
The Midcoast Inquirer

Newsletter of Midcoast Senior College
December 2014, Volume 10, No. 1



Happy Holidays from Midcoast Senior College Board of Directors
May peace and joy be yours during this Season of Goodwill



Snowflakes on winterberry

Class Registration Policy Change Announcement

by **Richard DeVito**

For many years MSC managed registrations using a 30 day open enrollment, after which, a random computer selection was conducted to determine who were assigned to classes, and who were placed on standby lists for the classes. With the introduction of on line registration, this system is no longer supportable, and the MSC Board of Directors has approved managing registrations on a First Come – First Served basis. The MSC office will be open from 9 AM to 1 PM Monday through Friday, and registration will be accepted on line, by mail, phone, or walk in. So that no one registration form is advantaged over another, registrations will be collected each business day, and assignments made to classes until the class is filled. On any single day, if there are more registrations for a class than open slots, a random computer selection

will be used to determine who is assigned to the class, and who is placed on a standby list. Early registration by any form is encouraged with on line and mail registration preferred.

If you have further questions regarding registration you may call the MSC office at (207) 725-4900.

Richard DeVito is Chair of the Administration Committee

Sustaining the Spirit of Midcoast Senior College

A Guest Editorial by **David McKeith**

In Spring of 2000, Midcoast Senior College presented its first semester to inquiring seniors. The College founders, as well as those who sought the values of our curriculum, were clearly in the spirit of Socrates who is said to have declared: “Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.”

Unlike emphasis on guidance in a child’s schooling, seniors are internally motivated and have a sense of what they wish to know. Being mature in lives of rich and varied experiences, our cooperative learning is affected by what each one contributes to inquiry, observation, and discussion. Our rich curriculum in the Liberal Arts and Sciences invites reflection and contemplation so that each of us in our own way may be liberated from not-knowing and from pre-judgments, our horizons broadened, and new interests cultivated.

The spirit of Senior College is more than the flowering of weekly classrooms. We convene for stimulating winter

The Midcoast Inquirer

is the newsletter of
Midcoast Senior College
10 Tibbets Drive, Suite 210
Brunswick, Maine 04011

www.midcoastseniorcollege.org
(207) 725-4900
mscoffice@midcoastseniorcollege.org

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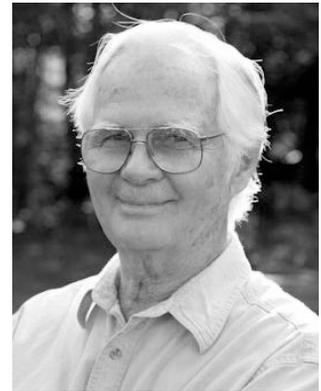
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Midcoast Senior College is one of eighteen autonomous, self-governing Senior Colleges in this State. We serve the area from Damariscotta to Freeport and inland toward Augusta. Most classes are held at 10 Tibbets Drive, Brunswick, Maine.

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

and spring lectures; we assemble to be moved by quartet music; we gather for weekly discussions of national and international import; we engage in summer's cultural excursions.

In different ways a number of students continue on with their learning that began on campus. Many request an additional reading list to further explore the subject of a course. Students of art are known to continue developing newly acquired skills and further ripen their artistic taste.



David McKeith

In several instances clusters of seniors gather without the instructor to pursue the theme of a course. A group of students, who spun off from Ann Kimmage's course several years ago on the writing of one's memoir, continues to meet to critique their ongoing work. A half dozen or more students from Bob Bunselmeyer's 2011 course on England in year 1910 meet quarterly to discuss a preselected book on a related topic. And a handful of budding poets, inspired by recent courses offered by Gary Lawless, meets monthly now in their third year to critique each other's progress in the many forms of poetry writing.

One may ask: What is the propellant that drives this lively program that serves our seniors? From whence comes the fire and passion? The answer lies in the gifts of talent, skills, and time given by a large number of volunteers who willingly demonstrate their dedication to the idea and ideal of lifelong learning. With the exception of a paid part time office administrator, every effort that moves Senior College forward is volunteered as a gift of the self: from board members, committee chairs and committee members (see the roster elsewhere in this newsletter), to our able faculty, webmaster, and all the other vital workers who have come forth to fill needs.

We can always absorb new volunteers, and you may wish to put yourself forward, satisfied that you, too, are contributing your time and talent to the continuing success of Midcoast Senior College.

Through all of this there are abundant opportunities for the pleasure of bonding among students. Look around you in class or in a lecture, and you sense that we share

with others a unique attachment born of our reasons for being here. Lasting friendships emerge from acquaintances first spun at Senior College.

Our commitment is to sustain and perpetuate what I have sought to describe as the spirit of Senior College. Growth in numbers will come naturally. Presently we find ourselves in the agreeable position of aspiring to support what we have found to work well for our community of lifelong learners.

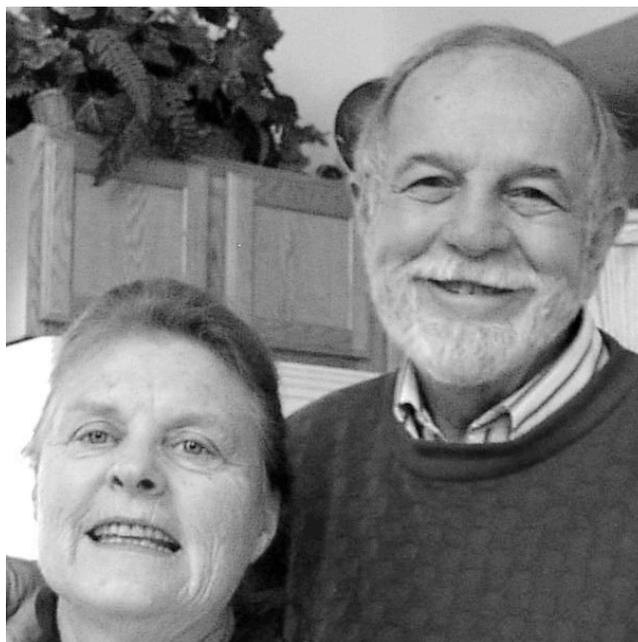
David McKeith initiated the Midcoast Inquirer 10 years ago and served as its' first editor for eight years. He was also a member of the faculty and taught courses on western frontier women and environmentalism. He continues to provide editorial guidance and a helpful long term view of MSC.

Profile: A Couple of Volunteers, Joyce and Richard DeVito

For this issue of the Inquirer, Nora Bishop and Dorothy Bell suggested both Joyce and Richard DeVito to profile as exceptional volunteers. Here is a description in Richard's words of who they are and how they came to be involved at MSC.

Joyce was born and raised in Topsham and longed to escape Maine. The fact that we ever got together is a story itself. I graduated from college in 1958 with a degree in Electronic Engineering and a commission as a second lieutenant in the Air Force. I had orders for Biloxi, Mississippi, but 2 weeks before I was due to report, I was redirected to report to a small Air Force squadron at Brunswick Naval Air Station. We met on the day I arrived. It was definitely not love at first sight, but over time, a close friendship developed, and after a few years we began dating seriously. Ten days before I was due to leave the Air Force in 1961, my active duty assignment was extended for 1 year due to the crisis in Berlin. We married in October of that year and the rest is history. We left the area in 1962 to work with General Motors and had assignments in 7 states in the USA and 6 foreign countries. In December 2001, Joyce wanted to return to Maine and we located to Georgetown.

Joyce started taking classes at Senior College 7 years ago, met Dorothy Bell, and started volunteering. She initially volunteered as a class liaison and helped with



Joyce and Richard DeVito

mailings and registrations. She took over the position of Volunteer Coordinator 6 years ago and did that until the program was dropped 2 years ago. She continues to volunteer today whenever asked. During this time, she got me interested in classes and asked me to help from time to time. 4 Years ago, Dorothy asked me to consider becoming a Board member. After some foot dragging, I agreed to join, and worked on the Administration, Policy and Procedures, and Technology committees. I was due to leave the Board this past June, but agreed to stay on 1 year and assumed the position of Administration Chair. The workload is challenging and certainly heavy, but I enjoy all aspects of the work. Both Joyce and I have been blessed over the past 50 years, and we are happy to help out where we can.

Over the past 4 years I have seen continued growth in the numbers of students attending classes and fully expect this trend to continue. Our move to SNHU in Brunswick has given us the capacity to grow well beyond today's numbers. We are fortunate to have a dedicated pool of faculty willing to teach, but I do have concerns about having enough staff to support our programs. It was absolutely imperative that we became a 501(c) 3 organization, but it has greatly expanded our administrative and financial workloads. These functions are served by a volunteer Board along with a cadre of other volunteers, and I have serious concerns whether we will continue to attract adequate volunteer staffing.



The Why and What of Mindfulness

By Ann Kimmage

Of all the wonders and mysteries of our universe, nothing is so wondrous as the mind. – Rammurti S. Mishra

We all know what it is like to eat an apple. But how often do we experience it through our senses? Is the apple juicy, mealy, sweet, crunchy, soft, or flavorful? How does the texture of the apple feel against the tongue and palate? What kind of an experience is it, mindful or mindless, and why should it matter?

The Russian mystic Guridieff believed that much of human misery is caused by living our lives mechanically, never properly attending to what it is to be alive. Mindfulness is a way of switching mental gears to awaken us to see clearly how things are in the present moment. This helps us make better choices and decisions. Non mindful functioning distances us from directly experiencing what life actually is. When we snap out of autopilot we connect with the sensations in our bodies and the thought patterns in our minds. At the same time we learn to slow down the incessant chatter in our minds.

The adult brain is capable of forming new cells and pathways. The brain rewires and reshapes itself in response to environment, experience, and training. Meditation is a training ground for the mind during which we shift the emphasis to a single object, the breath or mantra, so the mind does not roam like a wild horse. Recent scientific studies confirm that meditation can bring about significant physiological changes in the brain that create positive changes in health, mood, and behavior. The practice of meditation strengthens areas of the brain involved in decision-making, learning, memory and emotional flexibility.

When we are aware of how our body and mind operate we can come into a wiser relationship with them. This leads to a healthier and happier way of living. A mindfulness practice has particular relevance for seniors. It improves longevity, decreases loneliness, slows Alzheimer's, reduces health care costs, improves mood and eases strain on caregivers. There is an impressive list of conditions that are easier to manage with a mindfulness practice: depression, anxiety, substance abuse, eating disorders, insomnia, chronic pain, psoriasis, type 2 diabetes, fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, HIV, cancer, and heart disease.

Mindfulness and meditation is no longer exclusively practiced behind monastery walls or secluded ashrams. Compared to a few decades ago these practices are being effectively used in the corporate world, education, medicine, the military, and in training athletes. In addition to countless articles and new books on the subject of mindfulness, a new magazine, *Mindful*, is available to those who want to be initiated into the why and what of mindfulness. You can learn more about the growing awareness of the benefits of mindfulness in many spheres of American life in the **Winter Wisdom** lecture, *The Mindfulness Revolution*, on Feb. 4, 2015. Until then eat your apple mindfully to get more pleasure and happiness from the totality of the experience.

Ann Kimmage has taught at MSC for many years. Her courses have covered a broad spectrum of writers such as Ha Jin, Tolstoy, Nabokov and Proust. She has an established meditation practice and an interest in mindfulness practices. She has also published a memoir, An Un-American Childhood, about growing up in Communist Czechoslovakia and China.



American Troops in World War I

The Centenary of The Great War, 1914-1918

World War I is considered the first global war. Over nine million combatants and seven million civilians died.

Last August **Bob Bunselmeyer** had to withdraw for personal reasons from teaching a course on World War I and the literature it spawned. **Jack Thompson**, co-founder and faculty member at MSC, along with **Howard Whitcomb** of the Curriculum Committee found two new faculty members to step up in a very collegial manner and the three faculty members team taught a fascinating course on the war.

Bob Williams earned his Ph.D at Harvard and taught at Williams, Washington University in St. Louis and Davidson.

Jack Cooper earned his Ph.D from Columbia University and is Professor Emeritus from the University of Wisconsin. He is also a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

The Midcoast Inquirer invited two students in this course to share some insights into this war. **Jim Tyson** provides an historical overview and **Michael Wormser** summarizes the poetry of four major poets. Both Jim and Michael are long term students at MSC.

An Historical Overview:

By **Jim Tyson**

Invited to read aloud and discuss a poem for the class “The Great War 1914-1918”, I quickly volunteered an absent classmate, Michael Wormser, in my place. Despicable, yes, but less so if one considers that Michael is a serious student of 20th century war poetry and my own tastes run more to “There are strange things done/ in the midnight sun...” and “Delta Dawn/ What’s that flower you have on?...” But karma bit back with an invitation to write my impressions of the course, and it seemed not quite on to refuse again, considering those World War I troops sent out from their trenches into storms of machine gun bullets and bursting artillery shells, and also considering the course’s three distinguished professors, all called upon at the last minute.

So kudos to our three intrepid leaders: Jack Thompson, eclectic historian well known to all at MCSC (yet with a touch of the mysterious); Bob Williams, specialist in modern Russian history with an interest in intelligence and espionage; and John Cooper, whose field is modern American history, with a focus on Woodrow Wilson, quite relevant to the war and its aftermath, who led us boldly into battle.

Starting at the beginning with that fairly absurd assassination in Sarajevo, served up to those continually maneuvering leaders of the European nations, each in search of more territory, colonies, power (or the British, determined to hang on to their spot at the top). And pretty much everyone clueless as to the likely consequences. “A little war. Not too bad. Be over in a couple months.” They thought. After a couple months they had, of course, settled into a bloody stalemate of trench warfare, with no end in sight. Jack provided us with some cinematic views of those trenches and attacks. But there were wide-ranging consequences unleashed: air power became vital and submarine warfare important; a Tsar was overthrown and a new Soviet Russia came into being. The Austrian Empire collapsed and the map changed; in the “middle east” seeds laid down for today’s conflicts; and America, last to join in, emerged as the most prominent economic, military, and political power in the world.

A fine time was had by all. In the class. Not so much, those in the war.

Poets of the Great War: Brooke, Read, Sorley & Thomas

By Michael Wormser

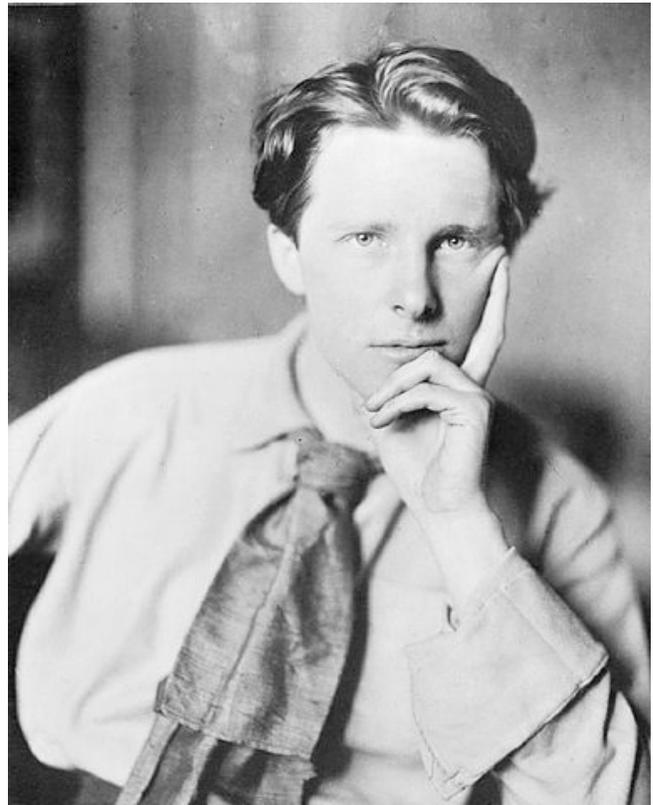
A soldier passed me in the freshly fallen snow,
His footsteps muffled, his face unearthly grey:
And my heart gave a sudden leap
As I gazed on a ghost of five-and-twenty years ago....
I am one of those who went before you
Five-and-twenty years ago: one of the many who never
returned,
Of the many who returned and yet were dead.

So wrote **Herbert Read** upon the start of another world conflagration hardly more than two decades later. “To a Conscript of 1940,” catalogues the sacrifices endured by the fighting men in 1914-18 and warns those entering into another war not to make the same mistakes in prosecuting the war or making the peace.

We gave what you will give—our brains and our blood.
We think we gave in vain. The world was not
renewed....
Our victory was our defeat.
Power was retained where power had been misused
And youth was left to sweep away
The ashes that the fires had strewn beneath our feet.

Read declared that one thing was learned: the soldiers’ sacrifice was for naught. **“Theirs is the hollow victory. They are deceived.”** Indeed, Lloyd George had promised a better life afterward, but the soldiers returned to a bankrupt nation in which working and living conditions were worse than before the war.

In 1914 none of the British soldier poets felt the war was being misrepresented. With the exception of **Isaac Rosenberg**, they accepted the necessity of war against Germany, even though many praised its culture and people. (Some would have preferred to be fighting against Russia.) Those poets still discussed today were all willing volunteers, not conscripts. And with varying degrees of enthusiasm went off to France to fight on the Western Front. **Rupert Brooke**, already an accomplished poet, fought initially in Belgium. He was the most popular poet in uniform in the first years of the war. His



Rupert Brooke

five war sonnets, including the famous
The Soldier

If I should die think only this of me:
That there’s some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England...

etc., —were hugely popular at home. In the first of two sonnets titled “The Dead,” where the slaughtered soldiers have “...poured out the red/Sweet wine of youth;” war becomes a cleansing, heroic act, which is also reflected, ironically, in “Peace,” containing the lines:

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His
hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping...
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping...

This verbal extravagance may seem today as highly overwrought patriotism, but Brooke represented the feelings of a nation whose sons were fighting for God, King and Country. Winston Churchill knew Brooke

personally and praised his poetry.

For many, though not all, of the war poets, the horrific battles of the Somme and Verdun in 1916 gradually altered their views of the war and the meaning of sacrifice. Brooke's verse glorifying the warrior and calling death on the battlefield heroic—"dying has made us rarer gifts than gold"—was ridiculed or forgotten. Rosenberg criticized his "begloried sonnets," which he said reminded him of "flag days." Brooke died before the Somme, and it is impossible to know whether he would have modified his views had he survived. His death on board ship in the Mediterranean on April 23, 1915, was from septicemia, not in combat.



Charles Hamilton Sorley

Charles Hamilton Sorley, a less well known poet, also died early in the war, on Oct. 12, 1915, by a sniper's bullet during the battle of Loos. He saw the war differently from the start: the war would be a disaster for both sides. (Sorley had spent six months in Germany just before war broke out and had no hatred for Germans. He had made many friends there.) In "To Germany," Sorley lamented the policies that had taken Germany to war, just as he and other British poets like **Siegfried Sassoon** and **Wilfred Owen** came to deplore their own government's policies:

You are blind like us. Your hurt no man designed.
And no man claimed the conquest of your land....
We stumble and we do not understand.
You only saw your future bigly planned,
And we, the tapering paths of our own mind,
And in each other's dearest ways we stand,
And hiss and hate. And the blind fight the blind.

Such sentiments echo **Edward Thomas'** "This is No Case of Petty Right or Wrong:"

I hate not Germans, nor grow hot
With love of Englishmen, to please newspapers.

But Thomas, like most of the poets, felt they had no choice but to enlist and fight:

My hatred of the Kaiser is love true:
A kind of god he is, banging a gong.
But I have not to choose between the two,
Or between justice and injustice.

Thomas was killed at the battle of Arras, April 9, 1917.

In **Sorley's** "When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead," there is an implicit criticism of Brooke's celebration of the dead:

Say not soft things as other men have said,
That you'll remember. For you need not so.
Give them not praise, For, deaf, how should they know
It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?
Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.
Say only this, 'They are dead.' Then add thereto,
'Yet many a better one has died before.

And in "Sonnet," he wrote:

Such, such is Death: no triumph: no defeat:
Only an empty pail, a slate rubbed clean,
A merciful putting away of what has been....
Victor and vanquished are a-one in death:
Coward and brave: friend, foe...

Sorley refused to give death great import, sentimental justification or inflated emotion. It was a fact of war. For him the larger question, starkly put, was whether the Great War was something worth killing and being killed for. And unlike Brooke he saw the war as neither something beautiful nor that death could be made attractive.

News of the Board of Directors

Each year at the end of June a number of board members complete their terms and new board members are welcomed.

The Midcoast Inquirer would like to thank the following for the contributions they made and continue to make to MSC:

Lois Lamdin served as the second editor of The Midcoast Inquirer and on the Curriculum Committee. She remains on our faculty and continues to teach.

Susan Mikesell served as Vice President and continues to serve on the Curriculum Committee. She also serves on our faculty and continues to teach.

Al Prest served as chair of our Policy and Procedure Committee.

Kelly Watt no longer serves on the Board officially, but continues to serve as the chair of Special Events and on the Public Relations committee. Kelly organized a very successful change of location to the Bowdoin College campus for our Annual Meeting last spring.

We welcome the following new board members:

Bianca Chambers has been chairing the Public Relations committee since last spring. She is now also serving on the Development Committee.

David Fluharty is serving on the Administration Committee.

Ian MacKinnon is serving on both the Development and the Finance Committees.

Bill Mason is serving on both the Development and the Public Relations Committees.

James Wilkes is serving on both the Finance and the Policy and Procedures Committees.

Second year board member **Ron Golz** is now the Chair of the Development Committee.

Second year board member **Anthony Belmont** is now Vice President and serves on the Executive Committee.

June Newsletter Correction

In the June issue of The Midcoast Inquirer article on the poetry of Kate Barnes, David McKeith referred to our esteemed community poet and town bookstore owner as Gary Loveless. This editor failed to pick up this error while proofing. Gary Lawless later wrote to us that he has never been known to be 'loveless.' Gary, thanks for your understanding.



Winter Storm Warning

Winter Wisdom lectures are cancelled if the Brunswick School District is closed for snow or ice. In that case, Curtis Memorial Library is also closed. We schedule a snow make-up date at the conclusion of the lecture series.

For The Latest Information....

Go To Our Website:

www.midcoastseniorcollege.org

Midcoast Senior College continues to grow at a very steady rate. In the future we hope to distribute our class schedules and newsletters to our students via our website. We will continue to send paper copies of these to those who prefer paper copies, but up-to-date information can be distributed more effectively by way of the Internet. Stay tuned.

New Faculty For The Spring Semester At Midcoast Senior College

By **Linton Studdiford**,
Chair of Curriculum

This spring semester there will be four new faculty as well as seventeen returning faculty offering nineteen courses. There will be three music classes, two art classes, four literature classes and an assortment of classes in history, current events, science and philosophy.

Charles Brockunier is a new faculty member at Midcoast Senior college, but he has taught “Could Hitler Have Won?” for two semesters at Coastal Senior College. Charles is a graduate of Harvard where he majored in Russian history and literature. He received an MA in European history from Boston University. He taught courses in European and Russian history at Northeastern University and at Boston public schools. He took time off from teaching to drive a Volkswagen bus from Germany to Nepal by way of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan! Charles will be teaching a course on the Pacific theater in World War II titled, “Could Japan Have Won?”

A course on Maine’s own Frances Perkins, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s secretary of labor and the first woman cabinet member, will be team taught by two new faculty. **Michael Chaney** is the Executive Director of the Frances Perkins Center in Newcastle. A native of Alna, he holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Maine – Orono and a MA in history from the University of Connecticut. He has served as CEO of the New Hampshire Political Library and Executive Director of the Yarmouth Historical Society.

Leah Sprague is a founding board member of the Frances Perkins Center. Leah is a graduate of Brown University and Boston University School of Law. She served as a Massachusetts Assistant Attorney General. Leah resides in Newcastle where she is writing a book on women in the judiciary.

A course on acting and speaking that will focus on how to deliver a line, overcome nerves, develop confidence and make characters believable will be offered by new faculty member **David Baker**. David has over 50 years of acting and 10 years of theatrical, stage managing and directing experience in both the UK and the US. He has had roles in *Oklahoma*, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *Oliver* and many others. Some of the plays he has directed are *Pirates of Penzance*, *Carousel* and *Twelve Angry Men and Women*. He is a resident of Bath and has recently been involved in a number of theatrical productions at the Chocolate Church.

