



**University of Maine
at Augusta
Senior College**

Winter 2018 46 University Drive Augusta, Maine 04330 www.umasc.org



As the new Chair of the UMASC Board I would like to thank Tom Feagin for his service as the previous Chair and share my journey of involvement with Senior College. Eight years ago my friend Priscilla Perry and I signed up for

As a lifelong learner I have been pleased to also take classes that have fed my passions. Last spring I enjoyed a class on birding, in the spring of 2017 I learned how to play pétanque, and in 2016 I took part in a wonderful drawing class. My love of birding, sports, exercising and art has been deeply satisfied with classes here at UMASC.

Senior College is made up of a Board of Directors, numerous committees, faculty members, and administrative support people who are all volunteers, supported by a most fortunate collaboration with UMA. Most importantly we have the numerous students who attend the classes making Senior College come alive! Last semester we had 382 student members in 26 classes. We are looking forward to the spring semester when we will be offering over 30 classes. Meanwhile we hope you will join us for the Sunday concert series, Tuesday Brown Bags, and Forums on the Future.

Looking forward to the future and enjoying the present,
Carole Baldwin

Ruth Bookey's art class, which we both truly enjoyed. In a conversation with Ruth, I asked how I could become involved in Senior College. Little did I realize just how involved and hooked I would become! Since that conversation with Ruth, I have joined the Curriculum Committee, taught two balance classes, started a pickleball class, and co-taught five art classes team teaching with my dear friend Elizabeth Luckraft.

The Senior College Writing Workshop

Famed journalist and poet Dorothy Parker once said, "I hate writing, but love having written." That's analogous to saying, I hate to plant, but love seeing my lilies bloom. Nothing gives us a bigger rush than enjoying a modicum of success after busting our butts. Hopeful Hemingways out there might actually enjoy putting thoughts to paper, but I need a nudge, or rather a shove to get started. That's what I got in Janet Cowperthwaite's "Writing Workshop." When Janet spoke, writers listened. And wrote. Not with a keyboard, but with a pen and paper; sometimes on a topic of our choice, other times not.

Marilyn Canavan

Editor's Note: Some of the following articles are the product of the Senior College Writing Workshop.

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“Thank the work of our hands...”

Richard Blanco

My father had huge hands. They were wide and muscular with short, thick fingers. They felt massive to a little girl curling her hand in his as we walked together. His wedding ring was almost big enough to be a bracelet for one of my dolls.

Dad was a plumber. His hands were strong as a result of manually cutting pipe every day—there were no pipe-cutting machines in those days! I watched those hands fix the ancient, blackened furnace at St. Mary’s School, work at the jail on frosty Christmas mornings to fix toilets plugged with towels by rebellious prisoners, and lay the pipe (always with perfect 45 degree angles) for beautiful new houses.

Those hands were also busy at our house. They could wield a wrench to tighten up an old bike, put together a swing set that would never shake loose, and keep the plumbing in our old house functioning with six kids using one bathroom. And there was no jar he could not open!

Dad’s hands were dirty all day as he worked with oil and grease or dug holes for furnaces and fuel tanks. He did his best to clean them with gritty lava soap and a fingernail brush, but they always looked like a working man’s hands. When he needed to go straight from work to a meeting or parent-teacher conference, he used his jackknife to clean his nails—much to the horror of his children!

As Dad grew older and lost his ability to work, his hands were clean and pale. It was a sad sign of the end of a working life.

Remembering Dad’s hands reminds me of the lessons he taught us: work hard; do the best job you possibly can every day; don’t be afraid to get dirty; never quit. Those were important lessons, and I have his short, stubby fingers that will never let me forget!

Margaret Bean

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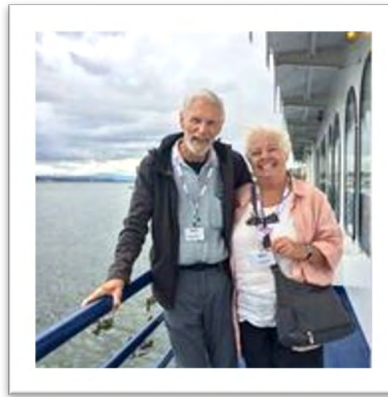
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Roll on Columbia



In the summer of 2017, Sue received a phone call from Gillen, her early childhood next-door neighbor and best friend forever. Gillen had just taken a riverboat trip on the Mississippi and told Sue that it was the best vacation she had ever had. She cajoled Sue into taking another river cruise with her.

A river trip, to us, had always meant canoes, camping gear, basic vittles, plenty of bug dope, tarps and raincoats, probably on the Allagash.

In August 2018 we discovered that there is another way: “small boat cruising done perfectly!” the cruise company claims. Just sign on the dotted line, give them a credit card, pack your bags, and you are good to go.

We flew from Portland to Portland and boarded what looked like an old fashioned stern paddle wheeler with a hundred other “mature” travelers. We located our cozy but very comfortable, efficient room and settled in. The journey required no cooking over a wood fire, no dishes, no rain gear, no bugs—not even a single dose of Dramamine. The meals included a wide variety of choices, morning, noon and night.

We were on the Columbia River in territory first made famous by Lewis and Clark. The Columbia is a beautiful working river, the largest on the coast of North or South America.

There was a resident historian on board who offered lectures everyday, sharing his expertise on Lewis and Clark, the local geology, and commercial operations on the riverbanks. He was always willing to chat with us and answer any of our questions.

Every day the boat stopped at a town where we could take side trips. We traveled up to Mount St. Helens on one day and on another went to Pendleton where we toured the underground saloons, houses of ill repute, and sweat shops of earlier times. This field trip included a tour of the Pendleton Woolen factory. All of the day trips returned to the ship in time for Happy Hour and dinner before the night’s entertainment.

Daily Irritations

The only downside was that the air, while dry, was very hazy due to wildfire smoke from fires in California and other places up and down the West Coast.

UMASC folks would not confuse the Columbia with the Kennebec. She is a heavily used river, particularly in the lower third. Much of the grain, oil, and wood shipped from the U.S. leaves on ships that go down part of the Columbia. On both banks are double railroad tracks frequently plied by unit trains with multiple engines and a hundred plus cars. We learned that unit trains are ones that carry the same commodity to the same destination, e.g., 110 tanker cars of oil to one transfer site. It was fascinating to see the big ships being loaded with grain and to see the huge car carriers bringing hundreds of new cars from the Far East.

The country has a much different look than Maine. It was formed by basalt floods of liquid rock that poured out of cracks in the earth's crust. The Columbia Gorge has never been glaciated so it is still easy to see the basalt layers with frequent areas of hexagonal columns that formed as lava cooled. The Cascade Mountains wring out much of the moisture coming off the Pacific, so the coast is lush, but the country quickly gets more arid as you move east.

As we traveled eastward, we went through the locks of seven dams, another interesting experience for us as neophyte river cruisers. By the time we went through the last lock we were at an elevation of 738 feet above sea level. Unfortunately the ship sometimes traveled at night, so we slept through some of the locks and some of the best scenery.

The crew did an outstanding job of customer service. Every one of them, no matter their job, was very friendly and extremely helpful. They should give our local stores lessons.

As it turned out we were the only passengers from New England. It was surprising to hear from many that they had already cruised the Maine coast and knew all about lobsters.

I wish the Columbia went all the way to the east coast. Traveling on the boat was a lot better than the airline we took home from Spokane.

When we arrived home, there were no wet tents or duffle bags to air out. It really was a vacation perfect for us seniors.

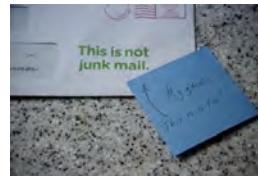
Sue and Mick O'Halloran

Perhaps it is a function of age, but the number of life's daily experiences that I find irritating keeps growing. Sadly, many of today's irritants were yesterday's pleasures.

High on my list is the mail. No image is more Norman Rockwellian than that of the postman navigating his way around an overly exuberant dog to deliver a letter from grandma. To be clear, I harbor no ill will toward today's mail carriers; it is the messages and not the messengers that raise my hackles.

The types of unwelcomed mail are sufficiently numerous that they require categorization. Let me start with the phony official communication.

This comes in a formal envelope stamped "urgent," "official business," or "final notice."



It either has no return address or the return address fails to identify the sender. While it should go directly into recycling, some primordial neurosis compels me to open it.

The contents, of course, are never urgent or official, nor do they include a notice of legal significance. Rather, the letter seeks to sell me hearing aids, an annuity, or an extended warranty for my car. Compounding my annoyance at my inability to resist opening these letters, out of fear that just once there may be an important message, is the recognition that the privilege of receiving them undoubtedly results from my inclusion on an age-based mailing list.

Not far behind the phony official communication is the incomprehensible medical bill. The listed services puzzle me, and the amounts connected to each service, whether they be charges, adjustments, or payments are like specters emerging out of the mist. Some border on the absurd, as when the cost of a service is stated to be \$10,000, but, as a result of an "adjustment," the hospital has reduced it to \$2,000. Does anyone really pay the \$10,000?

I recently received one such bill for \$5, and while I hate paying a bill I don't understand, I knew a call to the number given for questions would connect me with a sympathetic woman whose ignorance would rival mine. After an internal tug of war, I paid the \$5, but not without a measure of regret at life's imperfections.

A relatively new category of undesirable mail is the notification from a financial services firm, an insurance provider, or some other entity previously thought competent that your personal information has been compromised in a data breach. After reciting their great regret, the writers proceed to offer you, at no charge, the opportunity to add monitoring your credit rating to life's other fulfilling endeavors.

I suppose having your data compromised is not all negative. I did derive a certain pleasure when I received one such letter from my health insurer, as I imagined a scam artist having surgery in my name. That struck me as preferable to going under the knife myself.

My list does have seasonal variations, with late fall witnessing a spike in charitable solicitations. Lest I seem miserly, I recognize that while these entities do God's work, God refuses to fund them, and thus, they must find money elsewhere. My problem is with the persistence with which they undertake that task.

Here is an example. As someone who finds even small decisions a source of anxiety, I have a roster of charities to which I regularly contribute. While I try to ignore new overtures, I did succumb to one from UNICEF, unable to resist the picture of the unhappy child and seduced by the promise that if I made a donation now, they would forever leave me in peace. I sent money, but UNICEF is now a regular visitor to my mailbox. Once you turn the spigot on, good luck turning it off.

Let me end with what others undoubtedly see as welcomed mail – the birthday card. Putting aside the question of why an old person should celebrate getting even older, it takes at most 10 seconds to read a birthday card. More than offsetting those 10 seconds of pleasure is the environmental impact of creating and disposing of the card.

In truth, I could tolerate receiving birthday cards if it did not create an obligation to respond in kind, a task I find daunting as clever cards are hard to come by, and I hate the other options. Even when I find a card with a passably amusing message that does not reference aging, drinking, or sex, \$4 seems like a lot to pay for one joke.

But enough of unwelcomed mail. For those who share my sour disposition, be advised that my next installment will deal with commercials aired during the evening news. Whether it be candidates competing to demonstrate who loves veterans the most during election years, or tales of erectile dysfunction at other times, there is no shortage of irritating material between six and seven every evening.

Steve Diamond

For Whom Mike Bell Toils

Senior College's double-sessions course devoted to former President Jimmy Carter ended recently. The depth of the person, his family, and his politics took us to Carter's home town in Plains, Georgia and the White House in Washington, D.C. President Carter, ever the humanitarian, worked southern soil before rising to national and world esteem. Instructor Mike Bell seemingly whistled "Dixie" while he led us through the halls of Congress—dusting the shelves, so to speak, where Carter and his Vice President Walter (Fritz) Mondale successfully navigated through double-digit inflation, a second global oil crisis, regular battles with Congress, and the 1979 hostage crisis in Iran.

In previous semesters, numbers of us traveled with Mike as he harbored the wish of fingering spacecraft controls while commenting on Jack Kennedy's famous speech, "We Choose to Go to The Moon." He even conducted a classroom memorial service—with candles, music and clergy participation—honoring seven astronauts who died while advancing toward the successful Apollo moon landing.



Kindred Spirits—Mike and the Judge

And in still another class, Mike rightly reveled as our teacher-travel agent for the Boston bus trip to President Jack Kennedy's Library/Museum, part and parcel of our course. It was a day-long, historical

venture with lunch and plural opportunities to tour the extensive facility.

The conclusion of the President Carter class highlights Mike's knack of pulling a rabbit from a hat: a conference call with his long-time friend Walter Mondale who conversed with us for better than an hour, in a question/answer format from his home in Minnesota! While we didn't leave our classroom, we were ready to pack up for the mid-west! Instead, the former Vice President of the United States of America came to us, verbally, with warm, informative words. What helps gauge the depth of Mondale's warm nature? Seems easy! In his opening sentence to Mike, he asked, "How's Jonathan*?"

John Benoit

* For the uninitiated, Jonathan is Mike's pride and joy—his son.

Senior College Students at Work and at Play



Photography by Elizabeth Humphrey and

Ed Vigneault

Note to Self

November 3, 2018

Dear Ten-year-old Beth,

Right now, you are pretty confused and scared. You are being raised in a cult religion that makes no sense to you. When you try to talk with your parents about how you are feeling and ask the questions you are thinking, you are told, ‘just believe and don’t let the Devil speak through you.’ Yet, even at this tender age, you know in your heart this is not right for you, and you will never believe what you are being told.

What I want you to know is this: you are so much stronger and braver than you imagine you are. You will somehow find the courage and strength to give up everything you have been taught, and you will follow your heart and find the courage and strength to live your life on your terms.

It’s not going to be easy, and there will be times when you feel like giving up. You will question your decision when you are feeling alone because your family has shunned you. Although these will be some of your most difficult and darkest moments, you will find a way to keep going and stay true to yourself. So, my sweet Beth, let me share just three things your much older self has learned thus far going through this this journey called life.

The first insight I want to share with you is how important it is to learn to live in the present moment. This is only one place where you have any control. The past is done. You can learn from it; however, you cannot change it no matter how much time you spend thinking about it. Make peace with it and move on. Likewise, the future is intangible. You can plan for it and try to control it, yet most of the time something will happen, and you will realize that so much of what happens in life is outside your control. The present moment is where you need to be to really live life, so try to live in that space. And while you are at it, don’t forget to breathe! No matter how hard things get – if you can pause, take some deep breaths and stay present you will get through that moment, and the next, and the next.

Second, always be kind to others and stay true to your values. Sometimes, this will be a huge undertaking and you won’t always succeed in doing it. However, you will never regret what you say or do if your words and actions

come from a place of compassion and sincerity. On the other hand, the times you lose your temper and say hurtful things out of anger or do something you know is wrong, you will spend a lot of time regretting it and feeling bad, wishing you could have a do-over. Save yourself pain and regret by and always striving to take the high road. That breathing thing can help you with this one too!

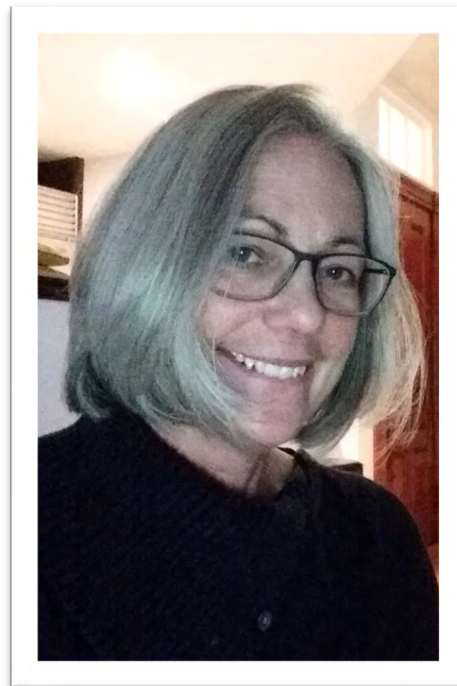
The last, and maybe most important thing I know for sure is this: when life gets really tough and you are struggling to keep going, there is one thing you can do that will give you the courage you need—put on some music and dance and sing! No matter how lost, angry, sad, confused or scared you are—letting loose with some good music and dancing will give you enough of a boost to keep going. It’s almost impossible to not be happy when you are singing and dancing. Seriously, I am not kidding you; this works!!

There are many wonderful, amazing adventures ahead of you. You will laugh and love a lot more than you will cry and be disappointed. As Robert Frost said, “The only way out is through.” And you will make it through every challenge the universe throws at you because you are made of good stuff. Just remember to breathe and dance!

With all my love,

Future Beth

Beth Hudson



Forum on the Future

- ◆ The Second Amendment: February 3, 2019; Snow Date—March 3, 2019
- ◆ Making Poverty Personal: March 17, 2019; Snow Date—March 31, 2019

Forum on the Future is FREE and open to the public. For information about the Forums and other UMASC activities, please email us at umasc@maine.edu or call 621-3551

Concerts at Jewett

Don Campbell Trio: December 16, 2018; Snow Date—December 23, 2018

Choro Louco: January 13, 2019; Snow Date—January 27, 2019

Boneheads: February 10, 2019; Snow Date—February 24, 2019

Sandy River Ramblers: March 10, 2019; Snow Date—March 24, 2019

Castlebay: April 7, 2019

Massanobu Ikemiya: May 19, 2019

Concerts are Sundays 2-4 pm in the UMA Jewett Hall Auditorium. Tickets are \$10, \$5 for students, 12 and under free. For further information call 621-3551, email umasc@maine.edu, or visit our websites at umasc.org or concertsatjewett.com.

2019 Brown Bag Lectures

January 8 – Rebecca Lazure – Women’s Suffrage in Maine and the First Amendment

January 15 - Jerry Nault – Revisiting Neal Peirce’s New England

January 22 – Peter Rosenberg – Richard Roger’s Librettists (Hart and Hammerstein)

January 29 - Mike Bell – Arkansas Traveler

February 5 - Patricia House – The Real World of Health Economics

February 12 – Pat Paradis – Senator William Pitt Fessenden of Maine

February 19 - Elizabeth Reinsborough – North of Hadrian’s Wall – Scotland

February 26 - Tom Feagin – The Robber and the Scalawag

March 5 – Chet Day – Eldercare Planning

The snow dates are Thursday, January 24 and Thursday, February 21.

UMASC members and guests are invited to bring their lunch to our Brown Bag Lectures at **12 noon on Tuesdays**. The length of the presentations varies from 60 to 90 minutes. Lectures are held at the Michael Klahr Center which is connected to UMA’s Katz Library. **There is no admission fee.**

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Book Groups

Senior College has two book groups. One meets on the third Monday of the month, and the other on the fourth Thursday. The groups include both men and women. We read a variety of books chosen by the group itself, and the discussions are enthusiastic and lively. The two book groups have been very successful and, in the interest of useful discussion, the Monday group is closed to new membership. If you are interested, please call the Senior College office (621-3551) and leave your name. We can help you to join the Thursday group or to form a new group.

Contribute to the *Illuminator*!

To be considered for the spring issue of the *Illuminator*, please send your articles, stories, poems or artwork to the editor, Ann Sullivan, at asullivan47@outlook.com. The deadline is May 15, 2019.

UMASC Website

Are you wondering when the next Concert at Jewett will be held? Who is performing? Have you signed up for an upcoming class, but would like to know more about the instructor? Lost your copy of the latest issue of the *Illuminator* before you finished reading it? All of this and much more is available on the UMASC website—www.umasc.org.

Our website is just another wonderful benefit for being involved with Senior College. Check out the slide show. Is a class you participated in featured there? There is a page for recent news releases, information regarding the mission statement, bylaws, and board of directors. You can learn how and when to register for classes and check the weekly course schedule. The best part, like all else on the Internet, it is available 24/7!