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Basketball Capital of the World

I just read Tom Breen’s article on Connecticut being the basketball capital of the world and wanted him to know how much I loved the story. We are Bristol, Connecticut, transplants out here in Henderson, Nevada, and we are diehard UConn Husky basketball fans. We share our passion and follow the men and women with another family of Connecticut transplants here, the Giuntas. We wear our T-shirts around town and to [WNBA Las Vegas] Aces games and fly our banners. A few years back Jon Giunta had someone knock on her door after she hung her banner out, and it was Sue Bird’s stepmother, who lives on the same street — I guess that’s six degrees of separation!

Judy Poirdie
Henderson, Nevada, via email

I really enjoyed the article on UConn basketball success. It brought back great memories of UConn’s first trip to the NCAA Elite Eight in 1964. Dom Perno stole the ball from Bill Bradley in the final seconds to assure UConn’s quarterfinal victory over Princeton. I was honored to be the Princeton. I was honored to be the

Edward Marth, former exec. dir. AAUP at UConn, via our website

Welcome article without “Bra-vo,” but fact filled. It is always exciting to watch successes build and see Con-necticut folks gather around a sport and a university that is successful in sports and academically ranked. It is only sad that the gals had such injuries all year. Surely, both teams would have been champions again.

Allan Anderson ’62 (PHARM) of the Wilbur Cross building.

Cardiff by the Sea, California, via our website

My goodness. This, friends, is how you design a magazine cover. @CASEAdvance, save yourself the trouble and just give @UConn the gold now. #UConnMagazine @tomdunse via X


Kicks (Joe La Puma)
JLP
@kribear778 via Instagram

This type of article is fascinating as it illustrates the real-life case histories of physicians’ residencies! Most people do not understand what residents go through to continue their medical training, which puts them in pressure situations where quick decision making is critical to saving a person’s life.

M.J. Scanlon ’77 MS, via our website, regarding “First-Years”

Art of the Label

As a trademark attorney, I found this bit of labeling history illuminating.

Nancy Kennedy ’04 JD
Hartford, Connecticut, via our website

I think of you every time I see one of these!

Caroline Taylor
Oakland, California, via our website

Aaron Carr Is Holding Landlords Accountable

Good to see an up-and-coming young person willing to pursue a career in the arena of economic justice. My brief research confirms that Aaron Carr is indeed the man your story paints him to be. It is clear that the Housing Rights Initiative has had a powerful impact on landlord-tenant relations by shining a bright light on abusive and predatory landlords, and forcing City Hall to hold them account-able.

Dannis McDermott
Mount Vernon, New York, via Facebook

Voices Rising

While I appreciated the piece on the “Voices of Freedom,” I would like to correct the origins of the choir. The bus reference was not from a civil rights protest. Here is my recollection:

In 1965 every Friday buses would line up at the old Storrs Center going to many cities. I boarded a bus going to Waterbury and Danbury and sat with (choir founder) Lorraine [Williams] who was from Danbury. As freshmen, we talked about UConn and how we as black students should not get away from our home training, which includ-ed the church experience. Lorraine spoke of wanting to begin a choir to, in some way, make black students proud and feel included on campus.

My advice was for her to get the word out and see if others shared her vision, and she did. Through her personality, and love for music she enlisted a core cadre that grew — the rest is history. I did not sing or participate in the choir, but helped bring the little known at the time R&B group, Kool and the Gang, to the old Hawley Armory and raised funds for robes for every mem-ber of the choir. I was very proud when my son Jonathan Beaamon ’94 (CLAS) joined the choir and sang a solo in 1993, and my daughter Janeen a few years later also joined prior to her transfer (she graduated from Eastern).

Reggie Beaamon ’73 (CLAS), former state representative and chair of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus Waterbury, Connecticut, via email

He Sells

I am a marine ecologist and have worked most of my career on the impacts of environmental contam-inants, but mostly on climate change over the past 25 years. While I love shells for their beauty and was amazed with Dave DeLucia’s collection of 7,000 shells, I wish you had included some mention in your article that either collecting live shells or buying beauti-ful shells from curio shops is quickly depleting those natural populations, especially from tropical environments, which often have the most beautiful shells on earth.

Tom Suchanek ’69 (CLAS)
Carmichael, California, via email

FEEDBACK

We want to hear from you! Please share thoughts, insights, discrepancies, recollections, photos — and how’s your Tom’s Trivia win-loss percentage coming? Post to our website at magazine.uconn.edu, email the editor at lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu, or send by regular mail to UConn Magazine Letters, 34 N. Eagleville Rd., Storrs, CT 06269-3144.

Here’s a sampling of comments on our last issue, edited for clarity and length. Find more at magazine.uconn.edu.
THE U.S. TREASURER

This August, human rights graduate student Sage Phillips ’22 (CLAS), ’24 MA spoke with Lynn Malerba, ’08 MPA. A member of the Penobscot Nation and founder of the Native American and Indigenous Students Association at UConn, Phillips was in Old Town, Maine, on a fellowship with the Wabanaki Alliance. Malerba, chief of the Mohegan Tribe, was in Washington, D.C., 11 months into her appointment as United States Treasurer.

Phillips: It’s an honor to speak with you. You are an inspiration for Indigenous women and girls across the country, so I want to ask— who inspires you?

Malerba: That’s a big question. I would say that all of the generations that came before me inspire me, because they held on to whatever was right, against all odds, despite very little resources, they were able to pass on our culture, make sure our government stayed intact, and then get us through the federal re-recognition process. My mom was part of those generations. Her grandfather was part of those generations; he was the chief from the 1930s to the 1950s. When I think about my role, I feel I’m keeping faith with them. They inspire me, but my children and my grandchildren inspire me as well, because I wasn’t able to do what they did in my lifetime. So in terms of being a chief, that role model for all of us, especially your people back home, is just amazing. How does being a lifetime chief of the Mohegan tribe affect your day-to-day work as the United States Treasurer and vice versa?

Malerba: It’s such a privilege to be in this position. And as I tell Indian Country whenever I’m with them, I said yes for all of us. I didn’t think I’d be working quite this hard at age 70. I was quite happy just living my life, being chief and kind of being queen a little bit. But this was an opportunity to educate an entire agency on what it means to engage deeply with Indian Country, how to consult with tribes, and to consider policy and guidance that would then impact tribes. There has to be a line between anything business related versus culturally related to the tribe, because you can only have one master and that is Treasury. So what I’m doing in the chief space right now is not the advocacy; but all the cultural and traditional and ceremonial things, like weddings and naming ceremonies.

Phillips: I’d love to know why you chose to get an MPA, why you chose UConn, and what it was like being Indigenous at UConn.

Malerba: My first career was nursing, and I always should have had a master’s in the director roles I had at the hospital. I just never got around to it—raising your kids puts a little crimp in your educational plans unless you are really a superwoman. We’ve all been told you can have everything, but all the cultural and traditional and ceremonial things, like weddings and naming ceremonies.

Phillips: You have so much going on. What is your favorite part of the day? Malerba: My favorite part of the day is helping people understand the work that we’re doing on a personal level. One of the things we’ve worked hard at is engaging with the offices that deal with policy and guidance issues within Treasury and bringing them with us to Indian Country so they can see how their policy impacts the communities we’re serving. The other piece I find really fascinating is that I’m engaged with the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and the Mint. They’re manufacturing facilities, they work 24/7, and it’s amazing. I’m on a counterfeiting deterrence committee that’s just fascinating. If you take a dollar bill and try to print it on a copier, it won’t print because of all the security features. Try it! And we print 8 billion pieces of currency a year. We are visiting the Osage Nation this fall to launch the Maria Tallchief quarter. There are really good things happening at Treasury and I know that the work we do will last and will inform all the work that happens at Treasury on behalf of our Native Nations.

Phillips: That’s been my trajectory all of my life. So in terms of being a part of the Indigenous community at UConn, I didn’t have that opportunity. But I do know that people are engaged with Indigenous studies at UConn now and I’m proud of the work that you and the faculty are doing there, because I think there is a really nice social justice focus to the work that’s happening right now. I intend to stay engaged with UConn around those topics because I think they’re really important.

Phillips: Thank you, that means a lot! If you’re ever around, we would love to welcome you and show you all the things we’ve been working on.

Malerba: I would love to come visit. Maybe this fall!

Phillips: You have so much going on. What is your favorite part of the day?

Malerba: My favorite part of the day is the work we do with the Native American and Indigenous Students Association and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Program at UConn. One of the things we’ve worked hard at is educating an entire generation of students about that role and I think they’re really important.

Phillips: If you’re ever around, we would love to have you on campus to talk to the faculty and the students. Thank you, that means a lot!

Malerba: We appreciate that! I intend to stay engaged with UConn around those topics because I think they’re really important.

Phillips: I look forward to it. Malerba: I do as well. And I’m proud of the work that you and the faculty are doing there.

Phillips: Thank you for your work. I’ve been working for full time and going to school. That’s been my trajectory all of my life. So in terms of being a part of the Indigenous community at UConn, I didn’t have that opportunity. But I do know that people are engaged with Indigenous studies at UConn now and I’m proud of the work that you and the faculty are doing there, because I think there is a really nice social justice focus to the work that’s happening right now. I intend to stay engaged with UConn around those topics because I think they’re really important.

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Malerba’s tribal name Mutawi Mutahash means “Many Hearts,” recognizing both her career as a cardiac nurse and how, as chief, she holds the heart of each Mohegan Tribe member.
Happy Birthday, Hip-Hop

In honor of a half-century of hip-hop, Jeffrey Ogbar puts a spin on “3 Books.” UConn history professor, director of the Center for the Study of Popular Music, and author of the award-winning “Hip-Hop Revolution: The Culture and Politics of Rap” (2007, University Press of Kansas), Ogbar just entered his 25th year of teaching his popular course, “Hip-Hop, Politics, and Youth Culture in America.” To celebrate the 50th anniversary of a Bronx party where DJ Kool Herc mixed two records using his “Merry-Go-Round” technique and gave birth to the genre, Ogbar sounds off on one classic, one personal favorite, and one essential hip-hop album.


Run-D.M.C. is the first rap group to be played prominently on MTV, the first to go platinum, the first to appear on the cover of Rolling Stone, the second to be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. “Raising Hell” comes out in a period where hip-hop is penetrating the mainstream. There’s no dedicated hip-hop magazine, TV shows, or Grammy category at the time, yet the album goes platinum and Run-D.M.C. is able to sell out arenas. The audience sort of elbows its way into the mainstream, and does so on its own terms—classic hip-hop bravado. It’s bragadocious, fun, festive, party music.

I grew up in L.A. In 1986, Run-D.M.C. had performed at Long Beach, and rival gangs had caused a ruckus. After that, no one would provide insurance for them to play in the area. In 1987, during my senior year of high school, I went to see the Beastie Boys at the Hollywood Palladium. Everyone was having a good time, the concert was hot, and the Beastie Boys introduced special guests. The lights went down and you heard D.M.C. yell, “My Adidas!” I distinctly remember the joy; hugging my boys. That was the highlight of my teenage years, seeing Run-D.M.C. at this small venue.


Even if you look at other genres of music, I don’t think that you find any album of any generation that’s such an explicit, clear articulation of politics centered on the uplift of Black people and dealing with the historical moment. Looking at mass incarceration, looking at policing, the illegal drug trade, the effects of racism and the legacy of government repression—looking at all these different forces, there’s nothing as rich, as substantive, as this album. It comes out at a moment when academics in the ivory tower, policymakers, and activists were alarmed at many of these issues within the Black community—the rise of the crack cocaine trade, increasing homicide rates, rising unemployment and poverty rates, the use of the term “endangered species” to refer to Black males. I love Whitney Houston, New Edition, Anita Baker, other artists of the 1980s— but they didn’t talk about these issues. Public Enemy came out and dealt with it in powerful ways. It was a seismic shift in the possibilities of hip-hop. It’s also a sublime album in terms of beats, production, and rhyming scheme. This album increased the beats per minute in hip-hop, made it much more frenetic.


Like Run-D.M.C. or Public Enemy, Kendrick was able to capture the attention of most people who listen to rap music—and those who don’t. It’s not only critically acclaimed and commercially successful, but also Pulitzer Prize-winning, making him the first artist to do so that wasn’t European classical or jazz.

That’s rarified space. These are personal songs about his life, his father, his family; “DUCKWORTH.” is a fantastic song that deals with faith. “PRIDE.” “HUMBLE.” “LUST.” “LOVE.” “FEAR.” “GOD.”—these are songs that talk about the human condition in such sophisticated ways. What you have with Kendrick is the combination of a wide range of topics, complex lyrical delivery, and on top of that wonderful production. It’s an essential album for people who are not familiar with hip-hop. “DAMN.” is an album that will continue to satisfy you long after you hear it the first time. You can listen to it for years and find something new every time.
In the decade after earning his education degree at UConn, Cob Carlson ’76 (ED) taught fifth grade and earned a master’s in education in Hartford, managed a Whole Foods store in North Carolina, and worked for the YMCA in Greenwich, Connecticut.

While doing marketing and public relations at the Y, Carlson realized it wasn’t where he was meant to be—he kept coming back to how much he enjoyed his “American Cinema” course at UConn taught by dramatic arts professor Michael T. Gregoric.

“He talked about this concept called the cinematic correlative; that a film needs a lot of people to get made. He was not a proponent of the auteur theory, where it’s the director’s cinematic correlative; that a film needs a lot of people to get made. He was not a proponent of the auteur theory, where it’s the director’s

Carlson looks back on his top 10.

For more than 30 years, Carlson has edited radio for WPKN, the world’s first non-commercial, community-based, non-profit, listener-supported radio station in Norwalk. Carlson discov-
dered this 30-min-
ute film that traced the journey of his grandmother, at the age of 16, from the farm she lived on in Kildysart, a historic fishing village in County Clare, Ire-
land, to Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Carlson says his work on Laurel Chiten’s award-winning documentary “Twitch and Shout,” about Tourette’s syndrome, garnered him wide recognition and led to more directors recruiting him for assignments.

One of the projects Carlson was offered from his first-time offer from first-time

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On the dangers of heatstroke:
“Climate change has taken this into the everyday world for the everyday American citizen. You don’t have to be a laborer working for twelve hours, you don’t have to be a soldier in training. This is making it affect so many people even just during daily living.”
Douglas Casa ’97 Ph.D., kinesiology professor and director of UConn’s Korey Stringer Institute, The New Yorker, Aug. 28, 2023

On the speed and efficiency with which AI discovers drugs like halicin:
“Not only can halicin kill many species of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, it is also structurally distinct from prior antibiotics. This discovery is groundbreaking because antibiotic-resistant superbugs are a major public health issue that traditional methods have largely failed to address.”
Bowen Lou, business professor, Vox, Aug. 25, 2023

UCONN NOW

On mistaking the sound of bullfrogs in Windham, Connecticut, for an enemy invasion in 1754:
“Apparently, it was pretty embarrassing for the colonists back then.”
Susan Herrick, herpetology professor, “PBS Newshour,” Aug. 3, 2023

On the forecast model for predicting potential ocean heat waves:
“No one wants to pull up a crab trap full of dead crabs.”
Samantha Siedlecki, marine sciences professor, Science, Aug. 23, 2023

On wildfires in Canada killing crops in the U.S.:
“All the native pollinators – they don’t go out when there is smoke ... Pollination didn’t happen, and the blossom dropped.”
Shuresh Ghimire, UConn Extension horticulture educator, CT Mirror, Aug. 3, 2023

On her forecast model for predicting potential ocean heat waves:
“Terry wants to pull up a crab trap full of dead crabs.”
Jim Calhoun, former UConn MBB coach, News 8, Sept. 15, 2023

On what people don’t know about him:
“I’m a theater buff. I’m on the O’Neill Theater board, on the Bushnell board. I love theater. I could go to theater almost every day.”
Jim Calhoun, former UConn MBB coach, News 8, Sept. 15, 2023

Mary Estella Sprague (1870–1940) was the first woman to serve as the dean of an academic department at UConn. She oversaw the Division of Home Economics from 1920 to 1926.
Educated at Bridgewater State Normal School and Simmons College in Massachusetts, Sprague taught in public schools for more than 20 years before becoming home director and teacher of home economics at Caroline Rest, a home for new mothers in upstate New York. In 1914, Sprague became the first woman to work for the UConn Extension Service. Hired as the assistant organizer for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Connecticut, she became professor of home economics and dean of women in 1917 and the first dean of the Division of Home Economics in 1920. Under her leadership, women composed nearly 26% of UConn’s student population in 1925 and 31% in 1930, up from only 19% in 1920. Dean Sprague retired in 1926.

During World War I, Sprague served as state director of home economics for the U.S. Food Administration. From June 1917 through 1918, she helped lead a statewide campaign to bolster food production and conservation on the home front in support of the war effort. As UConn’s trustees observed, this job required “a woman of broad vision and forceful personality who knew Connecticut people.” Sprague, they said, “more than met these requirements.”

Built in 1942, the M. Estella Sprague Residence Hall in Storrs was named in her honor.

–MICHAEL RODRIGUEZ

UCONN ON WIKI

UConn Nation welcomes
born April 19, 2023
home June 18, 2023

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University Archives & Special Collections
FALL 2023 13
peration 15. For 10 days in June it was the best-kept secret on campus: the new dog in town. Under a soft terry towel of secrecy, brother Jonathan XIV began the mascot training of XV, a 10-pound, blue-eyed bundle who loves to yap and cuddle. XIV, who came from Arkansas, was 16 pounds at this age, according to the Jonathan’s Crew, canine advisors and the members of Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity who’ve had charge of mascot care and safekeeping since 1970. Lucky for us, they recorded “the little guy’s” serious and silly milestones along the way — including the official unveiling to UConn Nation (see photo above right).

XV hails from Atwood, Ontario, Canada, where he spent his first eight weeks among his four sisters and one brother. During his top secret first 10 days at UConn, he learned to sit and stay — and pose for a close-up. A surprise meeting with some Huskies taught him just how tall a human can be — the basketball players held tightly to the secret, sharing photos only after the reveal (see photo page 16). A purebred Siberian Husky, mascot-in-training XV joins a long line of canine Jonathans dating back to 1935. Why Jonathan? Students named him through a contest — legend has it that during the American Revolution George Washington referred to Connecticut’s then-governor Jonathan Trumbull as “Brother Jonathan.”

Some of my favorite things:
food, crawling under couches, tennis balls that squeak, a good elk horn, more food

6.17.23 National Mascot Day — Leaving Ontario for Storrs
6.18.23 1:10 a.m. Storrs, I’m home!
6.20.23 Werth Family Basketball Champions Center — First Photoshoot, needs some work on staying put!
6.19.23 University Communications — First Official Meeting
6.28.23 By the Benton — First On-Campus Walk, secret is out!
6.18.23 First Bath, was a real champ
8.1.23 Toscano Ice Forum — First Time on the Ice
8.12.23 Avery Point — First Time in the Ocean, jumped right in!
7.29.23 Connecticut Sun Practice Arena — First Time Meeting Dorka and Phessa!
7.28.23 Wilbur Cross Board of Trustees meeting, The Big Reveal — with my new friends Andy, Radenka, and Dan
7.20.23 Dairy Bar — First Ice Cream, loves it as much as his big brother does!
6.23.23 Stats:
6.17 – 10 lbs
6.23 – 12 lbs
7.4 – 17 lbs
7.17 – 22 lbs
8.14 – 25 lbs
9.19 – 35 lbs

Illustrations by Ani Somi | Photos by Peter Morenus, Sydney Herdle, and Jonathan’s Crew
7.10.23 Dodd Center — First Parent Orientation

8.28.23 Towers Residence Halls — First First Day of Classes; the students were so happy to see XIV and XV together

8.31.23 The Rent — First Football Game, all the lights, people, noises and he acted like a pro!

8.14.23 Volleyball Media Day at Rizza Performance Center — First Photoshoot with Another 14/15 Combo

8.22.23 Rome Ballroom — First Resident Advisor Training

8.26.23 Mirror Lake — First Move-In Weekend

8.7.23 Student Union — First Husky One Card

8.20.23 Werth Champions Center — First Cuddle From a Husky, Donovan holding XV was as cute as you’d think; the follow-up on Sept. 7 was just as cute

7.3.23 McHugh 102 — First Classroom Romp, learned about glass doors (ouch!)

6.20.23 Werth Champions Center — First Cuddle From a Husky, Donovan holding XV was as cute as you’d think; the follow-up on Sept. 7 was just as cute

Go to s.uconn.edu/babysfirst for a collection of videos of Jonathan XV’s discovery of all things UConn
A superstar’s superstar, Sue Bird ’02 (CLAS) is undeniable Husky royalty, beloved for her prowess on the court and her candor, charm, and cheer off it. Connecticut WNBA fans root for her even when she’s on an opposing team, and the Seattle Storm faithful, including myriad little girls in Sue Bird tees, packed arenas throughout her final of 21 seasons there last year. She has stained her own lanes in life and basketball — we asked her to share some of the most fateful moments in both.

**The moment she knew she was good at basketball**

I think I always knew. But there is a moment… I was in, like, fifth grade, and I played for a travel team in my town. The coach had a connection with St. John’s University, so we got to be the little kids at halftime that come onto the court and play another intramural team. It’s a total of 10, 15 minutes max, but it felt very big to a fifth grader. And the ironic part is that St. John’s was playing the University of Connecticut, so that’s probably the first time Coach Auriemma laid his eyes on me — joking! As we were leaving the gym later that day, a security guard stopped us and he says to my dad, hey, can I get your daughter’s autograph? I have a feeling this is going to be worth something someday. He says, if you want to do this, you have to still work for it. But you have it. That was a validating moment.

The fact that I also can score, that’s what made me a different kind of point guard in that generation. I ac-

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Um, I’m still waiting for that day. No, no, what’s the moment that I knew I was legit? I guess around the same time, I think fifth or sixth grade. I’m playing on this AAU team and we go to nationals, where teams from every state come together and play in this huge tournament. Two things happened. One, Sports Illustrated for Kids saw our team and followed us. I re-

**The moment she knew she was an Olympics-level good at basketball**

It was going into my junior year; the 2000 Olympics had just finished. Coach Auriemma was an assistant for that team. He is back from Australia and back on campus reconnecting with all of us. He just kind of sits me down and is like, listen, I was just with all these Olympians, and he looks me in the eye and says, if you want to do this, you can do this. I’ve never seen what it is, up close and personal, and you have whatever it is — you have to want it and you have to still work for it. But you have it. That was a validating moment.

The moment she knew she’d be a point guard

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I was really lucky that I had Shea Ralph as a mentor figure. That year Shea and Sveliana [Abronsiona ‘01 BUS] got recognized as All-Americans. Rightfully so. They were the backbones of our team. And I remember, it’s the Final Four, we’re literally about to run out to warm up, and Shea pulls me over and says, you know, even though I got selected as All-American, you were just as deserving. Like, you’re an All-American, too. Wow. That meant so much, to see that she had that confidence in me.

The moment she knew it would be UConn

To be honest, when I look back on my recruitment, it was always UConn. They were always kind of number one. They were always the ones that interested me the most, that felt right. These other schools come in and they’re like the shiny new toy. There’s some bells and whistles and they’re winning and dining you. And Coach Auriemma, on the day that I was going to decide, I called him up and he asked me, you know, what are you thinking? And I was like, oh, I’m thinking my heart says Connecticut, but my head is a little confused ‘cause like I said, all these other schools are planting seeds and they’re creeping in there. And he basically was just like, oh, I hope you follow your heart. Those were his final words and I did follow my heart — thank goodness.

The moment she knew Coach Auriemma trusted her

There are two. One, it was preseason my freshman year, my career hadn’t even started yet. And I feel like Coach Auriemma had seen something in me early on... He said that I like to assess before I jump in. As an athlete, you have to be willing to take risks. Risk is just a part of the job.

The moment she knew just how much she could mean to UConn

My sophomore year, I was still growing, still maturing, I was still understanding myself, who I am as a player. I was really lucky that I had Shea Ralph as a mentor figure. That year Shea and Sveliana [Abronsiona ‘01 BUS] got recognized as All-Americans. Rightfully so. They were the backbones of our team. And I remember, it’s the Final Four, we’re literally about to run out to warm up, and Shea pulls me over and says, you know, even though I got selected as All-American, you were just as deserving. Like, you’re an All-American, too. Wow. That meant so much, to see that she had that confidence in me.

The moment she knew it would be Seattle

After my senior year, I was asked to go train with the national team. So I fly out to Colorado Springs, I go to the hotel, I’m in the lobby and Lin Dunn is there and she’s like, hey Sue, I just want to introduce myself. I’m Lin Dunn, head coach at the Seattle Storm. And I remember she made a joke around drafting me, like, well you might get picked number one. I remember being like, OK, this is probably happening. But I wasn’t thrilled — I did not know a lot about Seattle. Obviously, we know the end of the story. I love it here. I’ve spent my entire career here. But it was the distance — I was like Seattle, dang, that’s who had to get the number-one pick? I secretly wanted it to be New York. And then, very famously, on draft day after Lin had chosen me — and again, as it turns out, I couldn’t have been drafted by a better place — they ask Lin, was there any chance that you were going to trade this pick? And she just looks into the camera and says no. Just that. I think she was planning on drafting me and I think once she saw me in this camp with the national team hold my own as a 21-year-old college kid, I think that solidified it. I’ve actually never asked her. I should ask her!

A coming-home-to-Connecticut moment

I feel the love every time I go back to Connecticut. It’s all love all the time. And when the Connecticut Sun started and we played there in the regular season, that felt like a homecoming in some ways. I get announced as a starter and the whole place erupts. It’s amazing. But then we played them in the WNBA finals. And now I’m not getting the same love. They applauded when I got announced, but I look in the crowd and I see a sign that says something like “Go Sun, Skewer Bird.” My initial thought was, how do you hate me? Right? But then my second thought was, all right, this is great. The WNBA is getting to a point where these fans love their team no matter who they’re playing against.

A moment she knew how much she meant to girls and young women

I think most of the time it comes in the form of just seeing little girls wearing my jersey, especially my final year. I do have my fair share of moments where I have adults come up to me and say, when I was 7 or when I was 10 or when I was 15, I had your poster, and that kind of hits home. But little kids are little kids. They’re not really saying much to you. I do have a funny story where a little girl came up to me so serious. And I could tell it took a lot for her to walk up to me. She’s like, I just wanna tell you, I’m your role model. And I was like, oh, you are? Thank you. But I think where it hits for me now is meeting these people as adults and hearing the impact that I had on them growing up.
The winning moment that stands out from all the winning moments

OK, so I could sit here and talk to you about how special it was to win your first major championship, which is 2000, my sophomore year. I can sit here and talk to you about how special it was to win my senior year, and that is one of the major ones. Why? Yes, because we were so good. Yes, because we went undefeated. But knowing what I know now? There’s one team a year, right, that wins the championship? On that team, there’s anywhere from one to two, three, four, five or more seniors. So there’s really only a handful of people that get to finish their career smiling. And I feel really lucky, looking back, that I got to finish my college career smiling. No matter what happened my junior, sophomore, and freshman years, I got to finish smiling. And that’s rare.

I can tell you how amazing the Olympics were and what that meant, representing your country. I can talk about being the first champion in Seattle in 25 years.

The Sonics won in the ‘70s and we win 20-plus years later. I can talk about all this. But the one that sticks out, for sure, is 2018. And the reason why is because, after all I had experienced and all the success I had had, this felt like I was doing something on borrowed time. It was unexpected. I had, in some ways, conceded to the fact that I probably wouldn’t ever be in the finals again. The Seattle Storm had decided to rebuild, which I signed up for, so I knew what I was getting into in 2015. All the other veterans were gone. We had back-to-back number-one picks, which definitely accelerated this process. Especially because one of them was named Breanna [Stewart]. I was really going year by year. This could be over at any point. And I was like, my role here now, my life’s work now, is to just pass on all my knowledge to Jewell [Loyd] and to Stewie, to set them up for success and let them be champions for years to come.

So the fact that two years later we’re champions? And by the way, in 2018, I want to say we were picked to finish sixth or seventh in the league — and that wasn’t even a big locker room moment. We were like, yeah, we’re a young team. Let’s see what happens. Before you know it, the season ends and we’re first. Fast forward, we sweep through the playoffs, we’re champions. And I just remember feeling like, well, this wasn’t supposed to happen. I can’t believe this happened.

And I really got to experience going through a rebuild, getting on the other side of it, knowing my role. In previous championship years I was a basketball player who played the games and did what they could for the team and I had points and I had assists. I probably had a couple rebounds here and there, and that was what I did.

This was like, not only did I have points and assists and rebounds and all the things that you do within a game, I had — speaking of fingerprints — my fingerprints all over the way this team handled adversity and handled, really, the entire season. I very much had become a player-coach at that point. So there’s something different about that one.

So was that the moment she knew she’d be playing a bit longer?

Oh, it changes everything. Yeah, at that point, now that we’re good, it changes everything. Now I’m like, oh, I want to play as long as humanly possible. So now my motivation to stay in shape, right, to keep going for as long as I can. Sadly enough I missed the 2019
exception the public way — which is obviously a big one.

The moment she knew Megan was The One
So I met Megan when I was 35, going on 36. And we just — I mean, really, the simplest way to say it is, it was just easy. Everything about it was just easy and calm. Wow. And I had never really known that — obviously I’ve had other relationships before, some better than others, like everybody else. But I had never really experienced it like it just feels right. We started talking and we just haven’t stopped.

A Yankee-in-Moscow moment
The thing I’m most thankful for when it comes to my Russian experience — just being in a different culture helped shape my worldview, it helped me be less judgmental as a person. When you’re totally immersed in another culture, you just start to see that there are other ways of doing things. This is a silly example, but you get your produce and instead of putting it in a little plastic bag and taking it to the register to be weighed, you do it yourself, and put a sticker on it. No bag. A small thing, but those things showed me just cause we as Americans think we’re the best, that doesn’t mean there aren’t other ways of doing things that are better. Being there really opened my mind to that idea. And what I started to do was, in my own way, challenge the status quo.

The thing she realized the magnitude of her voice, her potential platform ...
That came much later. The 2020 WNBA season, with the pandemic, with all the social unrest, that bubble season. That is really when I understood the magnitude of my platform, my voice. Candace Parker and I did this interview recently and it was incredibly touching the way she described this. She said, there’s a lot of people who consider themselves leaders, there are a lot of actual leaders, and sometimes leaders are leaders just because of the title — maybe it’s coach, maybe it’s captain. But the difference with you, and what makes you the leader you are, and what makes you special, is when you talk, people listen. I think she was speaking to that bubble season.

Actually, if I rewind a little bit, we had our contract negotiations in the fall and winter of 2019. That’s when I started to really see the power that I had, especially because I was an older player negotiating. I wasn’t going to be the recipient of all these benefits. I think people really saw that I was just trying to get the best for them. They believed in me in that way and so, when I spoke, to Candace’s point, they listened. I think the combination of those negotiations and then what we all did as a league in the bubble, that’s when I started to really get a sense of it. It’s not that I’m smarter than the next person, but my expertise is in this world of women’s sports, right? I’ve lived it. There’s something unique about that perspective. There’s only 144 of us, so compared to the rest of the world, nobody’s going to know what we know. I can share those insights in that way, and it goes beyond basketball.

Sports mirror society, women’s sports mirror society. Everything that’s happening in society is happening to us, whether it’s the fight for equal pay and racial equity or having issues just because of who I love and who I want to marry, that being held against me, things like that. ...

... and what she might use it for
The reality is I’m no longer a basketball player. I’ve always said when people say shut up and dribble, the answer is obviously no. Because we have microphones in front of our faces all the time. We’re getting asked hard-hitting questions all the time. So you have a voice, you have a platform, but I no longer have that in that way, right? Our production company A Touch More is this vehicle I can now use as a retired player to continue to get the spotlight on marginalized groups or communities that are underserved, it’s a way to continue to tell these stories.

And it’s a vehicle that both Megan and I can use in our retirement that’s fun. I think creating this kind of content is going to be so much fun. It’s going to be exciting, but it’s also going to have a lot of meaning in our world.

Through telling these stories, you’re going to create change. It’s just inevitable.
Rob Saunders

How a UConn puppeteer went from being the beer guy at Whole Foods to creating animatronics for the biggest theme parks, robotics for cinematic superheroes, and crazy-clever costumes for Masked Singers.

By Tommi Lewis Tilden
Photos by Peter Morenus

It was 1990, and the world was mourning the untimely death of iconic puppet master Jim Henson. A 16-year-old aspiring puppeteer in Chester, New Hampshire, Rob Saunders ’96 (SFA) had long admired Henson’s artistry and aesthetic, the way he blended otherworldly elements and realism on children’s television shows like “The Muppets” and “Sesame Street,” and in fantasy cinematic visions like “Labyrinth” and “The Dark Crystal.”

“For a young person his passing was like a call to arms, to take up the mantle. It sparked a sense of purpose for me and other puppeteers that came out of that time, we felt compelled to carry on his legacy. I felt I gotta do this.”

Sitting in his high school counselor’s office, Saunders discovered that answering the call could mean earning $13,000 a year. “To my teenage mind, that figure sounded amazing. In that moment, it was clear to me where I
“I was wrapped in fire blankets with all these explosives going off over my head and had to keep my character moving stoically around the bar, doing his thing.”

was heading.” Saunders set his sights on, and gained admittance to, UConn's School of Fine Arts, renowned for its illustrious puppetry program, and in so doing became the first of his family to attend college. Almost immediately, he found himself working with the esteemed, longtime head of UConn's puppetry program, Bart Rococberto Jr., on a production of “A Christmas Carol.”

Off and running, Saunders immersed himself in courses for performance, directing, design, and fabrication, and created lifelong friendships with fellow puppeteers including David Regan ’95 (SFA), ’01 MFA; Tim Legasue ’92 (SFA); Jennifer Barnhart ’94 (SFA); and Jim Napolitano ’93 (SFA). “They’re all UConn grads who went on to do well commercially,” he says, citing some of their collective work with entertainment giants The Jim Henson Co., The Walt Disney Co., PBS, and Nickelodeon.

Jim Henson Lesson #1: As you start traveling down that road of life, remember this: There are never enough comfort stops. The places you’re going to are never on the map.

For five years post-graduation, Saunders honed his craft. “I moved to Nashville fresh out of college to work as a junior fabricator, building puppets. It was a steady gig, and I learned a lot.” Following a brief move to New York City, Saunders ended up working with relatives in Toronto where he met special effects designer Gordon Smith. “Gordon couldn’t hire me because I wasn’t Canadian,” Rob explains, “but I ended up working for him for free on a film character with claws.” Those claws turned out to be for Hugh Jackman’s first appearance as Wolverine in “X-Men.”

Broke, but teeming with inspiration, Saunders returned to New York City to work as a mold maker at a stop-motion shop. “I loved New York, but the type of projects I wanted to be involved in were primarily in Los Angeles. New York has a huge television puppeteers network, but I wanted to focus more on monsters and creature effects at that point in my career. So I left to check out Hollywood’s film and entertainment scene.” Saunders landed in LA two days before the catastrophic events of 9/11 unfolded. The entertainment industry ground to a halt and work was scarce. “I ended up taking a job at Whole Foods as their beer guy, but kept knocking on doors and sending out resumes.” Finally, opportunity struck in the form of a web-slinging superhero bringing much needed traction to Saunders’ career. Steve Johnson’s EdgeFX was seeking an artist to create a prototype for a costume in “Spider-Man 2” and Saunders seized the chance, earning his first break in the 2004 blockbuster hit with the credit “Puppeteer: Doc Ock Tentacle.”

Saunders was a member of the puppeteering team that helped create and manipulate the arms in the film-stealing scene where Alfred Molina’s villain character Doctor Octopus pleads and interacts with his sentient, clawed tentacles. This visual effect became a revered part of movie lore and is one reason for the film’s critical acclaim.

Word of Saunders’ talent spread throughout the industry. “South Park” creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone tapped him for their edgy and satirical “Team America: World Police,” which relies on puppets, miniature sets, and punchlines based on the ridiculousness of seeing the childlike, near-human characters in precarious situations. The puppets were about 18 inches, head to toe, says Saunders. “They were very complex and had nine motors inside their heads to make expressions. Some puppets had up to 12 strings for one controller.” Parker and Stone “dumbed down” the puppets to meet their specific vision, though, not using all they were capable of. “I loved working with those guys,” Saunders says with a smile. “They are brilliant writers and filmmakers. But I don’t think they knew how hard it would be working with puppets.”

Besides acting as a puppet wrangler for the tight 60-day production schedule, Saunders was the puppeteer for a bartender in a scene where one of the lead characters, Sarah, shoots up a bar filled with terrorists. “I was wrapped in fire blankets with all these explosives going off over my head and had to keep my character moving stoically around the bar, doing his thing,” he remembers. “And my character survived!”

Transitioning to a less explosive project and deepening his connection to Jim Henson, Saunders served as a legacy effects artist on the 2011 feature film “The Muppets.” “I built a suit for the movie called the ‘Muppet Man,’ where all the Muppets hide in a human three-piece suit to break into Miss Piggy’s office,” he says of the first and only time he worked with the Muppet characters. “The puppet community is so small,
“You can’t embrace and connect with [animatronics] in the same way as with puppets. My joke has always been that we were making bulldozers with fur.”

But something was missing... It was all about machines.

Machines? “The process of building high-level animatronics for theme parks is complex,” he explains. “You start with creative design. And then you layer in the mechanical design, the number of movements, how it works, whether it uses electric motors, air pistons, or hydraulics. You also need to take in the power and safety needs, and how long it can last while operating seven days a week in often humid conditions. “Animatronics are undeniably fascinating, but they can feel like powerful, weighty machines,” he continues. “You can’t embrace and connect with them in the same way as with puppets. My joke has always been that we were making bulldozers with fur.”

Those cold, furry bulldozers made Saunders miss the tactile magic of puppetry and costumes. When Stoopid Buddy Stoodios in Los Angeles invited him to work on “The Masked Singer,” the timing couldn’t have been better. “It was an intense schedule but exhilarating work,” he says of his five seasons working on the show. “The biggest challenge is making sure the masks are acoustically sound, with no reverb or interference. We have specialty microphones, but often need to adapt and reshape the foam inside the mask so the talents’ voices can be heard.”

While the world collectively grappled with the 2020 pandemic, Saunder worked on the show remotely from Nashville. “I had a small office set up in my house and was working with colleagues in Los Angeles. We would get a drawing and come up with a budget and plan how to build it,” he says.

“Then I’d go to Los Angeles to work with the team on it.”

Did he know what celebrity he was creating for in advance? “Never,” he insists. “They kept that a secret. All we had were general specs about the person, like shape and size, or if a person was older or frail so we wouldn’t make the costume too heavy.”

Yet show business doesn’t always go as planned. “We’d only meet the celebrity at the first fitting,” Saunders says. “One time we made this elaborate leopard costume for a petite woman. Turned out she changed her mind last minute and they replaced her with the musician Seal, who is 6’3”! So we had to rebuild the costume to accommodate him. We were always dealing with last-minute alterations.”

**Jim Henson Lesson #3:** I believe that we form our own lives, that we create our own reality, and that everything works out for the best.

On a trip to a fiber supplier in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 2022, Saunders’ world took another turn. “I shared my dream of establishing my own puppetry workshop with the owners,” he says. “To my surprise, they offered me a space in their facility to make that a reality. It was a gift that I couldn’t refuse.”

And so, CJS Workshop was born — a costume design, fabrication, and maintenance studio catering to themed entertainment and commercial advertising. Eventually the studio found its permanent home in Groton, Massachusetts, and operates out of an 8,000-square-foot building near the picturesque River Road Trails, where cyclists pass by daily.

“I love walking distance to the workshop,” Saunders says, waving his arms toward the studio’s windows that boast a New England treelined view. He also mentions he needs to end the interview soon to pick up his three young sons — Christopher, Jacob, and Samuel, who inspired the name CJS — at a public school just minutes away.

**Jim Henson Lesson #4:** Watch out for each other and love and forgive everybody. It’s a good life, enjoy it.

When the talk turns to his vision for CJS, however, Saunders stays planted and engaged, eager to share how he is actively recruiting to expand his team of 16. Right now, he counts four UConn alumni on his team. “I’m always on the lookout to hire people from the program,” he says. “UConn is good about reaching out to me about people they think I might want to work with.”

Saunders is intent on fostering a collaborative, diverse, positive, and respectful culture. He seems like the type of boss you’d want to work for and have a beer with; he speaks with genuine empathy and has kind eyes. “Service to our clients and each other is paramount,” he emphasizes. “We have a responsibility to care for one another.”

His company’s four-day workweek is one way he prioritizes a healthy work-life balance. “Remembering his salad days of initial excitement and discovery in New Hampshire, Saunders is also committed to lifting young artists. “I often meet kids at puppet festivals or through my old high school that have unbelievable talent but lack the support to pursue their artistic dreams,” he says. “Parents sometimes struggle to understand a career path in the arts. The key is to showcase the talent and hard work involved, and the fact that you can make a living at it. Of course there are challenges and risks, but that’s true for any profession.”

What about Saunders’ own parents? Did they support his passion? He pauses to find the right words, then shares, “Neither of my parents came from an artistic background — my dad was an electrician, and my mother worked in a nursing home. The concept of puppetry was foreign to them. While they didn’t actively encourage it, they didn’t dismiss it either.”

Right now, he worries about who will take over for his generation of old-school puppeteers. Yes, there is digital puppetry and CJS Workshop believes there will always be a need for live performance. He hopes CJS Workshop acts as a beacon for the next generation of artists. “It costs me nothing to talk to these kids about what it takes to be in this trade. There are the ones who are hungry for it, and you know they’ll do all right. For this profession, you have to fight for it daily. You have to want it daily. You need to be fueled by the hunger for art.”

**Jim Henson Lesson #5:** Life’s like a movie, write your own ending. Keep believing, keep pretending.
Billion Dollar Bailey

Air you can wear. That’s how the meteorologist describes the weather in Orlando this August weekend, and at 10 a.m. the track already shimmers with heat. But when she strides onto the red rubber, she is fresh as a CEO in an air-conditioned boardroom about to announce a better-than-expected earnings report. She’s in high heels and it’s 96 degrees Fahrenheit with 100% humidity, and she looks like she’s a whistle away from taking off, a streak of black on red running an 800 like it’s 1999.

“I love the track. Stepping on it gives you a high every time, it’s like ahhhh,” Trisha Bailey ’99 (CLAS) says. But instead of

Running gave Bailey her start in life and continues to be an inspiration. “In running you have to finish the race,” she says. And if she gets knocked down, “my greatest revenge is for you to watch me win.”
Bailey Bailey and her partner Tory Dandy celebrated her birthday and the launch of her book, “Unbroken,” with a swanky party at Serenity Ranch in August.

... my story, it's not normal. It's deeply disturbing.
“Bailey’s staff calls it her ESP. These mind melds…”

how it all happened, it got to the point where they had a kind of mind meld.

Bailey’s staff calls it her ESP. These mind melds aren’t just for Bailey, without being told, what an employee needs. She has a feeling about something, or someone, and then it happens. Bailey tells me it comes from prayer. “I will know things before they happen, and if I pray, my prayer is answered immediately. I will pray tonight, and the very next morning I will get the answer.” She says it is her faith, and her conviction that sowing seeds of hope and goodness leads to harvests of blessings, that give her a special ability to take a chance on people.

When she was just starting Bailey’s Medical in 2011, she says she ran into a challenge. She found certain neighborhoods in Florida unwelcoming to a Black woman with an accent and jokes that she needed a “pretty white boy” to sell to those areas. Recent college grad Shaw Widemberg was recommended by a colleague. And even though he was only 26, with job experience selling lawn-care services door to door, she had that feeling that she could make things work with him. So she took a chance, and he became the first employee of Bailey’s Medical.

“I went to the interview and she told me she had this vision, and I bought into it. I mean the vision was a 600-square-foot room at that point, no employees, no nothing, but there was a vision there, and we believed in it together.” Widemberg sat at a high top in the foyer surrounded by balloon sculptures, he tells a story about his first sale, a hospital bed, and how Bailey and he delivered it to a man in a demen- tia ward. One of the other patients in the ward had defecated on the packaging, and as they were cleaning up, Bailey got poop all over her shirt. It didn’t faze her, he says, because they had just helped someone, and that’s what they do. “We take care of people.”

The business grew quickly, and Widemberg with it, he is now COO. Bailey soon had managing teams of people, many of whom were older than he. He learned leadership from watching her, but also from books she had him read and then give weekly presentations on to the team, a few chapters at a time. He isn’t the only one to whom Bailey has assigned book reports – executives whose speaking style she deemed too negative have had to give presentations on positive criticism techniques, for example. This training technique harks back to her UConn tutoring days. Jessica Dyson, now HR director, started entry level and says she found it disconcerting when Bailey began to offer her more responsibility, asking her opinion on business decisions. “She eased me into it.” Dyson tells me. “And that’s kind of what she does, to make you grow into the shoes she’s trying to give you.”

By now, the party has moved into the late night phase, where everyone feels like they’ve known each other forever. A group of women including past track teammates, pharmaceutical marketers, an advocate for the homeless, and Bailey’s sister, princess of Sierra Leone dance together next to the indoor pool. Bailey is still signing books. The vibe is full of love. And the love is real. Bailey has installed a fundamental ethos into her medical device company: be kind and caring to people in the worst moments of their lives. You might just be delivering a hospital bed, you might get crap all over you, but you can be kind and caring and take care of people while you do it.

As she explained back at her condo the day before the party, the point of her success and wealth – and her book – is to be able to help other people.

Bailey remembers the manager, who, early in her career, let her take off as much time as she needed when her grandmother died. “He did that. Now, I take that, and make sure that that is a part of my leadership. I not only care for my employees in work, but I care for them outside. I can’t ask you to care for people if I’m not caring for you.”

Carol Milardo Floriani ’68 (NUR) reports that she has received from hospice nursing and now lives in Easley, South Carolina. She also notes that she and her husband just celebrated 50 years of marriage with a cruise in the Southern Caribbean. Local author Arno B. Zimmer ’68 (CLAS) of Fairfield, Connecticut, has come out with another book. “The Antiquary Book Murders: The Hunt for Little Dorrit” starts out with the murder of an elderly bookseller and the discovery of an 1887 copy of “Little Dorrit.”

Charles Surasky ’71 (CLAS) and co-founder East Halland received the Texas Numismatic Association’s highest honor, the Cabaret K. Tidwell Literary Award. They were honored for their research and authorship of “The Surviving Postal Notes of Texas” about the experimental form of 19th-century U.S. postal money orders. Monday also volunteers each week at the North Texas Community Food Pantry – often wearing his UConn Cars T-shirt.


When former UConn Huskies men’s basketball player Dee Dee Jonkins ’74 (CLAS) and co-author, his daughter, Amber, created a nonprofit to raise funds for brain cancer research. To date, the Glialoma Research Organization has funded five research projects at top U.S. cancer centers, such as the Cleveland Clinic, and has created a social media community connecting brain cancer caregivers. Find out more at glialorense.org.

Rose Jung-Gaggero ’75 (SFA), a mixed media artist, was the featured artist for the 2nd Street Art Gallery of Fort Pierce, Florida, over the summer. She recently became a member of the Arts for ACT Gallery, the proceeds from which provide shelter and counseling for abused women. David Mark Fettermen ’76 (CLAS) has published his 18th book, “Empowerment Evaluation and Social Justice — Confronting the Culture of Silence,” which he dedicated to his mother, Elsie Blumenthal Fettermen ’49 (ED), ’60 M.S., ’64 MA, ’66 Ph.D. He is president and CEO of Fettermen and Associates, an international consulting firm, and is a faculty member at Pacifica Graduate Institute and Claremont Graduate University.

Robert J. Kirsch- baum ’76 (CLAS), ’78 MA, ’82 Ph.D. checks in with a life update. He continues to work at a fast-growing, deadly type of brain cancer.

Stephanie (Green) Giancola ’78 (BUS) is living the dream. A former UConn cheerleader and self-proclaimed sports nut, she is writing as much as she can, and it didn’t take to create an advanced creative writing course. Always a roman- tic, she’s combined her passion for sports and writing to become a USA Today bestselling author. Under the pen name Stephanie Queen, Giancola has published more than 50 sports romance novels.

Giancola reunited with former cheerleaders at UConn’s Homecoming in 2017. From left: Patricia Fasupahong-Aki ’79 (ERO), Fattie Pansu-M护理 ’77 (CLAS), Giancola, Jeff Balon ’76 (BUS), and Renee (Occhialini) Maksowski ’78 (SPA).
FALL 2023
UCONN NATION    | ALUMNI

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his undergraduate degree in
recognized by the Hartford
this structure and a system of small daily
"You want to address very specific behaviors — not why some-
then depersonalize the problem and treat it before it festers.
"Everybody hated me," she admits. By sharing her failings
"I wanted to throw myself under the bus to get
her baby horse's first dressage
is top
or getting mentored
Do they forbid you from working with
Do they get anxious after neglecting you, sweeping in and
inopportune
moments, in the book, "I wanted to throw myself under the bus to get
Do you feel I gave you the opportunity to speak up in the
Do they show up at inappropriate moments, like after a project’s done?
Do you have no idea what your name is or who you do in your role?
Do you have multiple projects due at the same time?
Do they hover over you, or leave you alone?

West says stress can drive people into what she calls "acci-
dental jerk territory" and confesses that the pressure of lead-
ing an office reorganization made her a bulldozzer boss. "Everybody hated me," she admits. By sharing her failings in the book, "I wanted to throw myself under the bus to get people to have a little more humility," she says. "Most of us have an inner jerk. This isn’t a bad apple issue."

"Most of us have an inner jerk. This isn’t a bad apple issue." says West. Most people don’t mean to be bad bosses, but for example, pressure from the top makes them micromanage. Worse, an organization’s structural flaws encourage people to micromanage. Her next book, "Job Therapy," explores reasons people are unsatisfied at work and comes out next year. Thanks to the growth of remote work, it’s harder to detect a dental jerk territory and confesses that the pressure of lead-
ing an office reorganization made her a bulldozzer boss. "Everybody hated me," she admits. By sharing her failings in the book, "I wanted to throw myself under the bus to get their everyday life, which would try to be good bosses but, for example, pressure from the top makes them micromanage. Worse, an organization’s structural flaws encourage people to micromanage. Her next book, "Job Therapy," explores reasons people are unsatisfied at work and comes out next year. Thanks to the growth of remote work, it’s harder to detect a dental jerk territory and confesses that the pressure of leading an office reorganization made her a bulldozzer boss. "Everybody hated me," she admits. By sharing her failings in the book, "I wanted to throw myself under the bus to get people to have a little more humility," she says. "Most of us have an inner jerk. This isn’t a bad apple issue."

as a school psychologist for the Clover Park School District in Lakewood, Washington, a job he’s held for 30 years. He has published more than 50 peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and books and is now working on a book called (Learning) How to Grow Old. “He says he plans to retire someday but for now, tries to stay young at heart by playing music with friends and riding his Harley ‘very very fast’.” He would like to reconnect with a former undergraduate named Linda who worked with him at the Good Food Truck on campus back in the.

• Curtis Tearte ’78 JD shared the news that he was honored with an alumni achievement award at the 75th anniversary of the UConn Alumni Association, where he earned his undergraduate degree in 1973. Tearte, a retired IBM executive, is chairman and co-founder of the Tearte Family Foundation, which partners with educational institutions and organizations to offer scholarships, mentoring, and leadership training to under-

Bill Keena ’81 (CLAS)

colleague at the Midwest Food Bank, ‘72 (PT) and
Carolyn (Berner) Kelly and Rick Mahoney ’79 JD
named Linda who worked
with him at the Good Food Truck on campus back in the.

Robert Wachtel-Rosenthal, ’08 Ph.D. was elected vice president
and state officer of the New Jersey Organization of Special-Needs Education in Piscataway
Township, New Jersey, for 14 years and is retired from the Colgate-Palmolive Company.

• Namita Tripathy Shah ’93 (BUS) was selected for Pitney Bowes’ Executive
Board. "I’m a leader in the firm’s transac-
tion advisory services practice. I’ve been with
McHugh ’94 and
Steven McHugh ’94 (ENG), now a professor of law and as super-
vising patent attorney at the UConn School of Law. Prior to practicing law, Steven held electrical engi-
neering positions at United Technologies Corp., Timex Corp., and Dotaphone Corp. in
We still plan on staying involved with the teams.

Are you? Tessa West can answer both questions – and help you fix your workplace nightmares.

No matter who you are, you can become part of this winning way to heal. And we look forward to taking them to their first game this Homecoming 2002! Our girls have become huge Husky fans

I always think so fondly of my time at UConn, writes Anthony DiChiara ’05 (CLAS). I owe everything to my experience. I met my wife Melissa DiChiara ’04 (CLAS) there, which led to my career in fire safety, but more im-
portantly our two daughters — Annabella and Kevin — were born on the 15-year anniversary of the day we met during Homecoming 2002! Our girls have become huge Husky fans and we look forward to taking them to their first game this season.

My family’s link to UConn has continued to impact our lives in positive ways. In the Summer 2019 issue of the magazine, the story “Team Impact: A Winning Way to Heal” by Elizabeth Omar-Utimne caught my eye. After research-
ing the organization, I thought it would be something that would benefit our oldest daughter, Penelope, who was born with a very rare genetic disorder called Emanuel Syndrome.

We had an amazing experience with Team Impact, being matched with the Molloy University softball team here on Long Island. The players openly accepted Penelope as a teammate and Penelope always enjoyed her time attending games, practices, and other events with the team. Penelope recently “graduated,” becoming a Team Impact alumna, but we still plan on staying involved with the teams.

Our family will be forever grateful to UConn. So much can be said about how our experiences on campus have shaped our lives. Go Huskies!

Bill Keena ’81 (CLAS)
is now market president at AmeriHealth Caritas of New Hampshire. He also has accepted a position on the Board of the Granite United Way and serves on the National Com-
mittee Leadership Council for the March of Dimes. • Con-
sultants to Roberta Wachtel-Rosenthal ’81 (ED) on being recognized by the Hartford Business Journal as a 2003 Power 50 member. She’s the president of WellSpa Health, a Farmington, Conn-
necticut, provider of corporate wellness programs. • Jerome “Jerry” Luna ’81 (CLAS), of Glastonbury, Connecticut, has published his second book of poetry, “Hometown Poems.” He says each free verse poem evokes a memory of a landmark in his hometown of Stafford Springs, Connecticut, up the road from his main campus. His first book of rhyming verse, “Backyard Poems,” came out in 2022. • Tom Conners ’93 M.S., ’96 Ph.D. was elected vice president and state officer of the New Jersey School Boards Association for a two-year term. He has been a member of the Board of Education in Piscataway Township, New Jersey, for 14 years and is retired from the technology division of the Colgate-Palmolive Company.

Anthony Suvi ‘90 MM reports five of his newly published compositions have earned a JW Pepper Edi-
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Neuer, at the German National Library, believes a library’s mission “to record everything without fear or favor” is essential to democratic society.

World War, the Leipzig building, damaged by Allied bombing raids, became the leading library of Communist East Germany. “Certain publications from the West were strictly off limits to the public,” says Neuer. A West German library was opened in Frankfurt in 1946.

In 1990, the two libraries merged during German reunification. Today, along more than 250 miles of shelf space, sits every book, journal, CD, and map published in Germany from the beginning of the 20th century, cataloged in perfect sequence.

Neuer’s path to the top of the library world, though, was far less organized.

Arriving in Stettin as a German studying abroad student from the University of Mannheim, Neuer was quickly captivated by New England. He stayed on for a Master of Music in double bass performance and immersed himself in UConn’s musical life.

“I played in the wind ensemble, and in the orchestra,” says Neuer. “I discovered new repertoire. And I accompanied other kids from bass class on the piano.”

He also fell in with the art scene in Hartford. After college, he worked for the Wadsworth Atheneum and went on to hold management positions at Chamber Music Plus and the Hartford Symphony Orchestra.

“I was able to use the musical education I had from UConn, along with marketing and administrative skills, to venture into cultural management.”

In 2009, Neuer and his wife, whom he’d met in Hartford, moved to New York City. Applying for marketing jobs with nonprofits, he ended up at The New York Public Library, the fourth-biggest library on the planet. It was, he says, a surprise.

“I’d been a reader all my life. But it was just by chance that I ended up in the library world. I worked five years in the marketing department, moving up to director of digital engagement.

Then I switched over to library administration and became director of customer experience.”

In New York, Neuer saw how the library was changing lives. From its literacy programs to its world-class research collections, the library was enriching minds of all ages, across backgrounds. “Libraries can do anything back for anybody who wants to advance in life,” he says.

In 2014, he and his family moved to Germany, where he took a position with a library supply company. But he wasn’t satisfied. “I really wanted to go back to library administration, back to serving the public,” he says. “So when I heard the German National Library was looking for a director, I put my name in the hat.”

Neuer took the reins in Leipzig this summer at a time of transition. What challenges does he face? Guiding the library through an increasingly digital publishing landscape for one, as well as introducing artificial intelligence into library systems while, at the same time, making sure he protects jobs.

“We have AI that can do full-text scans and catalog items at a very fast rate,” says Neuer. “So this is a transitional moment for some of our professional colleagues.”

The library’s founding task — to record everything, without fear or favor — remains a guiding principle for Neuer. “In a democratic society,” he says, “it is very important that we don’t hold anything back.”

And to turn Neuer is returning to his musical roots as well. The library is home to the German Music Archive, which holds more than 0.1 million works, made up of sheet music and sound recordings. “In a way,” he says, “it’s like I’m coming full circle.” —TOMAS WEBER
I was immersed in Peter’s work just through my existence. I come from a small family. Both of my parents were artists — my dad, Paul Zelanski, was a professor at UConn for almost 40 years. He taught Peter; my mom, Annette (Harding) Zelanski ’65 (SFA); and Peter’s wife, Janet Cummings Good ’66 (SFA). We chose friends to be our family, and the closest were those connected through UConn, both faculty and alumni. I grew up with the Goods — some of my earliest childhood memories were playing parties, concerts at Jorgensen, and so many art openings.

From a set of Christmas stamps issued in 1993 to the UConn oak leaf symbol to the Hartford Whalers logo, the work of one of UConn’s first graphic design majors lives on.

Renowned graphic artist Peter Good ’65 (SFA), who received the University Medal for his work designing the University’s oak leaf logo and is perhaps best known as the designer behind the enduring Hartford Whalers logo, died at home in Chester, Connecticut, on May 3 at age 80.

I was supposed to work for him. I kept in touch with Peter while I was at UConn. When I graduated, I wanted to make sure I earned my spot at Peter Good Graphic Design (which was the business before he and Jan started Cummings & Good). I got his advice before I took my first job at Newman Design Associates, and when I was ready to leave there, I essentially showed up at his office like a stray cat that they fed and never left. I would find a corner of a desk to work at just to be close to his greatness. Peter was so incredibly generous and kind, and such a thoughtful teacher.

He would let me come with him to client meetings and presentations. He confessed he never liked public speaking, and I quite enjoyed it. I know how lucky I was that he allowed me that experience as a young professional. I have so many memories of driving over the river and through the woods together, just talking about ideas, design, concepts, books, music, and art. Those are my most treasured memories, the quiet moments. It’s not the published work that I remember the most — yes I smile every single time I see the Hartford Whalers logo, especially on a young person, the next generation appreciating his design — but for me, it was always the process. It’s the thinking, the research, the discovery, the humor, the making of things.

Through the duration of my career, the tools we use as designers have advanced beyond our imaginations. I worked for Peter as computers transitioned into office spaces, but were yet to be fully embraced. We always started with a sketch pad, and I still do to this day. We spent so much time making things in the studio — design was very tactile. One of the things that I learned from Peter was that a good idea will always last. I think that’s what makes Peter’s work so timeless. Certain design, you can look at and immediately know when it was created, like fashion. There are trends within design and typography that date it to a time period. Peter always avoided that.

I remember always being in awe of Peter’s work and knowing I ultimately wanted to work for him. I kept in touch with Peter while I was at UConn. When I graduated, I wanted to make sure I earned my spot at Peter Good Graphic Design (which was the business before he and Jan started Cummings & Good). I got his advice before I took my first job at Newman Design Associates, and when I was ready to leave there, I essentially showed up at his office like a stray cat that they fed and never left. I would find a corner of a desk to work at just to be close to his greatness. Peter was so incredibly generous and kind, and such a thoughtful teacher.

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Certain design, you can look at and immediately know when it was created, like fashion. There are trends within design and typography that date it to a time period. Peter always avoided that, his work started with the purity of an idea balanced with the art and craft of execution. It was never design for the sake of design. There’s a capacity with digital tools to make things look polished, but sometimes when you strip it down, there’s nothing there. Peter’s work was successful as a drawing on a piece of paper — it wasn’t the application that made it interesting. It’s special because it’s smart. You can recognize Peter’s work because his artistry came through so strongly. I understand that passion and love. I understand that joy for design wasn’t bound by time or hours that were billed to the client. That’s the life of somebody who lives as a graphic designer. Peter was truly looking for the best idea, the best solution — sometimes that took a great deal of time, even if the outcome looked relatively simple.

The very last time I saw Peter, we were planning on having lunch together at my studio. I told him then, as I told him every time I talked with him, how incredible it was for me to work for him and that it changed the trajectory of my life. I told him again that I hear his voice every day. I’m still surrounded by him. I’ve owned Ink&Pixel Agency for more than 29 years, but I continue to recognize his favorite typefaces, glyphs, and ligatures. He’s over my shoulder when I kern type, when I force line breaks.

Decades later, I hear Peter. He was so incredibly talented. He loved what he did, and he never compromised. It wasn’t work, it was the passion he had for life. That’s why his design will live on, and that’s why people recognize it even at a glance, because that’s how brilliant he was. That’s the mark of an artist whose work comes from their being. It’s not just a job. He taught me to be a designer for life. I miss him terribly. I truly, start to finish, admire him.

**NOEMI ZELANSKI KEARNS ’89 (SFA)**
TIM’S TRIVIA ANSWERS


FALL 2023

TOM’S TRIVIA ANSWERS


FALL 2023

TOM’S TRIVIA ANSWERS

Ryan Matthews ’09 (CLAS), ’16 MPA loved his first job out of UConn rebuilding homes for Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans. But when he came home to Beacon Falls, Connecticut, that Christmas, his life turned upside down. He discovered that his mother, Susan, had dramatically deteriorated after being diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).

So he quit his job and began caring for her full time. And then he watched in despair as the disease slowly robbed her of all control of her body over the next 18 months. “Watching my mom die from ALS was an experience that shaped every fiber of who I am as a person,” he says. “I graduated from UConn a little bright-eyed, a little full of myself, and ready to take on the world. ALS gave me this depth of perspective that almost made my peers seem unfamiliar.”

A few months later, he started The Susie Foundation, a nonprofit that supports families caring for relatives with ALS. Now 10 years later, the foundation has raised more than $1 million and helped hundreds of families. The organization gives grants of up to $3,000 a year to about 100 families in New England to help offset medical expenses not covered by health insurance. It also supports New England’s only summer camp designed to meet the unique and pressing needs of young people helping to care for a parent or family member diagnosed with ALS.

“There are tens of thousands of people diagnosed with ALS every year, but you still feel incredibly isolated when it hits your family,” Matthews says. “Part of what I wanted to do with The Susie Foundation is to make it feel less isolating and at least have one person helping to support the family who speaks the language of ALS.”

Matthews runs the Foundation on nights and weekends when he’s not at his full-time job as vice president of programs for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Connecticut or caring for his toddler. He discovered his passion for community service at UConn, while majoring in history and political science and engaging in community outreach, intramural sports, Leadership Legacy Experience, and Alternative Spring Break. “All the things I got involved with on campus made me a more well-rounded person and better prepared to handle ALS.” —GRACE MERRITT

For more information, visit thesusiefoundation.org.
and had multiple amazing experiences working in different animal hospitals and countries (with leatherback sea turtles in Grenada and numerous types of wildlife in South Africa). It has all made me a stronger doctor and human,” she says.

**Best wishes to Julia (Leonard) Cricchi ’12 (ED), ’15 MA and Kristopher Cricchi ’11 (CLAS), of Guilford, Connecticut, who were married in September 2023.**

**Marty Summa ’12 MBA, ’17 JD and his wife, Merrily, find themselves opening a second vineyard and event venue, Kingdom of the Hawk, in North Stonington, a few miles inland.**

It all started with a listing for 108 acres on the Stonington coastline that Michael, poised for a “next chapter” after 30 years as an attorney in Manhattan, suspected would be as good a host to French grapes as the soil across the bay on the North Fork of Long Island. “If they can do it there...” he surmised. And he was right. The Connerys have harvested cabernet franc, merlot, pinot noir, chardonnay, and sauvignon blanc grapes, and learned that merlot doesn’t winter as well in Stonington as it does on Long Island. But sauvignon blanc does even better.

That matters little to the wedding parties. They are as taken with the greens and golds of the marsh grasses and grape vines, the spectacular sunsets, and ubiquitous egrets and osprey, as the Connerys were when they bought the place.

The once decrepit Vineyard in Stonington, Connecticut, into a sought-after wedding venue. Demand is so high, two decades later, Michael Connery ’75 JD and his wife, Merrily, find themselves opening a second vineyard and event venue. Kingdom of the Hawk, in North Stonington, a few miles inland.

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**Everything’s Coming up Rosé**

They’d barely finished renovating the WWII-era private airplane hangar into a tasting room, barely planted their first vines, when they hosted a beautiful September wedding for friends — and unwittingly turned their budding winery, Saltwater Farm Vineyard in Stonington, Connecticut, into a sought-after wedding venue. Demand is so high, two decades later, Michael Connery ’75 JD and his wife, Merrily, find themselves opening a second vineyard and event venue. Kingdom of the Hawk, in North Stonington, a few miles inland.

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**Two of the things Michael Connery likes most about his second-chapter vocation as a vineyard owner are the view and “that sense of creating something tangible.”**
1. One of the books written by Nechama Tec, a professor of sociology at UConn Stamford from 1974 to 2010, was turned into a 2008 film starring Daniel Craig and Liev Schreiber. What is the name of the film?
   A: Renaissance
   B: Munich
   C: Defiance
   D: Infamous

2. In September 1989, dining halls began serving weekend meals for the first time in UConn history as part of an effort to get more students to remain on campus all week. The change was accompanied by a large rally at which effigies of what object were tossed onto a bonfire by students?
   A: Empty plates
   B: Calendars
   C: Cars
   D: Suitcases

3. Starting in fall 1993, it was finally possible to do what at the Student Union?
   A: Use the internet
   B: Walk the length of the upper floors
   C: Eat lunch
   D: Get from the ground floor to the top floor without an elevator

4. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, UConn Extension held a local version of a national contest aimed at encouraging poultry farmers to adopt new scientific methods of breeding larger, meatier chickens. What was the name of this contest?
   A: The Chicken of Tomorrow
   B: Victory Chicken
   C: Chickennnecticut
   D: Chicken for Dinner, Chicken Forever