NEW RIVER INSTRUCTOR JERRY DALE IS SOURCE FOR BOOK ON KANAWHA TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY

Mason was conducting research in the library on New River’s Greenbrier Valley Campus when library assistant Mike Williams guided her to sources in the college collection and then referred her to Dale, who was in law enforcement in St. Albans during the period often referred to as “the textbook wars.”

A Kanawha County native, Mason lived in Charleston at the time of the controversy. According to a description on the Cornell University Press website, the book “examines the legacies of the curriculum dispute that heralded the rightward shift in American culture and politics. At a time when black nationalists and white conservatives were both maligned as extremists for opposing education reform, the wife of a fundamentalist preacher who objected to new language-arts textbooks featuring multiracial literature sparked the yearlong conflict.

“It was the most violent textbook battle in America, inspiring mass marches, rallies by white supremacists, boycotts by parents, and strikes by coal miners. Schools were closed several times due to arson and dynamite while national and international news teams descended on Charleston.

“Mason demonstrates how the significance of the controversy goes well beyond resistance to social change on the part of Christian fundamentalists or a cultural clash between elite educators and working-class citizens. The alliances, tactics, and political discourses that emerged in the Kanawha Valley in 1974 crossed traditional lines, inspiring innovations in neo-Nazi organizing, propelling Christian conservatism into the limelight and providing models for women of the New Right.”

In the epilogue, Mason thanks Dale, “who for hours and with remarkable humor withstood all of my questions--ranging from the obvious to the absurd--about William Pierce and George Dietz. Without the memories and insights … this book would be something different--and deficient.”

This was not the first time Dale has been a source of information for articles and reports about his experiences. He was also interviewed for “Guru of White Hate,” an article in Rolling Stone magazine; the book, “Faces of Right Wing Extremists” by Kathy Marx (1996); “Patriots or Racists,” a news report on CNN and articles published in the Washington Post, The New York Times, and the Philadelphia Inquirer.
As an instructor in the Criminal Justice program at New River, Dale brings to the classroom his experiences in the state prison system, in law enforcement in Kanawha County, during three terms as sheriff of Pocahontas County and as a magistrate.

For further information The Criminal Justice program at New River Community and Technical College Greenbrier Valley Campus, telephone 304-647-6560 or visit www.newriver.edu.

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