

The background image shows three hikers on a rocky trail overlooking the ocean. The hiker in the foreground is wearing a black jacket and a grey cap. The hiker in the middle is wearing a red jacket and a backpack. The hiker in the background is wearing a blue jacket. The trail is rocky and covered with green moss and small plants. The ocean is visible in the background under a cloudy sky.

# *Taft*

BULLETIN

## *student* JOURNEYS

FALL 2019



# INSIDE

30

## Student Journeys

Learning, serving, and growing in knowledge, thanks to Taft's travel and study grants.

By Debra Meyers

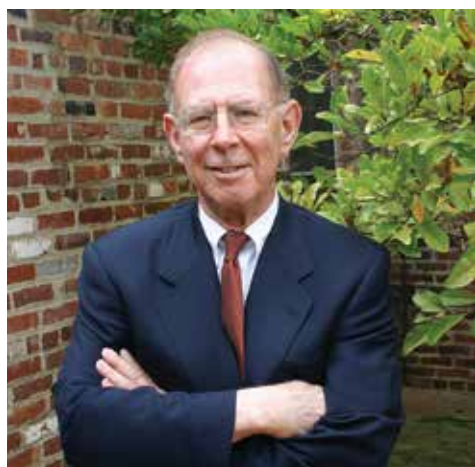


40

## One for the History Books

Harlow Giles Unger '49 masters the writing of historical biographies

By Christopher Browner '12



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ONE OF TAFT'S MOST FUN TRADITIONS, SUPER SUNDAY, IS HELD ON THE FIRST FULL WEEKEND OF SCHOOL. SEVERAL EVENTS THAT DAY BRING STUDENTS FROM SINGLE-COLOR TEAMS INTO ONE BEAUTIFULLY BLENDED SCHOOL COMMUNITY.



# Taft

BULLETIN

FALL 2019

Volume 89, Number 4

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## DEADLINES FOR CLASS NOTES

Winter–November 15  
Spring–February 15  
Summer–May 15  
Fall–August 30

## COMMENTS? TELL US!

We'd love to hear what you think about the stories in this *Bulletin*. We may edit your letters for length, clarity, and content, but please write.

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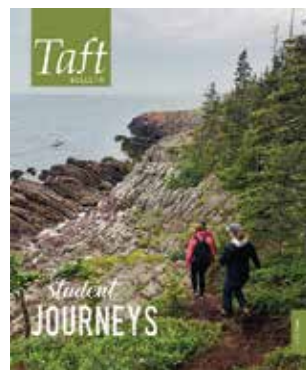
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## ON THE COVER

Taft students Katie Bootsma '20 and Maile Kuyper '20 were part of the Quebec-Labrador Foundation's Biodiversity Conservation Internship program over the summer, which included monitoring songbirds in the forests of New Brunswick and shorebirds along its coast. MAILE KUYPER '20

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## On MAIN HALL

A WORD FROM  
HEADMASTER WILLY  
MACMULLEN '78



EACH YEAR THE HEADMASTER ADDRESSES THE ENTIRE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AT THE OPENING OF SCHOOL CONVOCATION. AN ABRIDGED VERSION FOLLOWS.

## What the Trees Can Tell Us

What we set out to do every year is a wonderful and awesome challenge. With a community of students, teachers, and staff, and with so much diversity in lived experience, and learning in such tight quarters and with heavy pressures, we set out to create a healthy, happy, and func-

tioning learning community, where every member belongs and feels valued. Who doesn't want that? It's really hard work, and it is this diversity that makes it tough and also so important and valuable. It would be a lot easier if we had 595 students and 129 faculty who all had the same experiences and saw the world the same way, but can you imagine how boring, how irrelevant, and how useless that school would be? How would you grow?

And I found myself thinking about this idea of growth—that in a way Taft is a really complex *ecosystem*, with incredible biological diversity, and if it is healthy, the conditions are such that there is room for everyone to grow. All we have to do is be a tree; the school, a forest.

I got thinking about this metaphor this summer when I was reading a fascinating book called *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*, by a German scientist and forester named Peter Wohlleben.

Wohlleben has spent his life studying trees and forests, and what he learns is that trees seem to actually *feel* and *communicate* and *share*—and those are verbs we don't often think about with trees. You can sense this is not a straight science book. What is really interesting is that when he talks about trees and forests, it's hard not to conclude that he is also maybe talking about people and communities.

The book starts with Wohlleben finding what he thinks is a big ring of moss-covered stones in a beech forest, but when he scratches the “stones,” he realizes that it is actually the bark of a huge tree that died hundreds of years ago. But when he takes his knife to the wood, he finds it's actually green: it's *alive*. You biology students know that green is the color of chlorophyll, meaning there are living cells, and cells need sugar. So how was

“If we are able to look out for others, if we make connections, if we share resources, if we allow space—all this will create the very conditions we all need to thrive.”

WILLIAM R. MACMULLEN





“You each have a hand in creating the world we live in here, and you can make it the kind of place where all are included and all might grow.”

this centuries-old stump alive? He writes, “One thing was clear: the surrounding beech trees were pumping sugar into the stump to keep it alive.”

Trees, it turns out, are continually helping each other. And with that, the book is off and running, with lots of real science and plenty of lessons for us. Here are some of them.

Trees are really *interdependent*, he notes. Beneath the soil, there’s all kind of sharing going on. He writes, “It appears that nutrient exchange and helping neighbors in time of need is the rule. Once connected, roots [from different trees] have no choice but to exchange nutrients. They create what looks like a social network.”

Now, that sounds a good bit like Taft, doesn’t it? There’s no way this place could work if we all tried to act independently, as if we were not totally intertwined. We are all like the roots beneath the soil, totally and tightly connected in all we do.

As with the trees, acts of connection, *no matter how small*, sustain and strengthen *everyone*. We are a forest totally interdependent, continually exchanging the things that make us stronger: ideas, support, friendship, respect, humor, love.

Here’s another: Trees, Wohlleben writes, also seem to want *all their neighbors to succeed*. Crazy as it sounds, they actually help weaker ones have a chance. What scientists have discovered is that trees through their roots are good at equalizing the difference between the strong and the weak: “Whoever has an abundance of sugar hands some over; whoever is running short gets help.”

I add that it’s a little bit like how this school should work. Sharing the way the stronger tree does with the weaker one *benefits all because the act makes the entire forest healthier*. It’s the opposite of a zero-sum game, where the act of winning means someone is losing. That’s not who we are. Trees seem to realize that helping another tree benefits all. I really like this idea, and I hope it marks us. I look at the seniors in the front row and hope you will help and mentor and support younger students. I hope Old Boys and Old Girls, monitors, captains, class committee, and club leaders will all look for moments to support new students. I hope that when *any of you* sees someone who looks lost, alone, isolated or struggling, you will help them. When you do, this entire school is stronger.

Here’s a third one: Trees also grow really vigorously, but *they make room for each other*. Sometime take a walk in the woods and look above you. Here’s Wohlleben: “The average tree grows its branches out until it encounters the branch tips of a neighboring tree. It doesn’t get any wider because the air and better light in the space is already taken. You get the impression there’s quite a shoving match up there... but [a] pair of true friends is careful from the outset....The trees don’t want to take anything away from each other.”

Now that blew me away: they actually make space for each other so they all get some light?! Trees seem to recognize the truth that communities work best when there’s more partnership than argument. It sounds a bit like Taft, doesn’t it? Yes, there’s a good bit of shoving in a school filled with ambitions and smart folks—we compete, we bump up against each other, we sometimes even cross branches—but when we are most healthy, this place looks a lot like the forest Wohlleben describes. There’s room for everyone and everyone makes the space.

What he calls climate, we call *culture*. If we are able to look out for others, if we make connections, if we share resources, if we allow space—all this will create the very conditions we all need to thrive. You each have a hand in creating the world we live in here, and you can make it the kind of place where all are included and all might grow. This happens when you show empathy, allow all voices to be heard, act with courage and conviction in the face of exclusion, disagree with respect, support others in pain, and offer energy to the fatigued.

I don’t know if Wohlleben intended a reader to make the leap from forest to humanity. But I do know he provided metaphor, and with it, something we might hope to be, all of us as trees and this school as a forest. ■

*William R. MacMullen*

William R. MacMullen ’78

## SOCIAL SCENE

Follow @thetaftschool on Facebook, @taftschool on Instagram and Twitter for daily glimpses of Taft life.



Taft students recently volunteered at two family events in the city of Waterbury. At “The Gathering,” an annual citywide ethnic festival celebrating Waterbury’s rich cultural heritage, Tafties worked with Literacy Volunteers of Greater Waterbury and Waterbury Reads. Together they gifted children of all ages with more 500 books. They also volunteered their time at “A Slam Dunk! Basketball Family Night,” sponsored by The Mattatuck Museum, and featuring a scavenger hunt, basketball fun, art projects, and more. #taftlife #mytaft #whytaft #nonutsibi #nonutsibilife



This week Ms. Borken’s Advanced Ecology class went wild—or into the wild—at the nearby White Memorial Conservation Center. #taftlife #mytaft #whytaft



Great weekend. Great games. Great photos at taftphotos.com #taftlife #mytaft #whytaft







# As One Door Closed, Another Opened

A **MIDLIFE CAREER CHANGE** is a lot like woodworking.

There are materials to choose, dimensions to follow, varnish to apply, hardware to install, and, yes, trial and error, as Vaughan Scully '83 can attest.

His small business, Heights Woodworking, a Brooklyn, New York-based custom carpentry shop that opened in 1946 with its original owner, fabricates the front doors adorning many historic brownstone townhouses, as well as cabinets, stairs, windows, and moldings.

Heights Woodworking was started by

Amor Villar, a Spanish Civil War refugee who had worked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard as a carpenter. His son, Amor Villar Jr., eventually took over the business.

Scully, 54, bought the shop from the founder's son in 2017, becoming his own boss, inheriting about 13 employees, and shifting his livelihood from financial journalist to craftsman.

"When you're out of a job at 50 in the corporate world, it's awfully difficult to find another one," Scully says. "What you have to do is reinvent yourself."

Brownstone doors are complex and

expensive, with some costing as much as \$20,000 for a particularly large and ornate set of doors. In designated historic districts, approval is required by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission to replace them.

There are only a few wood shops with the capability to replicate historic doors, and the shop's long time in business has created a solid customer base.

"I don't do any sales or marketing," Scully says. "The phone just rings. We have trouble keeping up with requests for estimates."

During the first part of his career, Scully

was a financial writer for Bloomberg. He covered breaking news and wrote enterprise stories about mining, energy, agriculture, and transportation companies, first based in New York and then in Australia. He wrote and edited a newsletter for S&P Global, but then the "tap on the shoulder" came after nearly 12 years—he was being laid off. Scully's next job lasted 11 months.

Scully had no illusions. He wasn't senior management and younger, less experienced workers could do his job for less pay. Interviews and call-backs were few and far between.

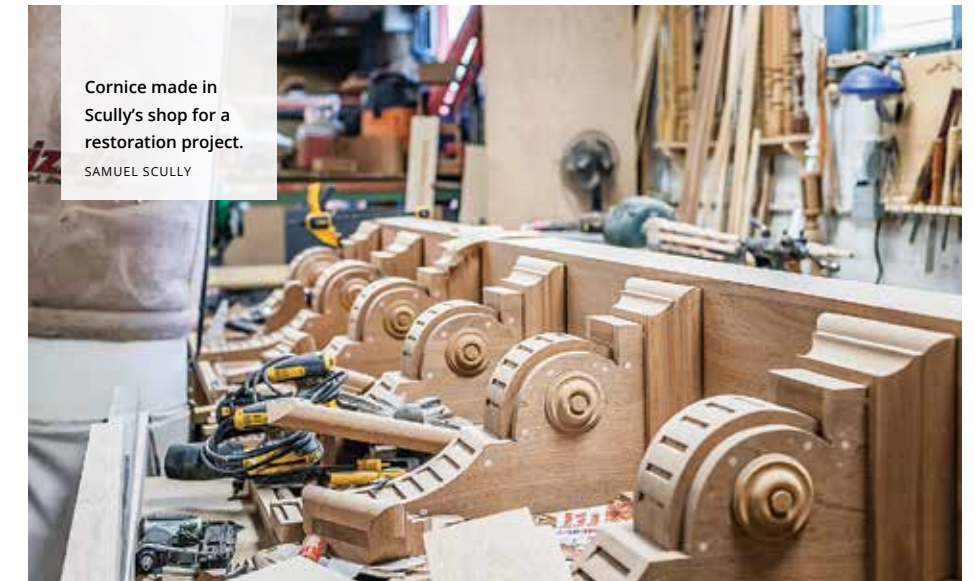
Then, just as one door closed, another opened for the Portland, Maine, native, who went to Reed College in Oregon after Taft, graduating with an English degree.

"One day, a guy called me who had done some work on our house," Scully says. "He said, 'Well, if you want you can come scrape paint off doors for me for 20 bucks an hour.'" Scully thought, why not?

"I didn't have people sending me snarky emails," he remembers. "I didn't have to worry about some process going wrong in the corporate world. I just made a decision—I'm not going back."

Next, the owner of a door-refinishing business wanted to gauge Scully's interest in buying his company, but the asking price was just too steep.

A few weeks later, Scully saw help



Cornice made in Scully's shop for a restoration project.  
SAMUEL SCULLY



wanted signs for a carpenter's helper and driver right in his Park Slope, Brooklyn, neighborhood. So he sent an email.

"The worst they could do was to ignore me, which is what everybody else had done," Scully recalls. "They called me right back."

"After working there for two years, I bought the business and took over, learning how complicated this type of woodworking really is. For me to make a custom door, that could be 150 parts that need to be manufactured," Scully says.

"There's a lot of things to get right and a lot of opportunities to make a mistake. That's not like making a new dinner at a restaurant because someone said the soup was cold. I had to learn that, and I had to make a lot of mistakes along the way." ■

—Neil Vigdor '95

Left: Vaughan Scully '83, owner of the decades-old Heights Woodworking, a Brooklyn, New York, custom carpentry shop that handcrafts elements often adorning historic brownstones, from front doors to windows, stairs, or cabinets. CHRISTIAN LARSEN

Previous page: A beautiful custom-made door by Heights Woodworking. SAMUEL SCULLY



# Rebuilding Lives Before Release

**WHAT LEADS A TEACHER FROM** New England to the American West, to South Africa, and back to New England, from boarding schools to women's prison? Ask Jennifer Wolter '96, and her answer doesn't come easily.

"I'm really just motivated and passionate about making life better for people," she says. "When I was overseas developing student life programming at schools, I was working with all cultures and economic status and backgrounds. They all had a wide variety of experiences, and that's when I started to shift

to working with broader wellness.

"It wasn't a conscious shift from schools to prison, but I see a lot of what people who are incarcerated need," she adds. "Their experiences and stories are very different, but a lot of what I do is the same—building a relationship with them and seeing how I can help."

Wolter is a founder of S.A.F.E.R., the Survivors of Abuse Feeling Empowered for Re-Entry program at the Suffolk County House of Correction in Boston, a program run by RESPOND Inc., a Massachusetts-based nonprofit that works to end domestic

violence. As a teacher and school administrator both in the United States and abroad, she worked closely with young adults who had experienced trauma, working with them to build leadership, health, and wellness programming.

At RESPOND, she builds trauma-informed, gender-specific support for both men and women in custody. Many studies have shown a strong link between victimization and criminalization.

"A lot of women's charges involve property and drugs, and many are linked to simple survival on the streets or from

dangerous situations they are in," Wolter says. "They are human beings who were placed into really difficult situations that led to mistakes. Many are just looking to learn and find better opportunities for themselves, and in many cases their children as well."

About 75 percent of the women at the

groups for women, in addition to individual counseling, case management, and legal accompaniment for all genders.

"We also do a lot of safety planning, especially as they are getting close to release, whether they are going back to that abusive family member or partner,"

she says. "We do harm reduction—what's the safest way to be with this person or get them out of [the soon-to-be-released] inmate's life. How do we keep them safe?"

Day in and day out exposure to the horrific trauma the inmates recount can take its toll, Wolter admits. To relax, she recently joined a dragon boat team that practices on Boston's Charles River. A breast cancer survivor, Wolter says her team is made up of cancer survivors.

"I'm kind of surrounded by frustration and struggles," she says. "I've learned to just keep pushing through the crap to try to make it better."

And it does get better, she says.

"I feel really good when someone else is in a better spot, and if I had even the slightest thing to do with that, I feel like my time's worthwhile. I think the impact I'm having and the appreciation not only from the people I work with but also the institutions is huge. I feel like this is incredibly meaningful work." ■

—Bonnie Blackburn-Penhollow '84

To find out more about RESPOND Inc. visit [www.respondinc.org](http://www.respondinc.org)

Jenn Wolter '96, program coordinator for S.A.F.E.R., facilitating a support group with inmates about domestic abuse. DAVID HILL



Wolter meets with a detainee in the women's programming area. DAVID HILL



Suffolk County House of Correction have experienced trauma or abuse, whether within a family or in relationships.

"I've got one woman now serving a murder sentence. She helped her boyfriend set someone up to be robbed, and the guy was killed. Because she was there, they called her an accomplice," Wolter says. "Also, we have a ton of women who go to drugs or alcohol" to numb the pain of trauma.

"A number of [the inmates] have never really talked about" their trauma, which can stem from sexual assault, homelessness, and/or addiction, and "some of what we do is just talking through things, helping them realize the extent of the abuse."

"A lot of them downplay what happened," Wolter says, "and they have that inner guilt and shame. They've never admitted or recognized it as abuse."

Wolter runs two different support

Wolter with inmates in the law library at Suffolk County House of Correction in Boston. DAVID HILL





John Wyman '10 is an advanced field lead for Elements Traverse in Utah, a wilderness therapy program for young adults battling behavioral and substance-abuse issues. JOSH RUCHT

# A Therapy Program in the Wild



Canaan, Connecticut, where he spent much of his time inventing backyard and driveway sports with his older brothers, Peter '05 and Hank '07. When he first heard about wilderness therapy from a friend, Wyman was intrigued. He decided to take a leap of faith, applying for an opening at Elements Traverse and joining the company in 2016.

Wyman quickly fell in love with his new life out west, the splendor of the landscape and the rewarding nature of the work.

"ET is a small company, and we usually have somewhere between six and 12 clients at a time, on a rolling basis," Wyman explains. "They're typically between the ages of 18 and 25 and stay with us for two to three months, all of which they spend living outdoors—rain, shine, or snow."

The trips take place in the desert and, during the hotter summer months, up in the mountains. As a field lead, Wyman spends one week on, leading the excursions, followed by one week off.

"It's a very unique environment," Wyman says. "As staff, we're trained to be hands-off. It's a non-abstinence program in the

sense that we don't tell our clients what not to do or how to live. We're there to give them the tools to make better life choices, but ultimately the goal is for them to come to these healthy decisions on their own, through therapy and emotional support. It's kind of like an emotional education."

Therapy at ET is both individualized and group-oriented, with styles including Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and mindfulness. A licensed therapist meets with each client weekly, but a big part of the program is the frequency of "emotional check-ins," which Wyman helps facilitate on a daily basis.

"At various points throughout the day, or whenever anyone feels the urge, we encourage clients to talk about their feelings," Wyman says. "Creating this safe, supportive, connected space is one of the elements I love most about my job. The level of emotional sharing and realness is unparalleled to anything I've experienced. It's a very therapeutic environment that's amazing to live in."

Wyman stresses that ET is not a boot camp; the trips are not overly rigorous,

consisting of moderate hikes and basic wilderness and camping skills. "The wilderness therapy industry has changed a lot over the past decade, and there's much less of an emphasis on physical strain," Wyman explains. "ET encourages clients to slow down, breathe, and hone fundamental skills like fire building and pitching a tent."

This simple, mindful way of living is what gives clients the interior space to generate personal change and empowerment.

Wyman credits Taft for instilling confidence in him from a young age, confidence that ultimately prompted him to stray off the beaten path and pursue a career that some may call atypical.

"The experience that always comes to mind is my senior project," Wyman recalls. "I worked with Hunter Yale '10 to build a boat that we launched into the pond. It felt like such an ambitious goal from the start, but we were given the freedom to try, and you know what? The boat floated. I'll never forget that." ■

—Carola Lovering '07

Wyman demonstrates some basic knots. JOSH RUCHTY



ALMOST THREE YEARS AGO, John Wyman '10 traded his corporate office in Times Square for a starkly different work environment—the desert plains and mountains of central Utah. There, Wyman is an advanced field lead at Elements Traverse, a wilderness therapy program for young adults battling issues such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, addiction, and suicidal behavior.

"I was an economics major at Middlebury, so a career in finance initially seemed like the right fit," Wyman says. "But my first job out of college as a transfer pricing consultant in Manhattan was grinding and unfulfilling. I was only there for a year—I knew it wasn't right for me."

Wyman had always been passionate about the outdoors. He grew up in New

In the field, Wyman works with clients doing moderate hikes and learning basic wilderness and camping skills. JOSH RUCHTY





# Growing Future Leaders

STACEY RUDNICK '85 HAS DEVOTED her career to a mission that's more imperative than ever: leadership education. As director of the Center of Leadership and Ethics (CLE) at McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin, Rudnick gives MBA students the tools to become the "effective, thoughtful, moral leaders that businesses so desperately need," says Rudnick.

"It's an audacious goal, but a great one," she says. "Leadership education is the gap we so frequently see in companies for students, and that recruiters desire."

Though she's extremely passionate about her work, Rudnick didn't always know she wanted to be in career

management. After graduating from Duke with a degree in art history, she worked briefly in an architecture firm before getting a job in retail.

"I started on the sales floor at Nordstrom and fell in love with it," Rudnick recalls. "I was promoted to manager in six months."

After eight years at Nordstrom, she'd worked her way up to assistant buyer. By then Rudnick was married, and she and her husband both had aspirations for business school. She started on the MBA track at Emory University, with the goal of pivoting from retail toward a career in brand management.

Rudnick worked first in branding and then consulting for several years, until one day her former career advisor from Emory called and said they were hiring for the MBA Career Management Center.

"My advisor asked me, point blank, when I was going to give up the whole 'corporate thing,'" Rudnick says.

The timing was perfect. Rudnick was pregnant with her first child, and felt that she needed a better work-life balance.

"It was a natural fit," she says of the job at Emory. "I'd always loved marketing, and it turned out that my best talent was marketing people."

Three years later, UT recruited Rudnick to be its director of MBA Career Management. Born and bred in a small town in Maryland, Rudnick found Austin to be a whole new world, but she quickly fell in love with the vibrant, forward-thinking city and her new position.

"I was managing around 1,200 full-time MBA students, guiding each one toward the right career path," she explains. "The amount of growth you see in a student in two years is astounding. It's immensely satisfying watching them go out into the world and achieve their potential."

After 14 years in the role, Rudnick had quadrupled her initial Career Management team of five. When she heard about the CLE director opening, she knew it was the right next step. She was offered the position and started in the spring of 2018.

"It was a smooth transition since I saw

the role as an extension of career management," Rudnick says. "If career management is helping students figure out what they want to do and how they want to get there, CLE brings that up a level. We ask students to think about what kind of a person, manager, and leader they want to be."

New assets under Rudnick's direction include a leadership core course for MBA candidates, as well as an MBA CLE fellows program offering a group of second-year students the opportunity to coach first-year teams in leadership. "This is about making our students better future leaders," she adds. "Companies are looking for skills in judgment, flexibility, and problem-solving skills."

Rudnick's passion for the work comes

from a deep-seated love of helping others, which she attributes to her Taft days.

"*Non ut sibi* was a big deal to me," she says. "The idea of being in service to others in everything that you do really resonated with me. There's nothing more satisfying than helping my students become better leaders."

With technological advancements ever on the rise, Rudnick believes that human capital will be the greatest differentiator in the future of business.

"The workforce needs authentic voices," she says. "Technology is doing more and more, but leadership? That's a purely human ability." ■

—Carola Lovering '07

Stacey Rudnick '85 is director of the Center of Leadership and Ethics at McCombs School of Business. JOHN LANGFORD





*The Will of the People:  
The Revolutionary Birth of America*  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
**T.H. Breen '80**

Over eight years of war, ordinary Americans accomplished something extraordinary. Far from the actions of the Continental Congress and the Continental Army, they took responsibility for the course of the revolution. They policed their neighbors, sent troops and weapons to distant strangers committed to the same cause, and identified friends and traitors. By taking up the reins of power but also by setting its limits, they ensured America's success. Without their participation there would have been no victory over Great Britain, no independence. The colonial rebellion would have ended like so many others—in failure.

The author restores these missing Americans to our founding and shows why doing so is essential for understanding why our revolution ended differently from others that shaped the modern world. In the midst of revolution's anger, fear, and passion, these Americans preserved a political culture based on the rule of law. In the experiences of these unsung revolutionaries can be seen the creation of America's singular political identity.

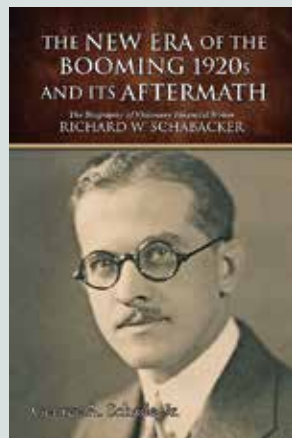
*Double Cross*  
SIMON & SCHUSTER  
**Beth Von Ancken McMullen '87**

Abby and her classmates have all been invited to Briar Academy to participate in The Challenge, a prep school competition where teams compete for prizes and the glory of being the best of the best. While there, they figure out their nemesis, The Ghost, is using Briar as headquarters to plan a devastating attack on his enemies (aka: pretty much everyone) using a brand-new invention Toby developed. And this time, The Center and Mrs. Smith will be of no help, as Abby suspects there is someone working for The Ghost on the inside—and they can trust no one.

*The New Era of the Booming  
1920s and Its Aftermath:  
The Biography of Visionary Financial  
Writer Richard W. Schabacker*

The 1920s saw the rise of financial writers who explained the booming stock market in what came to be called a "New Era," in which expectations were that no shadows darken the horizon. President Calvin Coolidge immortalized the catchphrase for the prosperity of the 1920s.

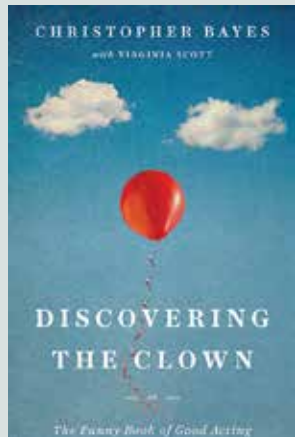
After the stock market cataclysm of 1929, he concentrated on the technical analysis of financial markets and wrote two books that advanced the field. Technical factors use the empirical information derived from the actions of buyers and sellers in an open market. Schbacker articulated the central technical postulates: Prices weigh all the factors that exert themselves to move security markets. Second, certain patterns, resulting when particular



*A Theology of Love: Reimagining Christianity Through A Course in Miracles*  
INNER TRADITIONS  
**Richard Smoley '74**

*Discovering the Clown, or  
The Funny Book of Good Acting*  
THEATRE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP  
**Christopher Bayes '80,**  
with Virginia Scott

Oskar Eustis, artistic director, The Public Theater, notes, "Christopher Bayes is a master, an extraordinary visionary who has done more to liberate young American actors over the last two generations than I can possibly express. His classes in clowning are philosophical manifestos; the power of his laughter inextricable from the depth of his spirit....Nothing can replace the experience of being in the room with a master teacher, but this practical, playful, brilliant book is the next best thing....It is indispensable."

Taft Bulletin / **FALL** 2019 **15**



## World Language Teachers Travel the World

Jon Bender explored art installations on the sea floor off of the Yucatán Peninsula. The sculptures were installed in areas of the seafloor that were previously barren and reflect the artist's commentary on the current ecological conditions of the world's oceans, marine life, and the communities that are most immediately impacted by climate change.

Every summer Taft teachers travel the globe with Professional Education Grants. This year a number of World Language teachers journeyed far and wide to absorb the cultures of the world.

### Immersed in History and Culture

QUÉBEC CITY is one of the oldest European settlements in North America and the only fortified city north of Mexico whose walls still stand. It is a city rich in architectural wonder and resplendent in its beauty; it is truly a cultural mecca. French teacher Corey Chandler spent the month of June taking in all that the city has to offer.

"I spent the first two weeks as a tourist visiting museums and cultural sites and taking in the rich history of the region. During the latter half of my trip I took language and saxophone classes," Chandler says. "As a French teacher, this immersion in language and culture is so valuable, as it gives me contact with a rich French culture that varies from what I studied and know from France. I have referenced this trip in my classes already this year, as I have been discussing school systems in the francophone world and trying to connect them to our students' own lives."

Corey Chandler took in the local color on La Rue St. Jean, one of the main streets that runs through the oldest sections of Quebec City.

### Inspiration on the Ocean Floor

SPANISH TEACHER Jon Bender traveled to the Yucatán Peninsula in June, where he explored art on the ocean floor through a Scuba excursion to the Museo Subacuático de Arte. Crafted by artist Jason deCaires, the underwater installations cast local fishermen and residents using porous, pH-neutral cement into sculptures that provide "a stable and permanent platform to encourage coral growth." The site pulls divers and snorkelers away from the overstressed reefs in the area.

"I was inspired by this visionary artist's ability to work with local communities, and raise awareness of climate change and the importance of coral reefs while actually constructing new reefs and allowing marine life to thrive," says Bender. "I teach a Spanish language course on the art history of Spain and Latin America, and I am excited to add this current artist and his installations to the curriculum. I hope his work will inspire my Taft students as much as it has inspired me."

Chandler traveled with his daughter and her boyfriend, seen here with the iconic Le Chateau Frontenac visible on the hilltop.





Baba Frew in front of Sans Souci, the summer palace of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, and at right, the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin's most famous historic landmark and a symbol of unity and peace (above and at right).

## ◀ Language and Culture in Context

**“BERLIN IN THE SUMMER** is a magical city, says Baba Frew, who teaches Spanish as well as AP Human Geography. She was, she says, “fascinated by the rich cultural landscape of a city steeped in such a remarkable history. “We rode bikes everywhere, taking in the Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer—the 70-meter physical remnant of the Berlin Wall—and visited Tempelhof Airport, from which the Berlin airlift provided a lifeline to the city from 1948 to 1949 when the Soviet Union closed all surface routes into the western zone of Berlin. The geographical implications are immense in this city of rivers and parks. So much of modern history took shape within its borders.”



Classics teacher Matt Reichelt at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (here and below).



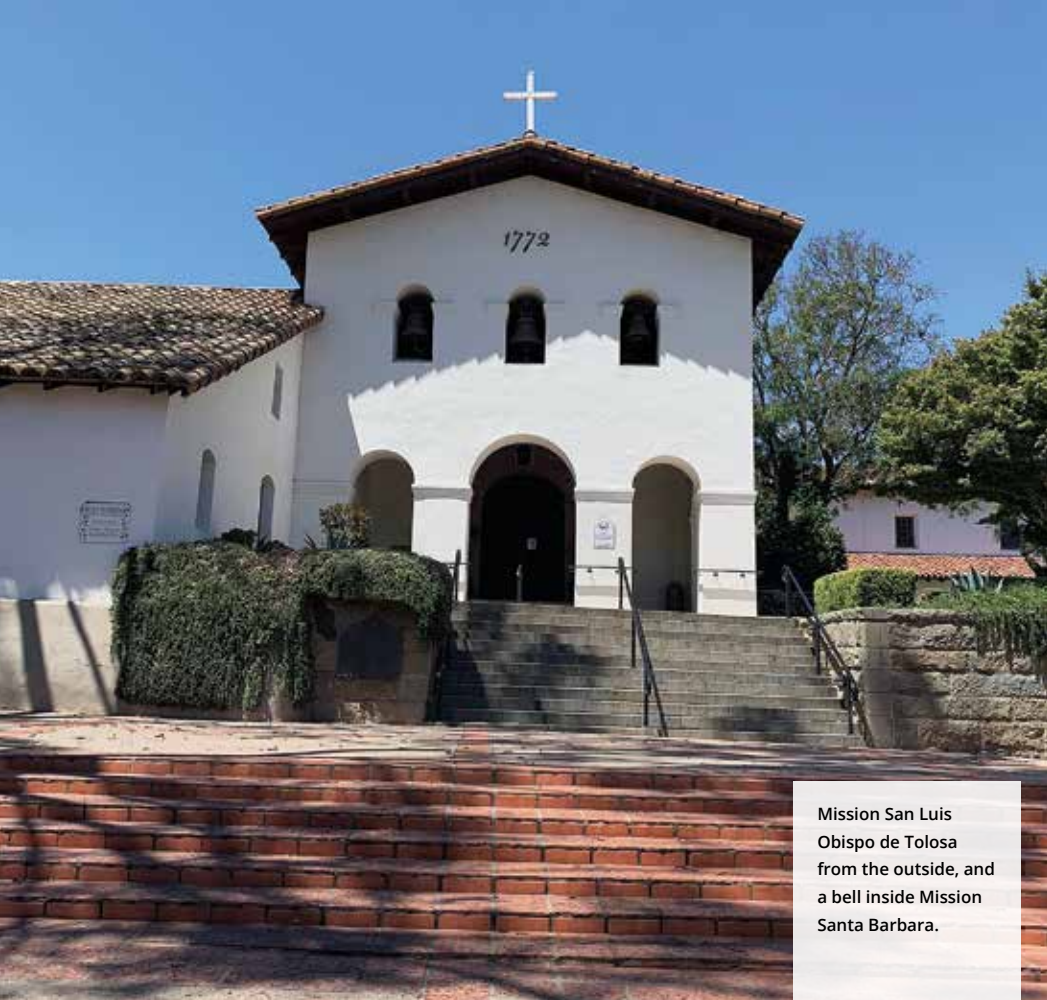
## ▲ Breathtaking Beauty

**THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO**, which dates back to the 4th century B.C., stands out among the many ruins on the southern slopes of Greece’s Parnassos Mountain. It is an imposing temple that was destroyed and rebuilt several times throughout history. It was also a stop on classics teacher Matt

Reichelt’s summer travel through Greece. “Greece is a beautiful country filled with remarkable archaeological landmarks and a breathtaking landscape,” says Reichelt. Traveling to Greece and visiting the Temple of Apollo at Delphi last summer was such an amazing opportunity.”







Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa from the outside, and a bell inside Mission Santa Barbara.

## ▲ Our Common History

SPANISH TEACHER PILAR SANTOS traveled to California over the summer, where she visited seven Spanish Franciscan missions. The first California missions were established in the late 18th century in an effort to convert Native Americans to Catholicism, thereby expanding the European territory. Between 1769 and 1833, the Spanish ran 21 missions in California.

“Visiting seven of the Spanish Franciscan missions in California was an eye-opening experience,” says Santos. “Looking at the mission buildings, I was absolutely amazed at how these missionaries were able to establish themselves all along the Pacific Coast, from San Francisco to San Diego, in 64 years. Sadly, the Native Americans had to pay a high price for the Spanish missionaries’ success—they were held captive, many of them dying from starvation, exhaustion, and diseases. This trip was a

window to the past of both Spain, where I am from, and the United States, where I teach. I truly hope that my experience will help Taft students understand how critical it is to know our common history to better understand our present history.”



## ► New Discoveries in the City of Lights

“I WAS ABLE TO SPEND TWO WEEKS in Paris, exploring parks, museums, gardens, and neighborhoods that were new to me, and that will bring a fresh perspective to my classroom,” says French teacher and World Language Department Head Sarah Tamsen. “Paris a city that, no matter how many times you have been, there is always a new corner to discover. I stayed in the 18ème Arrondissement—fairly far from what most consider the ‘center’—and got to know an entirely different kind of district.”

Tamsen also visited the Château de Fontainebleau, saw the extraordinary *Paris Romantique: 1815–1848* exhibit at Petit Palais museum, enjoyed the collection at the Musée de la Vie Romantique, which honors Georges Sand and other women writers from the 19th century, and checked in on the restoration work at Notre Dame cathedral. ■



Sarah Tamsen, opposite page, in the Jardin des Plantes, and here, with her son in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

Jon Bender, Corey Chandler, Baba Frew, Sarah Tamsen, and Pilar Santos received PEG Grants from the Davis Fellowship Fund. Jon Bender and Matt Reichelt also received grants from the Won Family Endowment for Service and Cultural Knowledge. Jon Bender received additional travel support from a Sheppard Family Grant.



# Summer by the **Numbers**

In just under 10 weeks every summer, Taft's facilities team transforms our campus through small tasks, major renovation projects, and a little bit of everything in between. What goes down when the countdown is on? Here's a look at a small portion of the work done in summer 2019.



**600**  
air filters  
replaced

**125**  
feet of granite  
curbing

**120**  
new sets of dorm  
room furniture

**104**  
dorm rooms  
painted

**100**  
gallons of paint  
emptied

**70**  
windows  
reglazed

**56**  
windows  
replaced

**22**  
faculty  
apartments  
refreshed

**3**  
classrooms with  
new furniture

**3**  
new common  
rooms

**2**  
new roofs

**1**  
renovated faculty  
apartment

**4**  
new  
bathrooms

**9**  
faculty  
apartments  
painted

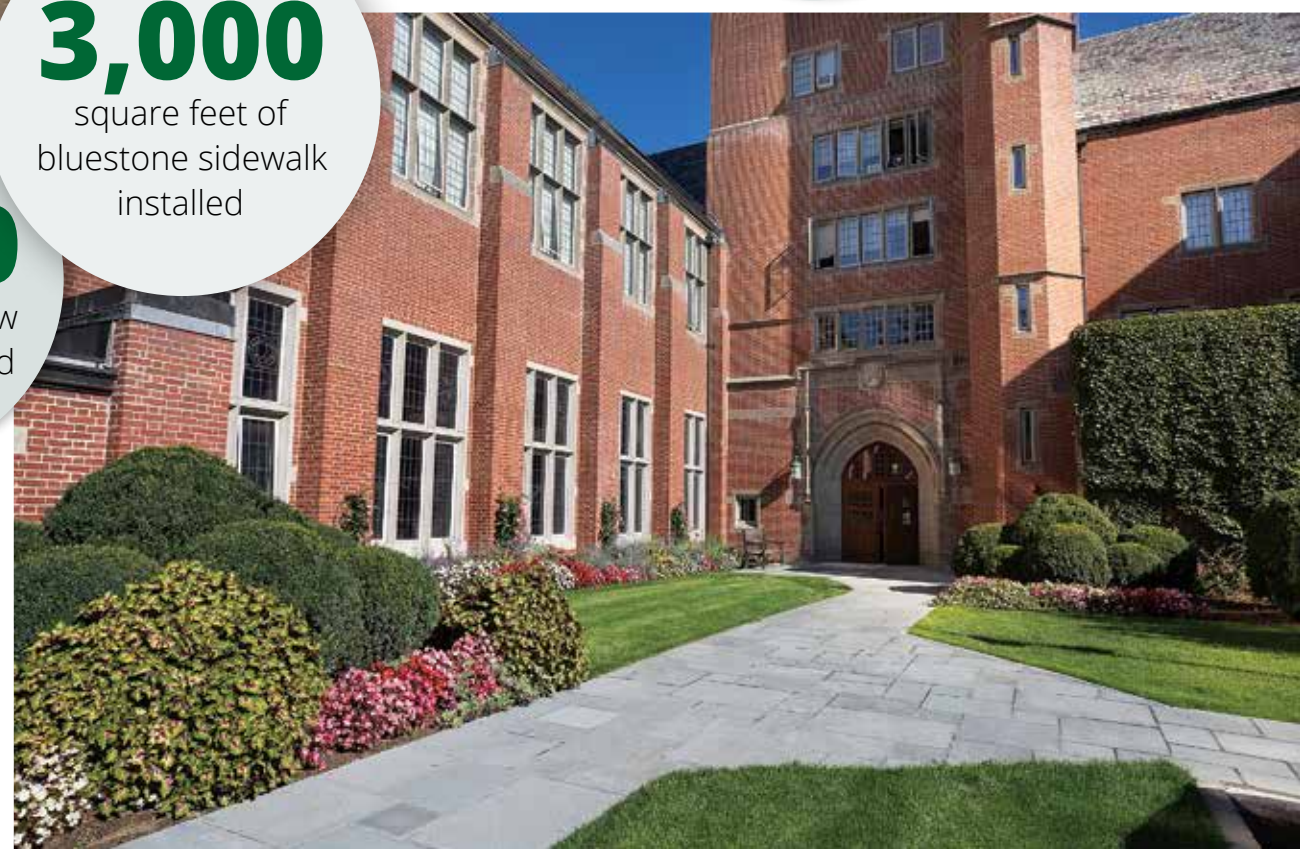
## Did we mention... **the new Wu Physics Lab**

with custom whiteboard countertops and a new projector, smartboard, and sound system; the new carpeting in the Faculty Room, CPT, and paddle fans in the dance studio; roof repairs, electrical work, painting, and cleaning in almost every corner of campus; a Mays Rink refresh; infrastructure upgrades—wiring and piping; and tree work, landscaping, and paving; and all the work that comes with hosting TEC, Taft Summer School, and the Taft-PAL Summer Enrichment Academy.



**3,000**  
square feet of  
bluestone sidewalk  
installed

**8,000**  
square feet of new  
carpeting installed





### Super Sunday

THE FIRST FULL WEEKEND OF school always features one of Taft's most fun traditions: Super Sunday! The Crisco slide, tug-of-war, egg races, and more bring students from single-color teams into one beautifully blended school community.



### Non ut Sibi

TAFT WAS PLEASED TO DONATE 60 reconditioned football helmets to the city of Waterbury for distribution across their high school football programs. Taft Director of Campus Safety and former Waterbury police officer Robert Cizauskas facilitated the process, with Taft Equipment Manager Pat O'Toole and Assistant Equipment Manager Joseph Aniki. The donation continues a tradition of giving and partnership with the city. From left, Aniki, Cizauskas, and Joe Gorman, supervisor of Health and Physical Education for the city of Waterbury.



Taft's afternoon program includes an option for students to be involved with a variety of **SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES**, including raising and caring for chickens on campus. Recently, students joined Director of Environmental Stewardship Alison Frye in gathering eggs from the campus coop, which were later used in a meal for visiting members of the Board of Trustees.





### New Faculty

TAFT WELCOMED 20 NEW FACULTY members to campus this fall, including several alumni, and a few returning staff members. Front row, from left: Lawrence Crimmins, Director of Development; Michael Mastrocola '08, Mathematics; Winston Leong, Computer Science. Second row, from left: Natalie Gomez, Penn Fellow in History; Marie Butterly, English; Rebekah Lofgren, History; Collin Benedict, French; Brianne Cary, English; Jake Odden '86, CFO. Third row from bottom, from left: Zana Previti, English; Kerry Bracco, English, Admissions, Community Wellness; Matt Mullane, Spanish; Zachary Scarano, Penn Fellow in Mathematics; Natalie Davis-Porada, Penn Fellow in English; Justin Hudak, Classics. Top row, from left: Douglas Au, Mathematics; Brandon Sousa '12, Mathematics; Justin Torre, Spanish; Courtney Smyth, Director of Student Activities, International Student Program Coordinator; Emily Clark, English.

### Nantucket Reception

NEW GRADS, more seasoned alums, incoming lower mids, family, friends, and faculty all gathered in Nantucket in August for a Taft reception at the Nantucket Yacht Club. It's becoming an annual tradition and it is growing every year.



The Taft School Presents:

# Music for a While

**Sunday, October 6 at 5 pm**

*Concert Organist Nathan Laube*  
Woodward Chapel

**Friday, October 18 at 7 pm**

*Classical Chamber Music with*  
*Andrew Armstrong and Friends*  
Woodward Chapel

**Sunday, November 3 at 5 pm**

*Music for a Great Space:*  
*Heroic Music for Choir, Organ, and Brass*  
Woodward Chapel

**Friday, November 22 at 7 pm**

*Tandem Dance Company*  
Bingham Auditorium

**Tuesday, December 17 at 6 & 8 pm**

*Taft's 84th Annual Service*  
*of Lessons and Carols*  
Woodward Chapel

**Tuesday, January 7 at 7 pm**

*La Boheme: A Night at the Opera*  
*with Christopher Browner '12*  
Walker Hall

**Friday, January 10 at 7 pm**

*Henderson-Kolk Guitar Duo*  
Walker Hall

**Sunday, January 26 at 4 pm**

*Concert Organist Renee Louprette*  
Woodward Chapel

**Sunday, February 9 at 4 pm**

*Folk Musicians*  
*Tom Rush and Matt Nakoa*  
Woodward Chapel Undercroft

**Saturday, February 22 at 7 pm**

*Mardi Gras! A Jazz Celebration with*  
*the TJ Thompson Trio and Friends*  
Woodward Chapel Undercroft

**Friday, February 28 at 7 pm**

*TriChrome: Classical Chamber Music*  
*for Flute, Viola, & Harp*  
Walker Hall

**Friday, March 27 at 7 pm**

*Art from the Heart: Classical Chamber*  
*Music with Taft Music Faculty*  
Walker Hall

**Friday, April 17 at 7 pm**

**in Woodward Chapel**  
and

**Sunday, April 19 at 2 pm**

**at St. John the Divine,**  
**New York, NY**

*Music for Great Spaces*  
*Taft Collegium Musicum;*  
*Bruce Fifer, Director*

**Saturday, May 16 at 4 pm**

*Concert Organist Daniel Scifo*  
Woodward Chapel

*Concerts are free and open to the public; tickets are not required.*  
*Walker Hall, 50 DeForest Street • Woodward Chapel, 25 The Green*  
*The Taft School • Watertown, Connecticut 06795*  
*More information at [taftschoool.org/concerts](http://taftschoool.org/concerts) Box Office: 860-945-7898*

QUISH/HUTTERSTOCK.COM





Photo courtesy christinemauersberger.com,  
Howard Romero, photographer

## In the Gallery

**WORKS BY ARTIST CHRISTINE** Mauersberger, Taft's fall Rockwell Visiting Artist, filled the Mark W. Potter Gallery from October 4 through November 21.

Mauersberger is an American artist who produces complex mark-making narratives in multiple media: paintings, embroidery, and installation works.

"I work primarily, although not exclusively, with textiles and stitching," says Mauersberger. "For me, the

process of mark-making, whether stitched, drawn, painted, or printed, is my way of making a physical artifact of the progression of time. It is my hope that my work captures not only the reality of time passing, but also the distillation of what remains when the unimportant parts of life have been removed."

Mauersberger has been the recipient of several fellowships and grants, a Creative Workforce Fellowship in Cuyahoga

County, Ohio, a Windgate Craft Artist Fellowship, and the Ohio Arts Council Award of Individual Excellence twice. Her work is featured in private and public collections and has been exhibited and published internationally including The Millennium Court Arts Centre in Ireland and in the Biennale du Lin in Quebec, Canada. She has taught and lectured in numerous locations in the U.S. and Canada, as well as Switzerland. ■

Rockwell Visiting Artists spend time working directly with art students in our classrooms and connecting with the full school community through our Morning Meeting program. They interact with students and faculty across campus through a range of events and programs, which may include workshops, receptions, and small group instruction. The program is supported by the Rockwell Visiting Artists Fund, established in 1997 by Sherburne B. Rockwell Jr., Class of 1941, and H.P. Davis Rockwell, Class of 1944.



“

**If we're able to look out for each other,** make connections, share resources, allow space, all this will create the very conditions we all need to thrive. Each of you is a valuable member of the community, and each of you has an impact in shaping it. You can make it the kind of place where we're all included, where we all might grow. This happens when you show empathy for someone's experience when it's really different than yours; when you allow voices to be heard, in particular the faintest; when you act with courage or conviction if you witness an act that is mean or exclusionary; when you disagree with someone with respect and openness to change; when you reach out to support someone who seems in pain; when you offer humor and energy when others are fatigued. ”



Watch the full address here:  
<https://vimeo.com/358153070>



—Headmaster Willy MacMullen '78  
Convocation 2019





SUMMER IS A TIME WHEN TAFT STUDENTS CRISSCROSS THE GLOBE, ENGAGING IN ADVANCED ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, MEANINGFUL SERVICE PROJECTS, AND UNIQUE INTERNSHIPS. THEIR EXPERIENCES HELP SHAPE THEM AS STUDENTS, LEARNERS, AND GLOBAL CITIZENS. HERE ARE A FEW OF THE MANY FASCINATING STUDENT STORIES FROM THE SUMMER OF 2019.

# *student* JOURNEYS

by DEBRA MEYERS



## alumni connections: partners in conservation

# KATIE BOOTSMA '20 & MAILE KUYPER '20

When it was announced that Larry Morris '65 would be named the 2019 Horace Dutton Taft Alumni Medal honoree for a lifetime of service through the Quebec-Labrador Foundation (QLF), Katie Bootsma '20 and Maile Kuyper '20 took note. As the rising editor-in-chief of *The Papyrus*, Katie was charged with writing about Morris, the award, and his dedication to environmental stewardship. As a lifelong environmentalist, Maile was deeply interested in QLF's global conservation initiatives.

Morris encouraged Katie and Maile to consider applying for summer internships with QLF. And they did. With support from Poole Fellowships, each spent three weeks working with the group in Canada as part of its Biodiversity Conservation Internship program. It is a program, Katie says, with two main goals: monitoring wildlife through hands-on fieldwork and educating area youth.

The interns were tasked with monitoring songbirds in the forests of New Brunswick and shorebirds along its coast. Because the songbirds are most active at dawn and dusk, the team would begin their woodland surveys by 6 a.m., hiking through the forest,

stopping every 500 meters to listen, identify the species by their calls, and note their presence in a shared field journal. As high tide approached, the team would leave the forest for the shoreline, where they shifted from auditory identification to visual monitoring.

When the team was not in the field, they worked to educate area youth about environmental issues. Each of the interns conducted research and then developed an original suite of educational materials (scripts, games, and digital presentations) around their topic. Maile studied marine debris, while Katie explored wetlands. They presented their work to children ranging in age from 5 to 15 through workshops at YMCA camps and other local youth and community centers in New Brunswick.

"The experience has definitely made me a more informed Taft student and a more informed eco mon," says Katie. "All of the work I did with QLF made me more open to learning about and understanding the challenges facing our environment. I learned so much from the other interns and from the amazing people we met in New Brunswick, and hope to share that with our community."

QLF exists to promote global leadership development, to support the rural communities and environment of eastern Canada and New England, and to create models for stewardship of natural resources and cultural heritage that can be shared worldwide. Larry Morris '65 is QLF President Emeritus. Learn more at [qlf.org](http://qlf.org).



## diversity and disparity: health care in Rwanda

# ALEX ROBERTSON '20

With support from a Meg Page '74 Fellowship, Alex Robertson '20 spent a month in Rwanda last summer, where he witnessed the diversity and disparity of health services available in a nation still recovering from the horrific 1994 genocide.

Alex began his work in the village of Nyamata. Each morning, he walked 45 minutes to a home for children with profound physical disabilities run by a nurse named Cecile.

"There are currently 20 kids in Cecile's care, ranging in age from 4 to 29," Alex says. "The oldest suffers from a rather severe form of cerebral palsy; he was found abandoned in a river during the genocide."

In the aftermath of the genocide, Rwanda became the world's poorest country, with the world's highest child mortality and lowest life expectancy rates. Almost immediately, the government prioritized the development of health care systems within the country. As a result, life expectancy in Rwanda has doubled since 1995. Partners in Health, a Boston-based nonprofit that has helped build and grow health care systems across the globe, notes that "Rwanda has become a model for how resource-poor

countries can build health systems from almost nothing." It points to the Butaro District Hospital as a shining example.

"We traveled up a winding dirt road, through mountains and seeing really almost nothing along the way," recalls Alex. "Then, quite suddenly, a modern, new hospital with a very large campus came into view. It offers an incredible range of medical services—they have an ER, a pharmacy, oncology, internal medicine, pediatrics, surgery—everything."

Opened in 2011, the mountaintop facility brought modern medical care to an area that previously had none. A year later, the Butaro Cancer Center of Excellence opened at the complex. Close by, Partners in Health operates the University of Global Health Equity, which awards master of science degrees in global health delivery.

"Before I went on this trip, I wasn't really thinking about going outside the United States to work in medicine. Now, I want to go back—I want to use some of the inside knowledge I have gained to work in Rwanda. With luck, I will return to Nyamata and see Cecile and the children again," he says.



*dechen la': the land at  
the end of the sticks*

## BOJANA DRCA '20

Bojana Drca '20 is passionate about the environment. She is especially passionate about climate change.

"I know that the greatest impact of changes in the climate can be measured in the Arctic," Bojana says, "and that if I really want to study and understand climate change, I should go there."

And she did. With support from a Robert Keyes Poole '50 Fellowship, Bojana spent 10 days in August at the edge of the Arctic working with two scientists from the Earthwatch Institute, an international, research-driven environmental nonprofit built on a citizen-science model.

"We worked in a very, very remote area in the Mackenzie Mountains," Bojana says. "The nearest settlement was 200 miles away, and it was an indigenous community of only 300 people. The experience was incredibly different from anything I have ever experienced before."

The expedition base was Dechen la', a remote lodge in the midst of tundra. "Dechen la'" comes from an aboriginal word meaning "the land at the end of the sticks," and indeed, the end of the sticks—the tree line—played a crucial role in Bojana's work. The lead scientist on the expedition is studying how climate and environmental changes shape tree line dynamics. Bojana identified seedlings of firs and spruces and recorded their growth in seeded and unseeded plots to establish reproductive potential.

"The data I collected will be crucial in proving that warmer growing seasons can lead to a greater number of viable tree seeds produced and higher germination success, allowing the tree line to migrate further into the tundra, where it is harder for them to survive because of the harsh conditions," says Bojana.

Bojana also worked on an ongoing project assessing the region's permafrost layer, the soil that remains frozen—below 0 degrees Celsius—for more than a year. As temperatures rise and permafrost thaws, the organic compounds in it begin to decompose, producing carbon dioxide and methane. The release of these greenhouse gases will amplify the effects of global warming.

"Earthwatch has been doing this for a long time," Bojana says. "It is a 30-year project. They come back year after year to measure the permafrost in the same locations, which was what I was doing—probing the ground using a 200-centimeter metal pole and recording the permafrost depth. I could see the direct effects immediately. They showed me the data that has been collected over the years, and the trend is really clear: the permafrost is melting. What I measured could really be influential in future research."



*illustrating science*

## RACHEL PEVERLY '20

Dr. Robert Naczi is a renowned scientist in the Institute of Systematic Botany at The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG). Among his current projects: fully revising and updating the 1991 *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*, a reference manual that will include new tools for identifying more than 5,300 species of vascular plants growing spontaneously in 22 states and five Canadian provinces. Rachel Peverly '20 spent 10 weeks last summer assisting Dr. Naczi on the project.

"The goal for my portion of the project was to create a proof of concept for the manual," explains Rachel. "I worked on developing illustrations for the book, with a focus on Cyperaceae, particularly the *Cyperus* genus, which includes about 700 species of sedges worldwide."

The illustrations will serve as highly refined and updated visual identification tools in the manual. To create them, Rachel needed to learn plant identification techniques and become familiar with plant morphology, or structures, particularly those critical to differentiating and identifying plant species.

"The idea was to get a representative model of each species," Rachel says, "which means knowing which characteristics to look for to get as close to the ideal as possible."

Rachel spent many hours over several weeks examining hundreds of specimens in NYBG's William and Lynda Steere Herbarium—home to 7.8 million plant specimens—in search of representative models. She then worked with renowned botanical illustrator Bobbi Angell to generate and reproduce full specimen drawings. She also produced some images herself.

"We did that two different ways," says Rachel. "I photographed the plant spikes of each species with a digital camera, which was very straightforward. I also learned how to take high-resolution photomicrographs with a dissection microscope using 'stacking' software, which essentially produces a very crisp, clear, three-dimensional image of the spike's structure. Those fine details are really useful in identification, and something never seen before in an identification manual."

Rachel's research was made possible by the Stott Family New York Botanical Garden Summer Internship and Sónia M. and John J. Batten III '15 Internship Fund.





## stars in the limelight

### BEN LE '21

Ms. Muoi worried that not every child in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, had access to education. To create opportunities for those “loving young and disadvantaged children,” she began offering free classes in a safe and stable environment. Twenty years later, the Ba Muoi Children’s Shelter continues to provide educational resources and services to disadvantaged children in Ho Chi Minh City. For the past two summers, and with support from Hatfield and Poole Fellowships, Ben Le ’21 has returned home to Vietnam to serve as one of Ba Muoi’s most dedicated volunteers.

Ben, along with four friends from Ho Chi Minh City, spent two and a half months working with second and seventh graders at the children’s shelter, helping them build effective communication skills and self-confidence through public speaking and drama. They conceptualized the unique program and wrote the curriculum. Ben arrived at the shelter each day with carefully crafted, object-driven lesson plans. For the first two weeks, he focused on teaching his students how to speak confidently and clearly, first to a partner, then to a larger group. Eventually, they would draft responses to prompts, present them to the class, and field questions from their peers.

“Then, for the following two months, we focused on working with the children to mount a play,” Ben says. “Our goal by the end of the summer was to invite everyone in the city to come and see our performance. It would be a way for the community to learn more about the shelter and about our project.”

The play was an original work, scripted by Ben and his fellow volunteers. *Cỏ Dại*, which translates loosely to *Wild Grass*, included roles for each of the seventh-grade students in his class. It tells the story of children overcoming difficult circumstances in their lives to achieve dreams they never thought possible. *Wild Grass* was not only well received, it was well attended: proceeds from ticket sales and fundraisers totaled \$1,200, which will be used to help improve the shelter’s facilities and to fund cultural and educational field trips. Many of those who came shared a special bond with the children.

“The moment the children saw one of their former teachers in the audience was very moving,” recalls Ben. “She taught them three years ago, and she marveled at how much they have grown. I could see in the glow of the children’s eyes as they ran up to her and in their smiles that they knew they had made her very proud. They had been stars in the limelight.”



## a sense of purpose

### ABIGAIL HANO '20

“The best way to learn is to immerse yourself—to just be a part of it,” says Abigail Hano ’20, who did just that last summer when she traveled to Peru to work with doctors and nurses in the *postas* of Cusco with support from a Meg Page ’74 Fellowship.

Abigail spent mornings shadowing physicians. In the afternoon she attended formal medical workshops, where she learned about conditions and diseases most common in Peru, to measure and assess medical vital signs, and to deliver therapeutic medical injections.

“I was assigned to the pre- and post-op floors of the hospital,” says Abigail, “where monitoring vitals is especially important. They don’t have all the electronic monitoring equipment we have here in the U.S., so the doctors were dependent on us to take the vitals every few hours to accurately monitor the patients. I feel like I had a really big, pretty important role there—a sense of purpose that was really rewarding.”

Abigail also spent time working on a floor dedicated to tourists seeking medical care.

“Many of the doctors in the hospitals spoke only Spanish to the volunteers and to the patients. Because I speak some Spanish, I was often able to act as a translator for the patients on the tourist floor,” Abigail says. “Those patients were usually nervous about needing medical care and about not speaking the language, so when we walked in and were able to communicate in both English and Spanish they were relieved and grateful. That experience made me think that I’d like to combine my Spanish language study with a career in medicine. Expanding my ability to communicate with a broader range of patients will make me a better doctor, and lessen the stress for my patients.”





## finding a place in science

# EUGENE ACEVEDO '20

As a young student growing up in the Bronx, Eugene Acevedo '20 often visited The New York Botanical Garden with his classmates.

"We went there all the time on school trips," says Eugene. "We would walk around the grounds and through the conservatory. I never realized there was a laboratory there."

For nine weeks last summer, Eugene not only discovered the Pfizer Plant Research Laboratory at NYBG, he played an integral role in the scientific research being conducted there. Eugene was an NYBG summer intern, working alongside Cullman Associate Curator of Bioinformatics Dr. Damon Little, a world-renowned research scientist and pioneer in the advancement of technological DNA barcoding. Eugene assisted Little with his research on *Calliatriopsis macnabiana*, a species of cypress in the conifer family. Eugene studied the conifer's transfusion tracheids—cells in vascular plant tissue that assist in the transportation of water and minerals.

"Much of my work involved looking at the transfusion tracheids through a scanning electron microscope, measuring them, recording the measurements, then using an additional program to add georeferences to each sample," says Eugene. "Most came from northern and central California."

For Eugene, simply working with the scanning electron microscope (SEM) was an extraordinary opportunity.

"What I was able to see in the SEM was fascinating," Eugene says. "I was able to observe actual plant cells and structures—things that I had previously only seen in textbooks. Working with the NYBG laboratory allowed me to take my interest in science and laboratory spaces to the next level—to help me see what my place in science might be."

Eugene's internship was made possible by:  
The Meek Foundation; Dwight L. Stocker III '74.

## modern medicine in venerable spaces

# KEREN EGU '21

Imagine taking up residence in the historic University of Cambridge, founded in 1209, now the second-oldest university in the English-speaking world and the world's fourth-oldest surviving university. At various times in history, the likes of Sir Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Stephen Hawking, and Manhattan Project leader J. Robert Oppenheimer all traipsed Cambridge's hallowed halls. Imagine putting pen to paper in a space where dramatist Christopher Marlowe, novelist Samuel Butler, and modernist writers E.M. Forster, Vladimir Nabokov, and of course, A.A. Milne all spent time learning their craft. For Keren Egu '21, this is not something to imagine, it is something to remember: Keren spent four weeks last summer studying medical science and psychology at—by nearly every measure—one of the top universities in the world.

"Our work in medical science was very hands-on. We began learning some straightforward procedures, like taking vital signs and drawing blood," Keren says. "But by the end, we were dissecting and suturing hearts. I've always been interested in science and medicine, but worried I would see blood and organs and just not be able to handle it. Once the professor brought out the heart for the dissection and I was touching it and suturing it I thought, 'OK, I can do this!' The whole program really affirmed for me for the first time that this what I want to—and can—do."

The coursework was rigorous, Keren says, but being taught by university professors was inspiring. She learned more effective note-taking strategies and skills that will allow her to better summarize material and extract the most salient details for deeper learning.

"I definitely would not have had this experience if it wasn't for Taft and the Page Grant," says Keren. "To be taught by university professors in a prestigious, historic, and beautiful place was truly amazing." ■



## These and other student experiences were funded in part by grants from the following endowed funds:

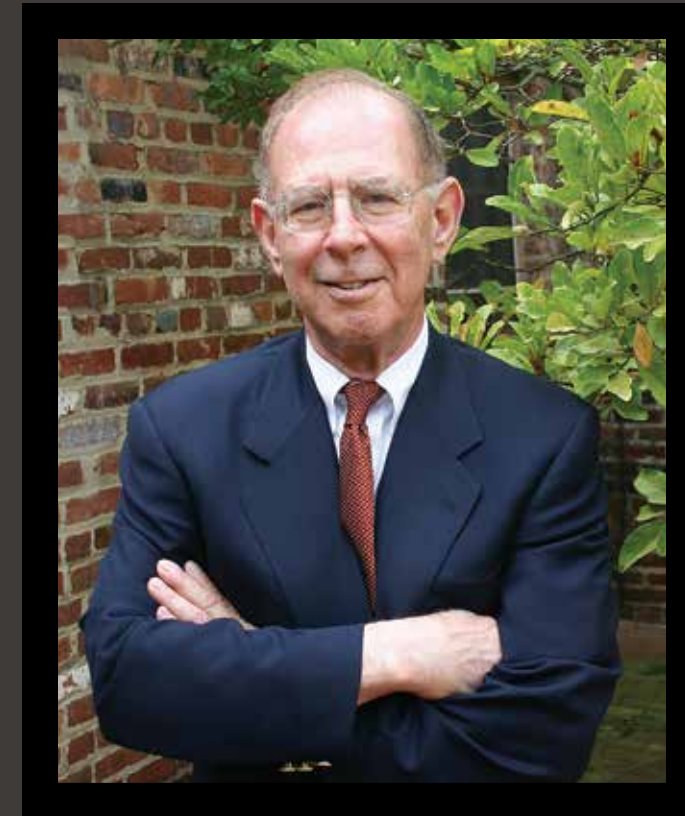
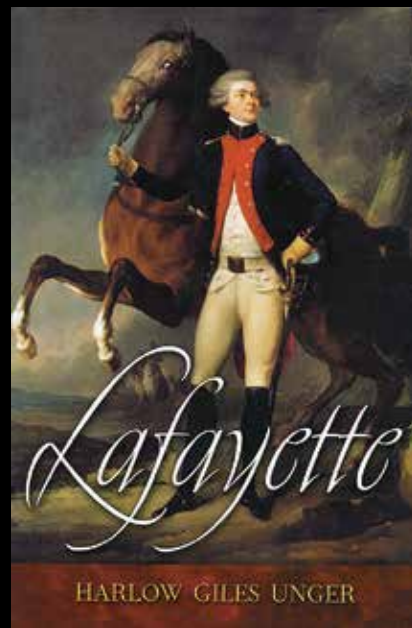
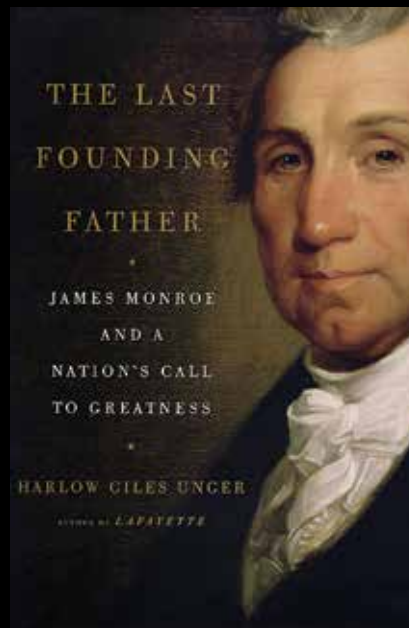
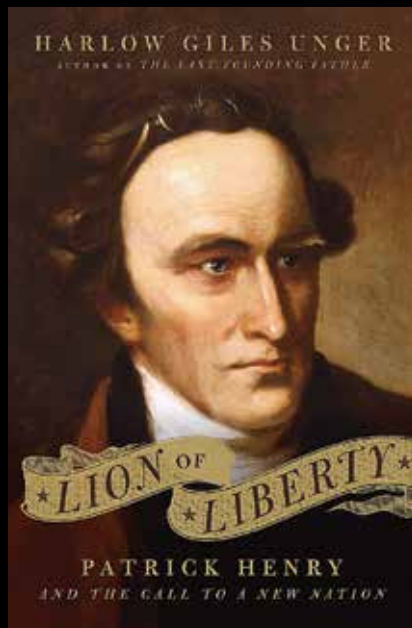
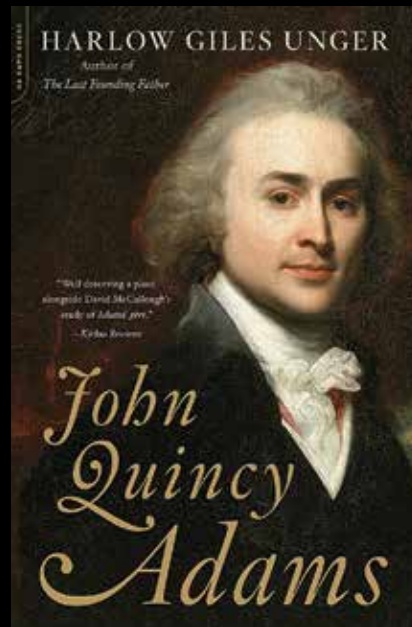
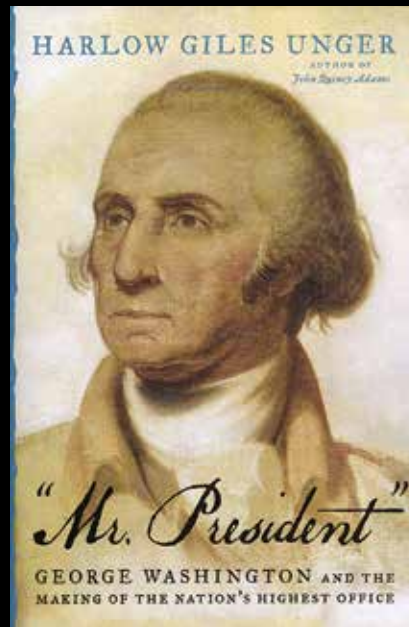
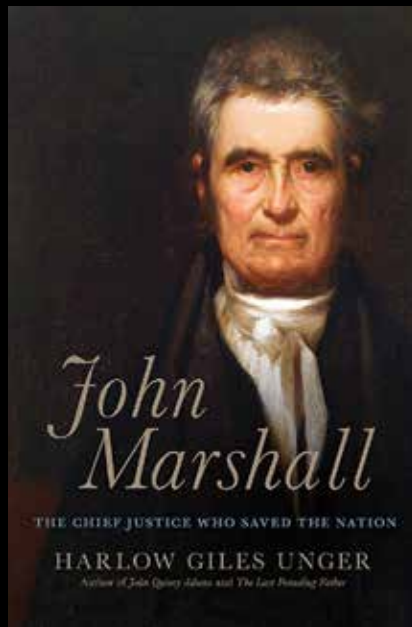
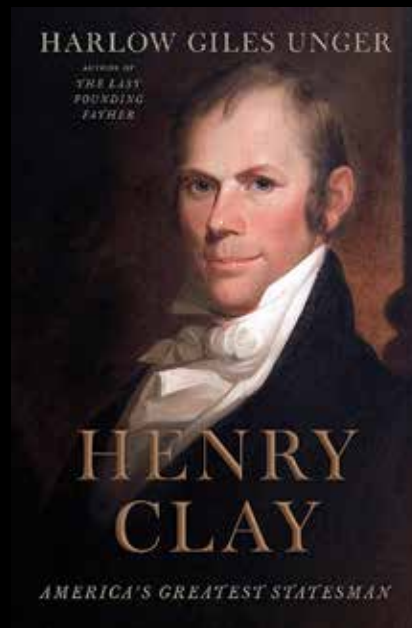
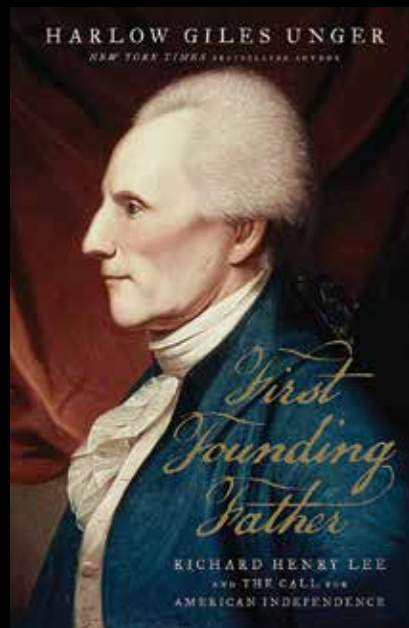
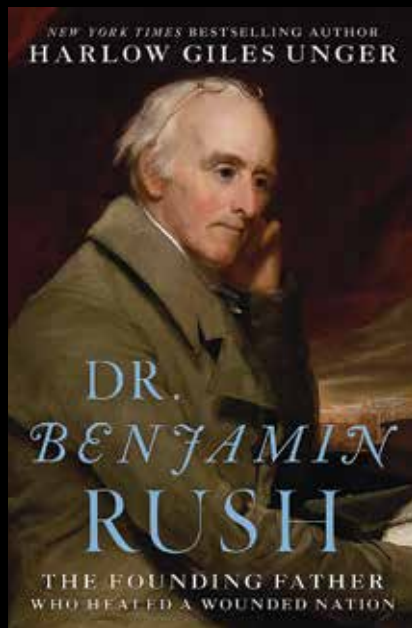
■ Established in 2010, and made possible through the generosity of Guy Hatfield '65, Ross Hatfield, and the ongoing support of William W. Hatfield's family, the Hatfield Grant celebrates the ideals of Horace Dutton Taft—service above self—and is given annually to one or more students whose commitment to volunteerism brings to life the message behind Taft's motto: *Non ut sibi ministretur sed ut ministret*—Not to be served but to serve.

■ Kilbourne Summer Enrichment Fund, established by John Kilbourne, Class of 1958, in memory of his parents, Samuel W. and Evelyn S. Kilbourne, provides students with opportunities in the summer to participate in enriching programs in the arts.

■ To honor her commitment to compassionate health care, Meg Page '74 Fellowships are awarded annually to students who wish to explore an experience or course of study devoted to the provision of better health care in areas such as public health, family planning, medical research, mental health, and non-Western practices of healing.

■ Robert Keyes Poole '50 Fellowships were established in memory of Robert Keyes Poole '50, Taft master from 1956 to 1962, and are awarded each year to enable Taft students to engage in travel or in projects consistent with Mr. Poole's lifetime interest in wildlife and the environment.





# One for the History Books

## HARLOW GILES UNGER '49 masters the writing of historical biographies

*by Christopher Browner '12*

If Harlow Giles Unger '49 could board a time machine and instantly be transported to 1776, he'd be right at home. With 27 books (and counting) to his credit, including 17 about the Founding Fathers, Unger is one of the nation's leading authors on the American Revolution and the power players who shaped the nascent United States. But with such an extensive bibliography, it may come as a surprise that as a child Unger had little interest in history.

Photo above:  
Harlow Unger '49  
at Mount Vernon in  
Virginia, home of  
George Washington.  
MOUNT VERNON  
LADIES' ASSOCIATION





Unger celebrated his 88th birthday this year; pictured with a dessert of *baba au rhum* and *crème fraîche*.



Unger riding Babe at his former home in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in the 1990s.

“It never occurred to me that I could be anything other than a doctor,” he recalls. “In our family, that was all you were going to be.” The son of renowned physician Lester J. Unger, a pioneer in the development of lifesaving blood transfusion techniques, Unger spent many of his formative years preparing to follow in his father’s footsteps. But when, after a year and a half, he could take no more of medical school, he found himself unsure of his future for the first time.

In stepped Jacques Grosbois, a friend from Unger’s youth who worked as bureau chief of the Agence France-Presse, then the world’s largest news agency. Aware of Unger’s fluency in French (Unger grew up splitting time between New York and Paris), Grosbois hired him as a translator for the agency’s foreign wire service, much of which arrived in French. For the next few years, Unger had a hands-on education in the art of writing for newspapers, ultimately landing a position as junior editor for the *New York Herald Tribune* Overseas News Service. After crisscrossing the globe to cover stories, he eventually formed his own newspaper syndicate—the *Harlow Unger*

system, including *How to Pick the Perfect Private School* and *What If I Don’t Want to Go to College?* So when his publishers were looking to compile a thorough *Encyclopedia of American Education*, they knew just the man for the job. “I ended up producing a three-volume encyclopedia,” he says, “and part of the work involved writing relatively short biographies on important figures in American education. Even though they were only going to take a page each in the book, I still had to do quite a lot of research on these figures.” Little did he know that these brief biographies would end up launching the second phase of his literary career.

“One of the figures that astounded me toward the end of the encyclopedia was Noah Webster,” Unger remembers. “We mostly think of him today as the creator of the first American-English dictionary—in a way, he’s the father of ‘American’ language—but I discovered that his contribution to American history was so much greater. He fought in the Revolutionary War, became a close associate of Washington, and was the resident intellectual guru during the writing of the Constitution.” Yet despite all of Webster’s extraordinary achievements, Unger was hard pressed to find a satisfactory

“AS A FORMER REPORTER, I NEVER EDITORIALIZE. I LET THE CHARACTERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. IN A SENSE, I INTERVIEW THEM AND THEIR COLLEAGUES, ASSOCIATES, FRIENDS, AND FAMILIES.”

*Report*, providing articles to 75 publications spread across more than 50 countries on most continents—and also contributed regular reports for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

At the same time that he was making a name for himself as a journalist, Unger was devoting much of his free time to helping less fortunate students get into college. Volunteering with the nonprofit Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, he spent years working “to identify children in underprivileged schools who had a potential to go to college but couldn’t realize that potential due to their circumstances,” he explains, adding, “I became an expert on college admissions.” It was only natural, then, that he would also guide his son Rich’s application process when the time came for him to consider potential universities. And when Rich secured a place at his dream school, he thanked his father by declaring, “Dad, you really ought to write a book!”

With the idea firmly planted, Unger embarked on his first full-length work, *A Student’s Guide to College Admissions*, published in 1986. For the next 10 years, he penned a series of books to help students, parents, and teachers navigate the education

account of his life. “I looked around, and there hadn’t been a biography about him in close to a century—so I wrote one myself!”

The success of this first foray into American history, *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*, spurred Unger on to further research into Webster’s fellow statesmen. “I started looking around for other Founding Fathers to cover, but all the major names were taken,” he laughs. “I went to the library and started going down the shelves until I found a name that was lesser known, and I fell on John Hancock. Nothing had been done about him, but everyone knows his signature.” And by the time that he completed his next (and possibly favorite) book, *Lafayette*, he was “truly off to the races.”

In the years since, Unger—whose numerous accolades include being named a Distinguished Visiting Fellow in American History at Mount Vernon—has explored the lives of many figures from early American history, from patriots Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee to John Marshall, the fourth Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, to the incredibly influential Henry Clay. He’s also profiled some of the United States’ first presidents,



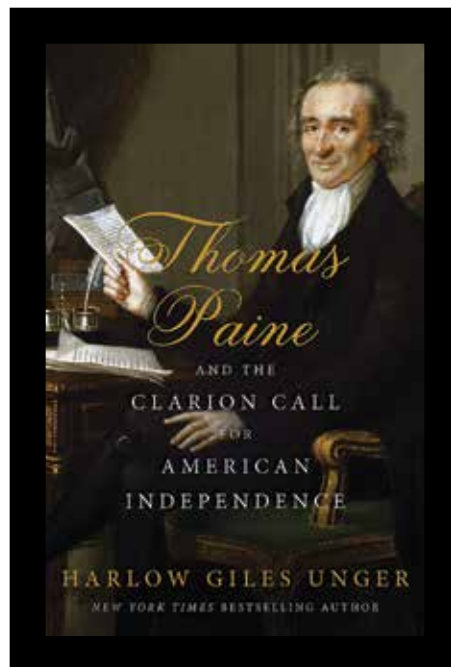
chronicling George Washington's private life in two volumes and examining the country's fifth commander-in-chief in *The Last Founding Father: James Monroe and a Nation's Call to Greatness*, which went on to become a *New York Times* bestseller. His most recent title, *Thomas Paine and the Clarion Call for American Independence*, hit shelves this fall and focuses on someone Unger hails as "quite an enormous factor in the Revolutionary War, so much so that John Adams called the era the 'Age of Paine.'"

Each time that Unger approaches a new "character," as he likes to call them, he does so as he would any newspaper subject, incorporating a wealth of quotations from primary sources. "As a former reporter," he points out, "I never editorialize. I let the characters speak for themselves. In a sense, I interview them and their colleagues, associates, friends, and families—really anyone who knew them or had contact with them." These "interviews" require an enormous amount of research, with Unger reading "anything that they ever wrote, as well as anything that was written to them or about them by contemporaries," and traveling around the world to view collections of each man's private papers and manuscripts.

Unger's experience as a journalist also contributes to his ability to tell a story effectively. "I'M ABLE TO ABSORB THINGS IN MY HEAD AND VISUALIZE THE ORDER OF IMPORTANCE."

But once all of this research is complete—a task that Unger admits is much faster nowadays, both thanks to the accessibility of information on the internet and because, by this point, he has read most of the Founding Fathers' collected writings—the rest quickly falls into place. "I'm a compulsive worker," he confesses, "and once I get started, I work on the book seven days a week. The whole process usually takes two years, but the actual writing only takes 90 to 120 days at most."

His experience as a journalist also contributes to his ability to tell a story effectively. "I'm able to absorb things in my head and visualize the order of importance," Unger says. But this background can also become a hindrance. "A newspaper article is written in an inverted pyramid, with the most important aspects in the



lead and then elaboration of each element in the subsequent paragraphs," he explains. "The structure of a chapter cannot be that way. When you get to the end of the chapter, you have to make sure that you leave the reader in suspense, so they get to the next chapter. That was certainly a skill that took some getting used to."

Unger often seeks inspiration not from fellow biographers but instead from skilled authors of fiction. "Ever since I started writing books, I've devoured literature," he says. "I've even gone back and read everything I ever read at Taft—sometimes three times."

One such notable literary figure that Unger admires is George Eliot, whose *Middlemarch* once helped him crack a particularly difficult case of writer's block. "I was working on a biography of George Washington, and the subtitle was going to be '*His Private Life*,'" he says. "Well, his private life was that of a farmer. I started writing it, and I started to get bored with my own writing. I needed to look to a great writer who had written about ordinary people, and I came upon *Middlemarch*. What a genius Eliot was. The whole novel takes place in this nowheresville in the middle of England, but she brings it alive. So I studied how

she makes each character interesting and the techniques she uses to make the surrounding landscape interesting."

And now, with his 27th book officially in print, Unger is already preparing to tackle his next character. "I have all the research material," he says—though he's not quite ready to reveal who the subject will be. In the meantime, the *Wall Street Journal's* excellent review of *Thomas Paine and the Clarion Call for American Independence* means that he'll be busy with speaking and book-signing engagements. After a break over Christmas, Unger will set to work on his next subject, and the rest, as they say, is history. ■

Christopher Browner '12 is associate editor at the Metropolitan Opera and regularly contributes to the *Taft Bulletin*.



Unger, at left, with his son, Richard, center, and mountain guide on the summit of Mont Blanc in 1991.

Unger, pictured here in the mid- to late-2000s, enjoyed powder skiing in Jackson Hole, along with other ski slopes over several decades.

To see the many books that Harlow Giles Unger has written, visit the website  
**HARLOWUNGERBOOKS.COM**



# Looking BACK

Students carried books to the second floor of Hulbert Taft Jr., Library. This monumental feat took under five hours with the aid of faculty and faculty spouses.



A front view of the library (without its current additions) in a decade adjacent to its opening.

This December marks the 50th anniversary of Library Move-in Day! On Wednesday, December 3, 1969, classes were canceled and the student body lined up to walk the entire collection (nearly 25,000 items) from the Woolworth Library in CPT across campus to the newly built Hulbert Taft, Jr. Library.

The year 1969 was not the first time students have filled bookshelves here at Taft! When construction was completed on the mezzanine in the Woolworth Library (now the Faculty Room) in 1953, it was students who carried books up the spiral staircase to the new bookcases.

—Beth Nolan Lovallo '93  
*The Leslie D. Manning Archives*

Students brought books to newly built mezzanine in the Woolworth Library in 1953.



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