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NCSU LIBRARIES

VOLUME 27 NO. 2

2007

PART V FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

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THE ALAMO* WITH JIM CRISP

CYMA RUBIN LIBRARIES FELLOW

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Lilium michauxii Poir. Carolina lily. From the inaugural exhibition featuring the work of pioneer ecologist B. W. Wells.

Friends of the Library News

By Anna Dahlstein

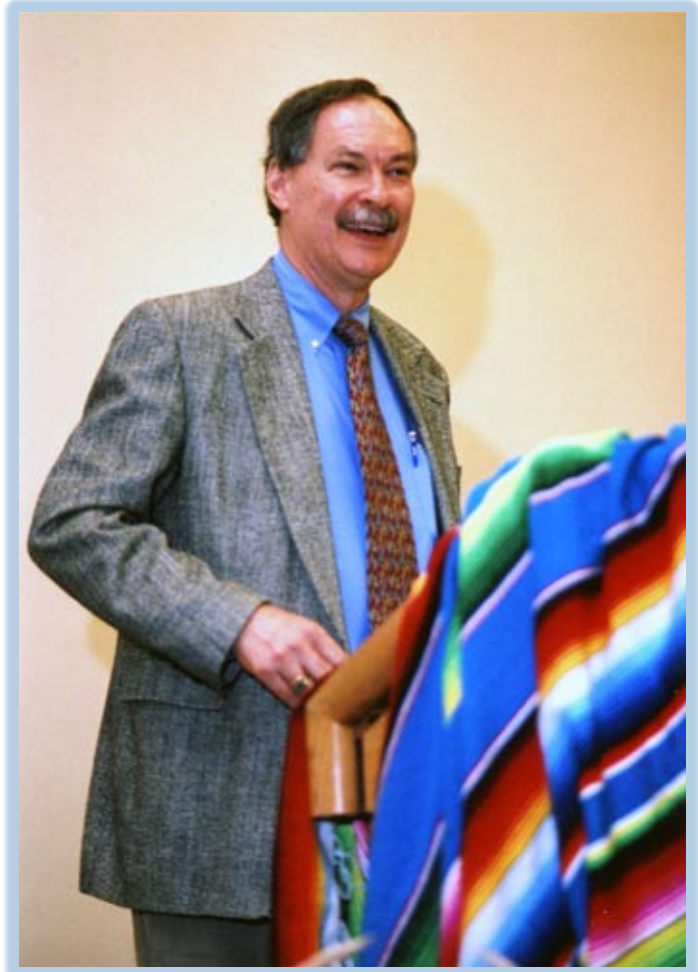
Fall Luncheon 2006: *Sleuthing the Alamo* with Jim Crisp

On October 16, 2006, more than 140 members of the Friends of the Library and the NC State community attended the Tejano-themed 2006 Fall Luncheon. The guests, including a large contingent of Corporate Partners from the Lone Star State by way of Bayer CropScience in the Research Triangle Park, enjoyed an authentic Tex Mex menu. Professor Emeritus of History and Friends board member **Alex De Grand** described the featured speaker, NC State Associate Professor of History **James E. Crisp**, as “Probably the best historical detective I’ve met in forty years in the profession.” He quipped, “If I ever buy a hound dog, I’m going to name it Jim Crisp.”

In his presentation, “Sleuthing the Alamo”—also the title of a book he published through Oxford University Press—Crisp offered a fascinating analysis as to why the 1836 Battle of the Alamo is viewed by many Americans as the last stand of the Anglo forces of “civilization” against the Mexican forces of “savagery,” even though Tejanos fought on both sides. Crisp expressed dissatisfaction with traditional explanations of the causes of the Texan Revolution that have attributed the upheaval either to race or to racism.

Defying these simplistic generalizations about “good guys” versus “bad guys,” Crisp explained that at the time, the border region was actually characterized by the peaceful coexistence and complex interactions of ethnic groups. Notions of a racial conflict emerged much later in the popular imagination, influenced by cultural products of the early twentieth century such as the iconic paintings depicting the Alamo by Robert Jenkins Onderdonk (1903) and Henry Arthur McArdle (1905) that now hang in the Governor’s Mansion and the State Capitol in Austin.

Before showing these and other works of art and discussing how pictures and movies have shaped modern perceptions of the past, Crisp described a breakthrough discovery he made in the D. H. Hill Library stacks. He had been puzzled by an inflamma-



tory speech attributed to Sam Houston, who allegedly stated that Anglo descendants could never mix with “indolent Mexicans, no matter how long we may live among them” and cursed them as “half Indians.” The speech seemed completely out of character for Houston, who spent many years living with the Cherokee and counted several Mexicans or Tejanos among his most trusted commandants and brothers-in-arms. While prowling in the Texas history and biography section of the library, Crisp located evidence that the speech was fabricated years later by a Prussian,

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[Clockwise from top, reading left to right in each picture]:

FOL board member Anna Ball Hodge and Associate Vice Provost for Library Advancement Suzanne Weiner; FOL board member Alex De Grand, FOL President Cyma Rubin, and NCSU faculty member Richard Bernhard; Elizabeth Osborne and the 2006 NCSU Libraries Faculty Award Winner Susan Osborne; Reba Worsley and FOL board members Karen McCanless and Cindy Joseph; Fall Luncheon keynote speaker Jim Crisp signing books for attendees, including NCSU faculty member Karl Bowman.



Herman Ehrenberg. Crisp's book makes a compelling case for the essential role of research libraries and archives in nourishing serious scholarship.

Susan Osborne, the associate professor of curriculum and instruction who accepted the NCSU Libraries' Faculty Award earlier in the luncheon program, credited her mother with fostering her interest in libraries. **Elizabeth Osborne**, who served on her local library board in Peru, New York, attended the event, as did special guests **Stephen Reynolds** (professor of physics and the awardee's husband), **Kay Moore** (dean of the College of Education), **Cyma Rubin**

(president of the Friends of the Library), and **Larry Nielsen** (provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs at NC State).

The Fall Luncheon concluded with the sale and signing of an impressive number of copies of *Sleuthing the Alamo*, for which Crisp recently received the Texas Historical Commission's Fehrenbach Award. In September Crisp was elected to the Philosophical Society of Texas, an organization founded in the Republic of Texas in 1837 by Sam Houston and other distinguished men of learning. ❖

Cyma Rubin Libraries Fellow

Friends of the Library President **Cyma Rubin** was pleased to meet **Lisa Boxill**, who has been named the second Cyma Rubin Libraries Fellow. Boxill will benefit from a professional development stipend supported by annual income from the **Cyma Rubin Endowment for the NCSU Libraries Fellows Program**. Boxill holds an M.S.L.S. from UNC-Chapel Hill and a J.D. from Harvard Law School. As an NCSU Libraries Fellow, Boxill has two complementary projects, one focusing on license review and analysis and another centering on copyright assessment for digitized collections. ❖





Focus, a newsletter published three times a year, seeks to promote the services, activities, needs, and interests of the NCSU Libraries to the university, the Friends of the Library, and beyond.

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