Globe-trekking alum featured at luncheon

Professional traveler, journalist and U.N. media consultant Greg Benchwick will relate just what a long, strange trip it’s been since graduating from the CU-Boulder’s journalism program.

His talk will follow the luncheon of the CU Retired Faculty Association’s annual Spring Business meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 19. The business meeting begins at 10 a.m., followed by a social with refreshments at 11:30 and the luncheon at 12:15, all in Room 235 of the University Memorial Center on the CU-Boulder campus.

The title of Benchwick’s presentation will be “A Traveler’s Tale,” according to CURFA Program Chair Richard Blade.

“One of the suggestions I received from the CURFA board was to get a local author to present at one of our functions,” Blade said. “Greg is not only an accomplished professional author and editor, he has also made a career out of traveling, and now works as a media consultant for the United Nations. He represents a real success story for graduates of the CU School of Journalism and Mass Communication.”

Since graduating from CU in 1998 as a News-Editorial major, Benchwick has authored Lonely Planet and Fodor’s travel guides for Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, California, and Alaska. He has also written articles for National Geographic Traveler, BBC, Adbusters and more than 40 U.S. newspapers. He served as an editor for Lonely Planet from 2005 to 2007. Greg now serves as a media consultant for the United Nations’ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), supporting the communications and knowledge management programs in Latin America.

“When I graduated from school, I didn’t want to find a job at a newspaper. I wanted to become a novelist, a poet, an adventurer,” he said. So instead of looking for a cub reporter job, he moved to Spain, where he

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CURFA’s range of offerings, involvement quite impressive

When I started doing my research for this column, I was struck by the number of quality events and issues CURFA has taken up during the past six months and the participation of CURFA members in those events and issues.

Turning first to the speakers and presentations, we were treated to a presentation by Sarah Qualls, Kraemer Family professor of aging at UCCS. Her presentation was entitled “Innovations for an Aging Society” and it presented ways of achieving a better quality of life for senior members of society. Those in attendance were fascinated by the innovations being attempted in Colorado Springs by the faculty and students at UCCS.

Vice President Richard Blade has offered to sponsor a day trip to Colorado Springs in order to observe first-hand the facilities and care being provided in this program.

The next topic presented was an exploration of history from the Persian perspective in John Longo’s talk, “A Panoramic History from the Persian Perspective.” He examined history from the Persian point of view from ancient times through the Iranian revolution. While being quite a shift from providing for seniors in the current day to ancient Persian history, it was clearly a topic that those in attendance enjoyed.

CURFA’s next offering was a presentation by Robin Haig entitled “Backstage with Margot Fonteyn and the Bumptious Colonial.” It took the audience into the world of ballet and examined the relationship between Dame Margot Fonteyn and the presenter.

The CURFA audience will soon become a traveler itself in Greg Benchwick’s, “A Traveler’s Tale.” This is a unique presentation that will excite the audience.

The excitement, unique nature of the performances and the educational content do not occur without some planning and forethought, and the person most responsible for that is Richard Blade, the vice president of CURFA.

Leaving the performances enjoyed by the CURFA audiences and turning to the activities of the membership, I also found a full plate. Our partner in two events during the six-month period was The Academy. The presentations, “Tea Time,” were offered in the beautiful chapel of the Academy which, by the way, also provided refreshments. I should also acknowledge the UMC catering staff that has kept us in the same room for our two general meetings each year and provided enjoyable meals.

Marc Swadener, in addition to being the editor of our directory along with help from Bill Jones, Jim Jankowski and our girl Friday, Sue Middleton, helped reinstitute the practice of taking photographs at our various events. Marc does a good job. Take a look some of the pictures on our website. Speaking of the directory, the January 2011 edition should be a handy publication for persons who would like to get in touch with CURFA members and beyond.

Another CURFA publication that has been of value to faculty members thinking about, or recently entering, retirement is the Retirement Guide prepared by members of CURFA. The revision of this publication was recently started and will hopefully be finished during the next six months.

An activity that received some attention in the last six months was our dues program. Attempts were made to get the dues payment on a regular and a predictable basis. September was the month chosen for the collection of dues. With that result in mind, all of our members, except
I've been lost all over the globe,” he said.

“Of course, I had to figure out how to make a living, so I got a job at the ski area as a ski instructor,” he said.

After returning to the United States, he decided that the best way to become a novelist would be to hone his skills in a newspaper newsroom.

“I was living in Portland at the time in a dive flophouse in the downtown. No newspaper would have me. So I went up to Alaska to make some seed money in the canneries and started pitching Latin American English-language newspapers. The Bolivian Times offered me $200 a month! Next thing you know, I’m landing in La Paz. This is where I really started to build my pedigree as a travel writer.

“Sure, I spoke Spanish and had lived in Spain, but I needed to build my craft. And while I didn’t have a room-full of editors to help coach my writing, I did have a few strong colleagues that worked with me to build my writing and reporting skills. Before you knew it, I was writing stories on the War on Drugs and human rights abuses. I even interviewed Evo Morales about coca. For the next several years I struggled as a writer penning the best way to become a novelist would be to hone his skills in a newspaper newsroom.

He eventually landed a job with Lonely Planet.

“After two years with LP, I asked myself, why the hell am I sending writers on the road (and paying them as much as I make) when I could do it myself. So I struck out on my own and for three years made a good living and had a good life as a travel writer and New World vagabond.”

But there were a variety of occupational hazards.

“One of my favorite parts of travel is getting lost. And I’ve been lost all over the globe,” he said.

Need a ride to join us?

If you have a problem with transportation to CURFA activities, please notify Richard Blade, 303-283-9670, or rich1600@gmail.com, if you want CURFA to try and make arrangements for you to be picked up by someone driving to the activities.”

I have had the opportunity to travel across Latin America, meeting heads of state, and spending time and learning from hundreds of poor smallholder farmers,” he said.

Finally, like many active organizations, CURFA has some project requests that it has not yet met. The library has requested CURFA’S help in the Faculty Oral History program.

In addition, CURFA has been invited to participate in the rebuilding of the teams in the Athletic Department. CURFA’S part in the rebuilding will be by providing mentoring and tutoring to student athletes.

The president’s report for the six-month period would not be complete without mention of the hard work and commitment of Gloria Main as our treasurer; Sandra Moriarty as the administer of the Kisslinger Awards and Neil Ashby as our webmaster.

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walked the Camino de Santiago and finished writing a novel from an apartment rented just below the Alhambra in Granada.

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But there were a variety of occupational hazards.

“One of my favorite parts of travel is getting lost. And I’ve been lost all over the globe,” he said.

“In Bolivia, I was strangled with a wire and left for dead in front of my La Paz apartment.” But even that experience allowed him to witness the best side of humanity.

“Any number of strangers have invited me into their homes to stay the night during my travels. After I was strangled in La Paz, a perfect stranger allowed me to stay the night in his house. He even gave me his shoes to walk home in the next day.”

Benchwick listed his top five travel experiences as:

1. Walking across Spain on the Camino de Santiago. “Travel is about pilgrimage.”

2. Hiking across the Osa Peninsula in Costa Rica. “I was still in college when I did that one. The rivers were so swollen we had to swim across a few.”

3. Living in a parking lot in Kenai, Alaska, waiting for the salmon to come. “Travel is also about the process. In our little tent city in front of the dragnet fishery, we solved the world’s problems, came up with silly games, fought, did drugs, spit on the ground in earnest and caught a glimpse at the base elements that create humanity.”

4. Dugout canoe trip in La Moskitia. “During my update of the last edition of the Lonely Planet guide to Honduras, I wanted to figure out a new way to get to the town of Las Marias (a day-long boat trip from the nearest town) and several days from the nearest road. Rather than following my own guidebook, I hired a local to take me by foot through the jungle to the remote outpost. On the way home we hired a couple of local boys to paddle us down on dugout canoe. We could have done the paddling ourselves (and did do a little), but it’s amazing how hard it is to paddle all day in the heat of Central America.”

5. Renting a treehouse in Olympus Turkey for a month. “To write my first novel.”

His current position with the United Nations allows Benchwick to continue to indulge his wanderlust.

“I have had the opportunity to travel across Latin America, meeting heads of state, and spending time and learning from hundreds of poor smallholder farmers,” he said.

first-year retirees, received a dues statement. As far as can be determined the approach proved worthy, and it appears that our dues income has gone up. As with any new operation, the formalizing of the dues structure brought pressure on other aspects of the dues structure. During the next six months CURFA will be defining its dues categories and the treatment of deceased members’ spouses.

The committee, which administers our faculty grants program, received a new chair, Charles Howe. Charles tells us that applications will be accepted from Jan. 1, 2012, to March 1, 2012. The winners will be announced by May 1. Five $500.00 grants will be awarded.

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Welcome to alum Greg Benchwick’s world

Photos from CURFA Oct. 19 luncheon speaker Greg Benchwick from his travels include on this page (clockwise from top) a picture of a Mayan pyramid at Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico, and images of Greg posing at Point Barrow, Alaska, shooting video in the Atacama Desert of Chile and hiking near the Maroon Bells in Colorado. His photos on the opposite page (clockwise from top) are of a yearly festival in Pisa for which the city is lit with candles, a monkey in the Amazon rainforest, a shrine on Isla Holbox, Mexico, and a building in Izamal, Yucatan, Mexico.
REX BURNS (English, UCD) has been appointed one of 14 faculty members in the Mystery Writers of America University. Faculty members participate in day-long seminars on fiction writing. He will teach at San Francisco State University in October.
rexburns@comcast.net

WILLARD (BILL) CHAPPELL (Physics, UCD) moved with his wife to Seattle in 2004 to be near her children from her first marriage. “We spend October to April in Thailand,” he wrote. “We will probably change that to October to July this year this year. I can’t recommend the weather in Seattle. We are both avid readers and have Kindles, which are great.”

EWALD FUCHS (Electrical, Computer and Energy Engineering, UCB) continues to focus his primary scholarly and professional activities on renewable energy resources and electrical power quality issues. His second textbook, “Power Conversion of Renewable Energy Systems,” (coauthored with M.A.S. Masoum of Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Australia) was published by Springer in April. He worked all through the previous summer to complete the instructor’s manual intended to accompany the book. He has also been consulted for various industry and research proposals in other states and eastern Europe, such as feasibility of photovoltaic (PV) solar panel-generated charging stations in carports/parking garages and of potential for fast-charging electric car batteries. He has also been consulted for various industry and research proposals in other states and eastern Europe, such as feasibility of photovoltaic (PV) solar panel-generated charging stations in carports/parking garages and of potential for fast-charging electric car batteries. as well as initial discussions and preparation for expert witness deposition and court testimony concerning the manufacturing vs. services process of electricity. “Decisions were made on this issue in Colorado and Texas within the last two years, and more states are wanting to pursue determination,” he wrote. “Additionally, I have submitted intent to publish and present findings at an international conference in Spain next spring, and am deluged – as many of us no doubt are – with inevitable requests for peer-review of journal and conference papers in my research field. In a nutshell, aside from no longer teaching my courses and receiving a regular paycheck, I don’t feel ‘retired.’ Our garden has generated overtime production of tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, green beans, carrots and other veggies, and our ‘mini-farm’ (the rest of our small yard in north Boulder) looks green and lush thanks to water bills from the city.” His wife, Wendy, is learning to enjoy her retirement from UCB, where she was financial analyst in the Budget Office, in combination with her part-time temporary jobs on campus which lasted until mid-July last year. “Best part for her thus far is being able to grocery shop and do her usual household chores – cleaning and laundry – during weekdays instead of on nights and weekends, going to Sunday or Monday matinee movies with friends and coworkers, and one August road trip to Santa Fe with our grown kids – who are both ‘gainfully unemployed’ and enrolled in master’s degree.
programs: our son, Franz, in the Kennedy School at Harvard and daughter, Heidi, in the environmental Energy Resource Group at Berkeley. Thus our likely near-future scenario will be me stuck at home writing a third textbook geared to engineering students other than electrical engineering majors, peer reviewing the ubiquitous journal papers and looking after our cat, Kato, while Wendy plays tourist in Boston and San Francisco."

Ewald.Fuchs@Colorado.edu

BOB GROSSMAN
(Atmospheric & Oceanic Science, UCB) survived a serious blockage in his heart in 2007 and backpacked several days in the Grand Canyon Gorge in 2008 to show that with a good surgeon and good rehab at Boulder Community, survival can be fun. He continues his interest in atmospheric science retaining memberships in his professional organizations as well as Sigma Xi. He no longer writes grants. In 2004 and 2005, with the help of a friend, he built a small cabin on five acres on Wright’s Mesa, west of Telluride and near the village of Norwood, which recently opened its own microbrew bistro. He spends a lot of time there exploring mountain, mesa, plateau and canyon country. He has skied out the front door more than once to trails with spectacular views as Wright’s Mesa is surrounded by distant and near mountains. In a given summer, he can attend at least as many Nobel laureate lectures in Telluride as in Boulder. He has never skied Telluride and probably never will as too much good skiing is available locally. He maintains a primary residence on an acre in Boulder with large, bountiful vegetable and flower gardens, grape vines, and fruit trees. He also maintains several close friendships, including one with his 19-year old granddaughter. “Fifteen-year-old old grandson is still in teenage ether but, hopefully, will come around,” he wrote. “In three words: Life is good.”

Grossman@Colorado.EDU

HERMAN SIEVERING
(Environmental Science, UCD, and INSTAAR, UCB) does environmental science consulting for the U.S. Park Service and Alberta Environment in Canada.

Herman.Sievering@gmail.com

RITA WEISS (Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences, UCB) is still on the board of the Democratic Women of Boulder County in the specially created role as “emerita board member.” “I have managed to cut down somewhat on the number of board meetings I attend,” she wrote.

rsweiss@spot.colorado.edu

PAUL WINSTON (EPOB, UCB) still lives at Frazier Meadows in Boulder. He wrote that it is “a great place to live. Not doing anything exciting. Just trying to stay semi-healthy.”

JULIET WITTMAN (Writing and Rhetoric, UCB) writes weekly theater reviews for Westword and is also working on fiction and essays. Otherwise, she spends her time reading, gardening and cooking.

JWITTS@aol.com

‘I have managed to cut down somewhat on the number of board meetings I attend.’
Report from the vice president and program chair

Richard Blade, CURFA Vice President

The presentation of Professor Sara Qualls from the UCCS gerontology program titled "Innovations for an Aging Society" was a great hit with the audience at the April business meeting. As a result, I tried twice during the summer to organize a bus trip to Colorado Springs to see the UCCS campus and "The Palisades at the Broadmoor," the retirement community that the gerontology faculty and students helped design and now help run and use for research. Unfortunately, there was insufficient interest both times.

The May Tea Time provided a religious history of the area now known as Iran, presented by religious scholar John Longo.

The September Tea Time featured an autobiographical one-woman show performed by ballerina Robin Haig and directed by Lee Potts, both retired faculty of the CU Department of Theater and Dance. It drew a large crowd and received rave reviews from the audience.

Coming at the Oct. 19 business meeting will be a presentation of Greg Benchwick titled "A Traveler’s Tale." Greg, a 1998 graduate of the CU School of Journalism and Mass Communication, has authored many of the Lonely Planet guides and now continues to travel extensively as a media consultant to the United Nations Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). See the front page story about Greg and his presentation in this newsletter.

CURFA’s policy for retiree research grants program

CURFA is pleased to call for applications for five $500 grants to aid in new and continuing research projects currently being carried out by all officially retired faculty from the University of Colorado.

The CU President’s Office generously has made funds available to initiate this program recognizing the continuing research contributions University of Colorado retirees make to their fields and to the reputation of the University community.

The evaluation committee will consider the originality, significance and feasibility of the research and award the grants for any use, excepting applicant’s salary, in support of the research.

Applications will be accepted from Jan. 1, 2012, to March 1, 2012, and grants will be announced by May 1, 2012.

Retirees wishing to be considered should submit electronic applications to the chair of the evaluations committee: Charles Howe (Charles.Howe@colorado.edu) and four hard copies to:

CURFA
Box 80, Regent Hall
University of Colorado, Boulder
Boulder, CO 80309.

Please, include in your application:

a) A cover page with name, former and current university affiliation, date of retirement, email and other addresses and phone number(s).
b) An abstract limited to 150 words describing the major objectives of the work.
c) A description of the work to be done, not to exceed two pages.
d) A budget indicating intended uses of the award.
e) A CV of not more than two pages.

These awards are open to all retired faculty whether members of CURFA or not.

Carl Kisslinger Graduate Student Awards Fund

CURFA has established an endowment through the CU Foundation that provides research awards for outstanding graduate students at all CU campuses. The awards are announced in the spring for the following academic year. Award winners are also invited to attend the general meeting and report on their research.

We continue to need contributions to meet our goal of $50,000 in the CURFA fund. Please help support this effort by making a contribution using this form.

You might also consider mentioning the CURFA Graduate Student Award Fund in your will and asking family and friends to make contributions to the fund in your memory.

Name: _______________________________________________________________________________________
Campus:  Boulder ___  HSC ___  Denver ___  UCCS ___
Mailing Address: _______________________________________________________________________________________
Contribution:  $25 ___  $50 ___  $100 ___  $500 ___  $1,000___  OTHER $___________

Mail your check and this form to the Carl Kisslinger Graduate Student Awards Program at the CU Foundation, 4740 Walnut, Boulder, CO 80301. Or charge a contribution to:

VISA ___  MASTERCARD ___  AMEX ___  Discover ___
Card Number: __________________________________________________________   Exp. Date: _____________________
Cardholder Signature: ___________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your support of the CURFA and its Carl Kisslinger Graduate Student Awards Program.