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'Invisible Wall' focus of lecture

By Alison Watson
Staff Writer

Michael Blumenthal, former secretary of treasury in the Carter administration, will be speaking at UNCA on April 6. The talk will be based on his recently published book "The Invisible Wall: Germans and Jews."

"We are excited to have someone of his stature speak here," said Rick Chess, associate professor of literature and director of Jewish studies.

The book examines Blumenthal's history and family members in Germany, while trying to explain the German-Jew experience.

"The Invisible Wall (is) the author's quest to understand the failure of the German-Jewish relationship and to explain the character and attitudes of Germany's assimilated Jews over a 300 year period," said a Center for Jewish Studies flier.

Blumenthal was born in Germany in 1926. He escaped from the Nazis with his family in 1939 and lived in Shanghai with other Jewish refugees.

Blumenthal came to the United States when he was 21 years old. He had $65 upon his arrival and went on to attain a Ph.D. He then went to work in business, government service and education. He was chairman and chief executive officer (CEO) of Bendix Corporation and Burroughs Corporation.

Blumenthal was an ambassador and deputy special representative for trade negotiations under presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

In 1997, Blumenthal accepted an invitation from Berlin, Germany to become president and CEO of the Berlin Jewish Museum.

Blumenthal currently lives half of the year in Princeton, New Jersey and half the year in Berlin. He does not normally give talks on his book or the museum, according to Mark Gibney, Belk professor of humanities.

"He is a very busy man. I thought his book was a magnificient piece, and if he had the chance to come speak, that would be great," said Gibney.

Gibney was Blumenthal's teaching assistant during graduate school.

Blumenthal is speaking at UNCA as a part of an annual memorial lecture. The lecture is held by Norman Sollod in memory of his wife Phyllis Freed Sollod, who was an active leader in the Asheville Jewish community and president of the Southern Branch of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

"The lecture is on a topic of Jewish interest and to the general community," said Chess.

The Jewish studies program tries to line up speakers to cover important topics that everyone can attend, according to Chess.

One year, the annual lecture touched on the Dead Sea Scrolls, while another year looked at women and Judaism.

The lecture "looked into feminist issues as well," said Chess. "It was an interest to people beyond the Jewish community."

Blumenthal will be 1999's only Sollud Annual Memorial lecturer.

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Michael Blumenthal, former secretary of the treasury in the Carter administration, will speak April 6 concerning the relationship of Germans and Jews.

McDevitt receives award

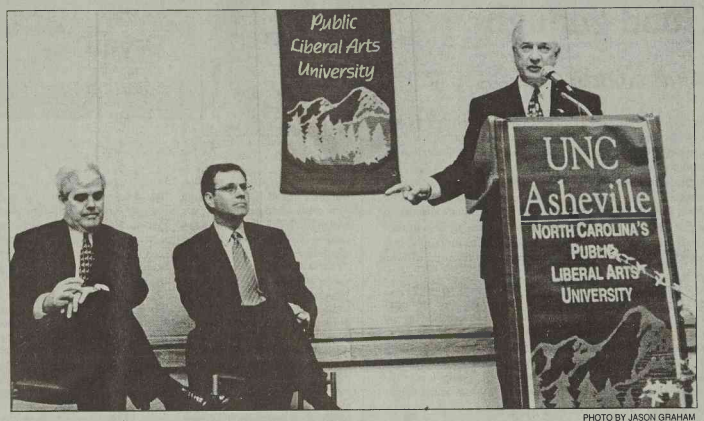

PHOTO BY JASON GRAHAM

Governor Jim Hunt makes a speech at the ceremony for Wayne McDevitt, Hunt's chief of staff and a UNCA alumnus. Chancellor Jim Mullen (middle) awarded the Chancellor's Medallion to McDevitt on March 31.

By Kathryn Krouse
Staff Writer

Wayne McDevitt, chief of staff to Governor Hunt and a UNCA alumnus, received the Chancellor's Medallion on March 31, according to Tom Byers, special assistant to the chancellor.

"The Chancellor's Medallion is the highest award given for service to the university, and is given to those whose efforts have been extraordinary," said Byers.

The medallion is a replica of the one the chancellor wears on ceremonial occasions, according to Byers.

"I think he is very deserving of this award," said Ben Ezell, a junior mass communications major and friend of the McDevitt family.

Nicholas McDevitt, a junior history and education major and Wayne McDevitt's son, could not be reached for comment.

McDevitt has helped channel the chancellor's and other campus leaders' requests for support in the right direction, according to Byers.

"Chancellors past and present have called on him for his willingness to help steer them through the maze of government offices, structure and funding possibilities to help the university," said Byers.

When the school prepares to obtain funds, McDevitt has been instrumental in helping them decide where to look for resources and giving assistance in obtaining appropriations, according to Byers.

"The university is better off for everything he has done to improve its standing in the state and community," said Ezell.

The award is not given annually. The first medallion was given in the 1980s, and only 10 have been awarded, three of which were alumni, according to Byers.

"McDevitt has previously been awarded for his distinctive achievements as an alumnus," said Byers. "This award recognizes his ongoing achievements to the university."

McDevitt has always been extremely loyal to the university, according to Byers.

"I've heard the governor comment about how McDevitt is always saying good things about UNCA," said Byers.

"It is a real privilege to give McDevitt an award recognizing (the) extraordinary contributions he has made to N.C.," said Jim Mullen, UNCA chancellor.

Prior to being chief of staff to the governor, he was also N.C.'s secretary of the department of environment and natural resources, and special assistant to the chancellor of UNCA, according to Byers.

"He was an energetic champion of the environment and had a key role in organizing the governor's conference on air quality," said Byers.

The style of the award ceremony changes to best suit the needs of the honoree, according to Byers.

"McDevitt's ceremony (was) a little different than those that have been done in the past," said Byers.

The ceremony was held at the N.C. Arboretum in the afternoon so more people could attend, according to Byers.

"He is well-known to many people who work at various levels of government and non-profit agencies in the state," said Byers.

One of the reasons the ceremony was held there was because "McDevitt had a big hand in developing the arboretum to its present state," said Byers.

His efforts at the arboretum are also reflected in his efforts at UNCA, according to Byers.

"I think he brought to bear (at the aboretum) some of the same abilities and knowledge that make him such a valued friend and help at UNCA," said Byers.

Last year, Adelaide Daniels Key, who contributed to the development of the Key Center for Service Learning on campus, received the award, according to Byers.

Students emphasize African issues in conference

By Davon Heath
Staff Writer

Seven UNCA students had the opportunity to study the Organization of African Unity (OAU) by participating in the National Model Conference that focused on social, economic and political issues facing the African continent, according to Elmoiz Abunura, coordinator of Africana studies and lecturer of political science.

"This experience definitely adds to my college education, because I met other college students from all over the country who genuinely share an interest in Africa," said Emily Carter, a freshman history and political science major. "It was an excellent opportunity to learn hands on how politics really works."

Students from the Introduction to Africana Studies and Contemporary African Politics classes prepared for the conference by studying the issues of the Republic of Congo (ROC), the country UNCA students represented, according to Abunura.

"Africa is striving to solve problems with African solutions instead of Western solutions," said Carter. "This is hard when you have the roots of colonialism dug so deeply in the politics and education."

The OAU was formed by the independent countires of Africa in 1963 to promote issues, focus on the development of Africa and to unify the countries in the continent, according to Abunura.

"It is similiar to the United Nations," said Abunura.

At the model conference, students engage in discussion and debate. They follow the formal procedures of the OAU and help in drafting final resolutions, which are then presented to the OAU, according to Abunura.

"I learned about how other countries felt about the issues by the debate of voting," said Andrew Hainsworth, a sophomore political science major.

"I learned how tedious the job of policy makers is because all delegates come from a different background," said Hainsworth.

The model is an opportunity for students to study the structure of the OAU while searching for solutions to key problems of the African nations, according to Abunura.

"Through simulation, participants gain a better and clearer understanding of the multi-various determinants, capabilities and constraints that shape the domestic and foreign policies of each country," said Abunura.

The conference, held in Washington, D.C., is organized on an annual basis by Howard University, the oldest African-American university in the United States, according to Abunura.

Approximately 45 universities from around the U.S. participate, according to Abunura,

"Some of the main problems presented were AIDS, additional healthcare, refugee problems, education and women's rights," said Carter.

"I submitted a resolution on the AIDS epidemic, which I combined with resolutions from Ghana, Chad and Senegal since our resolutions were similar," said Carter.

"I worked with other countries to pass resolutions on social problems, and tried to have it pass in a vote by the body of representatives," said Carter.

The U.S. and other nations try to force their ideals for solutions onto the African nations, according to Carter.

"This conference especially opened my eyes to the extreme AIDS epidemic that is now sweeping Africa, (as well as the) idea of prevention in a country where healthcare is already bad, plus the rapid rate it is spreading at," said Carter.

UNCA students went to the ROC embassy in Washington D.C., according to Hainsworth.

"To get us in the mindset, we went to the ROC embassy and met their ambassador," said Carter. "We learned a lot more about the country and their political background."

"The best way to learn about a culture is to research it and try to think like them on a daily basis, like we attempted to do in Contemporary African Politics," said Hainsworth. "I believe when you are dealing with different countries and cultures, you have to actually act like the people. Playing that role really made me understand them better."

UNCA's African studies program is active in promoting the political science history of individuals with

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY TANJA PAGEL

Several students attended a National Model Conference in Washington, D.C. to discuss African issues, representing the Republic of Congo.

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