distributed it to scholars working in World War II studies in order to highlight the depth and breadth of our collections.
- The Institute hosted a World War II Writers' Weekend (February 13-15, 2015) to coincide with the opening of the *Human Experience*. This public event, held on the ground floor of the FSU Museum of Fine Arts gallery, featured book talks on range of topics. Marcus Cox of the Citadel began the program with an overview of his monograph *Segregated Soldiers: Military Training at Historical Black Colleges in the Jim Crow South*, Michael Neiberg of the Army War College discussed his recent book, *The Blood of Free Men: The Liberation of Paris* (2012), and Nick McCall, an independent scholar and attorney at law recounted his efforts to uncover the story of his father's war-time experiences that lead to *Pogiebait's War: A Son's Quest for the His Father's Wartime Life*. Several members of the History Department also spoke about their work, including Robert Gellately (*Stalin's Curse: Battling for Communism in War and Cold War*), Annika Culver (*Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo*), and Whitney Bendeck ("*A*" *Force: The Origins of British Deception in the Second World War*). Uniformly well attended, often with standing room audiences, a highlight of the Writers' Weekend book talks was a gripping lecture by Pieter Kohnstam, a Holocaust survivor who spoke about his family's flight from Amsterdam to Spain in the memoir *A Chance to Live: A Family's Journey to Freedom*. Graham Farmelo of Cambridge University, a distinguished scholar of the history of science, gave the final public lecture in conjunction with the exhibit. Professor Farmelo delivered a lecture based on his recently published book *Churchill's Bomb: How the United States Overtook Britain*. The Institute joined with Strozier Library in hosting Dr. Farmelo's visit to campus in order to facilitate his research in the papers of Nobel laureate Paul Dirac. Funding for the Writers' Weekend was made possible in part by the George and Marian Langford Endowment in History.

- The Challenger Learning Center based in downtown Tallahassee asked the Institute to partner in promoting a new genre of 3-D films they were bringing to their theater for the first time. On February 12, 2015, the Institute hosted a special screening of *D Day 3D: Normandy 1944* narrated by NBC journalist and Institute patron Tom Brokaw to coincide with the opening of the exhibit *The Human Experience* at Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts. Later in the spring, the Institute organized a special exhibit to complement the Tallahassee run of this documentary. Anne Marsh was assisted by Laura Hessemer, a Museum Studies Intern; they identified 30 documents and artifacts related to the history of D-Day. The Challenger Center hosted a formal premiere of the film with a screening and reception for area veterans on the Seventieth Anniversary of D-Day on June 6, 2014. In partnership with W-TXL (Channel 27), the ABC affiliate in Midway developed a series of five short mini-documentaries that ran during the anniversary week of D-Day. Professor Piehler was among the scholars interviewed for this documentary.
- Professor Michael Bryant of Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island, delivered the Institute's fall lecture on October 21, 2014. Bryant based his lecture on his recent award winning monograph, *Eyewitness to Genocide: The Operation Reinhard Death Camp Trials, 1955-1966*. During his visit, Bryant attended an informal dinner at Professor Piehler's home with students from Piehler's fall honor's class. The Institute appreciates the assistance of Nathan Stoltzfus of the History Department in hosting Bryant's visit. Funding for the fall lecture was supported in part by the Rintels Professor of the Humanity and the Institute on World War II.
- Professor Jonathan Grant of the FSU History Department delivered the third annual Pearl Harbor Day Lecture on December 7, 2014, sponsored by the Institute and held in Sarasota. Professor Grant delivered a wide-ranging lecture on how the Soviet Union's arms build-up in the late 1920s played a crucial role in sparking an arms race that destabilized the world order, helping to set the stage for the Second World War. Funding for this event was made possible in part by the Harold and Kay Ronson Endowment. Assistant Dean Nancy Smilowitz of the College of Arts and Science and Florida State University Foundation hosted the reception that followed Professor Grant's lecture.
- Kurt Piehler regularly serves as a resource for local, national, and international media outlets. C-CTV America interviewed Professor Piehler for a segment that aired on the seventieth anniversary of V-E Day. In May 2015, Professor Piehler accepted an invitation from the *Daily Beast* to write an article examining the American pattern of commemoration. He also participated in a Memorial Day interview focusing on the American commemoration of war on NPR's *All Things Considered*.

SUPPORT

The Institute receives significant budgetary support from Florida State University, including the salaries of the director and staff. Funds from the University also provide the basic office expenses of the Institute, including telephones, postage, and supplies. Private contributions and

endowments play a crucial role in allowing the Institute to organize public lectures and conferences, host visiting scholars, fund graduate students, and undertake new initiatives to encourage the study and preservation of the history of World War II.

The Institute wants to acknowledge the support it receives from the following permanent endowments:

Duane and Betty Bohnstedt 460th Bomb Group (H) Collection
Harold Baumgarten and Samuel M. Gibbons Endowed Fund for World War II
Thomas C. Cundy Fund for World War II Era Research
Anne & John Daves Archival Fellowship
George and Marian Langford Endowment in History
Pearl Tyner Endowment for the World War II Institute
Harold and Kay Ronson Endowment
Rintels Professorship of the Humanity at the Institute for World War II
TBUF (Tallahassee Branch of the University of Florida) Memorial Endowment Graduate Fellowship
TBUF Memorial Endowment Acquisition Fund

We also want to recognize the following individuals for their charitable gifts to the Institute in 2014-15:

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Patricia W. Sasser
Scott Seippel
R. A. Simler
Stephen M. Slepín, Esq.
Thomasville Chapter NSDAR

We regret in advance any omission in our annual report; please bring it to the attention of the Institute Director, G. Kurt Piehler at kpiehler@fsu.edu.

In Memorium

In concluding our annual report we want to note the passing of the founding director, Professor William Oldson. Professor Oldson, a specialist in Eastern Europe and Holocaust Studies realized in 1997 the need to create a depository for the documents and artifacts of the World War II generation. As this generation was aging and dying in increasing numbers, Oldson understood

that crucial sources documenting the human dimension of war were being lost quite literally to the trash heap. Under Professor Oldson's guidance, the Institute experienced exponential growth in terms of the collection acquired. During his time as director (1997-2011), over 6,300 collections were donated to the Institute on World War II consisting primarily of letters, military records, photographs and military newsletters focusing on the everyday life of men and women whether on the home front or overseas.

Respectfully submitted,

G. Kurt Piehler, Director & Associate Professor of History

VACANT, Archivist

Anne Marsh, Administrative Assistance

Jan-Ruth Mills, Graduate Assistant

Richard Siegler, Graduate Assistant, Summer 2014, 2015

Allyson Stanton, Graduate Assistant, Summer 2015

Matthew Guerdat, Graduate Assistant, Summer 2015

Hillary Sebeny, Graduate Assistant, 2014-2015

Rachel Stuart Duke, Graduate Assistant without stipend, 2014-2015

Jordan Bolan, Undergraduate Assistant, 2014-2015

Luke Cochran, Undergraduate Inter, Summer 2014

Jennifer Barton, Volunteer

Richard Davis, Volunteer

Chris Juergens, Volunteer

Mary LePoer, Volunteer

Elizabeth McLendon, Volunteer

Inez Manuel, Volunteer

Dorothy Whittle, Volunteer

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