Georgia Gene Berryhill, Ph.D.

Gene Berryhill was a Fulbright Senior Specialist in Bulgaria, May 2010 for seventeen days. In the U.S. she teaches art history at the University of Maryland-UMUC, part-time and continues to work as a documental photographer and exhibit her collections. © 2010 geneberryhill

Fresco Hunting in Bulgaria

On a cool, damp morning I arrived at my local Southern California airport suited up in padded nylon vest, zipped-leg pants and sturdy hiking boots. Besides a suitcase, I had my trusty Nikon D1H digital camera, lenses, battery packs, flash unit, flash cards, compass and field book in tow—I was on my way to Bulgaria as a Fulbright Senior specialist grantee to serve as a documental photographer and lecturer with my institutional host, The Balkan Heritage Field School.

Twenty hours later, my plane was flying low over rolling green hills, preparing to land in the capital city of Sofia. The sky was a clear, pristine blue. The first notable architecture in sight was several tall towers of apartment buildings, constructed during the Communist Era (1944-1989). On the left, was a stunning view of the snow-capped Vitosha Mountain, a popular ski resort.

The whole scene filled me with wonder and excitement. I’d spent my first two Fulbrights in northeastern Germany, but anticipated that the East European Balkans would be a unique experience. For myself, I was drawn here due to a long time desire to experience Byzantine and Medieval art, folklore and culture from an Eastern Orthodox perspective.

Meeting me at the Sofia Airport was Ivan Vasilev, executive director of the Balkan Heritage Field School. The BHFS is a legal part of the Balkan Heritage Foundation-Bulgarian public, a non-profit, non-governmental organization. “The Balkan Heritage mission is to support protection, restoration, management and promotion of sites,
museums, artifacts and practices belonging or related to the cultural heritage of southeastern Europe.” (BHFS Handbook, 2010, p. 2)

Any anxieties about being in a new country quickly dissolved as I encountered the lively, suntanned field archaeologist who possessed a warm smile and a twinkle in his eye. I was in Bulgaria! Ivan expertly drove us through this amazing city of architectural contrasts to our home base for the next 17 days, the ancient village of Bankya, about 15 km north of Sofia. Quaint shops, cafés, spas and a large open-air market appeared as well as the much-appreciated bank ATM at the edge of town. After settling into our team base hotel, we went to a charming outdoor café bordering the central park, as a gentle drizzle floated down from the late spring sky. The menu was written in Bulgarian as well as English. I was surprised to discover that many Bulgarians spoke English fluently.

However, some local language skills were helpful, at least to offer a bit of friendly communication. The BHFS provided excellent reading materials before my trip that included a handy list of words. Two in common usage everywhere and easy to remember, were “ciao” and “merci.” Okay, so at least I could say “goodbye” and “thank you.” Desiring to learn more, I soon added “hello” (zdrasti) and “please” (molya). The more confusing communication was with head gestures: Head turning right to left meant “yes” and head nodding up and down meant “no,” the exact opposite of my life long habit.

The next day, more of our team arrived and among other things, we learned about Bulgarian dining. Delicious thick, unsweetened yoghurt, fresh chopped tomatoes and cucumbers usually accompanied a typical main course. These staples were served with breakfast, lunch and dinner as side dishes. You may also be served yoghurt for dessert, topped with honey and nuts or a berry jam. Local drinks ranged from coffee, chai (tea), wine, soft drinks and a clear alcoholic drink called rakiya, served in a small glass with salad or other appetizer. Part of getting acquainted with our team was the after dinner lesson on how to do the communal Bulgarian folk dance, the horo, a real icebreaker that had us in stitches. Thanks to team archaeologist, Vassil Tenekedjiiev’s dance skills we were better acquainted in no time.

After the preliminaries, training and work began. Part of this process consisted of trips to important locations such as downtown Sofia where we visited the medieval churches of St. George’s Rotunda, St. Sofia and the St. Alexandar Nevsky Cathedral, one of the largest Orthodox churches in the world. The Neo-Byzantine structure was built
between 1882 and 1912 in honor of the Russian soldiers who between 1877-1878 battled to free Bulgaria from Ottoman rule. We were delighted to hear an inspiring trio of male singers during a Sunday service.

Other significant locations included the National History Museum-Sofia, the Boyana Church, (UNESCO World Heritage Site), and the Rila Monastery (UNESCO World Heritage Site), founded by Ivan Rilski, a medieval hermit born in the 9th century. (Koeva 11) The largest monastery in Bulgaria, it is located 117 km south of Sofia on the cool, forested mountain of Rila--an ideal spot for a retreat. It is the tallest mountain in the Balkan Peninsula with Musala peak rising to 2925 m.
For more information about the Rila Monastery:
http://www.rilamonastery.pmg-blq.com/Gallery_fas_car_en.htm

Along the road we encountered such delights as refreshing rivers, soft green meadows and road stands selling jars of local honey mixed with nuts—delicious!

Included with the program were excellent lectures given by our erudite team of archaeologists and restoration experts. Topics ranged from detailed information on Orthodox Christian iconography and visual symbolism, taught by Vassil Tenekedjiev (branch director of BHFS Varna) to wall painting restoration by Galia Petrova and Plamen Petrov. Orthodox iconography is quite complicated and present in every church and monastery, so it was beneficial to receive this and other historical background training from Balkan experts. As explained in Palgrave’s Historical Atlas, “... the history of the Balkans is lengthy and complex, extending over a millennium and involving the interplay of three civilizations, five empires, three major religions, ten modern nation-states, and some fourteen “major” ethnic groups.” (Hupchick & Cox, 2001, p. 11)

It was also my privilege to give two presentations on documental photography at the New Bulgarian University for the Department of Archaeology, under the directorship of Prof. Ivan Gatsov, D.Sc. Visual documentation is essential in the field, as “Photographs are precise records of material reality.” (Collier & Collier, 1986, p. 10) My first lecture covered pre-field preparation and techniques, the second covered post fieldwork, leading to outcomes such as, books, presentations, web sites and portfolios. Sorting, recording, filing, naming and appropriate, useful enhancements of images were also part of the content.

Outline of Lectures

- “Architecture of Orthodox Churches” by Vassil Tenekedjiev
- “Graffiti Enhancement” by Jerome Decharnai
- “Bulgarian History and Medieval Bulgarian Art” by Ivan Vasilev
- “Boyana Church Presentation” On site, by Nadezhda Lazarova
- “Documental Photography: Supportive Techniques for Archaeology and Art History” by Dr. Gene Berryhill (New Bulgarian University)
- “Archiving, Image Prepping and Presentation” by Dr. Gene Berryhill (New Bulgarian University)
- “St. Petka Church in Balsha: Introduction to the Basic Principles of Conservation and Restoration” On site: Galia Petrova, Plamen Petrov
After the groundwork was laid, we were ready to hit the field. The objectives were to perform database recording, sketching and measuring plus photographically document frescoes, edifices, surrounding features and medieval artifacts such as gravestones, icons and iconostases. (Vasilev 19) With archaeologists, graduate students, cameras and equipment loaded up in the vehicles, we set out on the first of our 17 day adventure.

**Field Work Churches**

Briefly covered here are the five monastery/church buildings that were included in my field expedition work:

**St Nicolas Church – Malo Malovo (16th century)**

*Above: Malo Malovo facade. West wall, main entry with fresco.*
If you’re looking for a good hike, this is the destination. Located northwest of Sofia, we drove until the roads could no longer accommodate the vehicles, and then hiked up the rest of the mountain with the equipment and lunch on our backs. The effort was well worth it as we came upon a beautiful little frescoed building nestled in an isolated, pastoral setting within the region of Malo Malovo. “The church is the only survivor of a late mediaeval monastery complex.” (Vasilev, 2009, p. 17) Another unexpected pleasure was hearing numerous cuckoo birds calling to each other within the forested valley below. (Yes, they sound just like the German clocks—“cuckoo, cuckoo.”)

Churches and monasteries built during the Ottoman era (15-19th c.) were small and often secluded due to the intolerance towards Christianity. More recently, the locale was sparsely populated “largely due to the two world wars and 50 years spent in isolation from the rest of the country during the communist era.” (Vasilev, 2009, p. 16) We were able to photograph several of the interior frescoes; physical condition of the paintings ranged from poor to good. Unfortunately, erosion progresses with every storm, making recording and preservation efforts essential.

*Top left: Fresco of saints-south wall.*

Above: Left to right: Patricia, Angel, Colette, Vassil, Jerome, Scott, Gene. (Team photo courtesy of BHFS)
St. Petka Church at Balsha (16th century)

St. Petka is a 20 km drive northwest from the capital of Sofia. This was a true village experience of the best kind, as the villagers came out of their homes in the neighborhood to greet and tell us what they knew about this historically and communally important structure. In their welcome they expressed belief that God had sent us. After chatting with these locals, which included their hospitable invitations of drinks and food, we got down to work.

Due to substantial damage, a curved, wooden roof had been built over the church for protection from further deterioration. We were treated to an excellent on-site lecture given by Galia Petrova on preservation and restoration of the existing frescoes, sadly subjected to significant wear and erosion. Our photographic mission became even more urgent as we saw how fragile these images and their edifices had become. There was also evidence of an unusual script carved into the surrounding rocks, currently under investigation by BHFS associate archaeologist, Kalina Stoyanova, who speculates the script may be a memorial from the middle ages.

Above left: Petka facade, main entry.

Right: Pile of gravestones in the interior rubble.
Most of the work for me took place at this church, located in a pictorial farm setting in the Nishava Valley. After driving over a small, antiquated wooden bridge, we obtained the key from a villager who lived close by. Here we worked on two separate occasions, the first time to visually record the interior frescoes, the second to shoot the extensive, small scale graffiti scribed all over the narthex on the west wall. An additional bonus was the two layers of frescoes located on the east wall of the narthex. “The Holy Feasts and the Passion of Christ comprise the first layer of frescoes, while the second layer is clearly visible on the eastern wall of the narthex and the entrance to the nave.” (Panayotova, 1966, p. 167)

There were also some unusual paintings in this same room, mainly covering judgment themes, which is typical of Eastern Orthodox narthex iconography. The particular style was also significant as it featured a frequently utilized local imagery consisting of rounded heads and eyes, arched brows and drooping moustaches. An
interesting tie-in was evidence that the paintings were completed during the latter part of the medieval golden age (14\textsuperscript{th} c.) instigated during the reign of Ivan Alexander. (See History section)

With our director, Ivan Vasilev guiding us concerning what he wanted shot, graduate student Colette and I worked to make several photographs while experimenting with a variety of lighting. I utilized techniques peculiar to documental photography with the anticipation of transcription and translation. This was painstaking, lengthy work to shoot the images in sequence down the wall, in order to piece together a panorama, as well as to digitally process and name after the fieldwork was done. I also photographed the main compass points of the building’s exterior for the record and continued logging details and small sketches in my field book.

An interesting feature of the surrounding landscape was the mounded, downhill southern slope located just below the church, indicating a likely future dig site for artifacts within the presumed medieval burial ground. Afterwards, we had a relaxing, late lunch.
at the nature preserve, Dragoman Marsh. It was fascinating to walk across the wide breadth of marches on boardwalks looking at the water-acclimatized plants, fowl and amphibious creatures.

**Dormition Church - Iskrets Village (early 17th century)**

Here lay another pastoral beauty located in northwest Bulgaria for us to explore and document on a cold, rainy spring day. The church is situated in the small village of Iskrets about 50 km from Sofia. The lovely facade of the front entry bears a fresco of Mary in a niche above
the door. The term, “Dormition” in Orthodoxy refers to Mary, Mother of God, her death and acceptance into Heaven. This is celebrated annually each August by believers who flock to Orthodox churches for holiday services. (Sofia News Agency, 2010)

Greeting us at the Dormition Church was the friendly local priest who reminded us in his kindly fashion that the women team members (Patricia, Colette and myself) should not venture on the inner side of the iconostasis. This screen at the altar within the nave is an icon-bearing wall-like separation with a door in the middle. The priests pass through this door to enter into the Prothesis, where the liturgical preparation takes place. This interior configuration and tradition is present in Orthodox churches in general, and it was a priority for us to respectfully regard the culture, customs and religious beliefs. Graduate
student, Scott generously offered me digital copies of his photographic recordings of this section.

One of the stunning features of this church’s frescoes was the stylized brilliant red-orange chain-like medallions that framed each icon and unified the portrait zone of saints. Exterior surrounding architecture of note included remains of a courtyard wall made of brick and stone, with two arched passages for carriage and foot traffic. Nearby, was the magnificent Iskrets Gorge and waterfall, discussed in this next section.

St. Theodore (Thyron) Church – Zemivitza
(late 16th - early 17th century)

Zemivitza was my final field expedition, and we headed north, with the forecast of rain looming on the horizon. The tiny village was a short jaunt from the church so I stepped into the general store hoping to find an umbrella. Eureka! They had one model in silver, ideal for repelling rain as well as bouncing photoflash. The small stone church of St. Theodore needed overall measurement as well as interior photography of the frescoes utilizing scales. We needed to shoot every
image in all four registers or zones (horizontal sections or rows of images) with a scale and then without. These zones are a typical design scheme for paintings in Orthodox churches, and Dr. Angel Angelov provided on-site background information.

At the start of our BHFS tenure, graduate student Jerome with Director Ivan came up with a handy abbreviated identification system for the digital databases. At the St. Theodore Church, due to the scales, we shot doubles of every single image which added up to about 80-100 photographs per photographer—five in all.

As with the Kalotina Church, the exterior compass points plus surrounding terrain were photographed for the recording and updating of records. Landscapes change through the years, so this was another important aspect of the overall documental photography collection. Other features of interest were a group of gravestones on the north side of the building and a bubbling river down the hill, just east of the church. After the workday, we hiked over to the spectacular Iskar River Gorge and Skaklya Waterfall which measured 85 metres high.

Above left:
Exterior, southeast corner-apse

Right:
Fresco of saint with scale in place
Historical Highlights

Bulgaria has a unique and complex history unknown to many westerners. While it is impossible to cover Balkan history adequately in this article, I will attempt to timeline some highlights in support of the continuing work of discovery, record keeping, restoration and public awareness. One of the most interesting facts is the country’s location is the likely birthing place of European civilization. As Dimitrov tells us in his book, *Bulgarians: The First Europeans*, “... the first highly developed civilization appears in the Vth millennium exactly in the present Bulgarian lands and whose creators are in some sense the first Europeans.” Dimitrov (2002, p. 6) Building upon this quote, I offer a brief, selected overview of Bulgaria’s amazing historical heritage.

In 5000 BC (Copper age) development of copper and gold smelting and fabrication of implements began here. Starting in 3200 BC (Bronze age) Thracians migrated into these eastern lands and became the largest population. (BHFS Handbook 8) It is interesting to note that Spartacus was a Thracian (Dimitrov 18) and Orpheus and Dionysus were Thracian divinities. From about 340 BC, Philip of Macedonia (Alexander the Great’s father) overtook this region, which is modern day Bulgaria. (Ancient Macedonia, 2003) Then, in 146 BC the Romans conquered the southwest region, now Macedonia, and by the middle of the first century AD, provinces of Moesia and Thracia were established. Considerable amounts of refined metal works had been produced and acquired by the Thracian aristocracy during the first millennium BC. (The National History Museum of Sofia holds a large collection of these treasures.)

Left: Thracian king’s golden wreath crown. c.400 BC. (Location: National History Museum, Sofia)
In the west, Rome rose as a powerful center of pagan society, overtaking surrounding lands and persecuting the Jews and Early Christians who would not worship the reigning emperors. Christ’s apostles such as St. Paul and St. John made effective evangelistic journeys to spread Christ’s gospel message of salvation after His
death by crucifixion. Persecutions and martyrdoms continued until Constantine the Great declared Christianity the state religion in the 4th century. Partly due to the influence of Constantine’s mother Helena who had converted to Christianity, important changes occurred, including at least a nominal profession of faith by Constantine. “The persecution of Christians ended in 313 when Constantine of the West and Licinius of the East proclaimed the Edict of Milan, which established a policy of religious freedom for all.” (Lactantius, [1897?-1907?]) Constantine made major changes in 330 by moving the Roman Empire to Byzantium, renaming the new capital city Constantinople, after himself. Greek colonists originally established this city of antiquity in 660 BC.

Between the 4th and 7th centuries, the Visigoths along with other tribes such as the Slavs and Turks invaded the Balkan regions. These along with the Proto-Bulgarians added to the establishment Old Great Bulgaria, in the region of Eastern Europe. The latter part of the 7th century suffered conflicts from inside and outside forces causing the fall of Great Bulgaria. The youngest son of founder Khan Kubrat (632-672), Khan Asparuh (672–701), took over the western portions of Old Great Bulgaria and the new state of Bulgaria was established. The Bulgarians defeated the armies of the Byzantine Empire in 681. Through various methods, Khan Asparuh succeeded in unifying all of the local Slavic tribes under his authority and founded the first Bulgarian capital, Pliska. (BHFS 9, 10)

In 855 an important aspect of Bulgarian culture developed due to the creation of the Glagolitic alphabet by St. Cyril and St. Methodius. King Boris I (852-89) was instrumental in the conversion of Turkics and Slavics to Orthodox Christianity in 865. He helped facilitate the creation of the written Slavic language and the Cyrillic alphabet, based on Greek uncial letters, which was the essential ingredient for the cultural development of medieval Europe. (Hupchick & Cox 17-Map 8) St. Kliment is credited as the creator of Cyrillic, still notably used in Russia, Serbia and Mongolia. He named the alphabet after his teacher, St. Cyril to honor him. Cyril and
Methodius translated the liturgical books into this Slavic alphabet, which greatly enhanced the spread of Christianity. (Minaeva 92)

While the development of written language was a significant step forward culturally and politically, there was also a proliferation of icons created by eastern medieval artists. (Zarnecki 76) Other Christian image making emerged or was revived in the form of drawn symbols made for the purpose of Christian ideas in a condensed style for easy comprehension. Several of the visual signs found included crosses (or x’s), ships, trees, fishes, doves, harps, anchors, ladders and serpents. These carvings often overlapped pagan images, which made dating somewhat more difficult. This was also the period when the pendant cross was evident in Bulgaria. (Minaeva 95)

In the year 917, Simeon became emperor of the First Bulgarian Empire; Orthodoxy and relations with Byzantium appeared to be secure. However, between 1014 and 1018, the Byzantines conquered the Bulgarian lands, with domination lasting until 1185. (BHFS 10) Brothers Asen, Petar and Kaloyan reclaimed Bulgaria from the Byzantines and formed an alliance with the Roman Catholic Church, marking the beginning of the Second Bulgarian Empire. Kaloyan became king and the Bulgarian Church was recognized by the papacy as autonomous. (Hupchick & Cox 27-map 13)

Marking an unfortunate turn of events, in 1054 Constantinople’s patriarch was excommunicated by the Roman papacy in Hagia Sophia, the imperial Orthodox cathedral, originally constructed by Christian Emperor, Justinian I (527-65). Pope Leo IX sent Cardinal Humbert and two legates who delivered the Bull of excommunication and departed with these words: “Let God look and judge.” (Shelley, 1982, p. 141) This devastating action instigated the advent of the Great Schism (estimated to be around 1054). The once unified European Christian
Church was torn in half—western Roman Catholic and eastern Orthodox. “Although technically a religious matter, the schism sealed a cultural division between East and West expressed in mutual political animosity and ethno-religious bigotry, the consequences of which have persisted into the present.” (Hupchick & Cox, 2001, p. 23-map 11)

The 11th century ushered in the Romanesque period in Europe. In 999 the end of the world was thought to be at hand, and numerous works of art that followed reflected this theme through imageries warning of judgment and damnation. Adding to the zeitgeist was one of the worse epochs in Christian history. In 1202 the Fourth Crusade coming out of Venice to lead a campaign in Egypt decided instead to viciously attack Constantinople, leaving the once glorious city stripped and nearly powerless. Many of the treasures taken by 1204 still remain in the Venetian City. (Zarnecki 335). “A great many examples [mosaics and paintings] survive not in Constantinople, but [also] in Bulgaria and Serbia, where many metropolitan artists presumably took refuge during the Latin occupation of the capital.” (Zarnecki, 1975, p. 336).

In spite of the weakened Constantinople’s efforts to rally, in 1393 the Ottomans were able to take control and eventually the conquered city was renamed Istanbul. The Bulgarian Crusades against them in the 15th century were not successful and the Ottomans prevailed and ruled until 1878, promoting their belief that Islam was the “divinely ordained corrective for deficiencies that crept into Judaism and Christianity.” (Hupchick & Cox, 2001, p. 9-Map 5)

Byzantine art did not abruptly end however, and artistic developments occurred in the form of illuminations with western Greek and Latin influences. The Muslims did strip Hagia Sophia of its 50 foot (15 m) silver iconostasis and large collection of relics such as bells, altar and vessels, plus several Christian themed mosaics were plastered over. Through time, the Ottoman occupation added the four exterior minarets plus the mihrab (a niche that indicates the direction of Mecca) and minbar (a mosque pulpit). In 1935 its existence as a mosque ended and the current function is as a state museum of the secular Republic of Turkey. (Istanbulvisions.com par. 2-3)

Before the Ottoman takeover, it was 619 years (1259 to 1878) earlier that a future UNESCO World Heritage church was built in Sofia, Bulgaria--the Boyana Church. Its first two sections were completed by 1259. Kaloyan and his wife Dessislava commissioned the second section. The third section was completed in the mid-19th century,
supported by the surrounding community. (Boyana Church National History Museum, 2002) For the group’s benefit, Nadezhda Lazarova, a well-informed lecturer on Boyana, gave us detailed information on site from her doctoral studies. Photography was restricted to exterior shots, but we were allowed to enter and view this rare gem. More information and a photo gallery of interior frescoes are available at: http://boyanachurch.org/galeryen.htm.

The experiences, works of art and historical research covered thus far have whetted my appetite to dig deeper into the art history of Bulgaria. It has also sparked additional interest in eastern/western comparative studies.

Left: Boyana Church (UNESCO World Heritage Site). 1259 AD.

Contemporary General Points of Interest

Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007 and NATO in 2004. The lev is the national currency, but the country is in the process of converting to the euro. The exchange rate is 1 euro = 2 leva. One of many enjoyable experiences in downtown Sofia was visiting the cafes and clubs that stayed open virtually all night such as one called, The Apartment. It is a nicely restored, multi-storied building with inviting rooms decorated with the owner couple’s art and treasures collected from travels to exotic locations. Each large room has sofas, chairs and tables; some have computers with beamers that project onto walls that serve as giant screens—very fun for group activities on the Internet and movie watching. There was also a small room where you could purchase typical Bulgarian desserts, snacks and drinks.

I think it is important to mention that within my own experience, Bulgaria is a congenial place, one not overrun or infested with vampire stories and mafia legends. You might also think that a large city like downtown Sofia would be dangerous. It was just the opposite. We discovered how safe the city really was, even on foot in the later
hours. Probably the most dicey part was the roads, where “pothole slalom driving” is almost a sport. All kidding aside, I saw no serious threat due to road conditions or high speed, reckless driving behavior. (Dare I mention the poor man in the horse-drawn cart, sharing the road with cars and speeding home in a torrential rain?)

Another interesting cultural phenomenon in the city was Prom Week, held each year in May. Graduates dress up in garb from formals to outrageous costumes and cruise around town, some standing up, shouting and waving through the sunroofs of limos. It is a noisy, fun celebration that is part of the growing, ambient prosperity and freedom of expression the Bulgarian people enjoy.

Towards the end of my tenure in Bulgaria, special meetings were arranged at the Fulbright Commission headquarters in Sofia where BHFS’s executive director, Ivan Vasilev, program director, Nayden Prahov and I met with Dr. Julia Stefanova, executive director of Fulbright Bulgaria. It turned out to be an initial introduction for Fulbright and BHFS and will likely lead to future collaborations.

Another meeting took place one evening over dinner with Ivan Vasilev and his mentor, Professor Ivan Gatsov, D.Sc., director of archaeology at the New Bulgarian University. In a quiet, upstairs room at a local café in downtown Sofia, we dined on delicious Bulgarian cuisine while comfortably chatting about a variety of topics, including ideas for a conference in Istanbul next year. This is on the top of my list of “must do’s.”

**Final Remarks**

My Bulgarian experience was a very pleasant surprise, not because I didn’t anticipate it to be terrific, but because it was different than expected. After all, isn’t that usually the case when you travel to different countries? I think it is a major reason why I keep moving, wanting to see and experience first hand as much as possible for myself, to side-step hearsay and stereo-types. The Bulgarians are warm and friendly, welcoming and willing to share their unique historical heritage within the Balkan States. Bulgaria does indeed show compelling evidence about the origins of European culture—this country is literally an archaeologist’s paradise.

I wish to offer my heartfelt thanks to Fulbright Bulgaria and Washington DC for supporting this life-changing opportunity. I will continue to share with students and colleagues at home and abroad
about my experiences and photography collection. Besides articles, I am planning an exhibit and presentation in support of the BHFS mission:

In 2005, Balkan Heritage decided to initiate a field school programme designed to document these monuments as a first step towards their protection. The expedition focused on collecting data for the publication of a ‘corpus of mediaeval frescoes from western Bulgaria’ with the intention of bringing the frescoes to the attention of interested scholars around the world as well as to raise public awareness inside Bulgaria and the European Union. (Vasilev, 2009, p. 18)

It is my desire to return to Bulgaria and continue working with colleagues related to the BHFS, local educational institutions and to further promote the vision of the Commission set forth in 1946 by U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright:

The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to ‘increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.’ (Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), 2010)

My interests will strive toward these excellent goals of international exchange and mutual cooperation between scholars, colleagues, students and friends.
**The Team**

• Ivan Vasilev, archaeologist, executive director – BHFS
• Vassil Tenekedjiev, archaeologist, director of Varna – BHFS
• Nayden Prahov, archaeologist, program director – BHFS
• Kalina Stoyanova, staff archaeologist/illustrator – BHFS
• Dr. Angel Angelov, archaeologist – BHFS, Assoc. Prof. University of Sofia
• Dr. Gene Berryhill, Fulbright Scholar, Prof. University of Maryland-UMUC.

**Graduate Students**

• Jerome Decharnais, Canada
• Patricia Stoat, England
• Colette Frantz, USA
• Scott Cheney, USA.
Above left: Vassil, Angel, Nayden. Above right: Jerome, Galia, Ivan.
Center: Patricia, Vassil, Gene, Colette, Jerome. (Center photo courtesy of BHFS)
Reference List


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Biographical Information

(Georgia) Gene Berryhill completed her third Fulbright award as a Senior Specialist to Bulgaria in art history/archaeology May 2010. Her first two awards were in 2003 and 2005 (Art History/Archaeology) and took place in Germany. This project involved researching the visual program, shooting 3000 photographs for restoration and archiving, plus filming video of the grand opening of this Medieval Castle, Ziesar. First built in 928CE, it is now a Brandenburg state museum.

She has also served as a Fulbright/CIES arts reviewer for US and German applicants and is an elected member of the Fulbright Board of Directors, San Diego, CA chapter.

Including exhibition of her camera art in galleries, she worked the Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia as a media photographer, holds a life-time professorship in China and is listed in Who's Who for contributions in photography and graphic arts. For 2007-09, Dr. Berryhill was a co-recipient of an NEH (National Endowment of the Humanities) award involving restoration of tenth century Aelfric of Eynsham parchments.

Teaching experiences stateside, in China, Bulgaria and in Germany include art history, photography history, documental photography, digital imaging, and computer arts. Her book published by Thomson/Delmar is titled, Designing Website Images: A Practical Guide.

Degrees are a Bachelors in Fine Arts, a Masters in Design/Art History and a Ph.D. in Education/Design Theory and History.

To view additional projects: http://geneberryhill.com

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Above: St. Petka at Balsha - fresco, 16th c.