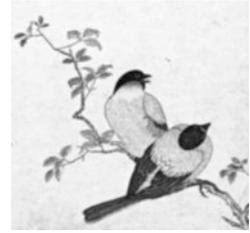

The Midcoast Inquirer

Newsletter of Midcoast Senior College

April 2015, Volume 10, No. 2



Midcoast Senior College to Welcome Fifty Somethings

This past winter the Board of Directors approved a new policy to invite people aged as young as 50 and above into our membership. Therefore our membership may now include students from 50 years old to 100 plus.

Such a broad age range is truly intergenerational. In fact, we already have a faculty member whose father is an active student at 103.

The Inquirer asked Bob Pring, a current faculty member of MSC, to comment on his experiences with intergenerational learning.

By Bob Pring

Every expansive era in the history of mankind has coincided with the operation of factors which have tended to eliminate distance between peoples and classes previously hemmed off from one another.

--John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*

When American philosopher John Dewey wrote those words in 1915, he was thinking primarily of the benefits of breaking down social-class barriers in education, but he was also thinking of racial and religious barriers, and he might as well have been thinking of age barriers too. When persons of different social groups work together, they may reap the benefits of an increased awareness of their common interests and an enhanced intelligence that comes from dealing with a greater variety of novel points of view.

I taught philosophy in a community college for thirty-seven years. Most of my students were between eighteen and twenty-one years of age, but in almost every class there were older students too. Interaction between different age groups was an everyday experience in a college where older, "returning" students were not "hemmed off" from the young.

One such older student was Frank, seventy years old, retired, and recently widowed, who came to college to explore ideas he'd often thought about but which his work life had kept him from exploring in the deeper way he craved. He took full advantage of our college's offer of free tuition for senior citizens, taking many courses in philosophy and the social sciences.

My classes broke up every day into small working groups, to whom I'd assign problems of interpretation. I fixed group assignments so as to "eliminate distance between peoples and classes," to speak, and I liked to put Frank in groups with younger guys who you might say were not so wholeheartedly devoted to intellectual enterprises and who sometimes had trouble focussing on the issues of the day. Frank thoroughly enjoyed talking with these younger people, and because he liked working with them so much, they naturally responded by working along with him. Staying "on task" was not an issue: learning became part of a friendly conversation that just happened to be taking place in a classroom.

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Summer Wisdom Lectures, see page 3

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Midcoast Senior College is one of eighteen autonomous, self-governing Senior Colleges in this State. We serve the area from Damariscotta to Freeport and inland toward Augusta. Most classes are held at 10 Tibbets Drive, Brunswick, Maine.

Our mission: to provide non-credit academic courses and other educational events for people of 55 years and older to continue their lifelong learning.

Over the years, I've worked with many Franks who have helped many younger students by giving them the benefit of their wider range of experience and their more developed discipline and work ethic, and who have in turn benefitted from the opportunity to learn what younger folks are *really* thinking about. Sharing a common purpose, learning, lessens the tendency of different age groups to see each other in caricature. Instead, they see each other in each other.

Note the difference between Frank's age and the age of his co-workers in class: fifty years. You might find the same age difference among students in some of our Senior-College classes. And you should find the same benefits of eliminating the distance between us by giving us the chance to do some intellectual work together. So let's get to work!

Bob Pring taught philosophy and religious studies in the State University system for many years. At MSC he has taught courses about Socrates, Plato, Epicurus, Montaigne, Barbara Kingsolver, and Terry Tempest Williams. He has enjoyed being a 'returning' student himself in a variety of courses at MSC, which he has nicknamed 'The College of the Second Chance'.

Announcements

MSC has added a new part time bookkeeper to join **Agnes Beale** in our office. **Sonia St. Pierre** will be helping with the greater bookkeeping demands of becoming a 501 (c) 3. Sonia is also a volunteer with the AARP program to provide free tax return assistance to seniors. She was a business education teacher for 10 years in Lewiston. Later on she was a controller for 20 years in a company in Winslow, Maine. Please welcome Sonia to Senior College.

There will be a raffle for the second year at our **Annual Meeting/Luncheon on June 10 at Bowdoin College**. The raffle will be for 2 tickets to area musical events such as the Bowdoin International Music Festival and the Maine State Music Theater, etc. The price is \$5 per raffle ticket or 3 for \$10. Cash only accepted.



SUMMER WISDOM 2015 LECTURES

Global Climate Change and Maine's Natural Resources, Present and Future: Gloom and Doom or Economic Boom?

CURTIS MEMORIAL LIBRARY, MORRELL ROOM 7:30 PM

Sponsored By Thornton Oaks

The history of Maine is closely tied to its natural resources; forests, farms and oceans. For generations, Mainers have relied on them to provide their livelihood. However, over the past several centuries, Maine's economy, largely based on these resources, has experienced a slow but inexorable decline. A heartening development, however, has been the renaissance in farming, stimulated by the warming climate and the locavore movement. This year's Summer Wisdom lecture series will explore the present and future status of Maine's natural resources in the light of global climate change.

JUNE 3, 7:30 PM: "MAINE'S ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE"

Fifty years ago, Maine was faced with the loss of its leather and textile industries, challenges of agricultural runoff threatening water quality throughout the state, a deadly insect infestation in the spruce-fir forest that threatened the forest products industry, and the devastating impact of foreign factory ships on the offshore fisheries. At this time the Maine Times created a non-profit arm, The Allagash Group, headed by our speaker to create an alternative sustainable economic vision for Maine. The result was The Maine Manifest, published in 1972. In this lecture, Barringer will look back on where we have come since then with respect to Maine's natural resources.

RICHARD BARRINGER served in the administrations of three Maine governors as Commissioner of Conservation and Director of State Planning and is the author of landmark Maine laws in the areas of environment, energy, land use and economic development. Upon leaving state government, he founded the Muskie School of Public Service at USM, where he is now Professor Emeritus.

JUNE 10, 7:30 PM "CLIMATE CHANGE AND MAINE'S FORESTS: WHAT WE KNOW AND DON'T KNOW"

Maine's climate has changed. The footprints are there in temperature and rainfall records, in ice-outs, and migration dates of birds. Although interpretation of these footprints is elusive, scientists predict further change, toward a warmer, wetter world for Maine's forests, whose impacts cannot be foreseen or predicted. This lecture will explore the difficulty of these predictions.

LLOYD C. IRLAND, based in Wayne, Maine has done consulting work and lecturing in several countries around the world. He attended the U.N. Forum on Forests 10th session in Istanbul, as well as the Copenhagen and Cancun global climate summits. He holds a PhD from Yale and is the author of 5 books and over 300 articles.

JUNE 24, 7:30 PM: "THE GULF OF MAINE AS THE FRONTLINE OF A CHANGING GLOBAL CLIMATE"

The Gulf of Maine is noticeably warmer than it was a few decades ago, and much of this warming has happened in the last few years. The lecture will deal with how global climate change and natural climate variability both contribute to the warming in the Gulf of Maine, how it is impacting natural resources and how fisheries in the region are adapting to these changes.

ANDREW J. PERSHING is Chief Scientific Officer and Ecosystem Modeler at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. He holds an ScB in Aquatic Biology from Brown University and a PhD in Geology and Evolutionary Biology from Cornell University.

JULY 1, 7:30 PM "GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND A SHIFT IN FOOD PRODUCTION—IS MAINE TO BECOME A BREADBASKET OF THE U.S.?"

This discussion will include a look at how Maine has changed from producing nearly 90% of its own food needs as late as the mid 1900s to now providing less than 20%; and a look at what global climate change and a focused effort on local farms/local food may do to bring economic growth and more food self-sufficiency to Maine.

TOM SETTLEMIRE is Professor Emeritus of Biology and Chemistry, Bowdoin College. He received his BS and MS degrees from Ohio State and holds a PhD in biochemistry from North Carolina State University. He is past president of the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust and is an active leader in the local farm/food movement.

- Richard Neiman, Chair of Summer Wisdom

Thanking Our Volunteers

The Inquirer would like to begin recognizing on a regular basis the volunteers who serve as classroom liaisons, help on bulk mailings, or outings, or at our annual luncheon. Without your help, there would not be a Midcoast Senior College. Note: This list does not include board members who volunteer in so many capacities.

Volunteers Who Assisted on Our Move: Dean Clark, Bruce Giguere, Susan Mikesell, Aggie Beale, and Nora Bishop.

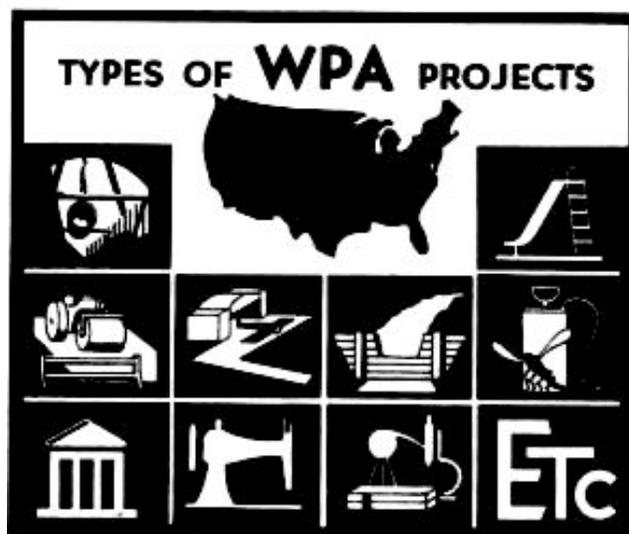
Members of Board Committees: Agnes Beale, Dorothy Bell, Nora Bishop, Sally Broderick, Dean Clark, Jack Henderson, Harry Hoperaft, Paul Kalkstein, Richard Leck, Lois Lamdin, David McKeith, Priscilla McKeith, Jim Millinger, Susan Mikesell, Esther Palmer, Jean Pope, Kelly Watt, Judy Woodman.

Class Liaisons, Fall Semester, 2014: Nora Bishop, Miriam Charette, Dean Clark, Claire Durst, Bruce Giguere, Marnie Hackenberg, Jack Henderson, Eileen Kleinkopf, Esther Leck, Jan Leavitt, Parcy Norton, Esther Palmer, Jean Pope, Harriet Richards, Kelly Watt.

December Bulk Mailing, 2014: Agnes Beale, Dorothy Bell, Nora Bishop, Miriam Charette, Marnie Hackenberg, David McKeith, Priscilla McKeith, Lynn Reese, Judy Rouillard, Michael Wormser.

Class Liaisons, Spring Semester, 2015: Margaret Beaven, Dorothy Bell, Nora Bishop, Miriam Charette, Dean Clark, Martha Dome, Clare Durst, Betty Hartley, Susan Hedrick, Patricia Huntington, Eileen Kleinkopf, Monica Kirkland, Esther Lacanoga, Joanne McDermott, Ann Morham, Barclay Palmer.

The Inquirer apologizes to anyone who volunteered and is not on the above list.



Let Us Now Praise.... Frances Perkins

By Michael Wormser

*This Spring Midcoast Senior College is offering a course on **The Life and Legacy of Frances Perkins**, the first woman ever to serve on a U.S. presidential cabinet. She served under Franklin D. Roosevelt. The faculty for this course are **Michael Chaney**, the **Executive Director of the Frances Perkins Center** in Newcastle, Maine and **Leah W. Sprague**, a retired justice of the Massachusetts Trial Court. She is also writing a book on women in the judiciary.*

***Michael Wormser**, a student of MSC, offered to write this Inquirer article on Frances Perkins and the Works Progress Administration (WPA)*

“I see one-third of the nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished,” President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared in his second inaugural address Jan. 20, 1937. And with “tens of millions of its citizens” still denied the “necessities of life” despite all the reforms and emergency relief legislation enacted during the “Hundred Days” in 1933, widespread unemployment and poverty persisted. Much more needed to be done, and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, the first woman in any presidential cabinet, had taken Roosevelt’s words seriously long before FDR dramatized these seemingly

intractable economic problems.

Perkins had been one of the president's longest serving advisers, starting with FDR's two terms as governor of New York. In her book of reminiscences about her association with Roosevelt, *The Roosevelt I Knew*, Perkins maintained that FDR came to "understand the problems of people in trouble" after confronting his own crisis when stricken with polio in 1921. It might be more accurate to say that after his affliction he developed a humility and an open mindedness and greater capacity to learn about the problems of ordinary people. He became sensitized to their needs. FDR's understanding of these problems was due in large measure to Frances Perkins. She became, first in Albany and then in Washington, his educator in chief on issues of labor relations and more specifically on the dire living conditions faced by working men and women during the Great Depression.

Roosevelt came into office with no preconceived master plan for ending the Depression and held traditional, rather conservative economic beliefs. His ideas on public spending on relief projects were distinctly cautious. On the other hand, he was pragmatic and willing to experiment with whatever might work. He did not let preconceived prescriptions interfere with the need for decisive action. Being practical meant not sacrificing the peoples' immediate needs for the sake of some greater ideal, no matter how laudatory. FDR knew Perkins was committed to

alleviating the plight of the working classes and came to trust her judgments and political instincts in drafting social legislation and lobbying Congress. She told him in 1934 it was high time "to be farsighted about future problems of unemployment and unprotected old age."

With unemployment still woefully high, Roosevelt did not need to be convinced. In fact, his enthusiasm for grand, universal relief and economic security, what he called "cradle to the grave" insurance, had to be tempered at times by what was feasible. Perkins told him any proposals had to be based "upon a practical knowledge of the needs of our country, the prejudices of our people, and our legislative habits." She realized quickly that FDR's desire to include a national health insurance plan would not survive politically. "Powerful elements of the medical profession were up in arms over the idea of any kind of government-endorsed system," she wrote in her memoir.

Perkins was at the center of the two most important proposals of what came to be known as the Second New Deal: Social Security and unemployment relief. The essential role she played in developing the recommendations that led to successful enactment of the Social Security Act of 1935, which also included the first national program of unemployment insurance, are well documented. She was also influential in the advice she gave the President on the Second New Deal's jobs programs, the most important of which was the Works Progress Administration (WPA).



Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, *Time*, August, 1933

Roosevelt appointed Perkins to chair a special Committee on Economic Security to draft the legislation on unemployment insurance and an old-age pension program, which became known as Social Security, as well as the measure that established the WPA. She said her role was like “driving a team of high-strung unbroken horses.”

The law that made possible the WPA appropriated what was at that time the largest peacetime spending act in U.S. history—almost 5 billion dollars. In the view of the President and his advisers the amount had to be on a scale large enough to get millions of men and women back to work. Small, piecemeal relief had been tried earlier but was inadequate to cope with the magnitude of the crisis. To make a difference in the unemployment rate—which reached 25 percent in 1933, vast sums of money were necessary. It was the Emergency Appropriations Act of 1935 that funded the WPA (the law itself gave the President authority by executive order to establish the agency).

Over its eight-year life, the WPA employed some 8.5 million Americans. The WPA projects are usually thought of today as construction jobs. Massive numbers of workers were employed to build highways, dams, airports (such as LaGuardia in New York City), post offices, sewer systems, and the like. The WPA, however, also employed hundreds of writers, journalists, musicians, actors, artists, lawyers, archivists and other professionals in four Arts Projects known as Federal One. Harry Hopkins, when asked why white-collar workers were given employment, observed, “Hell, they’ve got to eat just like other people.” Of the 5-plus million workers on relief in early 1935, about 11 percent were white-collar workers.

At its peak, the Writers’ Project (FWP) alone employed 6,686 men and women. It had the greatest impact of the Arts Programs. It’s guides to each of the then 48 states, plus the District of Columbia, Alaska and Puerto Rico and to the major cities and a host of smaller municipalities as well as oral histories are still read today and remain the best reference source to many of the states.

Perkins’ long and devoted service on behalf of Franklin Roosevelt, her knowledge of working class issues and, more importantly, of the people themselves, and her shrewd assessment of the political landscape of 1930s America were invaluable skills that made possible the success of much of the New Deal and is reflected by the

fact that of the President’s original cabinet members only she and Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes remained throughout the Roosevelt presidency.

An Essay on the Abolitionist Views of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

by **David McKeith**

Few among us have not read, or not been read to from, Paul Revere’s Ride, The Song of Hiawatha, or Evangeline. Literary critics attest that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) was the most widely known and beloved American poet of his century, for generations a mainstay in schoolrooms and by winter hearths. Born in Portland, a student at Bowdoin, later a professor at Bowdoin and Harvard, Longfellow was notably influential here and abroad in his poetry, literature, and significant translations, among them Dante’s Inferno.

This month of April, we turn to another side of Longfellow as we note the 150th anniversary of the ending of the Civil War. As a teenager, the poet desired to do something “for the great cause of Negro Emancipation,” as he then wrote. His activity in this vein became serious when, in England in 1842, he discovered the poetry of the German liberal agitator, Ferdinand Freilegrath. At the same moment he was similarly inspired by an intimate visit to England’s premier novelist and social critic, Charles Dickens. Thereafter during his shipboard return to America, Longfellow wrote seven poems that were soon published as Poems on Slavery (1842), available to us on the Web.

Longfellow’s network of fellow reformers grew large. He gave moral encouragement and generous financial support to those who worked for the cause of abolition: men and women who spoke publicly, operated the Underground Railroad, purchased slaves their freedom, and sought to educate freed slaves.

To a friend Longfellow wrote, “I am much gratified that [my poems] should have exercised some salutary influence; . . . I shall rejoice in the progress of true liberty, and in freedom from slavery of all kinds. . . .”

In 1862, as the war raged on, a northern editor, referring to Longfellow’s Poems of Slavery, observed: “The poet



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1854

of the people often becomes the seer—prophesying that which will come. . . . [What he] wrote is full of the pathos of genuine feeling and pregnant with prophetic truth. . . . [H]is discerning eye foresaw the inevitable result of that institution of American slavery. . . which he felt would in time, if not erased, be the instrument of final decay.”

One of Longfellow’s poems from his 1842 collection follows:

The Slave in the Dismal Swamp

In dark fens of the Dismal Swamp
The hunted Negro lay;
He saw the fire of the midnight camp,
And heard at times a horse’s tramp
And a bloodhound’s distant bay.
Where will-o'-the-wisps and glow-worms shine,
In bulrush and in brake;

Where waving mosses shroud the pine,
And the cedar grows, and the poisonous vine
Is spotted like the snake;
Where hardly a human foot could pass,
Or a human heart would dare,
On the quaking turf of the green morass
He crouched in the rank and tangled grass,
Like a wild beast in his lair.
A poor old slave, infirm and lame;
Great scars deformed his face;
On his forehead he bore the brand of shame,
And the rags, that hid his mangled frame,
Were the livery of disgrace.
All things above were bright and fair,
All things were glad and free;
Lithe squirrels darted here and there,
And wild birds filled the echoing air
With songs of Liberty!
On him alone was the doom of pain,
From the morning of his birth;
On him alone the curse of Cain
Fell, like a flail on the garnered grain,
And struck him to the earth!

2015 Wheeler/Thompson Founders Award Nominations

To acknowledge in a meaningful way the contributions of the two co-founders of Midcoast Senior College, Nancy Wheeler and Jack Thompson, the Board of Directors established in 2009 the Wheeler/Thompson Founders Award. Presented annually at the Spring Luncheon, this award recognizes an individual who has supported the spirit and work of Senior College in significant ways.

Nominations are solicited each spring from among past and present members/students, faculty, volunteers, and others. The Board makes the final selection. Sitting members of the Board of Directors are not eligible. Nomination forms will be distributed to students attending classes later this spring. May 1 is the deadline. You may also go to our website, <http://midcoastseniorcollege.org/>, and vote.