



University of Maine
at Augusta
Senior College

Spring 2020 46 University Drive Augusta, Maine 04330 www.umasc.org

View from the Chair



Not having our spring semester here at UMASC has been a hardship for most of us. Missing out on all the well-planned classes and social contacts within those classes is not something any of us imagined happening before Covid-19. I know for me it has been a great loss.

Like all of you, I am learning to adjust my life with this new normal. I am doing this without the people and activities that have been an important part of my life. I miss playing pickleball, going to the gym for my Fit for Life class, and getting together with family and friends without social distancing.

Recent conversations with friends have focused on how everyone is managing through the pandemic. We talk about how much we miss hugging our loved ones, engaging in face-to-face contact, and just stopping to talk with someone at the grocery store. How we deal with the feelings brought on by all the losses, being isolated and

lonely are also part of the conversation. All the losses bring on a great deal of grief.

On a cheerier note, we also talk about how fortunate we are to live here in Maine where we have the space to go outside and enjoy walking and other outdoor activities. We are grateful to have the health care workers, police, firefighters, market workers, and all the others who are working to keep us safe.

A thank you goes out to the office committee here at Senior College for all they did to make the registration process run very smoothly and for offering training on the use of Zoom to our committee members. Using this virtual meeting format has allowed us to plan for our future programming.

“We Are All in This Together” is a sign I am seeing in lots of places these days. I am not sure what that means, but I hope it means that those of us who can help others will help. Giving to a food bank, checking in with neighbors, making masks, donating to any charity that helps others, and wearing a mask when in a public place are all ways that we can help. Doing anything for others during this difficult time makes me feel more like “We Are All in This Together.”

Carole Baldwin

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Many thanks to Shelly Gerstein and Gale Mettey for the new version of our website umasc.org! The underpinning for the purpose of the revised site can be found at the head of the new homepage: Social connection “is the greatest human need after food and shelter. It predicts psychological health, physical health, recovery from disease, and longevity—it has a huge impact on our well-being.” *

You may ask, “How can a website foster social connection?” Shelly’s answer: begin by giving us the chance to believe that even in these abnormal times, we can still have some “normal” activities. To that end, he created a video of excerpts of Mike Bell’s first Zoom class; clearly, this was a place where people were happy to be—chatting, teasing each other, having a good time. Shelly is posting all of Mike’s classes, and there you can see for yourself how much we learned, all the while enjoying ourselves! We may not return to campus for a while, but these videos illustrate what is possible in a Zoom class.

Shelly then set up a ‘forum,’ a virtual place that will facilitate discussion about plans for Senior College activities. Given the current situation with Covid-19, we will need to be creative, and the Discussion Forum is a place to brainstorm and to share ideas.

You might, for example, suggest a topic for a course that you’d like to take. Or maybe you’d like to float an idea about a course you’d like to teach—Zoom or otherwise. Instructors might find someone of similar interests to team-teach with. They could share strategies for teaching a Zoom class, focusing perhaps on encouraging participatory activities.

To be part of the Discussion Forum, you’ll need to register. Not to worry, registering is easy. You can watch a video that explains slowly, simply, and clearly how to register and log in to the umasc.org site. In a second video, there is a guided tour of the site with information about how to watch Mike Bell’s FDR and Eleanor classes—a must-see! Included also is a brief explanation of how to navigate around a Zoom page and a demonstration of how to use the forum.

Speaking of Zoom—Senior College will offer some Zoom classes during the summer and maybe even the fall. So, if you would like some help joining a Zoom meeting, we can help. Just call 621-3551 and leave a message.

We hope that our community of students and instructors will benefit from these new tools. Who knows? Some of them may even come in handy, combined with campus activities, once the campus is reopened!

*Higgs, Micaela M. “5 Games to Play During Quarantine.” *New York Times*, 23 April 2020

Ann Sullivan

Food for Thought

I love going to the grocery store. When I was a young teacher at Cony and didn’t know anyone in Augusta, sometimes I went to the grocery store (or Zayre’s) on Saturday night just to chat with the checkout people. I rarely see anyone I know at Hannaford even now, but I smile and speak to people, making grocery shopping a social event. People usually respond, especially if I compliment their hair, jackets, or children.

During the pandemic, grocery shopping has changed dramatically. The first week was chaotic. People pushed huge carts loaded with children and mountains of groceries. One gentleman purchased 200 six-packs of water, causing muttering among the masses about why doesn’t the store limit how much people can buy. A young mother cleaned out the entire stock of Honey Nut Cheerios amidst the confused delight of her children. Frozen vegetables—even lima beans—were cleaned out. The canned goods aisle looked like a war zone with acres of empty shelves and an occasional exotic brand of artichoke or designer soup lying on its side. Toilet paper, tissues, and paper towels were long gone. Checkout lines snaked down the grocery aisles.

People were in good spirits, shaking their heads at the chaos and joking about toilet paper. As they waited in line, they talked about comfort foods they were planning to cook—lasagna, chili, soups, roasts. They marveled that it felt like preparing for a storm with no worries about losing power. They rolled their eyes about people clearly hoarding their favorite foods. And they happily tossed cupcakes and cookies, conveniently placed in the checkout area, atop their burgeoning carts.

The second week featured still-empty shelves and increasingly panic-stricken shoppers. People were frustrated, nervous, no longer joking about the toilet paper. Reality was setting in. Even shopping early in the day did not net canned goods or paper products. Thermometers, flu medicines, Advil, and Tylenol flowed off the shelves.

Talk in the checkout lines was sober. The virus had hit Maine. People worried about parents in nursing homes, kids who had nothing to do in their second week of enforced absence from school. Many were being forced to stay home from work—how were they going to make ends meet? Would there ever be work again? Was

Hannaford hiring? Friends were teary-eyed and hugged one another for comfort.



This past week, Hannaford’s distribution activity came closer to meeting demand. Shelves were stocked though not nearly full. Every aisle had newly-trained employees carefully unpacking and lining up neat rows of almond milk, Saltines, even canned soup. Responding to Governor Mills’ orders, the store had reorganized the checkout area, having all shoppers enter from one end of the checkout line, tape on the floor marking 6-foot distances to show people how to wait. Checkout staff were protected by tall plexiglass shields which made it impossible for them to communicate with customers. Staff wiped down the payment area after every customer. Other employees were wiping down every cart in the entry area. The atmosphere was organized, professional, serious.

And it was so quiet. People were shopping alone—no kids or spouses or elderly mothers. Barely looking up, shoppers passed one another quickly, almost seeming to hold their breath. People rarely acknowledged my smile or words of greeting. There was no chance of chatting in the checkout line. Six feet of distance may be good for protection from germs, but it kills conversation.

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Chair: Carole Baldwin
Masthead Design: David Guillemette
Photography: Ann Sullivan, Elizabeth Humphrey, Tammie Fowles, Gale Mettey, Mike Levy
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Editor: Ann Sullivan

My experiences at the grocery store reflect the progression of the effect of the pandemic on our lives. From curiosity and annoyance at the inconvenience, we have moved to organized, regulated behaviors designed to protect us from one another. On one hand, I feel human nature coming together to face a common problem. Globally, nationally, in states, towns, neighborhoods, and families, people are finding ways to help one another through this difficult time. We are sharing fear, grief, hope, and toilet paper.

But on the other hand, we are practicing quarantine and isolation. Is this the way of the future? Will we feel free to hug and hold hands again? Will we have relationships from a distance? Where is a person to go on a lonely Saturday night? I worry about that.

Margaret Bean, 3/27/2020

UMASC Gift

As most of you probably know, for many years the University of Maine at Augusta has generously allowed the Senior College to use the Jewett Hall auditorium for concerts and Forum on the Future presentations.

A couple of months ago, the Senior College Board of Directors approved a motion to donate \$4,000 from its gift fund to show our appreciation to UMA. As a result of the board’s direction, a gift was presented to the UMA Jewett Hall Renovation Fund to help pay for the recent improvements of the venue that the Senior College has used many times over the last several years.

Some of the improvements that have been completed include an enlarged stage and new seats. Our donation helped pay for 40 of those new seats.

**Donated by the
UMA Senior College**

The next time you have occasion to visit Jewett Hall, look at the new seats. You will probably be able to find one of the forty brass plaques that say “Donated by the UMA Senior College.”

Mick O’Halloran

Zooming with Mike



Mike Bell: To be honest I was quite depressed when the spring semester collapsed but thank God for Zoom. The research for the Roosevelt class was all set, and some of the outside programs were still willing to work with me, so I offered those who signed

up for spring courses the opportunity to take this trip with me.

It has gone well thus far. The interaction is different, and I think the technology has flummoxed a few intrepid souls but I think we are making progress. At the end of the day, I think having a place to be on Mondays and Fridays is a good thing for all of us...I just hope we don't have to make a habit of this medium. I miss the human connections.

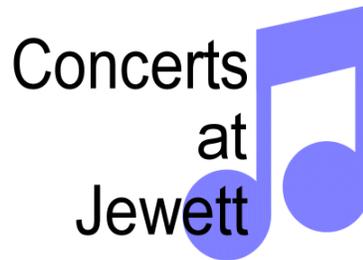
Ann Sullivan: What's it like to take a Zoom class? Well, it's certainly different from the "real thing." I had feared that student/teacher interaction would be affected. And I still think that's true, but to a lesser degree than I had imagined. Mike's presentation is perhaps more formal than is usual for him. Nary a Jonathan story... But we did get to see the actual Jonathan several times. My, how he has grown!

Initially, many students were a bit concerned that the technology side, signing in, etc. would be just too complicated. But I think that most of the twenty or so students who participate in the Monday class would agree that once you get the hang of it, it's quite simple. Office staff helped some people to log in, and they've all come back week after week!

There are also some advantages to the Zoom class. You can set the screen to Gallery View or Speaker View. In Speaker View, you see a large image of whoever is speaking. In Gallery View, my favorite, you see images of the entire class; you get to see people's reactions to what the speaker is saying. That enhances the sense of community that might have been lost in such a technological atmosphere. (And on occasion, it can be quite hilarious. One day someone appeared to be napping... Another day a bare foot magically appeared on the screen...)

All in all, I am so pleased that Mike decided to offer his class via Zoom. It gives me something special to look forward to every week. Our routine has been seriously disrupted, and this class lets me feel that we're back to normal, at least a little.

Concerts at Jewett



At the beginning of the new year, as the concerts committee was planning for the 18th season of the Concerts at Jewett, it was becoming more difficult to envision this next season. We were losing committee members and the necessary

energy and enthusiasm to carry on with changing circumstances. We reluctantly came to the realization that this would need to be our last season, and informed the UMASC Board of Directors in February.

Then the pandemic struck, UMA closed, and Concerts at Jewett came to an early end. The concert at the beginning of March became our last with the necessary cancellation of the April and May offerings.

Thanks to Deena and Chet Day's vision and dedication 17 years ago and that of others whom they enlisted through the years, the Augusta area has benefited from Maine artists performing a variety of musical genres at affordable ticket prices. The concerts were enthusiastically received, and we are very hopeful that while Concerts at Jewett may have come to an end, another organization in time will arise to take its place. We look forward to this new happening soon.

Irene Forster and Martha Tait
Concerts Committee Co-chairs

Frequently Asked Question: What's the Best Way to Spend Friday Morning?

The answer is: UMA's Senior College Classic Films Class! I have been attending this class for three years, and I am an eyewitness to this conclusion. Classic Films has everything a film fan wants.

First, we eat. We have snacks before, during intermission, and after the film.

Second, we watch the movie. We have a presenter who introduces the film and gives preliminary remarks. Then

we watch the movie. After the movie the presenter facilitates class discussion of the movie.

The presenter happens to be the person who nominated the movie, and whose nomination was accepted by the class administrators—Art Ray, Chet Day, and Peter Ezzy, known to us as the “Three Amigos.”



This format encourages class participation and requires preparation on the part of the presenter. And, to boot, the Three Amigos provide us with a terrific course guide that summarizes and critiques each film and its major actors.

Third, we have a terrific audience. Interested, smart, funny, full of goodwill, and without doubt no inhibitions about giving an opinion. There is lots of class participation from many classmates.

The conversation ranges from technical aspects of the movie to the politics of the era, the state of our culture when the film was made, the past and present views of the issues raised by the film, and more. The discussion is stimulating, thought provoking, and lots of fun. When we leave, we know a lot more than when we arrived.

Every time.

Fourth, the quality of the films is excellent. Nominations come from our talented classmates. They are screened by the Three Amigos who use their collective experience and knowledgeable film sources, and the movie list is set. The genre range is complete: musicals, film noir, mysteries, westerns, romantic comedies, dramas, tragedies, politics, human rights, and more.

Fifth, it's time for you to sign up and attend. What are you waiting for? You won't regret it.

Mike Levy

A Found Poem

Found poems already exist in quotations, media articles, cereal boxes, headlines, pieces of conversation—you name it—when united with original material. Arguably, all poetry is found. I came across this form of poetry during one of my eight semesters of Joy of Poetry, taught by gifted instructor, Ted Bookey, at UMA Senior College. Ted's courses shoehorned me from forty years of doggerel to free verse, haiku, pantoums, etc. Prose poems turned me oxymoronic. I smiled more and earned an occasional honorable mention and placement prize at competitive Maine Poetry Society sessions across the state. Thanks again, Ted.

I found the following poem in a Sinatra CD—provided students by popular instructor Mike Bell—in his recent UMA Senior College course, reviewing Frank's life. All twenty-five songs are worked into the referenced piece. While I'm a staunch disciple of repeated revisions of self-written material—prose and poetry—I lessened editing here, allowing readers better chances of intuitively plucking the location of 'old blue eyes' tunes.



Public Domain

ALL OR NOTHING AT ALL

We met in Chicago—our kind of town—in summer wind,
Strangers in the night, Saturday, loneliest night of the week.

Young at heart, we'd put our dreams away; learning the blues was new life.

We talked in the wee small hours of the morning, 'do-be-do-be-do.'

I asked her, Nancy, with the laughing face, come fly with me to the moon.

Just when I thought I'd never smile again, the way she looked that night

Gave me the world on a string. Applying witchcraft, all the way

Got her talking along life-lines of love and marriage.

I felt I'd done it my way when she admitted I'd got under her skin, just in time.

Day one of a very good year. Noon, we headed for New York, New York.

Toasting—one for my baby—and one more for the road.

John Benoit

Night Ritual



“I help him into bed, and then join him, pulling my feet up to sit cross-legged beside him. I open our copy of *The Boxcar Children*, and point to the first sentence under the heading “Shelter.” He reads the first two words effortlessly, “When Jess” and struggles to sound out the next.

“o, pa, en, ed. O, pa, en, en, ed,” he struggles to sound out the word and then stops and looks at me expectantly.

“Opened.” I offer.

“opened her eyes it mu, mu, st, must have been ten o’clock in the more, more, morn ing.” He continues, reading slowly, struggling with all but the simplest of words. We move through the book at a snail’s pace. He reads a page, pausing frequently for my assistance, and then I read one. After we’ve completed three full pages I stretch, get off the bed, kneel beside it, and fold my hands in prayer pose and rest them on top of his blue and yellow comforter. We begin the “Lord’s Prayer” together and when we finish, he continues on alone, “Dear God, thank you for Tammie and Terry and the two Kevins. Thank you for everything. Please take care of all the animals and poor people and children. Amen.” “Amen,” I echo. I kiss him on the forehead and make a show of tucking in the blankets snugly around him. “I Love you, sweetie,” I say with a smile. “Love you too, a bushel and a peck,” he responds and then pauses. “And a hug around the neck,” I add with far less enthusiasm, completing a ritual I’ve been participating in off and on for as long as I can remember. I turn off the light, making sure to leave his door open so that the hall light will shine into his room, and blow him a kiss, cheerfully promising that we’ll read again tomorrow night. It’s hot, I’m tired, and I’m ready to be done with this routine. I’ve been trying to teach my brain-damaged father to read for over 50 years.”

Tammie Fowles

ON CAMPING

2012, W. Virginia.

Campground directory on my lap, phone to my ear, I jotted down directions to our stop for the night.

The GPS we had borrowed for our cross-country trip lay stashed under the driver’s seat where it had resided after the first 100 miles. This due to it sending us 20 miles north to pick up our route south when we initially set out from home... Compounded by advice from numerous campground attendants not to use a GPS or we would never find them, which we easily believed...

So after some 8,000 miles of old-style map navigation, I ticked off the turns and mileage with an air of confidence which was only somewhat shaken as we crossed some railroad tracks and entered what appeared to be an industrial park. Earlier in the trip, we would have reconsidered and probably tried to locate a more scenic venue. As it was, my husband Don was weary of traveling, both in the day and in general, and had taken on the demeanor of a long-haul trucker, pressing on as though he had money riding on it. Now the sun was going down, and he needed to rest.

Another ¼ of a mile, and there it was, a few RVs sitting along a broad field with a tree-lined river running along the far side. As I jumped out to read a sign on the office door, a couple sitting in lawn chairs facing the field called out, “Just find a site you like, and Ray will catch up with you later. After you get settled, bring your chairs and cocktails—we’re watching a skydiving club do jumps. It’s terrific!” This is what is so seductive about campgrounds: the Hello, friends! Care to join us? Where you headed? camaraderie; what we used to call community.

Sure enough, the park was adjacent to a small airfield, evidenced by a hangar with a couple of single-engine planes parked out front. We quickly parked our trailer, hauled our chairs and a bottle of wine back to the couple who had greeted us. They were just fellow campers, but had arrived a few days earlier, and quickly shared relevant info such as where to find the best place to eat, the cheapest gas, and the nearest golf course. We had barely poured our wine before a diver came hurtling out of the sky, executing a perfect running landing just about abeam of us. We relaxed and chatted the next 45 minutes or so while enjoying our own private air show.

We had just finished dinner when there was a knock on the door of the trailer. It was Ray, the owner, who welcomed us and told us what we owed him. As I paid him I remarked on how much we had enjoyed watching the skydivers, and he replied, “Well, hurry up then, they’re going to practice some night jumps in about a half-hour.”

“Will we be able to see them?” I asked. “Oh yes, they have lights on their helmets,” he replied.

We hurried through the dishes and dashed out to the field with our chairs. The night was cool and clear, the stars spectacular in the darkened sky. Vehicles shined their headlights on each end of the grass landing strip, and we could hear the steady drone of the Cessna climbing to altitude. It had to get to 10,000—11,000 feet, we were told; when we heard the engine pause, that would be when the adventurers were jumping out. We could see the lights on the plane at first, and then we couldn't see or hear anything. Several minutes went by, and I was starting to grow anxious. Another minute or two passed. “I see a light!” someone yelled. We strained our eyes, and yes, there were small lights just visible high in the night sky. Descending, one person, two, and then a third. In a moment they set down and came running by us, gathering in their chutes as they went. Finally, the fourth man landed, and we all broke into cheers and applause, simultaneously relieved and exhilarated. What a magical night, and so unexpected!

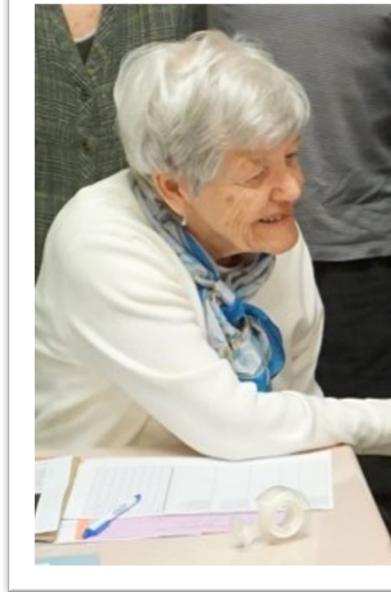
The next morning as we rumbled back across the railroad tracks, heading north, I turned to Don. “Do we really have to go home?” I asked.

Dee Keneagy

Memories of Penny Higgins and the Beginning of UMASC

Sorrored by the death of Penny Higgins last November at age 88, I recall her as a guiding light in the formation of Senior College in Augusta. Involved as she was in her extended family, her church, League of Women Voters, book club, and other public-spirited organizations back then in 2001, she had no need to join an exploratory effort to bring education for seniors to the Augusta area, a campaign which had no certain future. But when asked to join she responded with a cheerful eagerness. As a former teacher and administrator of nursing education, she made valuable suggestions for setting up our fledgling organization.

After helping us through the stages of Exploratory Group, Steering Committee and finally UMASC, she went on to serve over 18 years on our Board of Directors. In the last two years of her life, she stepped into the breach as Chair of the Concert Committee assuring that we had a successful musical program. She also was a member of



the Forum Committee where she handled publicity responsibilities. Her style of leadership was always low-keyed but determined, never bringing attention to herself, not only making sure that things got done – but got done right.

She often took courses that I taught, particularly those on

science and religion. She was never challenging but did not refrain from objecting to some of my outrageous assertions. Her participation reflected her deep and abiding faith and sense of caring for humanity. Penny's passing marks the removal of a pillar of strength, devotion, and wise counsel from the ranks of Senior College.

Of the 12 people in the Exploratory Group which brought a proposal for an Augusta Senior College to the University, eight and possibly nine* have passed away: Julian Sacks, Inge Foster, Sylvia Lund, Pat Brewster, Carol Brewster, Charles Danforth, Roy Whitcomb, and most recently, Penny Higgins.

There remains only Duane Prugh (now retired from Senior College), and myself. [*Jon Keggi was also one of the originals; I couldn't locate him through the Internet.]

Chuck Acker

Jeanne Davis

Jeanne Davis, who died in February, 2020, was a member of the steering committee which preceded the official formation of UMASC. As a member of the first Finance Committee she worked to establish financial policies and served on the Senior College Board of Directors through 2004. In addition to her service as a UMASC volunteer, she was a deacon in her church and many community- and peace-oriented organizations. Her passing should be noted, and she should be remembered as one who personified the spirit upon which UMASC was founded.

Chuck Acker

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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. If you are interested, please call the Senior College office (621-3551) and leave a message.

Contribute to the *Illuminator*!

To be considered for the fall issue of the *Illuminator*, please send your articles, stories, poems or artwork to the editor, Ann Sullivan, at office@umasc.org. The deadline is Nov. 5, 2020.

Call for Teachers!!!

Do you have a hobby that you're passionate about? Do you love history, or literature, or art? Or maybe you're interested in religion, or philosophy, or issues around health and well-being? Why not consider sharing your knowledge and skills with people just like you who are enthusiastic lifelong learners?

UMA Senior College is looking for instructors to teach classes this summer and fall. We're still waiting to find out if the campus will open up, but we've already had one very successful Zoom class, so that is definitely an option.