

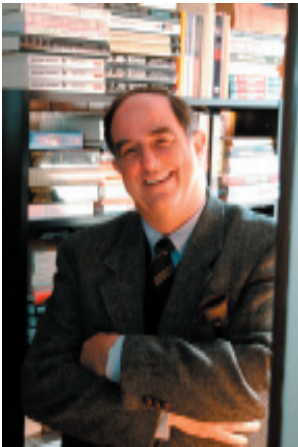
Concord Review Society

Newsletter and Forum

To Promote Varsity Academics® in High Schools

"Long Haul"

A Letter from the Founder



I got the idea for *The Concord Review* on a walk in March of 1987, during a sabbatical from teaching at the high school in Concord, Massachusetts. This was four years after the U.S. Department of Education's *Nation At Risk* report which warned of a rising tide of mediocrity in our schools. A number of people writing in 1987, such as Diane Ravitch, were arguing that we needed to pay more attention to the results (outcomes) of our educational efforts instead of our inputs (teacher degrees, library books, per-pupil expenditures, etc.).

It seemed to me that, with 20,000 high schools in the United States, and more in the rest of the English-speaking world, if I could get students to send me their best

history essays, I could use PageMaker on the Macintosh to put them into a quarterly publication, and with enough subscribers, this could show many students (and teachers) what good work in history was already being done, and might inspire more students to read a book or two and put in some hard work on their own history research papers.

The good news is that, thanks to you, we really showed people (and amazed me with) the high quality of research and writing being done by high school students of history in 43 states and 33 other countries, and we got support from John Abele of Boston Scientific Corporation and a few foundations to help us along. The bad news is that, while I spent my last \$100,000 to get the journal started, our subscriptions have never been enough to cover more than about 8% of our expenses and we have been turned down for support by 145 foundations, the Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities, among others.

They don't often tell me the reason, but there seems to be a reluctance to pay attention to students who are working hard (we don't have the same trouble when it comes to

high-performing athletes), and too many educators are wary of academic excellence, perhaps especially when it appears in teenagers. Almost no one can conceive that fine examples of scholarly work might be useful in encouraging others to meet high standards.

We had to suspend publication twice for lack of funds and I worked for 14 years with no salary or benefits, but we have just mailed our 55th issue, and I am deeply grateful to all of you who proved that I was right in the hope that you would send me good papers worth publishing.

Your papers have earned *The Concord Review* heaps of praise, and I am confident that one day, if we continue to work at it, the endowment necessary to keep us going will be found as well. Thanks for all you have done for not only *The Concord Review*, but for all the students and the history teachers who have seen your academic work in our pages.

Will Fitzhugh
Founder & President

A Letter from the Executive Director

Christopher L.Nasson



Hello and welcome to the Concord Review Society. My name is Chris Nasson and I am going to be working on the CRS for the next year. Our reason for founding the society is two-fold—we would like our members to be able to network through us, while staying informed of our progress and goals.

Now I would like to introduce myself and inform you why am I here and what I hope to accomplish while I am with the Concord Review Society.

I attended Lexington High School, a public school located in Lexington, Massachusetts. While at LHS, I lettered in baseball, basketball, and track, and was active in the National Honor Society, student government, and the Lexington Youth Commission, a community service organization. After graduating in 1999, I matriculated at Amherst College.

While at Amherst, I majored in Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought (which encompasses legal history, philosophy, and the social implications of law) and was a member of the baseball team. I graduated magna cum laude from Amherst this past May and intend to work for The Concord Review, Inc. for a year before enrolling in law school in the Fall of 2004.

I decided to take a year off before entering law school to work for The Concord Review, Inc. because I place a high value on the education of America's youth. I believe that the services offered by The Concord Review, Inc. (*The Concord Review*, National History Club, National Writing Board) can improve education by encouraging students to read, write, and think.

Additionally, with its focus on history, The Concord Review, Inc. helps to create a class of informed citizens. According to John Adams, "Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people." Simply put, if we, as a nation, do not understand our basic laws and rights and the historic principles upon which they were founded, how can we be expected to protect and advance them?

In reading newspapers, magazines, and journals, I have become concerned with our students' declining academic performance, particularly in the field of history. In February of 2000, a report was issued by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) which revealed that students were graduating from America's elite colleges and universities with an alarming historical ignorance.

The students, who were graduating seniors at fifty-five elite schools including Amherst, Brown, University of California-Berkeley, University of Chicago, Duke, Harvard, Wellesley, and Yale, struggled to answer high school level questions correctly. Only 60% of those tested were able to identify the Constitution as the document that "established a division of powers between the states and federal government." Just 37% of graduating seniors were able to correctly identify the Battle of the Bulge as occurring during World War II. Meanwhile, 36% of those tested incorrectly concluded that the U.S. Civil War was fought between 1750 and 1850.

Our remedy at The Concord Review, Inc. is to raise educational expectations and encourage serious students. Our motto, Varsity Academics®, indicates a desire to change America's social value system so that our commitment to, and expectations of, our students rivals our commitment to, and expectations of, our athletes. We believe *The Concord Review*, National History Club, and National Writing Board are mediums through which to work toward this necessary change.

Through my work with the Concord Review Society, I hope to increase publicity and raise funds for the continued pursuit and promotion of Varsity Academics® in our high schools. We would like to establish an endowment to ensure that TCR, NHC, and NWB services will continue to be available to serious secondary students throughout the nation and the English-speaking world. We also hope the Concord Review Society can serve as a clearinghouse through which TCR authors can share information and network with like-minded young, serious academics.

I look forward to working with you to achieve these important goals.

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Author Notes

Volume 1 ('88-'89)

Josiah Brown graduated magna cum laude from Yale in 1992, before studying public policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Josiah is now the Associate Director of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute. Josiah reports that the Teachers Institute works "to support the efforts of an urban school district to attract, develop, and retain well-qualified teachers."

Gilda Mann Zimmet, who received a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and a J.D. from the Georgetown University Law Center, has been named to the Board of Trustees of the Bryn Mawr School (MD). Gilda is currently working as an attorney at Krauthamer & Stahl, and is considering a future as a high school history teacher.

Volume 2 ('89-'90)

Darik Elwan graduated from Oxford University and is now living and working in Washington, D.C.

Volume 3 ('90-'91)

Sean Desmond received his B.A. in English from Harvard in 1995 and his M.A. in English from Columbia in 1998. Sean is currently an editor at St. Martins Press, Thomas Dunne Books in New York. He has been busy editing manuscripts by authors such as Ralph Nadar, Johnny Cochran, and Tom Daschle. Sean has published a novel entitled *Adams Fall*, which was made into the

movie *Abandon* by Paramount Studios. Sean's second novel is expected to be published in the Fall of 2003.

Britta Waller graduated from Northwestern University in 1995, where she majored in Journalism and minored in History. Britta is the Senior Editor of *Sky*, the in-flight magazine of Delta Airlines. *Sky* is in the seat pockets of 500,000 airplane seats a month and can be found online at www.delta-sky.com. Britta wrote us and reported, "An interesting convergence happened in 1999 when our magazine profiled John Abele, a donor to *The Concord Review*. The writer saw my name in the issue in which my high school paper was published and asked, 'Is that you?' Indeed it was." Britta reports that she still uses her research skills for the history-based stories in *Sky*. She recently completed a profile of 19th century explorer David Thompson.

Volume 4 ('92-'93)

Richard Hurowitz, who is currently a Principal at Halcyon Management Company in New York, graduated in 1995 from Yale University, with a degree in History. Richard attended Columbia Law, where he published a novel and was the founder of Quickstories.com, one of the first web companies dedicated to electronic books. Quickstories is now part of Palm, Inc. The Concord Review, Inc. would like to congratulate Richard and his wife Sharon on the birth of their first son, Asher, who was born on April 12, 2003.

Andrew Zurcher received his B.A. in English from Yale and his M.Phil. in Renaissance Literature from Cambridge. Andrew is currently a Research Fellow at Cambridge, completing work on his Ph.D. in English Literature and History.

Volume 5 ('93-'94)

Aaron Einbond, who was awarded *The Concord Review's* Emerson Prize in 1995, wrote to tell us he is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Music Composition at the University of California at Berkeley. Aaron received his B.A. in Physics and Music from Harvard, his M.Phil. in Music Composition from Cambridge, and his P.G. Diploma in Music Composition from the Royal College of Music, in London. Aaron has composed music that has been performed in New York, Berkeley, London, Cambridge, Holland, and Germany. When asked about his future aspirations, Aaron replied, "Eventually I hope to become a professor of Music Composition, while continuing my activities as a composer."

Julian Davis Mortenson recently graduated from Stanford Law School and is currently living in the D.C. area. Julian, who majored in History while getting his B.A. from Harvard in 1997, is currently doing a one year clerkship with Supreme Court Justice David Souter. Julian informs us that he assists Justice Souter "with all the legal work and analysis that's required to research and write his opinions in the cases that come before the court." He is planning a career in public interest law.

Keri Riemer recently began her career as an Associate in the corporate department at the Wall Street law firm Stroock & Stroock & Lavan, L.L.P. Keri spent sixteen days of her summer traveling around Spain, Portugal, and Morocco. Keri wrote to tell us, "Since writing my piece [for *TCR*] I've enjoyed a fabulous four years at Bowdoin College, from where I graduated magna cum laude. In 2000, I entered law school at Boston College and loved it."

Author Notes

Volume 6 ('94-'95)

Anthony Fotenos is currently living in St. Louis attending Washington University Medical School. He graduated from Brown University in 1999.

After being published in *The Concord Review*, **Enmi Sung** went to Harvard where she majored in Government and continued her study of History. After graduating from Harvard in 1999, Enmi worked for venture capital firms Boston Millennia Partners in Boston and IDG Ventures in San Francisco. Enmi recently began pursuing her M.B.A. at the Wharton School of Business. She anticipates graduating in May 2005.

Volume 7 ('96-'97)

Alec Barker received his B.S. in Foreign Service from Georgetown University in 2001. Alec, who is currently an officer in the United States Army, informed us, "My experience with *The Concord Review* gave me the confidence to undertake more ambitious projects. In May 2001 I concluded two years of research with a paper on the merchant Robert Oliver and the Atlantic History of Baltimore." Alec participated in R.O.T.C. while at Georgetown.

Sarah Mast graduated summa cum laude from the University of Southern California in 2000. She completed her graduation requirements in just three and one half years. While enrolled at U.S.C., Sarah majored in Public Relations, with a minor in Business Administration. In 2000, Sarah was named the first ever *P.R. Week* P.R. Student of the Year

in the United States. She was named the Outstanding Public Relations and Overall Journalism School graduate of the class of 2001 as well. Sarah is currently a Senior Account Executive in the public affairs and corporate issues branch of Weber Shandwick, the world's largest public relations agency. She is living in Los Angeles.

Volume 8 ('97-'98)

After spending a year working at Eugene Binder, an art gallery in New York City, **Amy Peltz** is entering the University of Chicago's Ph.D. program in Philosophy. Amy wrote, "I am particularly interested in the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein and the question of style in philosophy. Ultimately I hope to teach at a college or university, but sometimes I dream of teaching at my old high school (Hunter College High School, NY) alongside the teachers who encouraged me to submit a paper to *The Concord Review*!" Amy graduated summa cum laude from Bryn Mawr College in 2002, where she majored in Philosophy and minored in History. In 2003, she was named an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in the Humanities.

Stephen Sachs graduated with a degree in History from Harvard University in 2002. While at Harvard, Stephen specialized in medieval economic and legal history. Presently, Stephen is studying at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, pursuing his second undergraduate degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. After completing his requirements at Oxford, Stephen will return to the States to attend Yale Law School.

Volume 9 ('98-'99)

Congratulations to **Micah Maxwell**, who graduated with honors from Harvard this Spring. Micah majored in the History of Science and will be attending Johns Hopkins Medical School this fall, where he will pursue his M.D. and Ph.D.

Katherine Porter is in her final year at Duke University, where she is studying History and Education. Katherine spent her Fall 2002 semester studying in Italy, at Trinity College's Rome Campus. Katherine wrote, "I look forward to my senior year, the fall semester of which will entail student teaching through [Duke's] Program in Education." She has also been involved with the Duke News Service over the past two years.

The Concord Review Society would also like to congratulate **Jennifer Shingleton** who graduated summa cum laude from Princeton this June. While studying at Princeton, Jennifer was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa and was awarded the *New York Herald Prize* for the best political thesis on an issue of contemporaneous interest in U.S. government. Jennifer will be attending Harvard Law School this fall.

Volume 10 ('99-'00)

Matthew Anderson is studying Music at the University of Georgia. He wrote a soon to be published novel entitled *Valley of the Worms*. Matthew's short novel

Author Notes

is written in verse form and features rhyming lines.

Congratulations to **Paul Morton**, who graduated this past May from Columbia University with a B.A. in English. Paul is currently living in Vietnam, where he is a foreign sub-editor at the *Vietnam News*, an English-language daily based in Hanoi. Paul tells us that his job will mostly involve copy-editing, as well as headline and caption writing. He plans on pursuing a career in journalism and writing.

Nicole Velez was awarded a full academic scholarship as a 2000 Carnegie Mellon Merit Scholar. Nicole is enrolled at Carnegie Mellon where she is studying Information Systems and is Pre-med. At Carnegie Mellon, Nicole has spent a summer interning at Merrill Lynch and is the president of "Doctors of Carnegie," a Pre-med organization. Nicole is due to graduate in 2004 and plans to attend medical school.

Volume 11 ('00-'01)

Nancy Cheng recently began her first year at Harvard, where she is studying Biology. While a student at Wichita High School East (Wichita, KS), Nancy was chosen as an All-U.S.A. Academic Star by *U.S.A. Today* and was one of one-hundred Toyota Scholars (\$10,000 scholarship award). She was also one of twenty finalists for the National Caring Award. Nancy's future aspirations include becoming a cancer specialist and leading Doctors Without Borders.

Tom Trapnell spent his summer interning with us at The Concord Review, Inc. Tom was a valuable asset to us, helping to lay the foundation for the Concord Review

Society. Tom is in his junior year at Princeton University, where he is majoring in History. He is a member of the International Relations Council and principal chair trumpet in the Wind Ensemble. Tom recently wrote to inform us that his experience interning at The Concord Review, Inc. helped land him a part-time job in the Princeton Alumni Office. Tom is planning a career in Eastern European business and finance.

Philippa Pavia, who spent the summer teaching horseback riding, is a junior at Yale University, where she is an English major. Philippa is currently the captain of the Yale Equestrian team and is a member of the Yale Polo team. She has spent time interning with veterinarians at the Animal Medical Center, the Central Park Zoo, and in private practice. Philippa plans on attending veterinary school in the future.

Volume 12 ('01-'02)

Good luck to **Nicole Bonoff** as she begins her studies at Stanford University this Fall. Nicole plans to study environmental science and political science at Stanford. While a student at Flintridge Preparatory School (CA), Nicole won the school Art and History awards, a Princeton Book Award, and a Mitsubishi Scholarship for Earthwatch Expedition.

Patrick Hummel is studying Mathematics at Caltech where he is employed part-time as a researcher involved with theoretical chemistry. Patrick, who is the co-founder and president of the Caltech Chess Club, has published two pieces: "Solid Constructions Using Ellipses," which was published in the *Pi Mu Epsilon*

Math Journal and "On Consecutive Quadratic Non-residues: a Conjecture of Issai Schur," which was accepted by the *Journal of Number Theory*. Since enrolling at Caltech, Patrick has been awarded the Caltech Morgan Ward Prize for outstanding undergraduate research, the Caltech Green Memorial Prize for most outstanding undergraduate research, and the Caltech Upperclass Merit Award.

Devon Mauldin is studying Political Science, Pre-med, and Anthropology at Tulane University on a four-year academic scholarship. Devon was accepted as a member of Tulane Emergency Medical Services after becoming a Nationally Certified Medical Technician. Devon is also a member of the Dean's Council for Tulane's Newcomb College, a member of Tulane's Student Judiciary Committee, and newsletter chair for the Tulane Emergency Medical Services. While living at home in Arkansas, Devon volunteers as an Emergency Medical Technician at a local fire station. She plans on attending medical school.

Recently hired as an analyst at Goldman Sachs' Investment Banking division, **Henry Wigan** attended the London School of Economics, from which he graduated with First Class Honors in Economics and Economic History. While at the London School of Economics, Henry published a final year dissertation on the 1925 Portuguese Bank Note Crisis and was Chairman of the L.S.E. Business Society, the largest student society on campus. In 2002, Henry was named a Goldman Sachs Global Leader. His future plans include working in financial services for two years, possibly taking some time to work for a non-profit, and then working in

Author Notes

Volume 13 ('02-'03)

Best wishes to **Justin Ash** who has just begun his first year at Yale University, where he is a member of Ezra Stiles College and is concentrating his studies in the Humanities. While a student at the Cranbrook Kingswood Upper School (MI), Justin was recognized with a George C. Booth citation, Excellence in Journalism Award, Prize Programs Award in Computer Science, and the Coach's Award by the Cranbrook Kingswood hockey team. Justin tells us, "I currently maintain a website design business, JBA Designs, which provides services ranging from full-service production to consulting."

William Gaybrick is enrolled at Harvard University where he is double-majoring in Physics and Economics, and taking classes in Literature and Writing. William graduated from St. Alban's School (D.C.) in 2003, where he was a National Merit Finalist and Presidential Scholar for the District of Columbia. He spent this summer working an unpaid internship at the Kingsbury Institute, tutoring children with learning disabilities.

Best of luck to **Jennifer Hsiao**

as she begins her first year at Princeton University. A recent graduate of Hall High School (CT), Jennifer is very involved in music. She has performed as a violin soloist at the Hartford Rising Stars showcase, which is organized by the Summerwind Performing Arts Center. Jennifer won first place at the 2003 Paderewski Piano Competition. As a result, she was invited to play the Grieg Piano Concerto this past May with the Connecticut Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra. Jennifer and the orchestra performed twice: once in New Britain, Connecticut, and once at the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York.

Patrick Huffer spent his summer working as a counselor and coach at a soccer camp for young children, where he served as an instructor during drills and games. Patrick, who will be studying and playing soccer at Williams College this year, remains an active backpacker, guitarist, and reader.

A senior at Upper Canada College (Ontario), **James Kwok** is busy preparing his university applications. We look forward to hearing from James when he makes his decision regarding where he will attend university. James is active in the Upper Canada College community,

serving as Head of the Model United Nations club and Editor-in-Chief of *Quiddity*, Upper Canada College's creative writing publication. He was also appointed to the Student Executive Board at the United Way. James has received History and English prizes at the Higher Level for the First-Year International Baccalaureate degree and placed first in the provincial Canadian Legion Public Speaking Competition.

Now in her first year at Kenyon College, **Margaret Niehaus-Sauter** has not yet determined her major, but will likely study Biology and is considering a future in medicine. Margaret wrote to tell us, "In the Spring I was named a National Merit Finalist. I was awarded the Honor and Science Scholarship from Kenyon, as well as the Board of Regents Scholarship from the state of Ohio. I hope to become a backpacking guide with Wilderness Ventures."

AUTHORS—We want to hear from you!

The Concord Review, Inc. would like to thank all our authors who have taken time from their busy schedules to keep us informed of the important news and events in their lives. We only had space for a sample of the comments we received. If you haven't already provided the Concord Review Society with your contact information and news, please do so. Furthermore, if you have done something exciting or noteworthy since our last contact, please let us know. We also ask that you send pictures, if they are easily accessible to you. We would love to add some visual images to the newsletter. We would like to make our newsletter as informative and interesting as possible. The more you tell us, the more we can tell you!

Please email your updates to chrisn@tcr.org or mail them to Concord Review Society, 730 Boston Post Road, Suite 24, Sudbury, MA, 01776. You can also call us at 800-331-5007.

Services of The Concord Review, Inc.

The Concord Review

Varsity Academics®

Since 1987, *The Concord Review*, a quarterly journal, has published 56 issues with 615 high school history papers by students from 43 states and 33 other countries. Essays average 5,000 words, with (Turabian) endnotes and bibliography, and may address any historical topic (ancient or modern, domestic or foreign). We publish approximately 8% of the essays we receive. **David McCullough** wrote: "I very much like and support what you're doing with *The Concord Review*. It's original, important, and greatly needed." **Arthur Schlesinger Jr.** said: "*The Concord Review* offers young people a unique incentive to think and write carefully and well...*The Concord Review* inspires and honors historical literacy. It should be in every high school in the land." **William R. Fitzsimmons**, Dean of Admissions at Harvard College, has said: "We have been very happy to have reprints of essays published in *The Concord Review*, submitted by a number of our applicants over the years, to add to the information we consider in making admission decisions...All of us here in the Admissions Office are big fans of *The Concord Review*." We seek to recognize those students who are working hard in their study of history and to motivate their peers with examples of good historical writing.

National History Club

The National History Club, founded in 2002, now has more than 1,500 members in high school history club chapters in twenty-five states. There is no fee for a high school to be granted a charter by the National History Club. Our goal is to have a Club that is able to connect students of diverse backgrounds and varying abilities from high schools across the country.

High School History Clubs which join the NHC may be of several different kinds. Some may already be established. Others may be newly formed. Some will emphasize local history and site visits, others may focus on reading history books together and writing serious history papers. History Clubs may choose to invest their time into History Day or History Fair projects of various kinds. History Clubs from the same region may even coordinate activities with each other.

We provide members with a biannual newsletter, sharing information about Club activities in member chapters throughout the country. Our goal is the promotion of the reading, writing, discussion, and pleasures of history among high school students and teachers of history.

National Writing Board

The National Writing Board, founded in 1998, has now given an independent, unbiased assessment of high school history papers from 28 states. Each author receives a three-page report, with scores and comments, which she/he has asked us to send to college admissions officers (at 59 colleges so far), or simply could use as feedback on one of her/his best history research papers. History research papers of two lengths—around 2,000 words, or around 5,000 words—with (Turabian) endnotes and bibliography, may be submitted, with a notarized Submission Form and a check for \$100 to the National Writing Board. Deadlines for submission are November 1 and June 1 each year. The following colleges and universities now endorse this independent assessment service for academic writing: Amherst, Bowdoin, Carnegie Mellon, Claremont McKenna, Colgate, Connecticut College, Dartmouth, Duke, Eckerd, Emory, Georgetown, Hamilton, Harvard, Illinois Wesleyan, Lafayette, Middlebury, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Pitzer, Princeton, Richmond, Sarah Lawrence, Trinity (CT), Tufts, the University of Virginia, Washington and Lee, Williams, and Yale.



Ralph Waldo Emerson Prizes



The Ralph Waldo Emerson Prizes (now \$3,000) have been awarded to 30 students published in *The Concord Review* who have shown outstanding academic promise in history at the high school level since 1995. The ninth annual award ceremony was hosted by The Cliosophic Society at St. Mary's Episcopal School in Memphis, Tennessee on April 5, 2003. This year's laureates were **Rachel Hines**, of Rockville, MD, now at the University of Maryland, **Jessica Light**, of Northampton, MA, now at Yale University, **Chrystan Maria Skefos**, of Memphis, TN, now at Rice University, and **Robert Patrick Vance Jr.**, of New Orleans, LA, now at the University of Pennsylvania. Here is a list of past Emerson Prize winners:

- 1995 **Aaron Einbond** (Harvard), **Pia Luedtke** (Yale)
- 1996 **Matthew Eisenberg** (Yale), **Sarah Valkenburg** (Dartmouth)
- 1997 **John Spencer Neumann** (Harvard), **Camilla Ann Richmond** (Yale), **Mako Sasaki** (Virginia)
- 1998 **Lisa Hopkins** (Yale), **Joelle Novey** (Harvard), **Lea Sevcik** (Dartmouth)
- 1999 **Tobias Berkman** (Harvard), **Kerry Carwile Masteller** (Wellesley), **Andrew Paquin** (Harvard)
- 2000 **Gilman Barndollar** (Bowdoin), **Natalya Kozyreva** (Barnard), **Jennifer Shingleton** (Princeton), **Sarah Willeman** (Stanford)
- 2001 **Patrick Bradley** (Harvard), **James Egelhofer** (Brown), **Rebecca Fleming** (Harvard), **Sara Newland** (Wellesley)
- 2002 **Emily Alter** (Carleton), **Jonas Doberman** (Harvard), **David Gopstein** (Princeton), **Tanya Sibai** (Tulane), **Sarah Weiss** (Yale)

Introducing *The Concord Review* CD-ROM

The Concord Review CD-ROM is designed for your convenience to make the extraordinary scholarship of high school students from all over the country, published in our journal, easily accessible to you. Whether you are a former TCR author interested in the work of fellow authors, a high school teacher of history supplementing your curriculum with student essays, or a history buff interested in reading good historical work, this CD will prove invaluable to you. *The Concord Review* CD-ROM, which should be available in December, features:

- 594 history research papers from the first fifteen years of the *Review*
- indices grouping essays by categories such as: Essay Topic, Time Period of Topic, Region Discussed in the Essay, Author's Grade Level, Author's High School, Course for which Essay was Written, and much more
- video clips of interviews with TCR Authors, historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., TCR Founder Will Fitzhugh, Harvard Dean of Admissions William Fitzsimmons, and more
- biographies and photos of some authors and a full-text search of every essay
- abstracts describing the topic of each essay
- the history of the *Review* and ways to get involved with the journal

The CD-ROM will cost \$100, with a \$50 charge for yearly updates, should you choose to purchase them. Checks can be made payable to **The Concord Review, Inc.**

Concord Review Society Member Column

Thomas H. Trapnell

As full as the education profession is of conflicting theories and learning initiatives, there seems to be a general agreement on one topic: schoolchildren should not be taught history. For the past few decades, widely-respected individuals who are supposedly experts in formulating ways to teach America's children have insisted that history is totally incomprehensible to anyone who has yet to reach high school, and of questionable relevance to anyone even after college. The understanding of history, according to people like John Dewey, is too based in "formal concepts" for a "preoperational" human being—educationist jargon for "young student"—to understand.

Who am I to question the thinking of brilliant educationists like Dewey and Spencer? I've never attended a teacher's college or tried to teach a history lesson in an elementary school. However, my experiences with history fly in the face of everything the mainstream educationists have to say on the subject. I am convinced that history can be relevant *and* enjoyable for any child at any grade level; I'm also certain that this "understanding" which is supposedly so difficult to acquire grows out of exposing children to history at an early age without regard for whether it is "age-appropriate" or not.

I seemed like a pretty normal kid when I was in elementary school. I spent a lot of time riding around town on my bike, walking the family dog, and playing all kinds of playground games with my friends. Under the surface, however, a dangerously abnormal child was developing: a little schoolboy who had a passionate interest in history. While my friends were busy eating up the latest episode of "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," I was riveted to my TV as I watched movies of Shakespeare's histories or World War II epics like *Tora, Tora, Tora!* Instead of wanting to dress up like Batman at Halloween, I fantasized about getting my hands on the uniform of a 19th-century Russian general, gold braid and epaulettes and all (yellow cardboard had to substitute, unfortunately). Perhaps most importantly, I never read any "age-appropriate" books unless they were assigned in class. I have no recollection of ever reading Dr. Seuss; on the other hand, I vividly remember the accounts of the Battle of Trafalgar or Joan of Arc's campaigns, which I read in the vividly-illustrated Ladybird series of history books for children.

What was going on here? Were my parents forcing all this arcane material on their little boy in the hopes of turning him into a child prodigy? Nope. The only way in which my parents were guilty of tampering with my "natural" personality was that they introduced me to history at a time when Dewey would have deemed it completely inappropriate. I thought that 19th century military uniforms were awesome, so when I was going through a bookstore with my parents and saw a picture

of one, I had them buy me the book. I went crazy over the suits of armor in the Higgins Armory in Worcester, Massachusetts; so, my parents showed me *Henry V* so that I could watch people in armor fighting each other.

Did I "understand" history from these activities? Not exactly. At first, I had no idea what events led up to the Battle of Agincourt (as seen in *Henry V*), or the organizational structures of the empires whose officers covered themselves with such fantastic gold braid and medals. But one thing led to another. After a while, I got tired of looking at pictures of men with swords leaping back and forth over the sides of battleships, so I read through the text on the opposite page and picked up a fact or two about the career of Lord Nelson. Despite my love for watching fighter planes zip around the TV screen shooting at each other, I eventually wanted to know why they were doing that in the first place: the result was a 2nd-grade research project on the attack on Pearl Harbor.

My Uncle Billy—ironically, the only certified teacher in our family—ridiculed my Pearl Harbor project as me "playing the little professor," but it turned out that it was a tempting game for my 2nd grade classmates to play, too. As soon as my teacher Mrs. Sager had seen me present my project, she informed our class that we were going to have a new class activity: "presentations." And suddenly, little 2nd-graders were doing and then presenting research on J.S. Bach, Albert Schweitzer, Anne Hutchinson, and something like twenty other historical figures—since every single student in the class ended up wanting to do a presentation. Thursday afternoons became a time of great excitement: Ian's presentation was supposed to be "really good," or it was rumored that Katie's was going to involve a hilarious impersonation. Who knows how much of the material presented ended up being absorbed? However, the fact remains that an average public-school class of 2nd grade children suddenly became transformed into a society of budding historians within the course of a school year. No matter how quickly any of us forgot what we'd learned over the course of the "presentations," we still had been capable of passionate interest in history.

Of course I don't know when my love for gold braid turned into a desire to read history books about Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812, or when it finally registered in my mind that those fighter planes at Pearl Harbor were shooting at each other because of diplomatic disagreements and last-minute misunderstandings between America and Japan. I didn't magically "understand" history as I crossed the meridian from elementary school into junior high, or from junior high into 9th grade. The presenter on Bach in Mrs. Sager's class had no idea about the effect the great man's work had on subsequent composers, and I certainly could never have explained the developments

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in 19th-century Japan that eventually led that nation to challenge America for mastery of the Pacific. Yet because of my extended period of exposure to history without “understanding” it, I was never to look at a history book as a boring assignment to be breezed through with as great a degree of inattention as possible.

This brings me to my second point: what exactly is this “understanding” of history, anyway? Where does it come from? If I’d never seen a suit of armor or been shown an illustrated history book that was short enough for me to want to read, I would clearly never have been able to progress to a deeper level of knowledge about any historical period. Maybe most of those 2nd-graders in Mrs. Sager’s class never thought about their chosen historical figure again, but I’m sure that a few of them felt like going out and renting a related movie, or going to a museum that might have some information about that person. Who knows, maybe one of them (besides myself) went on to become a history major in college and write a term paper about the influences shaping that person’s attitudes, or that figure’s effect on his or her historical epoch. In sum, an understanding of history doesn’t simply appear out of nowhere. Without interest in a subject at some level, a child will not want to go out and acquire more knowledge; without the desire to acquire more knowledge, that child will never gain any degree of understanding. And to go back to the beginning of this sequence, no child can possibly develop an interest in something which he or she has never been exposed to.

Many of my readers will probably think that I have no right to assume my experiences are relevant to schoolchildren in general. I grew up in an upper-middle-class, white family; I attended prep school, and I now attend Princeton University. Educationists would probably have classified me as one of those “talented” kids who never needed any extra help with anything, who could be expected to be a “self-starter” under any conditions. But would I have been motivated to excel in all that schoolwork if I’d never been taught to enjoy any of it, or told that I had to wait to learn about something I found interesting because it was “inappropriate”? Would I be capable of writing college-level history essays now if I’d never learned that history could be interesting and worth studying intensely? By requiring some abstract kind of “understanding” of history before allowing exposure to history itself, educationists are fulfilling their own assertion that school-kids can’t learn history. Under the conditions demanded by Dewey, of *course* they can’t! However, a few elementary-school teachers like Mrs. Sager, who are brave enough to really teach kids about history, would go a long way towards showing the theorists just how wrong they are.

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Tom Trapnell (Volume 11, Number 1, *Douglas MacArthur*) is a junior at Princeton University where he is studying Eastern European History. He wrote this article while interning this summer with The Concord Review, Inc.

We hope that the **Concord Review Society Member Column** will be a regular feature of the CRS newsletter. If any CRS members are interested in writing a short piece (between 500-1500 words) about their experience with history or being published by *The Concord Review*, please contact Chris Nasson by phone, at **800-331-5007**, or by email, at **chrisn@tcr.org**.

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