**Charles Ameringer and Elizabeth Espadas**

Good Evening [Charles Ameringer speaking]

Has it really been 25 years?

Time flies when you’re having fun…

25 years ago, I was a vibrant 52 . . .

Jimmy Carter was president and advocating a human rights policy designed to provide some relief for peoples suffering under tyranny and to improve the image of Tio Sam in Latin America …

Fidel Castro had been in power for 20 years, and pundits were wondering just how much longer he could last…

The Sandinistas were about to overthrow Somoza in Nicaragua – – – they have come and gone…

Pinochet was still ruling Chile with an iron fist…

But the “dirty war” in Argentina was winding down, thanks in a large part to the protests of the “madres de la plaza de mayo”…

The generals were continuing to run affairs in Brazil…

And it seemed that Stroessner had been and would be in power in Paraguay forever…

Contrasting today with then, the situation appears much improved——

In any event, under such circumstances, MACLAS came into being.

Its origin sprang from two ideas.

First, Tom Tirado of Millersville university wrote to me in the fall of 1978 about the idea of forming an organization of Latin American historians in pa to meet to share research and present papers.

Second, this conformed with an idea that had been nagging me. I noted that the Latin American studies association (LASA) had a number of regional councils:

The New York council (NYCLAS)….

…..New England council (NECLAS)…..

………southeast (SECOLAS)……

….midwest (MALAS)…..

……………Rocky Mountain (RMCLAS)…..

….Pacific coast (PACOLAS)……

But there was none for the middle Atlantic region, namely, NJ, PA, MD, DE, DC, VA & WV…..

I wrote to Tom, suggesting setting up an organization not just of historians, but of all disciplines and interests and including the entire middle Atlantic region …. In other words, a LASA regional council —- MACLAS.

Tom replied: “good idea! The ball is in your court.”

And so, we moved on. We sent out a circular to scholars and programs in the region, inviting them to a meeting at Penn State on Saturday, October 7, 1978, to discuss the idea of establishing a regional LASA council and forming an organizing committee. The response was enthusiastic, and about a dozen persons attended at their own expense or funded by their institutions. I believe some are in the audience tonight

—-please stand and be recognized….

In addition to those here now, I recall Robert Alexander (Rutgers), Ivo Dominguez (Delaware), Judy Ewell (W&M), Michael Burke (Villanova), Harvey Summ (Georgetown), Kathleen Dutt (James Madison), Martin Stabb (Penn state), Dave Myers (Penn state), and John Martz (Penn state)….

Also attending was Riordan Rioett (of the SAIS of Johns Hopkins), who at the time was president of LASA. He was invited as a resource person to give us guidance and possibly welcome us as a regional….

Joe Criscenti of Boston College had also been invited as a resource person. He was one of the founders of the New England council (NECLAS), and we figured he could provide us with tips as to how to get started. Unfortunately, Joe didn’t show up. We got a phone call that he had missed his flight. He got stuck in traffic on his way to Logan International!

But aside from that glitch, with Reardon’s help, we decided to move ahead and established an organizing committee, consisting of myself, Harvey Summ, Judy Ewell, Ivo Dominguez, and Michael Burke.

Moreover, as good fortune would have it, the eighth international meeting of LASA was scheduled for May 1979 at the university of Pittsburgh. LASA and Pittsburgh were gracious enough to put the founding meeting of MACLAS on the agenda, providing us with a time and a place. At that meeting at the university of Pittsburgh, the constitution of MACLAS was approved, and we were in business. If any in the audience were present at that meeting….. Please stand and be recognized……..

Because of these persons and many others, the early years of MACLAS were extremely easy.

One may refer to MACLAS as a council or organization, but i prefer “association.” It has been an association of friends and individuals, who have made MACLAS work:

And in the beginning, there were a number whom i would refer to as the pioneers and stalwarts:

Robert and Joan Alexander (Rutgers); already a renowned scholar, right from the beginning bob provided his tremendous prestige to achieve the purposes of MACLAS; he brought in his colleagues at Rutgers (Jim Street, Vera green, mark Wasserman, and Yale Ferguson), and made Rutgers one of the pillar institutions in support of MACLAS;

Ivo and Carmen Dominguez; Ivo, my successor as the second president of MACLAS, in the same way as bob made the University of Delaware another of the pillars of MACLAS, involving his colleagues, John Deiner, Judy McInnis, and Gladys Ilarregui; Delaware has supported this council in so many ways.

Jack child and Leslie Morginson-Eitzen; Jack has been a stalwart, contributing his unique talents. Before many of us knew anything about personal computers, much less e-mail and desktop publishing, Jack was into computers and brought the MACLAS newsletter into being. I can’t recall a MACLAS annual meeting without an audio-visual presentation by Jack, in order to enhance our teaching methods. He and Larman Wilson made American U. another of the pillars in support of MACLAS.

…and talk about early stalwarts; the contributions of Pope Atkins (the naval academy), Judy Ewell (W&M), Harvey Summ (Georgetown), Asunción Lavrin (Howard), Mike Burke (Villanova), Winthrop Wright (Maryland), Hal Greer (VCU), and Eufronio Carreno (Kean University) as officers and conference hosts cannot be overstated.

…and then along came Alvin and Ellen Cohen; Alvin, a purveyor of the dismal science, worked some kind of magic to make the financial status of MACLAS sound. Furthermore, he helped make Lehigh University one of the strongest supporters of MACLAS, involving Jim Saeger, Hannah Stewart-Gambino, and Frank Gunter, among others.

…and add Ursinus as another pillar institution in support of MACLAS, thanks largely to Juan Espadas and Tom Gallagher, who also took over responsibility for the newsletter early on. Juan and Bob Alexander also gave birth to the MACLAS Essays, recognizing the outstanding papers presented at the MACLAS meetings.

And speaking of the Essays, the ninth president of MACLAS, Vera Blinn Reber (Shippensburg), served as editor for numerous volumes. I have fond memories of Vera for another reason. I remember that she and John Offner brought their daughter, Stella, to our meetings. Stella was just a toddler when she first came to our meetings. Now, she’s a young lady, having grown up with MACLAS.

…and in our life cycle, some of the pioneers are no longer with us:

Jim Street (Rutgers)

Vera Green (Rutgers)

Harvey Summ (Georgetown)

John Martz (Penn state)—our fourth president

Juan Espadas (Ursinus)—who can forget Juan’s hearty laugh?

Joseph (“Joe”) Graham (who faithfully accompanied his son Reid to our annual meetings and with whom I enjoyed many conversations during our banquets)

As MACLAS developed in the early years, we established prizes in order to recognize achievement and promote the goals of MACLAS: the Arthur P. Whitaker prize for best book; the Harold Eugene Davis prize for best article in a journal; the James Street prize for best MACLAS essay; the John Martz prize for best paper presented by a graduate student at the annual meeting; and the Juan Espadas prize for best paper presented by an undergraduate student at the annual meeting.

And we have developed and grown in other ways, expanding our region to include New York (given the disbanding of its own regional) and even Ontario, welcoming David Sheinin and Trent University.

…I have confined my reminiscences largely to the first decade of MACLAS, but I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that new leaders and institutions have stepped forward to support MACLAS. While the list of individuals is too long to name, permit me at least to recognize the present officers and newsletter editors: John Incledon (Albright), Barbara Tenenbaum (Library of Congress), Anna Adams (Muhlenberg), Judy McInnis (Delaware), David Sheinin (Trent), Reid Graham (Library of Congress), and Maria Riegger (Mary Washington).

[council members: Carolyn Bell (Kutztown, Ken Lehman (Hampton-Sydney college), John Stole-McAllister (UMBC), Brian Turner (RMC), Joan Marx (Muhlenberg), Elizabeth Espadas]

As for institutions, along with the continued support of Rutgers, Delaware, Lehigh, American, and Ursinus, we have Albright, Bucknell, Kutztown, Shippensburg, Mary Washington College, Howard University, VCU, Muhlenberg, IUP, and the Hispanic division of the Library of Congress. If I’ve missed any, I’m certain Elizabeth [Espadas] will help me out.

Given the growing Hispanic population of the United States, Latin American studies takes on an added dimension and importance, and it is gratifying to see that MACLAS remains up to the task.

Thank you.