Dear UDARF Members,

The University of Delaware gained national attention when Joe Biden became Vice President. Now we have another Joe to thank for putting our University’s name back in the press. Congratulations to UD’s alumnus Joe Flacco for being named the Most Valuable Player at the conclusion of this year’s Super Bowl game on Feb. 3. As you may recall, Flacco set 20 school records during his career as a quarterback for UD’s Fightin’ Blue Hens. He was drafted by the Baltimore Ravens 18th overall in the 2008 NFL Draft, becoming the highest drafted player ever from the University of Delaware. Flacco fans may want to visit the newly opened Greene Turtle Sports Bar & Grille on South Main Street, where there are Flacco-signed University of Delaware jerseys hanging on the walls. And, for those of you may have been in Florida this winter and missed out on the expansion of Main Street, Elkton Road was officially renamed South Main Street on Dec. 20, 2012.

What else is new? … Do come to our next luncheon on March 5, when Dr. Jason Mycoff will share his views about the current political state of affairs in Washington. Dr. Mycoff is a professor of political science and international relations and an authority on congressional committees, political leadership and the interaction between the legislative and executive branches.

Don’t forget that on April 11 Dr. William Boyer, former chair of the Department of Political Science and International Relations, will discuss “My Intellectual Journey” at 4 p.m. at the Courtyard Newark. His talk will be exciting and interesting. Afterward, there will be a wine and cheese reception.

We will conclude the year on May 14 with President Patrick Harker, who will discuss the “State of the University” at our luncheon meeting.

Best wishes,
Stuart Sharkey, President
Jason Mycoff to speak at March 5 UDARF luncheon

Jason Mycoff, professor of political science and international relations, will speak at the next luncheon of the University of Delaware Association of Retired Faculty, scheduled at 11:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 5, in Clayton Hall. A member of the UD faculty since 2002, Mycoff teaches American politics classes, including introduction to American political systems, Congress and public and policy and a graduate seminar on American political institutions and data analysis. He directs undergraduate studies in the department, and his research interests include the Congress, presidency and judiciary, with special interest in committees’ political leadership and the interaction between the legislative and executive branches.

He earned his Ph.D. from Ohio State University.

Author discusses World War I Christmas truce

An unbelievable thing happened during the first holiday season of World War I — peace broke out.

How the killing stopped for a few days in northern France and Flanders was the topic of a talk given by Stanley Weintraub, the author of Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce, during the December UDARF luncheon.

Weintraub, the Evan Pugh Professor Emeritus of Arts and Humanities at Penn State University, has written numerous histories and biographies, including Long Day’s Journey Into War: Pearl Harbor and a World at War-December 7, 1941.
“I was working on a book about the armistice at the end of World War I (A Stillness Heard Around the World), about the last week of World War I, when I came across a book about an impromptu Christmas truce during the first year of the war, 1914,” Weintraub said. “Most people thought it was just a fable.”

A while later, Weintraub was put in touch with a British Broadcasting Company producer who had done a radio series with veterans of World War I.

“He said that while I could not use all of the materials that he had gathered, I was welcome to look at them,” Weintraub said. “He said he also had material about the Christmas truce.”

Weintraub and his wife, Rodelle, author of Fabian Feminist: Bernard Shaw and Woman spent the next several summers at the British Library newspaper archive at Colindale and the Imperial War Museum, both in London, perusing letters to the editor and records of the British Army companies who were at the front during that long ago Christmas.

“The troops had been fighting since August 1914 and they were tired,” Weintraub said. “It was now December, the cold rains and some snow had come and the trenches were full of mud and water. Nobody wanted to fight.”

While individual military members have never had the power to stop a war, some of the combatants facing each other across that no man’s land between 300 miles of trenches decided to celebrate Christmas as best they could.

German soldiers, closer to home than the British forces, had traditional tabletop Christmas trees trucked to the front, placing the candle-trimmed holiday icons atop the parapets above the trenches, Weintraub said.

“The British were intensely curious about what was going on,” Weintraub said. “They crawled out of their trenches and met the Germans in the 100-yard-wide stretch of no man’s land between the lines. They talked about Christmas and peace.”

Another popular topic for discussion was the idea of a football (soccer) match, a seemingly impossible goal as the deadly piece of real estate was filled with shell holes and the bodies of the dead of wounded.

The idea persisted and the wounded were removed and clergy from both forces presided over mass burials for fallen soldiers.

The combatants also decided to exchange holiday gifts.

“The British had Christmas boxes, with plum puddings and canned items, while the Germans brought boxes filled with cigars and sausages,” Weintraub said. “The men also got to sample beer from barrels rolled in from Germany.”
There was also a spirited Christmas carol competition with a German tenor from the Berlin Opera singing Silent Night. The French countered with a Paris Opera tenor performing Cantique de Noël (O Holy Night).

“It’s hard to imagine all of this going on between the trenches, but it did,” Weintraub said. “They actually filled in the shell holes, and in many cases played soccer, with improvised rules.”

Weintraub said the British soldiers were so floored by what happened—no shooting, and quiet, almost like the war had ended—that they sent letters to their parents, wives or girlfriends, who in turn sent these to the English newspapers as letters to the editors.

“The British government was furious about this,” Weintraub said. “You had to hate your enemy, and how could you hate him when you traded gifts with him, visited his trenches and sat under his Christmas tree.”

Of course, the truce couldn’t last. Soldiers from the front were pulled and troops from the reserve rear areas that had not participated in the Christmas truce were moved to the front.

“In some cases, the truce lasted until New Year’s Day but the camaraderie gradually drifted away and the armies fought again,” Weintraub said. “No attempt was made for a truce during the next three Christmases, and the war finally ended on Nov. 11 (in 1918), more than a month before Christmas.”

_Domenico Grasso to serve as next UD provost_

Domenico Grasso, vice president for research and dean of the Graduate College of the University of Vermont, will become the next provost of the University of Delaware, effective Aug. 15, 2013.

“Domenico Grasso brings an impressive portfolio of experience, insight and leadership to this post as the University of Delaware’s chief academic officer,” UD President Patrick Harker said. “Dr. Grasso’s career has been marked by thoughtful and creative initiatives, reflecting a global viewpoint that impacts all academic disciplines. I look forward to working closely with him as
we advance the University on its Path to Prominence.”

“I have been deeply impressed with the University of Delaware’s faculty, staff, students, and facilities and most importantly its steep trajectory towards being recognized as one of the world’s great universities,” said Grasso. “I am excited to work in close collaboration with President Harker and join his team, the faculty and the entire Delaware community.”

Nancy Brickhouse has served as interim provost since Tom Apple resigned as provost in June 2012 to become chancellor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She will return to her position as deputy provost. “I am very grateful to Nancy Brickhouse for her strong leadership as interim provost during the search process,” Harker said.

As vice president for research and dean of the Graduate College at the University of Vermont, Grasso has been working with the UVM faculty building university-wide Transdisciplinary Research Initiatives or “Spires of Excellence” for selected and focused future resource investments.

Prior to his current position, he served as dean of the College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences at UVM, which became one of the most successful units on campus, increasing its applications by more than 300 percent, its enrollment by more than 50 percent and its research grant awards by 26 percent.

Before joining UVM, Grasso was Rosemary Bradford Hewlett Professor at Smith College and founding director of its Picker Engineering Program, the first engineering program at a women’s college and one of the few in a liberal arts college in the United States. The program attracted national and international attention for its design, which bridged traditional boundaries between the sciences and the humanities, with emphasis on the unity of knowledge across all disciplines.

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Intellectual journey: A career as criminologist and author

Frank Scarpitti planned to go to law school but a couple of influential professors at a major Midwest university persuaded him to pursue graduate studies in criminology.

The decision led Scarpitti to a long and distinguished career at the University of Delaware, where the Pennsylvania native authored a watershed report on race relations at the University during the late 1960s. Scarpitti, the Edward F. and Elizabeth Goodman Rosenberg Professor Emeritus of Sociology, recounted his career as an academic and author during a My Intellectual Journey lecture sponsored by UDARF on Friday, Nov. 30, at the Courtyard Newark-University of Delaware.
In his senior year at Cleveland State University in 1958, Scarpitti first encountered the writing of Walter C. Reckless, a pioneer in American criminology and corrections.

When the chairman of the sociology department at Cleveland State University learned that Scarpitti wanted to go to law school but could not afford it, he suggested an alternative academic path.

“The chairman called me into his office and asked me if I had thought about going to graduate school in sociology. He said, ‘You can get an assistantship or a fellowship,’” Scarpitti said. “I also thought that if I was going to go to graduate school in sociology, I would be going to Ohio State University.”

At Ohio State, Scarpitti came under the tutelage of his adviser Simon (Sy) Dinitz, who helped Reckless establish a strong and enduring tradition of criminology there.

After earning his master’s degree and doctorate at Ohio State, Scarpitti was urged by Dinitz, to take a job as assistant professor at Rutgers University.

“Coming from the Midwest, the East Coast had a kind of glamour, a sort of pizazz—New York, Philadelphia, Washington—and Rutgers is in the middle,” Scarpitti said.

During a meeting in Chicago during that fourth year, Scarpitti met Frederick B. Parker, chairman of UD’s sociology department, who asked him to join the faculty at UD.

“I didn’t know where Newark, Del., was, but I knew who the Blue Hens were, and that they used to play Rutgers in football and beat them rather consistently,” Scarpitti said. “My wife Ellen and I took a drive down and visited friends in Wilmington. I took the job.”

Another new arrival in the next year, 1968, was recently appointed UD President Edward A. (Art) Trabant, who asked Scarpitti to chair a committee charged with making recommendations for improving the conditions of minorities, particularly African Americans, on campus.

“We reported that the UD Board of Trustees need to recruit minority students,” Scarpitti said. “We also said that the University should think of itself as a regional institution rather than a state school, in order to have a larger pool of minority students to recruit from.”

Although not all members agreed with what became known as the Scarpitti Report, all of the recommendations were implemented over the next couple of years, including the appointment of an African American scholar, James Newton, and African American representation on the Board of Trustees, in the administration and on the faculty.

Comparing science to the building of a pyramid of pebbles, Scarpitti noted that most scientists contribute their individual pebbles, and that, with time, this pile may reach the top where it perhaps answers a question or solves a problem.
“That is the objective. Sometimes, someone comes along and puts a stone or walk on it, but there are not too many Einsteins or Darwins. Most of us put our pebbles there,” Scarpitti said. “I became satisfied with knowing that I put a few pebbles on the pyramid and that I helped to develop the science of criminology and sociology.”

New appointments

Deborah L. Hayes, a communications professional with wide-ranging experience in nonprofit public affairs, the entertainment industry and government, has been named vice president for communications and marketing at the University of Delaware. Most recently, Hayes served as managing director of communications for the Pew Charitable Trusts in Philadelphia from 2002-11.

Previously, she was founding partner and president of media strategies at Westhill Partners in New York; director of Media and Corporate Relations for Oprah Winfrey/Harpo Productions in Chicago; senior vice president for corporate communications at MTV Networks in New York City; and press secretary for Congressman Richard Gephardt.

New in the Office of the Provost

James Richards, Distinguished Professor of Kinesiology and Applied Physiology, has been named vice provost for graduate and professional education, and John Sawyer, professor of business administration at UD, is now serving as interim associate provost for institutional research and effectiveness. Effective May 1, Ravi Ammigan, now assistant director for programming and communications in the Office for International Students and Scholars at Michigan State University, will be director of the Office of International Students and Scholars.

In Memoriam

James R. Katzer, a former professor in the Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, died Nov. 2, 2012, at the age of 71. A member of the faculty from 1969-81, he is credited with establishing UD’s Center for Catalytic Science and Technology.

Wenbo V. Li, professor of mathematical sciences at UD since 1992, died of a heart attack on Jan. 26, 2013. A noted mathematician who studied probability theory and stochastic processes, he was 49.
Kenneth W. Seaman, retired instructor who served as academic coordinator of clinical education in UD’s Physical Therapy Program for more than 20 years, died Jan. 22, 2013. He was 62.

Victor Spinski, retired professor of art, died Jan. 21, 2013. He was 72. A well-respected ceramic artist, he joined UD’s art faculty in 1968 and taught at UD for 38 years, retiring in 2006.

Roger J. Steiner, professor emeritus of linguistics and cognitive science, died Nov. 2, 2012, at the age of 88. He taught linguistics at UD for 33 years. A lexicographer, he was the author of a French and English dictionary that sold millions of copies.

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Mark your calendar

My Intellectual Journey
4 p.m., Thursday, April 11 • Courtyard Newark
Dr. William Boyer
Wine and cheese reception follows.
Reservations not necessary