By a Thread
How three professors are saving Cambodian refugees, 40 years after the genocide
SNAP!

Gold Stars

How would we navigate campus without Wilbur Cross’s iconic gold dome? These days students come here for cafe-style food and drink, student ID photos, financial aid info, and the like. But from its opening in 1939 until 1978, this was UConn’s main library. The teacher, author, and four-term governor for whom it’s named shared a literary passion with the current library’s namesake, Homer D. Babbidge, who grew the book collection at Wilbur Cross from 400,000 to more than one million.

UConn videographer Angelina Reyes braved freezing temps to get this star-trails photo on a clear, starry March night.

For the time-lapse video, go to s.uconn.edu/stars.
Jamie Spillane '87 MM, associate professor of music and director of choral studies, directs UConn's Concert Choir singing "Unclouded Day" in front of the Florence Cathedral. The 67 choir members spent spring break participating in the American Celebration of Music in Austria and Italy, which included memorable performances in Salzburg, the birthplace of Mozart, and under Michelangelo's most famous painting, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

"We sang in beautiful churches filled with rich history and magnificent architecture . . . we sang on the streets of Venice, Florence, and Rome. In each place, I witnessed the joy brought to the strangers who happened to stumble upon us," says Erin Brochu '21 (CLAS).

To hear from more students and to hear them singing in the streets and the chapels, visit s.uconn.edu/sing.
FEATURES

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Cambodian refugees, tortured 40 years ago, remain traumatized, suffering unexpected diseases today. A team of UConn professors is helping them here and in their homeland. By Julie (Stagis) Bartucca ‘10 (BUS, CLAS), photos by Peter Morenus

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WEB EXTRAS
magazine.uconn.edu

TICK TESTING
Ticks were harmed in the making of this video. x.uconn.edu/ticks

NIGHTIME LAPSE
The night sky over Wilbur Cross. x.uconn.edu/stars

SERENADE
Hear the Concert Choir sing its way across Europe. x.uconn.edu/sing

DEAR FRESHMEN:
Outgoing seniors share secrets, advice, and parting sorrows with incoming freshmen. x.uconn.edu/dearfreshmen

CAMBODIA
Pharmacy professor Thomas Buckley’s snaps from a semester in the Cambodian countryside. x.uconn.edu/cambodia

TOM’S TRIVIA
Online only this issue — the questions and the answers.

From the Editor

REFUGE
While talking with the writer of “By A Thread,” which begins on page 18, I had so many moments of amazement and horror as she relayed the story of Cambodian refugee Lila Plawecki. But it was something uplifting I found myself thinking about afterward — Plawecki’s relationship with two UConn pharmacy graduate students. They had become so close, the writer said, that the students had invited Plawecki to their May graduation.

Connor Walker ’18 Pharm.D. and Celeste Cheung ’18 Pharm.D. each worked with Plawecki during separate one-month clinic rotations at Khmer Health Advocates (KHA), which is devoted to the health care of Cambodian refugees in Connecticut and Massachusetts. In that short time they formed what all three say is a lasting bond.

A couple days after graduation Cheung shared photos, like the one above, of the three on a 20-60 mile bike ride they took last year. When I asked what prompted the adventure, Walker said simply, “We’re friends!” Cheung said, “We knew it would make her happy.” They had hardly set out to ride that many miles, says Walker: “but Lila kept asking if we could keep going.” And “she kept telling us to go faster,” adds Cheung. When they got home they did the math and were surprised to see it added up to 20 miles.

Just two years ago, such a thing would have been unthinkable for Plawecki. She was so many moments of amazement and horror as she relayed the story of Cambodian refugee Lila Plawecki. But it was some-thing uplifting I found myself thinking about afterward — Plawecki’s relationship with two UConn pharmacy graduate students. They had become so close, the writer said, that the students had invited Plawecki to their May graduation.

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A Little Push

This is similar to the “mailboxes” along the Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia. There were no swings or trees along Mirror Lake back in the ’40s. Donald Wright, Jr. ’50 (CLAS) Madison, Wisconsin, via our website

The I.Q. of a.I.

How much power will be required for a future humanlike robot? How much power does the Honda robot consume at rest, but alert or just walking? It looks pretty hefty.

Mariann Chinsky, UConn mom Madison, Wisconsin, via our website

Skating Rink

Thank you for publishing the photo of the skating rink in 1976. I spent quite a bit of time there as an employee, a student, and in the women’s ice hockey club. From 1973 on this club played colleges, including Princeton and URI. We had so much fun. So now you know it wasn’t just the men’s hockey team and the local youth that used that beautiful old rink.

Debra (Sadian) O’Connor ’75, ’82 Brentwood, New Hampshire, via postal mail

The old rink was the best! Jane Gebert ’90 (CLAS) Greenwich, Connecticut, via Facebook

I used to come home from college for Christmas and skated there a lot.

Susan Bethune via Facebook

Band Camp

TUP!

David Duarte ’93 (CLAS) South Windsor, Connecticut, via our website

Saving the Monarch

Just brought our milkweed seeds last weekend to plant in the spring!

Lynne Liston-Smith Tolland, Connecticut, via Facebook

Jackie Burns as Elphaba

Saw the show yesterday. Jackie, you were terrific! Making UConn proud.

Marielle (Zuk) Nyser ’92 (PHARM) South Windsor, Connecticut, via our website

Jackie is one of the hardest-working people in the entertainment industry.

Joe Peltehach ’86 (CLAS) Canton, Connecticut, via Instagram

Jonathan Statue

Reading the article “Good Luck and Good Grades” on the inside front cover of UConn Magazine’s spring 2018 edition brought back many happy memories. It should be noted that while the statue of the UConn Husky was conceived by President Harry Hartley, the expense to construct it was covered by donations from UConn alumni, whose names are listed on a plaque near the statue.

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DREW COLE ’14 (CLAS) ROCKS “THE VOICE”

“Surreal.”

That’s how UConn alum and “The Voice” contestant Drew Cole ’14 (CLAS) sums up his experience on the Emmy Award-winning reality-competition program.

“For the blind auditions, we’re sequestered in a hotel for a month perfecting a song. You know that you’re going to get in front of these celebrity coaches,” says Cole. “It’s especially important to put everything you have into that.”

That’s what Cole did, walking onstage with his signature guitar and hat and singing “Sex and Candy” by Marcy Playground for coaches Blake Shelton, Adam Levine, Alicia Keys, and Kelly Clarkson.

“What was fun about that song [was its] on-the-nose message,” recalls Cole. Coincidentally, Adam’s chair turned just as Cole was singing “Who’s that lounging in my chair, casting devious stares in my direction.” Then, at the end of the song, there’s the lyric “This surely is my dream, mama, this is my dream.”

“To be there and be successful,” says Cole, “it was a dream.”

Cole also turned Blake’s chair but ultimately decided to join Adam’s team, beginning an unforgettable journey that ended just shy of the top twelve and, he says, has opened doors for him. “It’s been damn cool. ‘The Voice’ helped set me apart and put me on a pedestal during my time on the show.”

Cole was an economics major at UConn but was “always taking music courses,” he says. His brand arguably got its start sophomore year when he posted a video of himself playing for his best friend Richie Home’s golden retriever Bailey. It got more than 14 million hits. And despite the fact that Bailey steals that particular show, it got the attention of people in the industry.

“I got hit up by a music producer in Los Angeles, Jimmy McCorman, who said ‘If you get yourself out here we’ll record some songs,’” says Cole. “I was inspired by the music industry.”

After graduation in 2014, he packed up his car and went back to California. He auditioned for “The Voice” twice before making it to the blind auditions.

“Third time’s a charm,” he says. —Tiffany Ventura Thiele

To read more of Thiele’s interview with Cole, go to magazine.uconn.edu/voice.
Physicia George ’10 (CLAS) and teammate Kaillie Humphries took bronze for Canada in the two-woman bobsled behind the U.S. (silver) and Germany (gold) at the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang. Believe it or not, George had never even been on a bobsled until about 15 months ago. But this is actually her third Olympics.

A premier sprint hurdler from Markham, Ontario, George was a finalist in the 100-meter hurdles in London in 2012 and Rio in 2016. She hopes to do it again at the 2020 Summer Games in Tokyo.

This is perhaps not surprising to her UConn teammates, who remember her prowess as a track and field star.

She excelled off the field at UConn as well, majoring in biology and minoring in physiology and neurobiology.

We caught up with George recently in PyeongChang and talked to her about becoming a bobsledder and how UConn helped shape her drive and mental toughness.

You just started doing the bobsled, right? How did that happen?

Kaillie Humphries, my current race teammate, contacted me after the Rio Olympics in search of a new brakeman to race with for PyeongChang. She and her coach, Stu McMillan (and now my bobsled coach), saw a lot of potential in me and saw the benefit of having an experienced athlete team up with Kaillie.

The idea of potentially becoming a summer and winter Olympian sparked my interest. I relish any opportunity to compete for my country. I agreed to come out and try going down the bobsled track before I made a final decision. While it was a bit of a shock to my system, I enjoyed the thrill of it and the challenge of seeing myself get better at the sport. I took two weeks off after the 2017 London Track and Field World Championship, and then I began full-time bobsled training for the winter.

Are there any similarities between the two sports?

I’d say the main similarity is that running is involved and being fast is a huge advantage. But it’s very different in the way that you run and create force. I had to get used to not swinging my hands while running and learning how to use my hands to transfer the force. I was creating with my feet into the sled.

In essence, I had to learn to push the sled and accelerate it instead of simply running behind it.

What’s your job on the bobsled?

I’m the push athlete; I sit behind the pilot. My job is to get the sled moving as fast as possible at the start. Bobsled is a sport that is won in hundredths of a second, so the start is essential to ensuring the run is fast. Then at the end of the track, I pull the brakes.

What is the scariest part?

You’re moving at speeds up to 99 mph and there are g-forces pressing down on your body. My first time in a bobsled was in Whistler, British Columbia, which is the fastest track with some of the highest g-forces of any bobsled track. I was sitting up way too high and, as a result, I felt those forces much more excessively. However, I had decided before-hand that I would take two runs that day. Thankfully, I stuck with it, because my second run felt better. And every run I’ve done since has gotten better and better.

Have you always been a thrill seeker?

I wouldn’t say I’m a thrill seeker. But I believe in stepping outside of your comfort zone to constantly challenge yourself.

Have you had any crashes?

Only one. It was in Lake Placid, New York. It was near the end of the run, we had about two more turns to go and flipped onto our side. In a crash, you still travel down the track, so we basically were sliding through two turns with our helmets and shoulders on the ice. The main thing I remember is just how loud it was. Thankfully, I had no injuries.

Did you have to build muscle weight to do the bobsled?

I had to start lifting much heavier than I do for track and field. I gained 12 pounds of lean muscle mass, added three inches to my biceps, one inch to my quad, and five inches to my hips and glutes.

Strength plays a huge role in bobsled — the sled weighs 363 pounds!

Have you always been an athlete?

Believe it or not, George was a finalist in the 100-meter hurdles for UConn track and field. I gained many life skills and made some lifelong friendships. — GRACE MEMO
This spring’s seniors shared advice with the incoming Husky Class of 2022 in a series of videos called “Dear Freshmen.” They shared favorite places on campus, best food and dining halls, ways to maximize academic potential and get a professor’s ear when needed, how to find a good roommate, and so much more. Here are just a few of to whet your appetite.

Find the entire Dear Freshmen video series on UConn’s YouTube channel or go to uconn.edu/dearfreshmen.

**DEAR FRESHMEN:**

If I could give you one piece of advice: “Stay away from Netflix! Do Huskython. Do Oozeball. Go out and meet new people because you only have 13 weeks per semester. College flies!” —Austin Barrett ’18 (BUS); accounting

Maxing out academics: “Show up to office hours. Perseverance will get you a long way. And that applies to everything else, like showing up to a club that you’ve never been to before or applying for a competitive program. It’s never easy. Just do it.” —Danni Dong ’18 (CLAS); psychological sciences

Living with a roommate: “Of course I looked them up on Facebook, but I didn’t try to draw assumptions. It might turn out that this person is your best friend for the rest of your life.” —Frank Amaefuna ’18 (CLAS); molecular & cell biology

“Dive in headfirst.” —Sean Palzere ’18 (ED); elementary education

I couldn’t survive without: “The app.” [myUConn] —Natalia Gutierrez ‘18 (ENG); computer science and engineering

If I could give you one piece of advice: “Divine in headfirst.” —Taylor Mayes ’18 (CLAS); environmental studies and political science

Maxing out academics: “I know this is kind of corny, but I would say pick a major that you’re passionate about. If it’s art, if it’s design, if it’s things around social justice and humanities, even if it seems like you’re not going to make money, I promise you that you will be where you need to be because your passions will take you.” —Sean Palzere ’18 (ED); elementary education

**THIS JUST IN**

**INVASION OF THE BODY-SNATCHING ZOMBIE FUNGUS**

UConn researchers recently documented in *Nature Scientific Reports* a gory and fascinating relationship between periodical cicadas and a fungus that infects them, hijacks their behavior, and causes a scene straight out of a zombie movie.

“It’s a fun story for us, not for the cicadas,” says UConn ecology and evolutionary biology researcher and adjunct faculty member John Cooley.

Though researchers have known about the fungus for around 100 years, Cooley and his colleagues, postdoctoral student David Marshall and lab technician Kathy Hill, recently published new findings about the infection.

The story starts with the cicadas’ emergence, when around 2 to 5 percent are infected with spores of a fungus called *Massospora cicadina*. The fungus infects both male and female cicadas. However, the researchers discovered that early in the cicadas’ emergence, the infection—at this point called a Stage I infection—causes curious behavioral changes in the males.

In addition to their normal mating behaviors, the infected males will exhibit wing-flapping that is typically seen only in female cicadas. The infected male cicadas put on a ruse, much like the Sirens of Greek mythology—they flick their wings like a female and lure in unsuspecting males. Those healthy males then get close enough to the infected cicadas to be exposed to spores, which leads to their doom. The diseased males will also attempt to copulate with the uninfected females, exposing them to even more spores.

And back to that horror movie—it’s not a pretty doom. The infection results in the insect’s abdomen becoming distended as it fills with powderly, white fungal spores eventually to the point of bursting open or falling off altogether. When the abdomen falls off, the genitalia are lost with it—but that doesn’t stop the cicadas from their eager quest to copulate.

Cicadas that have been infected by the spores passed around by the initially infected cicadas exhibit what is called a Stage II infection. Stage II follows the same infection cycle as that seen in Stage I infections. These cicadas in some cases act normal—despite missing genitalia and large portions of their abdomens, they go about their business, spewing spores wherever they go. Now the fungus’s job is complete—the spores are spread and ready to infect future generations.

“This phenomenon is the ultimate evolutionary arms race, where the hosts lose because they are rendered sterile or evolutionarily irrelevant by the fungus in order to spread the spores,” says Cooley. He anticipates that this area of research will continue to heat up in coming years, as more details of these arms races are uncovered. This type of research has to be performed in the field, and it’s hard to predict where the fungus will be present. The best sites for studying these unfortunate cicadas have been almost stumbled upon. As Cooley explains, “I’d be driving along and say ’Holy smoke, there are a lot of dead cicadas in this spot. What’s going on?’”—Elaina Hancock ’09 MS

Illustration by Jess Carrero
Rising seniors Jessica Hinchley and Mia Dupuis at Mystic Aquarium’s ray touch pool, tracking how ray movement differs when guests are not in the exhibit.

Romano conducts her research — on the health and immune systems of endangered species — at UConn Avery Point, having moved the aquarium’s labs to that campus.

“I now have this beautiful lab space which we didn’t have at the aquarium,” says Romano. “And I have access to students, faculty, and a library. All of this enables us to raise the level of our research.”

Class labs and independent projects, meanwhile, often take place at the aquarium.

“The ability to go to Mystic Aquarium and see the animals firsthand, to have access to the collection, to get behind the scenes to see what the public doesn’t get to see, and to be able to listen to the staff talk about what it’s really like to work at aquariums — for a student, that’s magical,” says Bucklin.

The two teachers say they get to know each student personally and work “aggressively” to match them with meaningful practical research experiences. That could mean at-sea fieldwork, internships, or teaching assistantships.

Romano recalls taking a Native American student with her to Alaska to collect samples from wild belugas. “Being exposed to that culture and individualizing what belugas mean to them, it was really powerful for her.”

Bucklin says she asked to teach this class because it is the one that inspired her to become a marine biologist. She remembers being captivated by the “strange and lovely — and mostly tiny and long dead — marine animals” she studied in that class, which were brought to life by the dynamic professor.

“When watching what my professor did inspired me,” she says. “And I’ve always wanted to be that professor — the one the students watch and say, ‘okay I want to do that.’”

**Class Description**

This course is a mix of lecture and labs, and in both cases a primary goal is to stimulate critical thinking.

“Conservation biology is a field that has no easy answers,” says Bucklin. “You may be trying to save animals, but what about other interests, such as oil drilling, commercial shipping, or commercial fishing?” In the name of finding the most creative, efficient solutions, says Bucklin, “It’s important to help students learn to see all sides of a problem, to be devil’s advocates.”

Another mission is to help students to envision all the things they can do with a marine sciences degree. Romano is the perfect partner for that endeavor, says Bucklin. “The aquarium is such a wonderful outlet for so many kids to see what they can do.”

Indeed, Romano reaps off myriad possibilities — animal care and training, water quality, exhibit design, public education and outreach, research, animal husbandry, vet services, graphics.

Having Mystic for show and tell helps illuminate lecture material, too. “I gave this lecture on dolphins and whales, went into the various toothed whales and then talked about the adaptations of belugas,” says Romano. “And then we went out to the aquarium’s beluga habitat and had the beluga lay out so the students could see these characteristics. We had the whole vocalize and showed students its unique feeding behaviors. Seeing it first-hand is an amazing learning experience.”

Students also observed firsthand how seals and sea lions differ. After learning about it in the classroom, they watched the Mystic denizens strut their stuff.

“Conservation biology is a field that inspires me,” she says. “And I’ve always wanted to do that work. That last is a big caveat. On the spring day I caught up with the two teachers, they said they were inspired by the dynamic professor. I can’t imagine a better partner. We come to each other’s classes when we’re in town. That last is a big caveat. On the spring day UConn Magazine caught up with the two of them, Bucklin had returned from Finland the night before and Romano was leaving for Alaska in a couple days. Both are active researchers and actively recruit students to help with that research. And, that classic example of the shark and the remora, the partnership between the two is a symbiotic one.

**Why We Want to Take This Class**

The fieldwork is the big draw, of course — not just at Mystic, but also collecting data from a boat on Long Island Sound, and in visits to estuaries and tidal zones.

“The intimacy of the class is compelling, too. During a lecture on estuaries, every student contributed and each was called on by their first name. We had a chance to ask them what their favorite things about this class had been so far. Here are some of their answers: ‘Going behind the scenes at the aquarium, it was so cool to be close to the animals. The beluga whale came right up to us.’”

“Tracy gave a marine mammals lecture and then we got to do a demonstration and give JOE the male beluga a hand sign so he would open and close his jaw. It’s one of those behaviors they learn that helps keep the animals healthy.”

“Seeing how significant a role the aquarium plays in research conservation, realizing that without the ability to study these animals in the aquarium, we’d understand so much less about wild populations.”

“I liked the dogfish dissection.”

“Everything here is more hands-on. Monday we were at the coast looking at organisms and sea worms and we were able to bring some back to the lab, to look at a polychaeta [a marine worm also known as a bristle worm] under the microscope.”

“There are so many examples of what we can actually do career-wise.”

“Having guests like Dr. Romano come in and seeing what she does.”

“The interaction with the animal is something, getting to see the way they actually work in the real environments is especially helpful if you want to go into marine mammal conservation like I do.”

“LISA STIEPOCK"
In a study recently published in the *Journal of the Mechanical Behavior of Biomedical Materials*, Wei reports that the medical community has been aware of silk fibroin for a while. Yet no one had ever tried to make a dense polymer composite out of it.

Working with UConn associate professor Dianny Zhang, a mechanical engineer, Wei’s lab began testing silk fibroin in various composite forms, looking for the right combination and proportion of different materials to achieve optimum strength and flexibility—and finding it! In a study recently published in the *Journal of the Mechanical Behavior of Biomedical Materials*, Wei reports that her high-performance biodegradable composite showed strength and flexibility characteristics that are among the highest ever recorded. —Colin Potrias

For more on the study, go to s.uconn.edu/silkbones.

**PASTA SALAD 2.0**

This chickpea and rotini salad is one dish from Dining Service’s new, national award-winning line of Healthy & Lean Bean Pastas. All are vegetarian, low-carb, gluten-free, non-GMO, and high in both fiber and protein. Also, a quick straw poll at one dining hall found students insisting they were absolutely delicious as well.

**SPIDER SILK KEY TO FIXING BROKEN BONES**

UConn researchers have created a biodegradable composite made of silk fibers that can be used to repair broken load-bearing bones without the complications presented by other materials. Repairing major load-bearing bones, such as those in the leg, can be a long and uncomfortable process. Doctors may install a metal plate to support the bone as it fuses and heals. Yet some metals leach ions into surrounding tissue, causing inflammation and irritation. Metals are also very stiff. If a metal plate bears too much load, the new bone may grow back weaker and be vulnerable to fracture. Seeking a solution to the problem, UConn professor Mei Wei, a materials scientist and biomedical engineer, turned to spiders and moths for inspiration.
On his book *Prince of Providence*, about the city’s notorious mayor, being turned into a play: “Politics is theater, and Buddy’s life was a huge drama.”
Mike Stanton, associate professor of journalism, Associated Press, March 16, 2018

On evaluating how much plastic is in the ocean by viewing it from space: “To know that it’s actually plastic and not something else floating or even a bubble or a whitecap, we have to have more of a sense of the spectral fingerprint and what’s unique to plastics.”
Heidi Dierssen, professor of marine sciences and geography, Newsweek, March 21, 2018

On how the changing acidity of ocean surface waters is a good thing for seaweed, including edible seaweed: “There are winners and losers in ocean acidification. Organisms that produce carbonate shells like shellfish, they’re a loser. They can’t handle the lower pH. They can’t deposit as much calcium in their shells. On the other hand, seaweeds like kelp, they actually pick up that carbon dioxide because now it’s easier for them to do photosynthesis.”
Charlie Yarish, marine biology professor, CBS’s “60 Minutes,” April 29, 2018

On helping students who have experienced bullying and violence: “A trauma-informed approach is critical for schools.”
Sandra Chafouleas, professor of educational psychology, Washington Post, April 3, 2018

On the sexist nature of a new video game called “Super Seducer”: “The game appears to essentialize women’s and men’s sexuality by assuming that all people are basically the same, leaving no space for individual preferences. The game also seems to fall into the sexist trope of assuming that women’s sexuality is passive—that men ‘make a move’ and that women ‘react.’”
Amanda Denes, associate professor of communication, Newsweek, March 14, 2018

On Kanye West’s take on slavery: “His music stems from those slave spirituals… He ought to know that even when blacks were enslaved, their minds were not enslaved.”
Manisha Sinha, history professor, Time magazine, May 2, 2018

On pitching for the Boston Red Sox: “I was a Yankees fan. The keyword there is ‘was.’”
Former UConn star Matt Barnes, ABC News, May 9, 2018

On a study finding that blue light like that from smartphones can be linked to some cancers: “The most efficient suppression of melatonin is with that beautiful blue light”
Richard Stevens, UConn Health, CNN, April 17, 2018

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On how a study finding that blue light like that from smartphones can be linked to some cancers:
By a Thread

Cambodian refugees, severely tortured 40 years ago, are suffering from trauma-related diseases today. A team of UConn professors is helping them here and in their homeland.

By Julie (Stagis) Bartucca ‘10 (BUS, CLAS) | Illustrations by Michelle Kondrich

After years of civil war, Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge regime invaded the Cambodian capital city on April 17, 1975. Dressed in black uniforms, the communist soldiers forced two million Phnom Penh residents from their homes, saying they were being evacuated briefly to avoid American bombings. Instead, they walked in droves for days. Some recall being separated from family members; others remember being tied together by sewing thread and warned that if the thread broke they would be shot.

The evacuation was, of course, not about protecting the Cambodians but about serving the Khmer Rouge mission to create collective farms. Those Cambodians who survived the journey were brought to work camps in the countryside and tortured and starved for more than three years.

Lila Plawecki was 10.

The tears flow easily as Plawecki, now 53, describes the abuse she and her par-
ents endured. Her father, once a dignified soldier, was yoked like a cow, forced to pull carts through the fields.

“After that, I never see him,” Plawecki says. “They kill him.”

In a regime focused on agricultural revolution, those from the city, “new people,” such as Plawecki’s mother, were tortured particularly harshly and in many ways, including through starvation. While reaching into a hole in the ground, trying to catch crabs for her family to eat, Plawecki’s mother was bitten by a venomous snake. She died two days later.

The orphaned Lila was taken to a work camp for children and forced to labor in the fields from sunup to sundown with hardly anything to eat. The Khmer Rouge berated her, telling her she wasn’t working hard enough. They rapped her fingers with bars of hot wax, slashed her hands and permanently damaging her nerves.

Still not a teenager, Lila was jailed and raped and starved. The Khmer Rouge ate in front of their prisoners, giving them nothing. Lila and the others stole any food they could find—even if that meant bugs or putrid, rotting rice—and hid it to eat when the soldiers were gone. Sent to collect bamboo from the forests or elephants for the Khmer Rouge to eat, they would gnaw meat from dead cows or elephants for eat when the soldiers were gone. Sent to toil in front of their prisoners, giving them no food, they experienced hyper tension, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and death from diabetic complications at a rate six times that of the general population.

In October 2016 she suffered a bad fall at work. “After that, I just wanted suicide because I couldn’t work for a living, no income,” says Plawecki. While reaching into the hole in the ground, trying to catch crabs for her family to eat, Plawecki’s mother was bitten by a venomous snake. She died two days later.

“The genocide continues,” says Thomas Buckley, UConn associate clinical professor of pharmacy. “It manifests itself now as chronic disease.”

In October 2016 she suffered a bad fall at work. “After that, I just wanted suicide because I couldn’t work for a living, no income,” says Plawecki. While reaching into the hole in the ground, trying to catch crabs for her family to eat, Plawecki’s mother was bitten by a venomous snake. She died two days later.

“Sister”

For more than two decades, Plawecki worked on engine pistons at a machine shop. The detailed work required manual dexterity, but the incessant pain in her once-broken fingers made the task difficult. Suffering on the job and severely depressed, she decided two years later, in 1990.

“Her sister, she came to the U.S. in 1990. In two hours, she expresses her gratitude to him. Then she either lets Knoch translate or she takes Knoch’s encouragement and says it herself, in this time in English.

“It’s a complete turnaround from the person she was less than two years ago: withdrawn, depressed and scared to talk, says Knoch. “Now, if she wants to cry, she cries; if she wants to laugh, she laughs. She’s not afraid. And she’s very brave.”

Eat, Walk, Sleep... is being widely implemented by UConn researchers, whose studies have proven it is particularly effective for traumatized patients with diabetes or pre-diabetes.

“Broken Courage”

Over the past 12 years, the UConn researchers and their partners at KHA have treated thousands of Cambodian refugees with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the related cortisol spikes were causing many of their patients’ chronic physical ailments, Buckley says. The researchers have taught many to ask the right questions.

“There’s a tree in Cambodia called the kapok tree. When the wind blows, the leaves remain silent,” Buckley says. “The Cambodians were taught to be like the kapok tree and to remain mute to survive the Khmer Rouge.

“ Physicians have a hard time breaking through,” he says. “The refugees won’t talk to health care providers about their trauma—and U.S. health care providers don’t ask.”

Plawecki now visits doctors with UConn pharmacy graduate students Connor Walker and Celeste Cheung in tow to make sure all questions get an answer.

Between that and the intervention from Buckley and others at KHA, she is now treated for PTSD, depression, pain, and hypertension, and is learning the Eat, Walk, Sleep curriculum prescribed to prevent diabetes.

Initially developed by KHA, “Eat, Walk, Sleep” is a culturally specific framework promoting evidence-based dietary and exercise routines, and sleep hygiene practices. The program is being widely implemented by UConn researchers, whose studies have proven it is particularly effective for traumatized patients with diabetes or pre-diabetes. Through the 18-month program, Plawecki has picked up several healthy habits, like eating many more vegetables and brown rice instead of white. She walks 30 to 40 minutes every day, and has learned to meditate and not to watch TV before bed. “It helps a lot, relax my mind and I don’t have bad dreams,” she says.

But perhaps the most important piece of “Eat, Walk, Sleep” — and the one reported offered through KHA—is the social component. The curriculum is delivered in group sessions, designed to combat the social isolation that studies have shown can be a stronger predictor of death than clinical risk factors like heart disease.

Plawecki views the people at KHA as family. The students who visit the doctor with her also took her on a 20-mile bike ride along the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and occasionally attend her Buddhist temple in Bristol. They call her their “Cambodian mom,” and gave her a ticket for their pharmacy school graduation.

In two hours, she expresses her gratitude for all of them by name—Bong Vy, Mr. Tom, Mary [skull: clinical director of KHA], Dr. Miller, Connor, Celeste—no fewer than seven times. She says she prays for them every night.

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workers as they deliver a curriculum on “Eat, Walk, Sleep” to workers in Cambodian villages via videconferencing this summer. The six village health workers on the ground will work with 60 new patients in remote villages who were not previously engaged in treatment and will be tracking their outcomes into next year.

The goal of PLUS-Cambodia is not only to reach patients on the ground in Cambodia but also to leverage the expertise of health aides in both places to improve treatment in the future.

Additionally, Buckley has long emphasized medication management in his work with refugees, and he also studied medication adherence during his time in Cambodia this spring. When he first connected with KHA, they had realized patients were not following their prescribed medication regimens.

“People were getting over-the-counter medicines. Lack of knowledge and proper education about their conditions furthers the problem. One patient Buckley met in Cambodia this year was a 52-year-old man from a remote village who has diabetes, hypertension, pain and gastrointestinal issues, and a long history of PTSD and depression.

The man’s only access to medication is when the Cambodian Diabetes Association’s mobile clinic visits his village, which might occur only once every few months. It’s impossible to provide patients in the villages enough medicine in one visit to cover them until the next, Buckley says. And this man, like other patients of his in Cambodia, is generous with his medication — too generous in fact. He continually sacrifices the treatment that could save him to help others in his family and village, many of whom may have similar symptoms to his, but probably shouldn’t be taking the same medicines.

“It’s difficult to see him deteriorate,” Buckley wrote in an email from Cambodia in March. “This was obviously true for the CDC clinic MD who was with me on these village visits, as he was uncharacteristically sensitive and emotional about this man, obviously upset that we can’t help him more.”

The doctor was struggling to maintain the stoicism typically required to administer healing concepts of his Buddhist faith “knowing he was sending the patient back into an environment filled with the social determinants of health that we can’t control, and therefore the vicious cycle of health care will continue,” Buckley wrote.

This vicious cycle is exactly what Buckley and his partners are trying to prevent, in as many populations as possible.

“We want to look at how what we’ve learned can be applied to other traumatized refugee communities . . . can we prevent some of these debilitating conditions in other groups? That’s what we really want to see.”

“They are angels”

What about those currently experiencing trauma-induced cortisol spikes, like Syrians coming to the U.S. today? “In 20 years, will they have the same issues?” Buckley asks.

He believes they will — unless the U.S. government makes changes to help these populations when they get here. Effecting that change is the team’s goal.

While their initiatives directly help Cambodian refugees, the solutions Berthold, Buckley, and Wagner have found can be used to prevent the same chronic health problems from affecting other refugee communities.

“We want to look at how what we’ve learned can be applied to other traumatized refugee communities that come to the United States. We know the Cambodian community is a model of what happens to a traumatized community long term,” Buckley says.

“Can we prevent some of these debilitating conditions in other groups? Can lay workers in the home country and in the diaspora leverage each other’s efforts to address diabetes? That’s what we really want to see.”

At least for now, for Plawecki, their work is paying off.

“We’ve seen dramatic improvements in her pain and sleep issues, a reduction in medicine, and the social isolation piece is huge,” Buckley says.

“Everyone supports me,” says Plawecki. “I feel more strong; I’m so happy.”

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“Everyone supports me,” says Plawecki. “I feel more strong; I’m so happy.”

“They are angels. If I don’t meet this group, I probably suicide. It’s true.”

For photos of the players and places, visit s.uconn.edu/cambodia.
As you'd expect of an institution that got its start in 1881, UConn has its fair share of curiosities — quirky corners and obscure objects that have accumulated a wealth of stories over the years. Call it “Hidden UConn,” because most of these charming oddities are often overlooked during the daily bustle of a great university, even if some are right in front of our noses. Can you name the whats and wheres of these peculiar facets that make UConn Storrs unique? (Find the answers on pages 50 to 51.)

By Tom Breen '00 (CLAS) | Photos by Peter Morenus
Finally, consider that some of these infections can carry lasting effects, such as those seen in post-treatment Lyme disease syndrome (PTLDS), ranging from fatigue and malaise to arthritis, cardiitis, and neurological symptoms.

“Would you rather wait or would you rather know?” asks lab technician Heather Haycock ’03 (CAHNR), who works at the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab (CVMDL) smack dab in the middle of the UConn campus.

CVMDL is a little-known resource offering powerful data and potential peace of mind for those who have picked ticks off of themselves or loved ones (two- or four-legged loved ones). The lab tests around 600 ticks each year — provided by clients who take the test results to health care providers.

Why have your ticks tested? “Knowledge is power,” says lab technician Maureen Sims ’06 (CAHNR). The knowledge will get you targeted, appropriate treatment. Or conversely, it will give you peace of mind that the tick you found didn’t harbor any nasty pathogens.

IF YOU PUT A TICK IN A BLENDER...

A recent visit to CVMDL finds Sims leaning over a dissecting microscope, bright lights and lens trained on a specimen that resembles a parched gray watermelon seed. The tick was recently submitted and is ready for identification and testing.

“This one is a female deer tick, and Oh!, she’s moving!” Sim’s head pops up from the scope and she points out eight legs slowly beginning to stir as...
Like symptoms and presents with flu-like symptoms. Spread by deer tick, this presents with flu-like symptoms typically within a week or two of being bitten by a deer tick. It is estimated that the pathogen will be transmitted after 24 hours of attachment to the host.

**Tick-borne relapsing fever caused by *Borrelia miyamotoi***

Spread by deer ticks, this presents with flu-like symptoms and joint aches and a high fever. Transmisión can happen as soon as 15 minutes after the tick becomes attached.

**Babesiosis caused by the parasite *Babesia***

This presents with flu-like symptoms typically within a week or two of being bitten by a deer tick. It is estimated that the pathogen will be transmitted after 24 hours of attachment to the host.

**Anaplasmosis***

This presents with flu-like symptoms and joint aches and a high fever. Transmisión can happen as soon as 15 minutes after the tick becomes attached.

**Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF)**

Spread by the brown dog tick, dog tick, or Lone Star tick, RMSF is caused by the bacterium *Rickettsia rickettsii* and can be fatal. The disease typically starts with flu-like symptoms often accompanied by a high fever. Transmisión can happen as soon as 15 minutes after the bite. Symptoms may include fever, headache, encephalitis, confusion, and seizures, to name a few. However, some do not develop symptoms.

**Lyme caused by *Borrelia bergdorfi***

Borrelia burgdorfi, a tick-borne bacterium, transmits after 24 hours for Lyme disease. The third punch Powassan packs is a deadly one, with a reported 10 percent of cases ending fatally. Powassan is also quick, with transmission in as little as 15 minutes after the tick dug in, unlike the often-touted 24 to 48 hours required for Lyme disease. The third punch Powassan packs is that it has no cure; only supportive treatments can be administered with hopes the patient will pull through.

**THE "NEW" DEADLY DISEASE***

As a component of the pathobiology and veterinary science department at UConn, CVMDL also serves as the Connecticut State Veterinary Diagnostic Lab. Work with the diagnostic labs and research labs may overlap, expertise is shared, and collaborations are frequent. Within the department, focus tends to be on studying animal diseases. But many of these diseases are shared with the human population, says Guillermo Risatti, associate professor of pathobiology and head of Diagnostic Testing Services at CVMDL. Powassan virus, the newest tick-borne infection to make headlines in Connecticut, is one of those diseases.

Powassan itself is new. It was first described in the 1950s in a fatal case of encephalitis in a young boy and is in the same family as West Nile and the Zika virus, says Risatti. But humans were seen as more of an incidental host for Powassan, which mostly appeared in woodchucks and was carried by a tick not typically infected in people. Then the virus started to show up in the deer tick population, the same ticks often pulled off people.

Though only one case of Powassan has been reported in Connecticut, there were 21 cases in the U.S. in 2016, and the virus is a serious one. It packs a deadly punch, with a reported 10 percent of cases ending fatally. Powassan is also quick, with transmission in as little as 15 minutes after the tick dug in, unlike the often-touted 24 to 48 hours required for Lyme disease. The third punch Powassan packs is that it has no cure; only supportive treatments can be administered with hopes the patient will pull through.

“This is a public health crisis in the making,” says Verardi, who in addition to teaching pathobiology works as a virologist and vaccine developer. He naturally started thinking about a vaccine when news of Powassan in Connecticut broke. Since most of the tick-borne diseases in our area are bacterial and are relatively easily treated, the issue of vaccines for tick-borne diseases had been on his back burner.

**DISEASES TYPICALLY TRANSMITTED BY TICKS IN THE NORTHEAST***

**Lyme caused by *Borrelia burgdorfi***

Spread by deer ticks, Lyme disease presents with flu-like symptoms and is typically accompanied by joint pain or discomfort. Though many look for the bull’s-eye rash, this is not seen in all cases. Left untreated for days to months, Lyme can cause fever, pain, heart problems, nerve pain, and neurological issues, such as depression and memory troubles. Ticks must be attached for at least 48 hours for Lyme disease to be transmitted to the host.

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**Powassan***

Transmitted by the deer tick, and caused by the virus of the same name, the disease is transmitted in as little as 15 minutes after a bite. Symptoms may include fever, headache, encephalitis, confusion, and seizures, to name a few. However, some do not develop symptoms.

**Alpha-gal allergy***

If bitten by the Lone Star tick, individuals may develop a severe allergy to mammalian meats (for example, beef and pork). The allergic reaction can occur a few hours after eating the meat and may present with hives, itching, gastrointestinal symptoms, and possible anaphylaxis.

*Information from experts at the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab and cdgov.
Disease infections. Where, in the human population, giving doctors forecasting what diseases might start popping up, and len counts, this expanded surveillance data could in growing animal populations, the growing tick ment, ”Risatti warns. As long as the virus remains around and acting as a great disease spreader. What if there were a way to monitor disease activity before these diseases even had a chance to make their way into the human population? One way to do this is by putting ticks to work for us, and CVM-DL has plans to do that. Risatti explains, ”Ticks are a big deal for us; they are real-life biosensors,” feeding from and sampling wild animal populations, the same animals that may harbor diseases like Powas-san. Along with the 500 to 600 ticks submitted each year, typically pulled off humans and domestic animals, there are plenty of ticks hitchhiking their way to CVM-DL. ”We receive a lot of wildlife submitted for rabies testing,” says Risatti, ”and they often have ticks on them. What we are doing now is saving those ticks for future testing.”

Like old buddies, with ticks come tick-borne pathogens. Tick-borne pathogens persist in the animal population for the most part because they aren’t usually fatal to their hosts. If an animal harboring the Powassan virus isn’t sickened, it will carry on with its life, infecting and ferrying ticks around and acting as a great disease spreader. ”These animals will keep the virus in the environment,” Risatti warns. As long as the virus remains in growing animal populations, the growing tick population is more likely to carry it. Just like forecasts for weather, UV levels, or pollen counts, this expanded surveillance data could forecast what diseases might start popping up, and where, in the human population, giving doctors tools to quickly diagnose and treat tick-borne disease infections.

This data will also come in handy for keeping tabs on tick species found here. With different ticks come different or “new” tick-borne pathogens, ones creeping closer to our region, such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Powassan isn’t the only new disease we should be worried about. Verardi stresses, ”What we have here isn’t just a problem with those diseases. What we have here is a problem with ticks!”

So why are ticks such a problem here in the Northeast? The topic, like the ticks, seems to pop up everywhere, and it’s hard to avoid because the Northeast happens to be a fantastic place to be a tick. Dr. Buschmann explains, ”We’re near the ocean and there’s more moisture here, making it a favorable climate for ticks.” Essentially, we are living among more and more hosts, with fewer predators, in conditions ticks thrive in. As wildlife populations grow and become comfortable with the cushy suburban lifestyle, they will support an ever-growing, ever-hungry tick population.

PROTECT YOURSELF

What can we do to stay safe? For one thing, we can make our yards less tick-friendly. Ticks rely on cool, damp, and dark locations, where they hang out and can keep from drying out. Stone walls, say, are ideal. Fortunately for ticks these habitats are also frequented by squirrels, chipmunks, and mice, who play the roles of a taxi and a source of blood for them to feast on. Ticks cannot fly or jump, but they are particu-larly good at hitchhiking, using a behavior called “questing” — clinging to the tips of grass or other vegetation with their rear legs and using its front limbs to grab on passersby. While the tick hitchh-kees a ride and starts chomping down, its rodent host carries on with its life, scurrying about looking for food and making rodent babies. The tick will hang out here until it is full; then it will ditch its current host in search of different host, whether it be another rodent, a dog, a child — you name it. There are few places these rodents and their blood sucking passengers can’t access.

Susan Pelton of the UConn Home and Garden Center (HGC) stresses the importance of elimin-at ing tick and rodent habitats — those cool, dark places they prefer. ”Landscape modification provides a barrier to ticks and can be very effective at managing ticks — use dry wood mulch or crushed stones, just no fresh mulch or leaf litter. Keep that clear!” Maintain clear paths and also provide a dry mulched perimeter around stone walls, plantings, and in areas close to the forest’s edge. A fact sheet provided by the HGC notes that 82 percent of deer ticks found in a yard will be around nine feet from the edge of the wooded area. Keeping yards tidy and increasing sunlight conditions are key strategies. Ask yourself, ”Would a tick hate this?” If the answer is yes, do it.
Michael Bradford’s ‘Brainpower Job’

By Kenneth Best
Photos by Peter Morenus

“After that night I thought, ‘I didn’t know people really did this, and this is what I want to do,’” says Michael Bradford of the first time he saw live theater. Now head of the Department of Dramatic Arts in the School of Fine Arts and artistic director of the Connecticut Repertory Theatre, Bradford ’98 (BGS) was then a systems operator in the Navy. Bradford grew up in Arkansas City, Kansas, and later moved to San Jose, California. He remembers reading stories about American history and the African-American poetry of writers such as Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, and Sonia Sanchez that he found in books collected by his mother. He wanted to become an English teacher.

“I thought, ‘I’m going to write the great American novel,’” he recalls. “When I started reading those works, I thought. ‘Poetry is where I really want to live.’ I wrote a lot of bad poetry in those days, but I loved it.”

No one in his family had ever gone to college. After high school, Bradford sold encyclopedias, worked in fast food restaurants, and then had a series of jobs through an employment agency in San Jose, where he told the person in charge of hiring that he loved to read and write. “She said, ‘This is not a brainpower job,’” says Bradford, with a smile.

Having initially turned down an invitation to join the U.S. Navy from a recruiter he met during a chance encounter, Bradford reconsidered, wanting that “brainpower job.” He enlisted.

It was during a posting in Seattle, while on a date, that he ended up at the theater. He wanted to see a jazz quartet, but his date had tickets to see “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom,” August Wilson’s landmark play about the African-American experience in the 20th century. For Bradford, the performance was life changing.

“Thank goodness I was in the military because I don’t know if you know, but every base has a theater. Every base. And rank doesn’t matter, none of that matters.” You could just go in and say you were an actor or a playwright and they’d invite you to act or write, he recalls. “I had five or six years where I was just living in community theater on bases.”

After one rehearsal in Bangor, Washington, he told the director of the play he was working on that he was a writer. Though he had never written for theater, he turned one of his short stories into a play and then continued to write as he moved to new postings.

By the time he arrived at what would be his last post, the U.S. Submarine Base in Groton, Connecticut, Bradford was married with a family. He took advantage of an early release program from the Navy, was hired by Electric Boat, and started taking classes at UConn Avery Point, where he earned his undergrad-
“You need a scuba tank to for the bottom of the ocean.”

Bradford works with students in the Nafe Katter Theatre during a playwriting class.

Bradford then enrolled in an MFA program at Brooklyn College, where he worked as a teaching assistant. During this time, he began writing, reading, and performing at Home Depot, and teaching writing at Avery Point.

A reading of one of his first plays, “Living in the Wind,” at the Eugene O’Neill Centre in Waterford resulted in a staging of the play. He went on to graduate degree. Bradford then enrolled in an MFA program at Brooklyn College, where he commuted three days a week while also delivering newspapers, working at Home Depot, and teaching writing at Avery Point.

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Bradford works with students in the Nafe Katter Theatre during a playwriting class.
On May 22, 2010, Floridian Laszlo Hanyecz ordered two pizzas from Dominos. It’s not the kind of thing that usually makes the history books. Yet his name goes on a list that includes Max Pruss, the captain of the Hindenburg, and Fred Kap, the magician who followed The Beatles on The Ed Sullivan Show — unfortunate men who will forever be remembered for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Laszlo Hanyecz’s mistake was to buy the pizzas with bitcoins, 10,000 of them, a value of about $41, the first recorded bitcoin purchase. Had he held on to his bitcoins for a few more years, he could have sold them for $100,000,000. Or bought 6,253,909 large pepperoni pizzas.

It is stories like this that suggest bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies may have once been silly, but now they matter.

“The first time I taught the subject was 2016,” says David Noble, from his office in the UConn School of Business. “We said, hey — do you know about this?”

In addition to teaching business and management courses, Noble is head of UConn’s new Peter J. Werth Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. The 40-year-old Woonsocket, Rhode Island, native’s boyishness is accented by the red Chuck Taylors he wears during our interview.

If great minds are reflected by untidy offices and desks, his mind is clearly great. There’s an empty dog crate on the floor beneath the window. On a table, an easel and a painting he’s begun, tubes of paint all around.

“You want to be able to explain it to people,” says Noble. “Even my colleagues don’t really know what all this stuff means. A lot of people still say, ‘What are you talking about?’”

Think of it (to oversimplify) this way: suppose seven poker players each buy 100 bitcoins. It just wasn’t on their radar screen. It was wide open. I started by just asking around, saying, ‘Hey — do you know about this?’”

Bitcoin Believers
IF YOU CAN UNDERSTAND PIZZA AND POKER, YOU CAN UNDERSTAND BITCOIN — AND DAVID NOBLE BELIEVES YOU SHOULD

By Peter Nelson
Illustrations by Andrew Colin Beck
software that's infallible and doesn't . . . except there is no end of the game. game, Siri knows who owes what to whom of this — I bet five chips.” At the end of the pot, someone says, “Hey Siri — keep track stead of shoving a stack of chips into the chip is a bitcoin. worth even more in the future. people will pay, believing they will be the chips goes up, according to how much 50 cents a chip, and so on. The value of miners, and the power of those miners collectively, has a lot to do with the safety of the network and the currency: THE [MAN?] WHO INVENTED BITCOIN “Crypto” is slightly misleading as a prefix, because it means “secret or hidden.” One might suppose they’re called “crypto-currencies” because no one understands what they are exactly, a mysterious virtual monetary system that exists only in cyberspace. In fact, the prefix describes the technology that encrypts and protects identities and data, but the system is open-source, transparent, and therefore decentralized — and that’s its strength. An investor who buys a bitcoin is assigned a personal key, impenetrable or encrypt- ed in a way that is impossible to hack or reverse-engineer and that key becomes a kind of digital safe. The algorithms of the blockchain create a peer-to-peer decentralized banking system, without any middleman or data-hoarding corpo-rate entity handling or authorizing the transactions. “The beauty of bitcoin,” Noble explains, “is the combination of technol-ogy and the elegance and simplicity of that. It’s the methodology with which you’re able to backtrack the entire history of the bitcoin. There’s no single ground-breaking piece of technology. It’s the consensus mechanism for proof of work. It started as a nine-page white paper, re-leased two weeks after Lehman Brothers crashed, saying, ‘Here’s how we’re going to build digital currency, which is not reliant on any central bank.”’ The invention of bitcoin is credited to white paper author Satoshi Nakagoma, with the caveat that no one knows if he’s a real person or if the name represents a group of rebel programmers. “Whoever wrote that white paper had to have a connection to the cypherpunk movement,” Noble says. “They are aware of things that were firmly entrenched within that cypherpunk community. It was almost an act of ministry, a political movement that believes central banks, politicians, etc. are able to be corrupt because they live in the shadows, behind obfuscation.” The nineties cypherpunk movement was a lot about obfuscation, about letting privacy be private, and about populariz-ing encryption. “When you place financial transactions in the light of day, you don’t need to know who those parties are. You just need to know the history of the transactions, and that will eliminate corruption,” continues Noble. “The thinking was, centralized banks and politicians, don’t have the best interests of people at heart. Therefore, we need to find a monetary system that allows for peer-to-peer transactions. Something like the way music file-sharing evolved on Napster.” Some believe blockchain technolo-gies represent a third stage of internet evolution. The first stage of open-sourced codes (HTML, email, GPS and so on) led to a second stage of centralized data where companies like Google, Facebook, Amazon collect and own our digital information. Blockchain might mean we own and control our own data again.

I’M FOREVER BLOWING BUBBLES

As with many attractive new financial opportunities, excessive zeal creates bubbles when overenthusiastic adopters let their optimism, or greed, best their common sense. Any chart graphing the history of the American economy will show a rollercoaster of manic specula-tion creating bubbles and busts, starting in 1716 when investors overvalued the potential for trade in French-held Louisi-ana. More recent would be the dot-com bubble of 1999 or the housing bubble of 2007. People who talk about bitcoin often refer to it as “the bitcoin bubble.”

“But,” Noble says, “there have been six or seven bitcoin bubbles already. Six or seven sudden devaluations. What causes that? Different things. It relates to emo-tions. The price is based upon potential. Not on, well, reality. It’s like the stock market, where valuations are based on all the possibilities of what could happen to any particular company. And when you get new information that’s unexpected, your stock prices change. Mount Gox was one of the first big crypto-exchanges that got hacked and collapsed the market.” Mt. Gox was a Japanese exchange, a place to connect buyers and sellers of bitcoin for a fee or percentage. Early on, Mt. Gox handled as much as 70 percent of bitcoin traffic — until it was hacked in 2014 to the tune of $460 million. Mt. Gox operating software was vulnerable to being overwritten, and only the owner could approve changes to the source code, which meant bugs fixxers took weeks. “Bitcoin had hit a thousand dollars,” Noble says, “but it fell to 200- plus after Mt. Gox. A lot of people sold. But when you read of a hack involving bitcoin,
PUT ON YOUR JETPACK AND GOOGLE GLASSES

If open-source transparency protects blockchain technologies like bitcoin by making them self-monitoring and self-correcting, it is also a vulnerability, where if anyone can start their own crypto-currency, anyone will, and probably already has. There are now hundreds of cryptos, including Ripple, Etheruem, Dash, ZCash, Monero, Litecoin, and others, all vying for a piece of the pie (or an index of the best-selling coins, see coinmarketcap.com). This year, the state of Massachusetts blocked five companies (B1Moonus, MITcoin, MITcoinPro, Across Platforms, and Sparkgo) from issuing their own ICUs, or initial coin offerings, in hopes of regulating a runaway market where unscrupulous start-ups issue coins to raise quick capital, or where pump-and-dump schemes artificially inflate coin values. Massachusetts is just one state, a relatively small jurisdiction in an economy that has no borders, at a time when buying cryptocurrencies is approaching mania. Noble thinks getting the SEC involved is not a bad thing.

“We may need regulation to prevent fraud,” Noble agrees. “My research started in 2016, and eventually Dominick Oddo, a graduate student, and I pulled together a data set. It’s pretty damning, the data we’ve seen.” It’s all marketing. This is the way to think together a data set. It’s pretty damning, the data we’ve seen. One state, a relatively small jurisdiction in an economy that has no borders, at a time when buying cryptocurrencies is approaching mania. Noble thinks getting the SEC involved is not a bad thing.

“It’s all marketing. This is the way to think together a data set. It’s pretty damning, the data we’ve seen.” Noble notes. (Or “I’ll never buy anything online?” Or “I’ll never buy something using a mobile phone?” Now, 7,000 websites store my credit card information, and I don’t think twice about it. We don’t know the future. What we’re talking about is potential. That’s all you can do."

At a conference I went to, one of the top 10 people in the field said, regarding cryptocurrencies and blockchains, “We’re like where we were with the internet in 1991. We’re pre-diagonal. We’re encrypting.”

“To know what it is, you really have to bring a humility to your understanding, which is not easy, because you want to make a statement. You want to say something. But what we’re talking about today is potential!” It’s tempting to extrapolate the future by drawing a line from the past to the present and extending it. Eight years ago, a man paid 10,000 bitcoins for two pizzas. On March 22, 2018, New York City real estate developer Ben Shoich sold two condos on Manhattan’s Upper East Side for the equivalent of $2,560,000 in bitcoins, turning a virtual currency, existing only in cyberspace, into a place to live in real space. Can the value of bitcoin keep rising? Probably yes. Or no.

“Author’s note: 10 minutes after interviewing David Noble, I received an email telling me how I could ‘juxtapast my bit- coins portfolio and become a millionaire.’ Probably just a coincidence.

Put On Your Jetpack and Google Glasses

It’s not the system. It’s the centralized exchange. People go there to open an account, but then they leave their money in that account, where it becomes a target. And there’s a hundred-something exchanges, and those get hacked all the time. It happens because people don’t want to do the work it takes to set up their own wallets or buy cold storage wallets [secure offline USB drives]. People leave it in their exchanges and then you get hacked, the same way Target got hacked.

“People thought Mt. Gox was the end of bitcoin, but now we’ve seen that five or six times, something that challenges the existence and the utility of bitcoin in a major way. And each time, it corrects itself. The answer might be decentralized exchanges.”

The Peter J. Werth Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Peter J. Werth sees UConn becoming the premier hub of entrepreneurial education. To help make it happen he announced a $22.5 million commitment to the UConn Foundation for a namesake Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. The Institute brings together student and faculty programs that foster entrepreneurship and innovation and that have the potential to create new products and new companies. This is not just a School of Business endeavor. The Institute is actively seeking ideas from students and faculty members in every school and college, says director David Noble.

“If they have innovative ideas they now have a partnership that can financially and administratively support their efforts,” he says. “The Institute can be very successful without a lot of great ideas and partners.”

At the end of last year, the University-wide collaboration has already produced fruit in the form of a 3-D printer for personalized medicine, a certification program for farms that promote farmers’ health, and a musculoskeletal loading device for sit-to-stand maneuvers for people with lower limb injuries. Werth is the founder and CEO of ChemWorth, a drug manufacturing company based in Woodbridge, Connecticut. “While I didn’t attend UConn,” said Werth in a statement announcing the donation, “which was the second-largest in University history, “I have come to believe in its mission, and see the importance of creating opportunities for innovation at our state’s flagship University.”

For information on events in Connecticut and in your neck of the woods, visit uconnalumni.com/events.

Thank You: We Raised a Quarter of a Million in 36 Hours!

At the stroke of noon on April 5, Anthony LaRosa ’08 (CLAS), Jennifer Doak-Mathewson’06 (CLAS), Hannah Davis, and Amanda Bradley ’15 MA celebrated the official end of UConn’s first-ever Giving Day. The four had just written the names of the final donors on the painted rock. Starting at 8 a.m. that day, Foundation volunteers from across campuses had been outside writing the names of each of the nearly 2,500 alumni, students, parents, faculty, staff, and friends who donated money during the 36-hour event.

In total, members of UConn Nation raised $260,582. Contributions came in from around the globe, with folks in the state of Connecticut alone chalking up 1,744 donations in celebration of Husky pride. –EMMA CASAISGANCE ’16 (CLAS)

CLASS NOTES

Robert Neagie ’64 (CLAS) has created and hosted two Facebook groups for discussions and images of UConn radio during the 20th century. Find the groups at The WHUS That Was facebook.com/groups/WHUSThatWas/ and UConn Radio Through The Years facebook.com/groups/173268230018286/. He invites all WHUS alumni to join. Michael R. “Rick” Spinel ’66 (CLAS), an optometrist, is an optometrist, has been inducted into New York’s Eastchester High School Hall of Fame recently. After graduating from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1970, he was co-investigator for a new soft contact lens and authored the first book ever written on soft contact lenses. He wrote countless articles and research papers during his career, presenting his research across the country. He is considered an expert in sports vision and was a faculty member at Pennsylvania College of Optometry, now called Salus University.

James R. Benn ’72 (CLAS) reports that his 13th novel in the “Billy Boyle WWII” mystery series, Stolen Graves, will be released by Soho Press in
School shootings in Parkland, Florida, and by CNC News on the mindset of the mass shooter in this and other such tragic national episodes.

Eric Stockman ‘90 (CLAS) ‘94 JD recently founded the law firm of Stockman O’Connor PLLC with offices in Southington and Bridgeport, Connecticut. He has been named to Connecticut Magazine’s Super Lawyer’s Edition each year from 2007 to 2017.

Joe Miranda ‘00 MBA recently became a board member of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. He is the 2018–2019 Association’s Choral Director, American Choral Director’s Schools, was awarded the Educator of the Year, Farmington Public Schools, and is the 2017 recipient of the ASCA’s National Award for Student Conduct Standards, is the 2018–2019 National Association of School Psychologists’ President-Elect.

Joey Lee Miranda ‘00 MBA recently was elected to the Connecticut chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. He has a master of fine arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and is an assistant professor of psychiatry and professor of psychiatry and practice, Parrino|Shattuck, with offices in Southbury with offices in Southbury, Connecticut.

Dominick Cristofaro ‘87 MBA recently was re-elected mayor of the town of Hamden, Connecticut, in November 2017 and elected to serve a second term as a board member of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

Leslie A. Imse ‘87 MA, MM, chair of the School of Business Department for Farmington Public Schools, was awarded the American Choral Director’s Association’s Choral Director of the Year award at the state conference.

Bob Crispe was recently appointed secretary of the board of directors for the Environmental, Energy, and Technology (EET) Group.

Mandy Bundock-Shaw ‘87 MBA was elected to the Board in November 2017 as the Representative of Robinson & Cole LLP’s Environmental, Energy, and Technology (EET) Group.

Sarah Thomas, a full scholarship student at the University of Colorado, has recently been featured in the Coloradoan as a world-record–breaking marathon swimmer. She plans to attempt an 84-mile, four-way crossing of the English Channel in 2019. — ELAINE K. HOWLEY

For more photos of Thomas in action, please visit s.uconn.edu/thomas.

A SWIM FOR THE CENTURIES

Former UConn swimmer Sarah Thomas ‘04 (CLAS) blast another world record in ultra-marathon swimming.

After seemingly impossible nonstop solo swim across Lake Champlain in New York and Vermont, Sarah Thomas ‘04 (CLAS) was awarded the 2017 Solo Swimmer of the Year from the Marathon Swimmers Federation. To be recognized as a marathon swim by the federation, Thomas’s 67-hour, 104.6-mile “Century Swim,” took most college swimmers around 20 hours swimming, a mere drop in the bucket for Thomas now.

She started swimming across lakes, reservoirs, and channels instead of pools a few years after college, in 2007, when a friend suggested she attempt the Horsetooth 10K, an annual event held in the Horsetooth Reservoir in Thomas’s adopted state of Colorado.

“IT was so nervous before that first swim,” she recalls. “I really didn’t know whether I’d even be able to finish.”

Instead, when she found some room to stretch out beyond the confines of concrete walls, “I felt like I’d finally found my niche,” says Thomas.

The open-water experience was more invigorating than anything she’d done before, told espnW reporter Doug Williams. “It was exhilarating to be in the open water and not have to do flip turns. And the people that do open water are a little bit more laid back. No lane ropes, being outside. It all fits.”

From there she accepted more difficult challenges. In short order she completed the Triple Crown of Open Water Swimming, which includes solo swims across the 21-mile English Channel and 20-mile Catalina Channel and a 28.5-mile loop around Manhattan. She also became the first person to complete a 44-mile double crossing of Lake Tahoe and a 50-mile double crossing of Lake Memphremagog in Vermont and Canada.

Thomas became a world-record holder for the first time last October when she swam 80 miles across Lake Powell in Utah and Arizona in 56 hours. That’s when the idea of attempting 100 miles began percolating.

Next up? She plans to attempt an 84-mile, four-way crossing of the English Channel in 2019. — ELAINE K. HOWLEY

For more photos of Thomas in action, please visit s.uconn.edu/thomas.
If you’re one of those people who reads from back to front, stop now and see the quiz on pages 24-31 before reading these answers.

1. Old Ski Lift: A rope tow behind the sheep barn used to carry students to the summit before the 1930s. Students, especially on cold winter days, would “ski” across the mountaintop, not from a downhill slope.

2. Wall of Keys: When the Division of Public Safety staff no longer needs a locked building late at night, valuable time can’t be wasted finding and reissuing building managers, on firefighters and police officers have a key for everything.

3. Antique Apothecary Jars: These beautiful and rare jars were displayed in the Louis Ann Byrn’s Conference Room at the School of Pharmacy.

4. “The Dynamic Genome”: The book cover features a rope tow with a group of students looking down at a field of sheep. The book is an introduction to molecular biology and genetics.

5. Grave of Jonathan I: A small stone marker bears the name of Jonathan Trumbull, the first governor of Connecticut. It is located on the grounds of Haywood Armory.

6. Wool Blanket: The first wool blanket produced by a mill in Connecticut was a gift to the Jonathan Trumbull family. The blanket was used to keep warm during the winter months.

7. Gardner Dow Plaque: What happens when a memorial plaque outlines the field it was intended to name? Gardner Dow was a World War I veteran and UConn student who died on the battlefield during a game at the University of New Hampshire. His family members named the new athletic field for him, but as the university grew, the field shrank. Today, it’s the site of the Homer Babbidge Library, the School of Business, Oak Hall, and the ITE Building. For years, when the old Co-Op was located nearby, not even the plaque was visible. Today, it can be found on the rear wall of Haywood Armory.

8. UConn Test Kitchen: You won’t find TV cameras or July 4th traditions here, but UConn boasts its very own test kitchen located on the third floor of the Student Union. Dining Services staff is constantly coming up with new recipes to satisfy their customers, from vegan crab cakes to cheddar pull-apart garlic bread. Innovation here is encouraged and necessary with over 200,000 meals served up every week, UConn’s kitchens have a lot of mouths to feed.

9. Golf in Gampel: At UConn, the venerable early spring tradition of making maple syrup is still done at the sugar house at the base of Horsebarn Hill, thanks to the hard work of the Forestry and Wildlife Club. Students collect sap from 800 to 1000 trees in the UConn Forest. It takes about 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup.

10. Wall of Records: What would a college radio station be without its record library? Founded in 1922 and occupying various spaces on campus, WHUS is now housed in the Student Union, along with countless relics of its vinyl from every conceivable genre of music. The record room today is also used for live performances by musicians that are broadcast over the air and via Internet. You may have heard about the resurgence in popularity of vinyl records, but WHUS, they’ve never gone out of fashion.

11. Antlers: This single pair of deer antlers from the 1930s has been passed down from one animal science professor to the next since the 1930s and currently resides with Tracy Rittenhouse. There were so few deer in this area at that time that every student got a peak at the treasure.

12. Physics Observatory: On weekday nights during the spring and fall semesters, if the skies are clear, you can journey from Storrs to the stars, to the powerful telescope housed in the observatory atop the Physics Building. Dating back to the 1960s, the observatory hosts the UConn Astronomy Club along with viewing sessions held by the public who want to know more about our place in the galaxy. Majestically astronomical events, like eclipses, are especially busy times at the observatory.

13. Plaster Heads: This collection of plaster face casts used to create theatrical and artistic pieces are suspended on the walls in the Puppet Arts Complex. Some are from former students, and others are the faces of actors from Connecticut Repertory Theatre shows. The number, at about 40 now, grows over time, and we are happy to have the third to the next since the 1930s.

14. Sugar House: At UConn, the venerable early spring tradition of making maple syrup is still done at the sugar house at the base of Horsebarn Hill, thanks to the hard work of the Forestry and Wildlife Club. Students collect sap from 800 to 1000 trees in the UConn Forest. It takes about 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup.

15. Rare Books: With over 300 rare editions, the Fable Collection is one of several collections that comprise the Connecticut Children’s Literature Collection in Archives and Special Collections in the Dodd Research Center. This 1754 edition of “Aesop’s Fables and Other Fables,” is from the collection of Richard H. Simon, founding member, UConn’s first Special Collections librarian and a generous donor.

16. Beehives: Students at Spring Valley Student Farm maintain these bee boxes for UConn’s hives, which uses the honey in a salad dressing at Chuck & Angie’s restaurant. If there’s extra, you’ll find it at C-store in the Student Union.

17. Little Stone House: Plenty of rumors circulate about the purpose of the “stone hut” across from Swan Lake, but the truth is both more prosaic and quieter. New Britain farmer A. F. March owning the property in the 1830s and his wife Susannah built the stone house and each of the (at the time) 48 slates to the Connecticut Grange, which in turn decided to turn them into a tribute to agriculture on the university campus. Dedicated in 1937, identifying plaques were added to each stone in the 1960s. A copy of the old stone house can be found in Alaska from Hawaii.

18. Whitman’s Iron Lung: A 500-pound piece of medical equipment, the iron lung was essential in the early 20th century. Born out of the polio epidemic of the 1950s, the iron lung allowed patients to breathe when polio was one of the most feared diseases imaginable. Today it’s part of the Josephine A. Dolan Collection on the history of nursing.

19. Woodman Club Training Area: This student club practices for events, such as two-foot gavel obedience, cut sawing, bow sawing, saw throwing, vertical chopping, and log rolling in front of the Center for Environmental Science and Engineering.

20. Protest memorabilia: Student protest is a UConn tradition: from demonstrations against militarism in the 1930s to civil rights in the 1960s to sweatshop labor in the 1990s. Among the Dodd Center archives are photos, posters, pins, flyers, and more protesting topics like the Ku Klux Klan; and a copy of the UConn Free Press, a radical student publication that was revived in the 1990s and 2000s.

21. Not Just Desserts Bakery: Gluten-free recipes may be all the rage, but UConn has been doing it since 2015 in this bakery in the Towera complex. Cookies, cakes, muffins, pies, brownies, you name it: there is something for every sweet tooth. Some are made with alternative flours, or otherwise, being baked daily and delivered to eateries across campus.

22. Wolf Enclosure: These empty pens near Horsebarn Hill are home to the wide-ranging research of Benson L. Ginsburg, professor of biology, and the field of behavior genetics. Ginsburg’s work on squirrel fleas, mice, dogs, voles, humans, and coyote-dog hybrids, in a project that was started over 20 years ago, has been published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. It is expected that his work will provide insight into human behavior.

23. Tiny Planetarium: On the shores of Swan Lake, this stargazing chamber was built in 1954 and is the oldest planetarium in the state. In the 1960s, the planetarium seats just 25, but generations of UConn students have used it as a staple in their astronomy courses and physics courses. Students sit inside and enjoy the earth’s rotation while looking at the night sky.


Ray Neag ’56 (CLS), of Goshen, Connecticut, and Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, a philanthropist who built his fortune in the medical device industry, died Thursday, April 19, at age 86. He died at home with his wife, Carole, by his side. Carole and Ray Neag are among the most prominent benefactors in UConn’s 138-year history, next to brothers Charles and Augustus Storrs, who donated the land and funding in 1880 to start the University. In 2000, Ray received an honorary degree from UConn.

“Ray had a profound impact on the University of Connecticut and our entire state. With his first record-breaking gift to the Neag School of Education to his generous support for the wide-ranging research of Benson L. Ginsburg, professor of biology and the field of behavior genetics, Ginsburg’s work on squirrel fleas, mice, dogs, voles, humans, and coyote-dog hybrids, in a project that was started over 20 years ago, has been published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. It is expected that his work will provide insight into human behavior.”

Cronin at the 2007 School of Education commencement.

For more on Neag and his legacy, as well as other obituaries for alumni and staff, please visit uconn.edu/neag.
the Lyman High School (Wallingford, Connecticut) Hall of Fame. Class of 1997, for softball. She also recently started a new job working in the Learning and Development Department of Medtronic as a training coordinator. ➤ Pam Malyk ‘01 (CLAS), ‘03 MA, the University of Florida’s Assistant Dean/Director of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution, is the 2018 Conference Chair for ASCA’s Annual Conference. A national organization with about 3,000 members at more than 1,000 institutions, the ASCA is the leading voice for student conduct administration in higher education. ➤ Linda Benoit ‘03 MPA coordinated that she has a private practice as a social worker and also works as an addiction therapist. She loves seeing the world and recently attended a conference for student social workers in Mangerlore, India, where she gave an address on best practices in substance use disorder treatment.

➤ Dana Balter ‘03 MPA is excited to announce she is running for the U.S. House of Representatives in New York’s 24th Congressional District. ➤ Michael J. Nichols ‘05 (CLAS), ‘08 JD has been named the Executive Director of the Replakan Association. The Replakan Association is a private nonprofit dedicated to revitalizing and enhancing the Charles River Replakan in Boston. Previously, Michael served as Chief of Staff at the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy in Boston.

➤ Jennifer Softayer Hrbek ‘05 (CLAS) recently took a job as executive director of Positive Directions—The Center for Prevention and Counseling in Westport, Connecticut. ➤ Marie Ann Mosher ‘05 (CAHNR) has published several books, among them The Secret Ingredient and Beyond Food. The 5 Keys to Kickstart Your Health, which is specifically written for people who have stalled in their goal to optimize their weight and their overall health because of stress. She also hosts thecoalbabes.org, a free support community for women authors.

➤ Craig Yannes ‘07 (ENG), ‘09 MFA and Angela (Marchetti) Yannes ‘08 (CAHNR) announce the birth of their son, Leo, in December. The family lives in Milford, Connecticut. ➤ Elizabeth Petratsis ‘07 (BGS) reports that she has been the head coach of the West Haven High School dance team for 10 years and her team has competed in the state championships since 2013. Liz is also a personal trainer, group exercise instructor, and therapeutic recreation director and says she loves working with clients of all ages, her oldest being 103.

➤ While studying during finals week of 2006, Chris Hall and Meg Burns, both ‘08 (CLAS), met at Homer Babbidge Library. A decade after graduation, the Halls are proud to welcome their daughter and future Husky, Nell ‘Nellie’ Marin Hall. They are excited for Nell’s first trip to the Dairy Bar this summer!

➤ Holly Wonneberger ‘14 (CLAS) and Christopher De Marchis ‘13 (CLAS), both former student athletes, majored and engaged at UConn in November 2017 and set a July 20, 2019, wedding date. They met in the fall of 2011 and became friends when they both enrolled in back-to-back English courses: Honors Medieval Literature and Intro to Literary Theory. After graduating in 2013, Chris took a graduate publishing course at Columbia University’s School of Journalism and started a career in publishing at Rodale Books in New York City. After Holly graduated, they started dating. But then Holly moved to Washington, D.C., to start law school at Georgetown University and Chris went back to school to earn his master’s in from Columbia University’s Teachers College. After three years in a long-distance relationship, they both moved back to Connecticut. In November, while taking a walk around campus, Chris proposed to Holly on the quad of South Campus where Holly lived as a student.

➤ Celitt Brody ‘17 (CLAS) won a seat on the Mansfield (Connecticut) Town Council in November 2017. ➤ Rebecca Arpin ‘17 (CLAS) recently joined the marketing team of Nutmeg Technologies, where she had interned while at UConn. Arpin, of Vernon, Connecticut, is the company’s marketing coordinator. She also hosts Nutmeg Technologies’ social media platforms, as well as coordinating its online marketing and advertising campaigns.

KUBOX

Karl L. Schultz ’92 MPA is the new commander of the U.S. Coast Guard

Vice Admiral Karl Schultz, an East Hartford, Connecticut, native, was appointed the 26th Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard on June 1. He had been the commander of the Coast Guard Atlantic Area. Schultz is a recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including the Defense Superior Service Medal, four Legion of Merit, and four Meritorious Service Medals. He led the Coast Guard in his efforts to help in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria, Irma, and Harvey.

The Boston Police did not have quite enough evidence to charge a suspect in a horrific 2013 murder of a young woman. They turned to one of the department’s forensic scientists — Joe Ross ’04 (CLAS). Ross, 36, shown above in the Boston Police Headquarters Lab, closely examined the man’s shoes, which appeared to have been wiped clean. Still he found tiny blood droplets, about 30 or so, in a few of those he found some DNA — the victim’s. That with evidence, the police were able to charge the suspect.

Though that sounds like a storyline plucked from an episode of “CSI,” Ross, now in his 10th year in the department, is quick to point out that not much about his job resembles the TV version. Cases can take months. Forensic scientists don’t carry guns or drive Humvees, he adds. But they can work long hours collecting evidence at a crime scene. Last year, he and a fellow scientist spent 18 hours at a grisly double murder in South Boston.

Ross, though, is happiest in the lab with an eye glued to a microscope and a pipette in one hand. That’s why the self-proclaimed “science nerd” studied molecular and cellular biology at UConn. He envisioned working for a biotech developing new drugs. Then in his senior year, the ardent Huskies’ fan took a criminology class taught by two adjunct professors, both working forensic scientists at the Connecticut State Crime Lab. He found their enthusiasm for their work inspiring, and he revamped his career plans.

“I feel like I make a difference on a daily basis,” says Ross. —AMY SUTHERLAND

For more of our interview with Ross, go to s.uconn.edu/ross.
Looking for Tom’s Trivia?
Go to s.uconn.edu/june18trivia.