
The Midcoast Inquirer

Newsletter of Midcoast Senior College
December 2018, Volume 14, No 1



Learning Together

As I begin my second year as President, I have been fortunate to have been involved in many aspects of Midcoast Senior College including experiencing the excitement and energy of members supporting the move to our new home. A full complement of courses and students taking courses during the spring and fall terms reinforces the importance and significance of MSC.

I came to this role because I believe MSC and all its components and mission have tremendous potential and incredible opportunities. I saw clearly the dedication and the breadth and depth of expertise of members and our mutual desire to make a positive difference in the lives of Midcoast adult learners. I knew there was no better place where together, we could make such a difference.

I know many of the opportunities of the college are a result of its dedicated and passionate volunteers. It is exciting to see how many MSC people play multiple roles as students, volunteers and faculty. You represent the legacy of this college and its traditions. You also are a significant part of its success with your support of MSC with your donated time and your philanthropy.

It's an honor for me to lead and serve as President of the Board. Donna, Sonia, and Board members have provided strong leadership and I've been fortunate to learn from their perspectives and guidance.

As we all begin this new school year together, I have complete confidence that we have the elements needed to ensure MSC thrives in the future – talent, resources, and commitment to an important mission. Thank you for your support – I look forward to working with you.

James Wilkes, President



MSC President Jim Wilkes cuts the ribbon for our new facilities at Brunswick Landing with vice president Doug Bates, while Executive Director Donna Marshall looks on..

In Tents Experiences: Roughing it in Retirement

Paul and Marnie Kalkstein

A great benefit of membership in Midcoast Senior College is the chance to learn new things. Much research demonstrates how learning outside our sphere of stored knowledge is a boon to our mental well-being and happiness. The remarkable diversity of offerings in the senior college presents many opportunities to grow in ways we may not have contemplated before looking at the courses offered each term.

If learning in unaccustomed fields is healthy for aging folks, actively doing new things is beneficial, too, and may be even better for us if the doing is combined with learning a new skill or technique.

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is the newsletter of
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Midcoast Senior College is one of seventeen Senior Colleges in the State of Maine. We serve the area from Freeport to Waldoboro and inland up to Augusta. Most of our classes are held at 29 Burbank Avenue, Suite 6, Brunswick, Maine. This past Fall we offered 33 courses and enrolled 590 students into 750 spots. Class schedules and *The Midcoast Inquirer* are available on our web site for each semester. Students may also register on line at midcoastseniorcollege.org.

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A couple of years ago my wife Marnie and I decided to go tent camping. This activity was certainly new to us, and it involved a lot of learning as well as doing. We both love the outdoors, so that hiking and boating have been our style. With some trepidation, we loaded up our Subaru in February 2017 and headed south. Although we had made a sort of shakedown cruise at the Hermit Island campground right after the previous Labor Day, we had a lot to learn about the ins and outs of state parks, and we were a bit uncertain about our very basic equipment. (Well, not all of our stuff was basic: in our 70s we enjoyed very comfortable air mattresses.)

Do you know how, when you tell people about adventures you have had, they often say, "Hey, you should write a book!" Well, our daughter Molly, who is an editor and the Publications Director at the Telling Room in Portland, encouraged us to record our adventures, and so we did. If two people write a single narrative together, the result is all too likely to be a bland compromise with little tone or personality. To avoid this, we wrote in our own voices, alternating passages in the book. Marnie's parts are in boldface, as befits her direct style, whereas my parts tend to longer sentences and some not necessarily successful attempts at subtlety.



Our book, *Tent for Two: Roughing It in Retirement* (Lulu Press), chronicles our trip south, with camping experiences in state and national parks in Florida and South Carolina. In those campgrounds we found a way of life that was simple, mostly, and different from anything we had known before. Returned to Maine, we completed our year of camping with

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Mission Statement of the Midcoast Inquirer:

The Midcoast Inquirer articulates the academic spirit and educational mission of Midcoast Senior College to offer lifelong learning for older adults. To this end, we provide a bulletin board that announces course offerings, lectures and special events, and a literary forum (or virtual classroom) of essays, reviews, interviews and commentaries written by faculty and students.

--Robert C. Williams, Editor

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trips to Sebago Lake State Park and, finally, our crowning achievement, Warren Island State Park off Islesboro.

But if the book, and the experiences that informed it, were just about camping, it would not have a great deal of value, either for us or for anyone who read it. As part of this adventure, we did some research and also looked back over our fifty-plus years together to try to ascertain what benefits we would derive, and what we could take from the experience to apply to our lives.

For instance, we discovered how malleable our sense of time is. During the long Maine winters, although the days seem rather long, the weeks speed by. On the other hand, when we drove south to camp, we found that time seemed to spread out; two days at a campsite in the Florida springs seemed almost like a week. The key to this shifting perception of time was novelty. Living, albeit briefly, in a new place was magnified by learning new skills and techniques for camping.

Research and our own unfolding experience suggested additionally that camping was good for our physical and mental health, and for our relationship. Even a near run-in with a deadly poisonous coral snake proved an enriching experience after the fact.

The act of writing *Tent for Two* helped us review and understand the value of our camping experiences as it gave us perspective on our own lives. By the time you read this, we will have pitched our tent in Schoodic Woods Campground and Cobscook Bay State Park. We're not done yet!

Paul Kalkstein has been an active faculty member at MSC for several years. Paul received his B.A. from Princeton and an M.A.T. degree from Yale in English literature. He and his wife Marnie intensely enjoy tent camping.

Summer Excursion: Monhegan Island, August 21.



Kelly Watt once again put together a terrific summer excursion by bus and vessel to Monhegan Island, one of Maine's historical fishing and artistic colony islands.

Between the Covers

Judy Smith

This summer and fall already have been tumultuous times, at best. We have seen anger and division, tempered only occasionally by acts of kindness and joy. The rescue of the Thai children from the cave was one such occasion, the Mr. Rogers documentary was another. I am certain that we in our own small worlds have experienced some moments like that.

So, my summer reading list began with a touch of tumult as well. What shall I read that will inform me or help me get lost in a wonderful tale or will make me laugh? Many of you read the *New York Times* book review section and the column, "By the Book" written as a question and answer by various authors. One question always asked is "What are the books on your nightstand?" If you want to laugh, just read how authors answer that question.



For me, the answer was egads or yikes! When the pile is about to topple, I pare it down. I don't always read from that pile, although my intentions are good. However, I did read and am reading several books that relate to the goals in the above paragraph. Here are a few.

For informing and for hope, I read Jon Meacham's book, *The Soul of America, the Battle for Our Better Angels*. A caveat here: I am not usually a reader of history, but I like Meacham and I admired the way he set up this book. He breaks it up into seven distinct times that America faced crises and how we survived them. Appomattox, rise of the Ku Klux Klan, Women's Suffrage, The Red Scare, The Depression and Segregation, to name a few. Each chapter describes the historical period and how we survived them as a country. It is informative and good reading as well.

So, in no particular order, here are the books which fed my soul in one way or another and with apologies to my memory, the first is one I may have written about before, but joy is always worth doing again.

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The Book of Joy by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu is the first. These two Nobel Prize-winning men have been friends for many years. When they converse, they are very funny, compassionate and hopeful that we can achieve a different world. One quote that may entice you into these pages is "If you develop a strong sense of consent for all human beings, this will make you happy, even before you have coffee."

Our church's mini book discussion group is reading three books on solitude. We began with May Sarton's book, *Journal of Solitude*, followed by *The Stranger in the Woods* by Michael Finkle. This is the story of the well-known hermit, who lived alone in the deep Northern Maine woods for twenty-seven years, speaking only one word to a stranger he met on a path early on in his seclusion. He survived by robbing local cottages of food and was eventually caught and jailed. The story of why he did this and how he adapted when he was put in prison surrounded by so many others is quite fascinating. It is not a great piece of literature, but the discussions that evolved are worth it.

May Sarton's book on solitude is about what solitude is and how her battle with depression has helped or hurt by this aloneness. Her descriptions of New England weather, the fall, winter blizzards and early spring are glorious.

Neither of these books are long reads, but they are worth the journey and they might not even topple the books on your nightstands.

I do not read Stephen King, and am not a fan of horror, but for anyone who likes to write, this is a must. Simply titled, *On Writing*. His section on the writing "tool box" is something I wish I had had in college. It is also filled with good stories about his growing up.

Our book group just read, *The Book Thief* by Marcus Muzak. This is listed as a Young Adult Book, but it certainly transcends that description. It is written about the Nazi period from the viewpoint of a young girl growing up then and loving to read. Like Anne Frank, it is a well told tale. If you love books, you will love this. I had a back and forth with my eighteen-year-old granddaughter who has read it and LOVES to read. Interestingly, she said she was "late coming to this book". She read it in eighth grade!!!! I guess I'm REALLY late. She loved Death as the narrator of the story, something that escaped me in the beginning. She also said, she felt "it was important to read it so her generation would not repeat this period." We do need these young people to step up and speak out.

For fun, and it's hard to believe there is fun right now, I read David Sedaris' Calypso. For almost half of the book, it makes you laugh out loud, sharing lines you want to read to others. It does take a more serious turn toward the middle/end but is still a fun book. For other humor books, this author is a good one to look into.

To complete this column, I refer again to the "By the Book" column and a quote by Barbara Kingsolver talking about a recent read of hers, "I love fiction that educates me on the sly, especially about something I didn't realize I wanted to know. I'm open to any kind of arcana."

Judy Smith is a local writer and frequent contributor to the Inquirer for many years with her "Between the Covers" book review columns.

A Trip Down Old Bath Road

Nancy Wheeler and Nora Bishop

"Want some ice cream?" It was the summer of 2018. Nancy Wheeler, a co-founder of MSC, drove along Bath Road with her sister, past Wal-mart. "This place has just opened and they have a drive-up window," said her sister about the new Fielder's Choice store.

As they drove in, it suddenly dawned on Nancy. This spacious ice cream emporium was on the old Taylor Rental grounds, right next door to the building once known as the University of Maine at Bath/Brunswick (UM@BB) and the first home of Midcoast Senior College.

The building that originally housed MSC's fledgling organization was not in any fashion grand. It was a nondescript building hidden among the many small businesses surrounding it. If you weren't paying close attention, you'd drive right past. The advertising always referred to it as 275 Bath Road, a mile northeast of Cook's Corner and across from Yankee Lanes. Today, these rooms house a worker retraining service, an H&R Block, and Kilroy's Hair Cutters. Our home was unique in a number of ways: it had a peculiar layout, a dirt parking lot with too few spaces, paint peeling from its clapboards, sloping floors... but it had a most agreeable staff.

Walking in the front door, a narrow hall ran the length of the building. Halfway down, it seemed to slope abruptly at almost a 45-degree angle. To the right were the offices of UM@BB's Director, David Baty, and his toy poodle, Bingston; and Dennis Unger, Director of Student Affairs. Further down the hall were the restrooms. Arlene Smith, Doreen Sandelin, and Linda Gagne were

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the friendly and welcoming administrative staff who gave MSC so much help and attention. The eight classrooms --four with televisions-- were simply furnished with standard issue student tables and chairs. Narrow windows below the ceiling allowed relatively little daylight, creating an almost bunker-like atmosphere. But when MSC classes were in session, the atmosphere was alive and convivial with an informality that included active give-and-take between instructor and students, laughter, and even the occasional appearance of David and Bingston.



In this building, David Baty envisioned a center for lifelong learning, and he enlisted retired Indiana University historian Jack Thompson and Nancy Wheeler to give it life. A highly popular Saturday Morning “College for Kids” program for first- through sixth-graders included such classes as “Insects: Don’t call ‘em Bugs”, “Planets! Planets! Planets!” and “The Veterinarian”. In the summer of 1999, David, Jack and Nancy started to meet to plan a program for older adult learners. Their attempt to assess the community’s interest at an Open House, expected to draw perhaps twenty-five, brought over 125 interested people. Three classrooms needed to be utilized and more refreshments sent for. The response to a questionnaire determining areas of interest was overwhelming.

The organization was on its way. Midcoast Senior College, as UM@BBserving the greater Bath/Brunswick area became the third senior college in Maine. Operating with the director and a very informal Advisory Board, the first classes were offered in March of 2000. Among the seven were Stu Ross’s “Learning to Draw” and Jack Thompson’s “The Maine Experience: Highlights and Lowlifes.” Jack, in addition to becoming the first Curriculum chairperson, taught the most classes, and

he strong-armed his tennis buddies to teach or join the board. Stu taught art classes regularly for many years. Nancy, because of her diplomatic demeanor, became Board Chairperson.

From that modest clapboard building, this group of friends started a program that has moved three times since 2000. MSC has evolved into an independent senior college that today offers more than twenty-five classes each semester, a Winter and Summer Wisdom Lecture Series, a Thursday current events forum, summer excursions, and social interactions for over five hundred members devoted to the liberal arts.

Not too long ago, Jack’s response was “Oh, my!” He would have liked the ice cream, not to mention his own enduring legacy of humane learning at Midcoast Senior College.

Nancy Wheeler is a founding member of Midcoast Senior College. Nora Bishop, a resident of Bowdoinham, is currently working on a history of MSC for its twentieth anniversary in 2020.

News from the Board of Directors

Donna Marshall, our indefatigable and efficient office administrator, has been promoted to MSC Executive Director. Donna sits with the board of directors and reports directly to the MSC president. Congratulations to Donna for continuing to run MSC as a professional and sustainable business operation with support from a legion of volunteers.

Thanks to *Stuart Gillespie* and his team for organizing our move back in June to our newly renovated Brunswick Landing quarters, to *Clare Durst* for her countless hours of help with our new classroom technology and to *Jim Wilkes*, *Doug Bates* and *Erv Snyder* for find our new building in the first place. *Jack Henderson* continues to play a key role by managing our MSC web site.

Adjusting to life at Brunswick Landing has meant painting and upgrading our three classrooms, outfitting two offices for our executive director and volunteers, and creating lounge/mailroom facilities for faculty and students. *Lynn Lockwood* did a great job designing our free exchange library and display cabinets.

Erv Snyder as treasurer continues to keep an eagle eye on our finances helping us all understand that increased operating expenses require a balanced budget and increased income. We continue to depend on the generosity of members and friends in our annual fund donations—as we will in future capital campaign requests. Stay tuned! Your financial support is our lifeline.

Singing "Broadside Ballads"

By Tom Rumpf

Last fall the Midcoast Senior College Chorus, under the leadership of director Stuart Gillespie, explored broadside ballads, a type of folk music. We learned to sing two traditional Newfoundland ballads, The Blooming Bright Star of Belle Isle, and I'se the B'y. As part of the class we also learned about the history of ballads, in particular, the type known as broadside ballads.

History – What the heck is a "Broadside Ballad?"

All folk music has been handed down by oral tradition from earlier days, before the existence of radio, records and digital files. Ballads, starting in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, were narrative poems set to music, and sung by wandering singers known as minstrels in the halls of royalty and nobles. Later, the development of block-printing technology changed the way the public could read and obtain books and papers. Starting some time in the sixteenth century, papers printed on one side of a broad sheet of paper became a common thing to see throughout Western Europe, and then later in the Americas, where they played a key role in the American revolution. These "broadsheets" or "broadsides" were printed in the many small print shops scattered throughout the region. A "Broadside" was anything printed cheaply on one side of a sheet of paper, such as advertisements, handbills, official proclamations, posters, propaganda (in song or prose) and news. Very quickly after this technology became widely available, someone thought to publish words or lyrics to popular songs and new songs, as well as poetry and general musings. If a printer was Protestant or Catholic, they would publish broadsides supporting their religious beliefs. This applied to political beliefs as well.

Although the broadside occasionally included traditional "rural" ballads, the bulk of them were of

urban origin, written by the journalistic hacks of the day to cover such news as a robbery or a hanging, to moralize, or simply to offer entertainment. In their diversity they fulfilled all the functions of the modern newspaper. The use of crude verse or doggerel was common, as this was thought to heighten the dramatic impact. The verses themselves would be based on the rhythms of various traditional airs that were in common circulation, sometimes credited, occasionally with the melody line printed. It was common for ballads to have crude woodcuts at the top of a broadside. The ballads retailed on the streets of London and other big cities for up to a penny, meaning almost everyone could afford this cheap form of entertainment. Broadside are often thought of as precursors to the tabloid newspapers of our day.

The Ballad Continues

The demise of ballads has long been predicted, but old ballads continue to be sung and new songs are still written that hark back to the ballads of earlier times. The folk revival of the 1940s, and the later revival of the 1950s through 1970s, led to new interest in narrative songs. Singers such as Woody Guthrie and Joan Baez sang old ballads and wrote some of their own. In the 1970s Jim Croce was famous for his unique style of ur-

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The TRAGICAL BALLAD: Or, The LADY who fell in Love with her SERVING-MAN.



PART I. GOOD people pray attend / Once more I've pleas'd, / Which to the world I find, / Therein show none, / And how what I do say, / Alas! and a woful day, / Unto love's lot I fell, / From a small love.

PART II. GOOD people lead an on, / For love you'd find a man, / When you this story hear, / The latest part, / How Cupid bent his bow, / Wounding those lovers so, / Overtaken they did know, / By his love's dart.

Rather than that should be, / I'd go along with thee, / Either by land or sea, / Or where you wish. / You see my heart's delight, / I can't stand to be, / In their love's lot I fell, / To end the tale.

ban narrative songs, such as *Bad, Bad Leroy Brown*, and *Rapid Roy*, which blended African-American and Anglo ballad styles. Ballads continue to interest songwriters like Paul Simon, who began his career singing traditional ballads such as *Scarborough Fair* and *Barbara Allen*, and who has written many narrative songs in his long career, from *Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard* (1972) to *The Teacher* (2000). Both rap and hip-hop music have drawn heavily on ballad-style storytelling, while modern Mexican and Mexican-American popular songs draw deeply on the corrido tradition. Whether songwriters compose new songs to resemble earlier forms of balladry or cloak their narratives in the styles of current popular music, they compose them for an American public still eager to hear songs that tell stories of love, war, and the many foibles of the human condition.

Sources for this article include: thejovialcrew.com website, The Library of Congress website, and Wikipedia.

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Many thanks to our volunteers who helped in the office, classroom, and with our move and other special projects this past summer and fall. This list does not include all MSC board members or faculty who volunteer their time and effort on a regular basis.

Ellen Asherman; Caroline Bean; Dorothy Bell; Susan Billings; Nora Bishop; Nate Bowditch; Catherine Buotte; Deborah Cravey; Richard DeVito; Joyce DeVito; Leona Dufour; Donna Fox; Eunice Fraser; Catherine Gibson; Robert Gibson; Carole Gillespie; Kay Greenwood; Marnie Hackenberg; Bill Hammond; Laurie Hauptli; Jack Henderson; Carole Johnson; Paul Johnson; Lynn Kay; Barbara Laffoley; Ann MacKinnon; Susan Mikesell; Susan Montgomery; Lynn Murray; Alicia Pietraho; Karen Rienert; George Sergeant; Susan Sergeant; Sonia St. Pierre; Deirdre Strachan; Barbara Swiderski; Patricia Taggart; Kelly Watt; Robert White; Linda Zingaro.

Office Volunteers: Barbara Swiderski; Dorothy Bell; Linda Zingaro; Deb Showalter; Barbara Laffoley; Danielle Lambrechts; Karen Rienert; Bonnie Studdiford; Nora Bishop.

Classroom Technology Support: Clare Durst; Jack Henderson; Bob White

Calendar of Events 2019

Monday, January 28, 2019

Spring Semester Registration Opens

March 11, 2019

Spring Semester Opens

Winter Wisdom:

Curtis Library, Brunswick,
Wednesdays, 12:15 to 1:45 pm.

- Jan.9 – George Lopez – Johannes Brahms, The Young Eagle
- Jan. 16 – Francis Dillon – Action Plan for Terrorism
- Jan. 23 – Allen Wells – The Uncertain State of U.S./Cuba Relations
- Jan. 30 – Ivy Frignoca – A Changing Casco Bay
- Feb. 6 – Cynthia Shelmerdine – Greece Before the Odyssey: Myth and Realities
- Feb. 13 – Brenda Cummings and Timothy Richter – Twice A Day Island: The Peterson Canal at New Meadows
- Feb. 20 – Longfellow Days
- Feb. 27 – Snow make up Day

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- Now You're Cooking
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...because learning never ends.

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