

Professor lives political turbulence

A life of travel and activism contribute to a historian's worldview and class lectures

Mary Ann Macombie
for the Index

Like many history professors, Marc Becker speaks to students about revolutions. But unlike most, he can speak from a first-person perspective.

"Police started shooting tear gas at us," Becker said. "I thought I could get away from the tear gas there ... I couldn't breathe ... Thought I was going to die."

Becker, assistant professor of history, is a political-social activist. He does not just teach Latin American history, he lives it.

Becker's experience of being tear gassed as a protester occurred in Quito, Ecuador, about a year ago. Becker had answered a call to rally in opposition to talks by the ministers of the Free Trade Area of Americas.

At the time, Becker was on a leave of absence from the University, doing research on a prestigious and highly competitive Fulbright professorship for the 2002-03 academic year.

The Fulbright Scholar Program grants professorships to 800 U.S. faculty and professionals each year. Often it gives professors the chance to research or teach abroad.

Becker said his work in Ecuador has affected him in areas other than teaching.

"For me, the impact of having been tear gassed was such that I lost my fear," Becker said. "They can do this, but they can't kill us, and we come back even stronger."

Becker is a pacifist and peacemaker. His travels in search of knowledge and understanding have taken him to Canada, Europe and Latin America. He is an advocate of the economically disadvantaged everywhere.

He has courage in his beliefs, whether he's driving an old pickup over jungle roads mined with explosives or monitoring democratic elections.

While some students had Becker as a teacher, others first heard him speak at events on campus.

"I was first aware of him when he was at one of the peace rallies on the Quad following 9-11, and he spoke to remind us that 9-11 was also the day Allende was overthrown in Chile in 1973," senior, Suzanne Leslie said.

Becker brings his passion for equality and justice to the campus and classrooms of the University.

"He is so passionate about events and the role the U.S. has had in them," Leslie said. "He is an original thinker, unafraid to



Adrian Lorincz/Index

Professor Marc Becker teaches Latin America in the National Period in McClain Hall Tuesday afternoon. Becker specializes in Latin American history, social and political causes and has traveled extensively throughout Latin America.

voice his opinions. I respect that."

Becker urges his students to call him by his first name, rather than address him as "professor" or "Dr. Becker."

"It's because we're all equal," Becker said. "It's democratic. I'm uncomfortable when students call me Dr. Becker. It violates the whole concept of the liberal arts education. We're in this together."

Leslie said she likes the informal atmosphere of Becker's classes and being on a first-name basis. She described Becker as intelligent and motivated.

"You can tell he really cares about the students and feels strongly about Latin America," Leslie said.

Becker arrived at Truman in 1999, a direct result of a search conducted by the history faculty.

"Marc Becker was hired by the history faculty as part of our efforts to reach out and increase our knowledge of world history and diverse problems in history," said David Robinson, associate professor of history.

The thing that interests Robinson most about Becker is his commitment to staying current with issues and causes in the

Americas.

"He has a lot of connections that keep him involved in what's going on in Latin America," Robinson said.

Robinson, a Fulbright Professor in 2001-02, said it is valuable for a professor to be able to spend an entire year in another culture. It enables the professor, upon returning to his college or university, to connect better with students, make other places seem more real to students and encourage students to study or pursue careers in other countries.

Becker's past helped prepare him for his experiences overseas.

Raised by Republican parents in the small farming community of Freeman, S.D., Becker's first act of civil disobedience was at age 18 when he refused to register with the draft.

With the possibility of prison looming on the horizon, Becker left the United States that year to live in Ontario, Canada to avoid prosecution.

"I set out to explore the world," he said. "I didn't know anything about the world."

From Canada, Becker journeyed to the Netherlands, working for a Mennonite cul-

tural exchange program.

Becker then attended Bethel College (North Newton, Kan.), where he received his bachelor's degree in history and peace studies. He spent the next 10 years receiving numerous grants and scholarships and earning his master's degree and doctorate in history at the University of Kansas (Lawrence).

While attending the University of Kansas, Becker met his wife, Cheryl Musch.

She is a fellow world traveler who now travels the world working for Sales Exchange for Refuge Rehabilitation Vocation, an international nonprofit organization that promotes the social and economic progress of people in developing regions of the world by purchasing and marketing their crafts with fair trade practices.

Becker never has registered with the Selective Service. He no longer lives with the fear of prosecution, however. The statute of limitations ran out years ago.

The next stop on Becker's itinerary is Venezuela, where he plans to spend a weekend in October.

Small-town Impressions

Suggestions for keeping visitors busy over Family Weekend

Friday

♦ The Clothesline Project for Rape Awareness week on the Square.

Saturday

♦ University-sponsored tailgate picnic, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Red Barn Park or fix a picnic and enjoy the fall scenery at Thousand Hills State Park.

♦ Red Barn Arts and Crafts Festival, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., downtown Kirksville

♦ The University Art Gallery presents "Textiles of Indochina" from 12 to 4 p.m. in University Art Gallery in Ophelia Parrish.

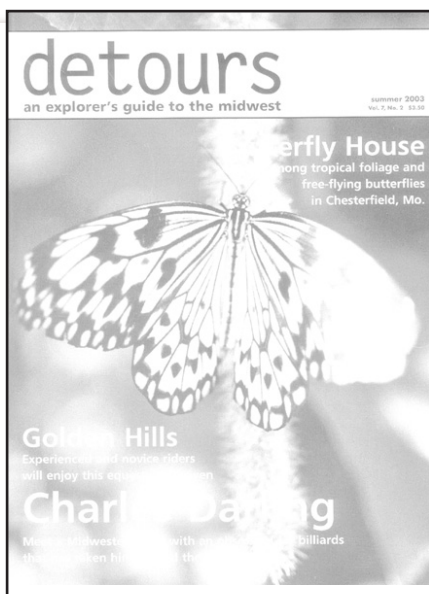
Sunday

♦ The University Wind Symphony and Concert Band and the University Orchestra performs at 2 p.m. in Baldwin Hall.

C	A	D		M	I	N	O	R		J	O	I
A	L	I	A	D	A	G	E	E	R	A		
P	E	N	A	L	P	L	A	N	T	E	R	
		A	X	I	S	E	L	O				
D	I	R	E	C	T		M	E	R	I	T	
A	M		E	A	R	N		L	I	M	O	
T	A	M		R	O	E		M	A	X		
E	G	I	S		E	W	E	R		G	I	
D	E	L	T	A		D	E	A	C	O	N	
				A	L	B	S	A	G	E		
N	I	A	G	A	R	A		S	O	L	A	R
E	L	I		M	A	N	G	O		T	R	Y
A	L	L		O	N	I	O	N		S	E	E

DETOURS

AN EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO THE MIDWEST



Detours is looking for Ad representatives

You could receive commission and bonuses.

Contact Laura Stull for more information.

laura_stull@hotmail.com (660)785-7438

business careers

State Street, a world leader in financial services for investment companies, has job opportunities at our downtown Kansas City office for talented students seeking degrees

in accounting, finance or other business-related majors.



STATE STREET.
For Everything You Invest InSM

Apply at our web site today or look for State Street at the Campus Career Fair in Kirksville on October 21st.

statestreetkc.com

The biggest threat to depression is your awareness of it.

Serious depression strikes millions. Serious depression strikes indiscriminately. Serious depression is MOST dangerous when it goes unrecognized. That's why it's so important to always be aware of the threat of depression. And if your life is ever interrupted by a period of depression, remember that it is readily, medically treatable.

UNTREATED DEPRESSION

#1 Cause of Suicide

Public Service message from SAIWE (Suicide Awareness\Voices of Education) <http://www.save.org>