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St. Bonaventure student shares love of martial arts by forming campus club

Andy Gaieski learned starting a new club at St. Bonaventure University is possible with passion and drive.

Gaieski, a junior sport studies major, said his desire to share his knowledge and love of martial arts with others drove him to create the club; he wanted to show other people the things that changed his life.

Martial arts has been Gaieski's passion since he was young.

"Even when I was 4 years old I was the kid who would go outside and play fight with sticks," he said.

Martial Arts Club members Hanh Tranton (front) and Aashish Abraham take part in a class in Butler Gym.

Eventually, he joined the Enchanted Mountain Martial Arts Academy (EMMAA) in Olean, where his passion truly ignited, Gaieski said.

The discipline and body awareness he learned after joining the academy coupled with the efforts of his instructors, had a lasting effect on Gaieski – all things he wanted to share with others.

Gaieski, who enjoys teaching and public speaking, decided he wanted to be an instructor. His role as president of the martial arts club gives him those opportunities.

The meetings are like a class, Gaieski said. The club adviser, Master Barry Broughton, owner and operator of EMMAA, attends most meetings to oversee them. At a typical meeting, the members will start out with five to 15 minutes of exercises and then go right into instruction.

So far, the instruction has been run mostly by Broughton and Gaieski, but they intend on having other members who have had prior instruction lead the exercises or even teach the rest of the club something new from his or her own style. They try to keep the club as open as possible to maintain a comfortable learning environment, and, according to Gaieski, that method has been successful thus far.

Meetings are from 3:30-5 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays in Butler Gym, but members are not required to attend every meeting. The meetings mostly consist of learning new techniques, or practicing ones already taught.

Campus Martial Arts Club founder Andy Gaieski (right) and club adviser Master Barry Broughton (back to camera) instruct club members (clockwise from left) Shiyu Wang, Nick Garuckis, Aashish Abraham and Doug Gaylor.

Participants do anything from traditional drills, to walking drills, to partner work during club meetings, said Gaieski, so they acquire a good balance of different learning environments.

Gaieski has begun to see members not only excelling in the practice of martial arts, but also making friends with other members. The club has about a dozen members and is always looking for more. For more information about the Martial Arts Club, contact Gaieski at gaieskaj@sbu.edu.

By Jessica Nothnagle, '10

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SBU graduate wins 'Best Documentary' award for film on Jefferson Davis

A 1993 St. Bonaventure University graduate's documentary film on the life of Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy during the Civil War, has won the coveted 2009 Peter Rollins Film Award for Best Documentary from the American Culture Association.

"Jefferson Davis: An American President" was directed, edited, co-produced and co-written by SBU alumnus Brian Gary, co-founder and CEO of Flying Chaucer Films of Los Angeles, Calif.

Gary isn't the documentary's only connection to St. Bonaventure. One of the Civil War scholars interviewed in the film is retired SBU history professor Dr. Edward Eckert, Board of Trustees Professor Emeritus at St. Bonaventure and a former academic dean and vice president.

Brian Gary, '93, directed, edited, co-wrote and co-produced "Jefferson Davis: An American President."

Additionally, Gary's SBU classmate and roommate his junior and senior years, New York City-based entertainment attorney David Davoli, is the attorney for Flying Chaucer Films and helped secure the recent nationwide release of the documentary on DVD.

The Davis documentary, which was five years in the making, was born from a bit of serendipity – a meeting between Gary and Percival Beacroft, the owner of Rosemont Plantation in Woodville, Miss., Davis's boyhood home.

Gary and his wife, Wendi Berman, co-founder of Flying Chaucer Films who is also a co-writer and co-producer of the Davis documentary, met Beacroft while visiting Gary's family in New Orleans about eight years ago. "Beacroft told me that for the past 15 years he'd been trying to get a feature film made of Jefferson Davis's life," said Gary.

Gary suggested instead that they do a documentary. "A feature film is a total crapshoot. All it takes is for it not to do well and you've lost everything," said Gary. A documentary, on the other hand, especially one in the Civil War genre, has staying power. "There are whole sections in bookstores just on the Civil War," said Gary. "A documentary will sit on bookshelves and in gift shops from now until the end of time."

He and Berman were surprised to learn that their project would be the first of its kind. "No one had ever done a documentary on Jefferson Davis," said Gary. "As far as we knew we were the first documentary project on the life of the guy who was the president of the Confederacy, and that just blew us away. We saw the opportunity to make something unique here."

The filmmakers spent months interviewing subjects, researching records at the Library of Congress and National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., and shooting film. In the end they had amassed 110 hours of video and some 6,000 still images. Gary and Berman spent more than two years editing the material, writing the script as they went, all the while juggling an assortment of other Flying Chaucer projects.

Their goal in the documentary was to offer a look at Davis that goes beyond the oversimplified characterizations of Civil War figures one gets from high school textbooks.

"Davis could be painted as a villain if you wanted to just have a very black and white look at history, but once you start peeling back the layers it gets very tricky and complicated," said Gary. "You're dealing with a West Point graduate, a Mexican War hero, a U.S. senator and Secretary of War – a patriot who shed blood for his country and yet, at the same time, believed slavery was a proper institution.

"We tried to offer a very balanced look at the guy – not apologize, not blow anything out of proportion, but just kind of lay out this man's life and let people figure out for themselves what they will about him."

When Gary was assembling his cast of Civil War experts to serve as his documentary's "talking heads," Dr. Eckert's name was high on the list. Gary had taken two courses from Eckert at St. Bonaventure and knew he had written a book about Davis' years in prison after the war.

Eckert remembers the phone call from his former student. "It came out of nowhere – totally unexpected," he said. "I remembered him, but I didn't know he was in the filmmaking business."

Gary was one of those students you don't forget, said Eckert.

"He was an excellent student, an honors student. Not only was he very bright, but he was creative as hell," said Eckert. "The thing that just blew my mind was his honors project. He wrote, directed, produced and starred in his own play. This kid had such creativity and he kept taking things to new levels."

Gary was already a budding playwright when he graduated from high school. His father, a theater director and professor in the Pennsylvania State University system, encouraged him to find a college with a strong liberal arts program. "St. Bonaventure gave me the best scholarship," said Gary.

He majored in journalism and mass communication, a decision that has paid dividends time and time again, said Gary. "My skills as a writer were very well honed at St. Bonaventure. Having that journalism degree was especially helpful in writing the texts and scripts for the Davis documentary. We pored over and over the script, making sure every single word was exactly what we wanted to say. That reduction, which I learned in the journalism department, I found to be invaluable."

Gary minored in fine arts at St. Bonaventure and after graduation set out for New York, hoping to carve out a career as an actor. Meanwhile, his SBU roommate, Davoli, landed a job as an assistant to actor Alec Baldwin in Los Angeles. Gary followed his friend to L.A. where the two were roommates again. Gary got his Screen Actors Guild card and chased acting parts, landing roles in episodes of TV's "Coach" and "My So-Called Life," and small parts in movies, including a role in "The Net."

Eventually, Davoli went to law school and Gary tired of the acting profession. "You're just constantly waiting around, waiting for things to happen," said Gary. "So I really started focusing on directing and a natural evolution out of that was producing, and another natural evolution out of that was editing."

Gary produced and edited the New York Film Festival award-winning film "Frankie D." As a producer, his other projects include the independent feature "Local Color" and the upcoming feature film adaptations of Stephen King's "Bag Of Bones" and James Ellroy's "Clandestine." Gary has also worked extensively in television, most recently directing and editing the television series "SpeedFreaks" (ESPN and MavTV).

Professor Eckert said the Davis documentary will only enhance the reputation of his former student.

"It's an excellent documentary he's put together," said Eckert. "Brian's going to be pretty well known by the time he's done with this career."

History is an interpretation of events, Eckert continued, and the Davis film "is an excellent interpretation from Jefferson Davis' point of view. It's an accurate, but dated interpretation of the causes of the Civil War. It's not a position the majority of today's historians would espouse. But it tells the story of Jefferson Davis from his own view of himself as a man, as president of the Confederacy, as a senator, as a legend and so on. I certainly see it being used in college courses on history as a viewpoint of the war and how we got into the war. I think it's highly accurate, I think it's entertaining, and the cinematography is excellent."

It's also a feather in the cap for St. Bonaventure University, said Eckert. "I think it's great that coming from Bonaventure is this type of individual who is going out and making a name for himself."

Gary is also proud of that Bonaventure connection.

"It's a great campus story," he said. "You have two students, roommates, who have stayed friends and who work together, and then you also have a student who felt comfortable enough with a former professor that he could call him after eight years – and the professor remembers him and is more than obliging to be part of his project."

"At a larger school or one that doesn't have that really good personal connection between the students and the faculty, that might not happen. It's one of the things that makes Bona's special."

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Friday Forum

Date: Dec. 11

Time: 12:30 - 1:30 p.m

Location: University Club

Speaker: Steve Watson

Title: Division I Athletics at St. Bonaventure University: Top Students, Elite Athletes, Great People

Summary: Director of Athletics Steve Watson will host a presentation/discussion on anything and everything athletics at St. Bonaventure. Topics will include the academic achievements of our student-athletes, the competitive successes of our teams, the community involvement of the Department of Athletics, and the importance of fundraising in the Athletic Department's funding model.

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Increase recycling, reduce trash with Zero-Sort recycling

When it comes to recycling at St. Bonaventure, don't be afraid to mix it up! Campus Recycling Club members want you to know that Zero-Sort® recycling is making it easier than ever. With Zero-Sort, just toss all of your recyclables into one bin. You'll increase recycling and reduce trash.

Casella Waste Systems, which handles the university's contract for garbage and recycling, takes care of the sorting at its state-of-the-art facilities. (Watch a video about the sorting process: <http://www.casella.com/zero-sort>.)

What does that mean to the campus community? It means you can combine recyclables such as cardboard, office paper and aluminum cans all in one designated recycling bin. Signs about the Zero-Sort recycling option were placed in residence halls near current recycling bins last week. After winter break, club members plan to increase the number of recycling bins available on campus in non-residential areas.

Here is a list of Zero-Sort recyclables: (all materials should be free of food items)

- Cardboard
- Clean boxboard (shoe boxes/cereal boxes)
- Office paper (white/colored)
- Magazines, newspapers, glossy inserts
- Office paper, junk mail, envelopes
- Aluminum cans
- Tin cans
- Glass bottles and jars
- Plastic bottles #1 through #7

Items that are not recyclable:

- No unmarked plastics (laundry baskets/chairs/toys)
- No windows/light bulbs
- No Pyrex or ceramics (dishes/plates/mugs/pots)
- No foam packaging
- No aerosol cans (paint/hairspray, cleaner)
- No recyclables containing food waste

For more information about the St. Bonaventure Recycling Club, contact a club member (Bridget Steele, Sinead Coleman or Tony Zambito) or Sr. Suzanne Kush, C.S.S.F., at the Franciscan Center for Social Concern.

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Newsmakers

Rodney Paul, Ph.D., professor of economics in the Department of Finance, had the paper "Bettor Biases and Price Setting by Sportsbooks in the NFL: Further Tests of the Levitt Hypothesis of Sportsbook Behavior" accepted for publication in Applied Economics Letters.

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