

UC SANTA BARBARA

# *THE* **Current**

December 10, 1999

Bill Schlotter

## **UCSB HISTORIAN TO PRESIDE OVER MIDDLE EAST GROUP**

Middle East specialist R. Stephen Humphreys, a history professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has been selected president-elect of The Middle East Studies Association of North America, the world's largest organization of Middle East scholars.

Humphreys, who has been a member of the 2,700-member group since its formation in 1966, will serve as president-elect in 2000, as president in 2001 and as past-president in 2002.

He gives up a five-year tenure as editor of the organization's journal, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, to take his new post.

"The board and the president are elected by the general membership," Humphreys said. "It's a statement by the membership of what people they would like to have representing them so in that aspect it's quite a substantial honor."

The MESANA is dedicated to fostering scholarly investigation and discussion of Middle Eastern life and issues in a variety of disciplines.

To that end, Humphreys said, the organization avoids taking stands on issues confronting the area with the exception of issues involving academic freedom. And maintaining that kind of neutrality is one of the president's biggest jobs.

"The hardest agenda is to maintain the character of the association so that it is a place where people are free and able -- enabled, even -- to exchange scholarship and ideas," Humphreys said.

Humphreys has devoted much of his career to the study of the medieval Islamic world.

He has recently turned his attention to the modern Middle East.

His most recent book, published this past summer is *Between Memory and Desire:*

*The Middle East in a Troubled Age* (University of California Press).

Humphreys has been on the faculty at UCSB since 1990, when he came from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, to accept a post as the King Abdul Aziz Ibn Said Chair in Islamic Studies.

---

## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.