

## Editor's Notebook

This issue of *Social Education* offers our readers two important special sections—one on World War II and the other on AP social studies.

The issue opens with the special section, “Recovering the Lost Voices of World War II,” which offers a gripping inside portrayal of the war as seen by those who fought it, and uses art, poetry, letters, and oral history to highlight the potential of primary sources to bring history alive for students. The section is edited by James A. Percoco, director of education for the Friends of the National World War II Memorial, whose publications on teaching history are familiar to many of our readers.

In the opening article, Lee Ann Potter introduces two vivid and memorable sketches by Tracy A. Sugarman, a gifted artist who served in the U.S. Navy in the European theater during World War II. Potter offers teaching suggestions for readers interested in using the sketches in the classroom, and introduces resources from the Library of Congress and its Veterans History Project. She invites readers to access the Teaching with the Library of Congress Blog for a post tied to her article.

The section's guest editor, James A. Percoco, describes a groundbreaking oral history initiative by high school students to interview World War II veterans to preserve their memories—“a golden opportunity,” he writes, “to bring the ‘latest generation’ in contact with the ‘greatest generation.’” (232) His article describes the experiences of the student interviewers, and invites teachers across the country to involve their students in similar initiatives in their own localities. Among the veterans interviewed by his own students was Peter A. Thomas, whose poignant poem, “Omaha Beach,” is a major feature of the article.

Letters from U.S. troops to their families are often extraordinarily powerful, and Andrew Carroll emphasizes their value as primary documents because they are “about actual people who have seen history unfold before their eyes, and their words bring these eyewitness accounts vividly to life.” (238) He presents some remarkable examples of wartime correspondence, including a letter from a staff sergeant written from Hitler's apartment in Munich after its capture by U.S. troops, and one from an assistant to a U.S. army physician who operated on Japan's former prime minister, Hideki Tojo, after the latter's unsuccessful suicide attempt.

Lynne M. O'Hara describes the moving experiences of students and teachers selected through a national competition to go to Normandy, France, where they retrace the steps of the troops who landed on the D-Day beaches in 1944. Each student selects an individual from his or her own state who is buried in the American Cemetery above Omaha Beach, and studies the campaign through the eyes of that soldier or sailor.

Our readers will hopefully find this special section particularly valuable on occasions such as Veterans Day, Memorial Day, or the upcoming 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings in June 2014.

Elsewhere in the issue, two of our regular columns deal with important contemporary issues.

In a Looking at the Law feature, Steven D. Schwinn examines a decision on the legal enforcement of voting rights made by the Supreme Court this summer, which favored states' rights by ruling that Congress had exceeded its authority in reauthorizing a coverage formula in the Voting Rights Act. Schwinn notes that voting rights are “the crown jewel of the civil rights movement” (243), and suggests that the Court's recent decision “may well just be the tip of the iceberg” (243) as other related cases come before it. He suggests questions for classroom discussion about the issues raised by the decision.

In his Internet column, C. Frederick Risinger points out that “world leaders believe that water shortages are at the top of major problems facing our planet.” (248) These shortages could lead to grave future conflicts. Risinger recommends a selection of sites likely to be useful for teachers introducing the subject in the classroom.

Most of this issue is devoted to a special section on AP Social Studies, edited by Walter R. Herscher, a long-time NCSS member and history teacher who has served as a leader of the Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies, and Robert Stevens, professor of education at the University of Texas-Tyler and regular past contributor to *Social Education*. The articles in the special section cover both general issues and specific social studies subjects. Among the topics discussed are whether AP programs should be restricted to the most accomplished students, or whether their benefits should be offered to a wider enrollment of students, as well as the most effective ways of teaching AP to non-traditional students. The wide array of contributions cover most of the social studies subjects that are taught at the AP level and offer valuable recommendations about teaching them. A detailed summary of the articles is provided by Guest Editor Walter R. Herscher in his introduction to the special section on pages 249–251.

Our thanks to the guest editors and all who have contributed to the special sections in this issue, as well as to Shelly Singer, former NCSS board member and past president of the Illinois Council for the Social Studies, for her efforts as a prime mover in initiating the special section on AP social studies to assist current and future teachers of advanced placement.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at [socialed@ncss.org](mailto:socialed@ncss.org).