

UConn

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2018

By a Thread

How three professors are saving Cambodian refugees, 40 years after the genocide



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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.





SNAP!

Serenade

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.



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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)*

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Can you guess not just what, but where, each of these treasures and oddities is? *By Tom Breen '00 (CLAS), photos by Peter Morenus*

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No, it won't grow to gator size and come back to bite you. But taking it to this UConn testing facility could reap some significant rewards. *By Elaina Hancock '09 MS*

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If it weren't for the Navy, Michael Bradford '98 (BGS) would never have made it to his latest job as head of the Dramatic Arts Department. *By Kenneth Best*

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If you can understand pizza and poker, you can understand bitcoin — and business professor David Noble believes you should. *By Peter Nelson*

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WEB EXTRAS

magazine.uconn.edu

TICK TESTING

Ticks were harmed in the making of this video. s.uconn.edu/ticks

NIGHTIME LAPSE

The night sky over Wilbur Cross. s.uconn.edu/stars

SERENADE

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

DEAR FRESHMEN:

Outgoing seniors share secrets, advice, and parting sorrows with incoming freshmen. s.uconn.edu/dearfreshmen

CAMBODIA

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

TOM'S TRIVIA

Online only this issue — the questions and the answers.

Cover illustration by: Michelle Kondrich

Snap! photography by: Angie Reyes (stars) and Emily Lattanzi (chorus).

Table of contents: Illustration by Andrew Colin Beck; illustration by Michelle Kondrich; photos by Peter Morenus.

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FROM THE EDITOR



REFUGE

Lila Plawecki with then-graduate students Celeste Cheung and Connor Walker (both '18 Pharm.D.) along the Farmington River bike trail in Collinsville, Connecticut.

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-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 deeply depressed and credits all the people at KHA, especially Cheung and Walker, for helping her to completely turn that around.

“But it’s a two-way street,” says Walker. “Lila helps us just as much as we help her. She’s an incredibly wise woman who has taught us a great deal about life and I consider myself very lucky to have met her.” He and Cheung both say their “Cambodian mom” has had a real impact on their thinking as the new grads consider what they’d like to do with the rest of their lives.

For starters, Cheung has a general residency at Waterbury Hospital, but says she wants to continue working with refugee populations in the future. Walker is joining the Peace Corps in Southeast Asia and is hoping to make it to Cambodia to see Plawecki when she is there visiting her son.

Lisa T. Stippock

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LETTERS

A lot of you remember the old skating rink and appreciated seeing a photo of it (“Traditions”). A few inquired as to where it was — the current rink was built in that exact spot. Readers also appreciated the creative work UConn is doing in the mental health field (“A Little Push”). Here is some of the feedback we received on the Spring 2018 issue. Please see the our website for more.

Get in touch! Email me at lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu or post something on our website at magazine.uconn.edu.

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

➤ This is a sweet and important opportunity. This would be a wonderful gift to the students of Parkland. I hope you will share this. They need ideas!
Mariann Chinsky, UConn mom
Union, New Jersey, 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.

Jeffrey Nemit '63 (ENG)
Camarillo, California, 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 (Sadlon) 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

➤ Many wonderful hours spent skating and having hot chocolate. We went every New Year’s Eve for a long time. Fond memories!

Susan (Brown) Pellerin '87 (ED)
Milford, Connecticut, via Facebook

➤ Coldest place on Earth!
Eric Ferreri '95 (CLAS)
Durham, North Carolina, via Facebook

Band Camp

➤ TUP!
David Duarte '93 (CLAS)
South Windsor, Connecticut, via our website

Saving the Monarch

➤ Just bought 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)
Ellington, Connecticut, via Facebook

➤ Jackie is one of the hardest-working people in the entertainment industry.
Joe Pelehach '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.
Daniel C. Leone '53 (PHARM) and
Marianne V. Leone '59 (ED)
Norwich, Connecticut, via email

Tom’s Trivia

➤ Miss French also forbade women from wearing “trousers” on campus unless they were going to gym classes. Smoking was only permitted in certain rooms in the dorms. Ever wondered how many are left from the class of 1948? I’m one of the younger ones at 91. Returning vets were much older.

Jane (Hoxie) Maxson '48 (ED)
Wakefield, Rhode Island, via our website



Tyler Golden

KUDOS

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 Hume’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 McGorman, who said ‘If you get yourself out here we’ll record some songs,’” says Cole. “L.A. inspired me so much musically. For the first time, I thought I wanted to play music for the rest of my life.”

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 s.uconn.edu/voice.

INSTAGRAM



We approve, @kobebryant #UConnNation
@uconnhuskies



Once UConn Generation 1 finishes reading #UConnMag, UConn Future Generation takes over and pulls out all the highlights @cewt23



Pups at the Helen Woodward Animal Center will have some new toys thanks to these San Diego Huskies! #UConnCares #UConnNation @uconnalumni



TWEETS

@UConn Hey #UConn18! Now that you’re a proud @UConnAlumni, don’t forget to keep in touch with us! (@UConnSenior)

@UConn Did you know UConn has a @UConnBreakdance Club? The student-run organization actively participates in intercollegiate competitions. And you might even spot them performing around the UConn campus!

@UConn Celebrating 20 years @UConnStamford

@UConn Q: How many official Jonathans has UConn had? A: It’s not the number you might assume... Find out on the latest @UConnPodcast



Getty, UConn Athletics

CHECKING IN WITH...

OLYMPIAN PHYLLICIA GEORGE '10 (CLAS)

Phyllicia 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 McMillian (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.

What's going through your mind when you're hurtling down the track?

I'm mainly focused on the track and the turns that we are going through, making sure I feel the turns so I know where we are. Everything happens so quickly, so it's hard to think about too much.

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 bicep, 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!

How has UConn helped you on your journey?

UConn played a huge role in my development as an athlete and as a person. My coach, Clive Terrelonge, helped to lay the foundation and gave me some of the tools for my future success. He truly helped me to become a mentally strong athlete. He saw potential in me that I didn't even know existed, and his belief helped me push my boundaries and to believe in myself and my abilities.

And I had the opportunity to train alongside some talented athletes I was fortunate enough to call teammates. We all pushed each other to become better athletes. While studying for my degree in biology, I gained many life skills and made some lifelong friendships. —GRACE MERRITT



George, left, with bobsled teammate Humphries and, above, running hurdles for UConn track and field.

ON CAMPUS

DEAR FRESHMEN:

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 s.uconn.edu/dearfreshmen.



Danni Dong '18 (CLAS);
psychological sciences

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."



Austin Barrett '18 (BUS); accounting

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!"

Frank Amaefuna '18 (CLAS);
molecular & cell biology

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."



Sean Palzere '18 (ED);
elementary education

If I could give you one piece of advice: "Dive in headfirst."



Natalia Gutierrez '18 (ENG);
computer science and engineering

I couldn't survive without:
"The app." [myUConn]



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."



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-flicking 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 uninfected, 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 powdery, 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



COVETED CLASS

MARINE BIOLOGY, MARN 3014

One of the payoffs of the partnership that UConn Avery Point has with Mystic Aquarium and its Sea Research Foundation is courses that give students an opportunity to learn firsthand about potential jobs in the marine sciences and to conduct research at the famous aquarium. MARN 3014 is one of those classes.

The Instructors

“Tracy is a role model,” says marine sciences professor and Fulbright fellow Ann Bucklin of her co-teacher Tracy Romano, who is not only a marine sciences professor in residence at UConn Avery Point, but also is the vice president of research at Mystic Aquarium. “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, like that classic example of the shark and the remora, the partnership between the two is a symbiotic one.

Rising seniors Jessica Hinckley 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 seeing 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.

“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 reels 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 whale vocalize and showed students its unique feeding behaviors. Seeing it firsthand 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.

Labtime for the second half of the semester is for individual or group projects that the students design. Many use the aquarium, where they are free to study, but not make contact with, the animals.

Why We Want to Take this Class Ourselves

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. We got a real taste of what it’s like to do those jobs.”

“It was really cool to be so close to the animals. The beluga whale came right up to us.”



Rising sophomore Lissa Giacalone and rising junior Vanessa Thornberg recording beluga vocalizations at Mystic Aquarium. They hypothesize that the belugas vocalize more before feeding sessions than immediately after.

“Tracy gave a marine mammals lecture and then we got to do a demonstration and give Juno 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 polychaete [a marine worm also known as a bristle worm] under the microscopes.”

“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

For photos of the professors, Avery Point, and Mystic, go to s.uconn.edu/mystic.



Stephen Slade '89 (SFA)

KUDOS

THANKS FOR FOUR YEARS OF AWESOME!

Graduates Kia Nurse '18 (CLAS) and Gabby Williams '18 (CLAS) head to the WNBA, along with Azura Stevens, who will earn her CLAS degree this summer

Role models on and off the court, Williams, Nurse, and Stevens (a transfer from Duke) will be much-missed members of the UConn academic and athletic community. All three were top 10 picks in the WNBA draft. Williams will join Stefanie Dolson '14 (CLAS) playing with the Chicago Sky. Nurse joins Tina Charles '10 (CLAS), Kelly Faris '13 (ED), Brianna Hartley '14 (CLAS) and Kiah Stokes '15 (CLAS) on the New York Liberty's roster, and Stevens will play for the Dallas Wings with Saniya Chong '17 (CLAS).

During their four years, Nurse and Williams lost only three times in 151 games and were part of many historic UConn moments. They were on the court during the team's 100th consecutive win and coaches Geno Auriemma and Chris Dailey's 1,000th win. They helped lead the team to three undefeated regular seasons, eight AAC championships, four Final Fours, and two National Championships. Charismatic players and people, the community may miss their post-game microphone banter most of all.

Individually, each won honors too numerous to list. Highlights for Williams include the Senior CLASS Award, given to the most outstanding senior student-athlete in NCAA Division I women's basketball, the Cheryl Miller Award recognizing the top small forward in NCAA Division I, and being named a Huskies of Honor at Gampel, the 2017 WBCA NCAA Division I Defensive Player of the Year, and twice a WBCA first team All-American. She chalked up more than 1,500 career points, 1,000 rebounds, 400 assists, and 300 steals. Nurse was AAC Freshmen of the Year, 2018 WBCA NCAA Division I Defensive Player of the Year and received All-American honorable mention. She racked up more than 1,600 career points, 395 rebounds, 400 assists, and 185 steals.

IN DEVELOPMENT

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. In

The composite showed strength and flexibility characteristics that are among the highest ever recorded.

particular, Wei focused on silk fibroin, a protein found in the silk fibers spun by spiders and moths known for its toughness and tensile strength.

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 Dianyun 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 POITRAS '85 (CLAS)

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



Jeff Gonci

TASTE OF STORRS

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.

Chickpea Rotini with Roasted Garlic, Tomato, Mozzarella and Balsamic Gastrique | Makes 8 (6 oz) portions

For the garlic oil

- 1 cup olive oil
- 6 ounces garlic, peeled and chopped
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 ½ tablespoons kosher salt

Combine oil and garlic in a sheet pan and roast at 375 degrees until light golden brown. Remove from oven and season with red pepper flakes and salt. Cool, then blend in a blender or mash with wire whisk. Makes extra.

For the balsamic gastrique

- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar

Combine the vinegar and sugar in a saucepan over medium heat. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sugar dissolves and the vinegar reduces to a syrup (about half its volume). Cool and place in a squirt bottle if you have one. Otherwise a bowl is fine.

To assemble

- 16 ounces Banza chickpea rotini, cooked according to package directions
- 8 ounces fresh tomatoes, cored and diced
- ½ cup garlic oil
- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves, sliced thinly
- 4 ounces fresh mozzarella log, diced
- balsamic gastrique, for garnish

In a large pot over medium high heat, combine the chickpea rotini, the diced tomatoes, and the garlic oil. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes until heated through, stirring occasionally.

Remove the pot from the heat and gently stir in the basil. Spoon the rotini mixture onto serving plates, garnish with the fresh mozzarella, and drizzle with balsamic gastrique.

CLUBBING

CONCRETE CANOES

Student members of the School of Engineering's concrete canoe club finish work on this year's Neapolitan-themed race boat (the colors are designed to bring to mind the strawberry, chocolate, and vanilla of the classic ice cream combo). In the annual concrete canoe invitational in Vermont in May, the team finished in second of 14 places. —EMMA CASAGRANDE '18 (CLAS)



For more on the club, see s.uconn.edu/canoe.

UConn Talks

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 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 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

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

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They walked in droves for days . . . tied together by sewing thread and warned that if the thread broke they would be shot.

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 collectivized 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 bamboo, breaking 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 get meat from dead cows or elephants for the Khmer Rouge to eat, they would gnaw on the tough skin.

Though Lila Plawecki survived the reign of Pol Pot, which ended in January 1979, her anguish endured. Sponsored by her sister, she came to the U.S. in 1990. And then, for 26 years, she suffered in silence.

After the Trauma

An estimated two million people died during the Cambodian genocide. But mil-

lions like Plawecki survived the trauma. All these years on, they still suffer. “The genocide continues,” says Thomas Buckley, UConn associate clinical professor of pharmacy practice. “It manifests itself now as chronic disease.”

The prevalence of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the Cambodian-American immigrant/refugee population is more than 10 times the national average, and they experience hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and death from diabetic complications at a rate six times that of the general population.

“When you have such astronomically high rates, it shows this population has been ignored. They have low BMI [body mass index], yet they’re dying of strokes and cardiovascular disease. It’s so unexpected,” says Buckley. “Khmer Health Advocates considers this a manifestation of genocide because the American health care system has not addressed the ramifications of genocide. Who would’ve thought you’d get diabetes from a high level of cortisol that happened over 40 years ago?”

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

Buckley, along with S. Megan Berthold, School of Social Work associate professor, and Julie Wagner, UConn Health associate professor of oral health and diagnostic sciences, have dedicated their work to battling this phenomenon, not only in Cambodians but in other refugee populations.

“Sister”

The three faculty members, all principal investigators at UConn’s Institute for Collaboration on Health, Intervention, and Policy, have worked with West Hartford, Connecticut-based Khmer Health Advocates (KHA) since 2006, developing programs that improve health care for

Cambodian refugees in Connecticut and Massachusetts. KHA is the only Cambodian-American health organization in the U.S.

In her new life, Plawecki is comfortable talking about her past. Though sometimes she struggles to find the words in her second language, she just needs a minute to think through what she wants to say. Speaking in an office at KHA, Plawecki sometimes turns to Kuoch to say certain things in Khmer first. Then she either lets Kuoch translate or she takes Kuoch’s encouragement and says it herself, 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 Kuoch. Now, “If she wants to cry, she cries; if she wants to laugh, she laughs. She’s not afraid. And she’s very brave.”

When she arrived at KHA, Plawecki was not on any medication. Her doctors had never asked her about her history, and like many Cambodians, she didn’t share it. Berthold, Buckley, and Wagner have developed programs to educate doctors on caring for survivors. For a long time

Eat, Walk, Sleep

physicians would look at refugees’ symptoms separately, not understanding that 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 her questions get answered. Between that and the intervention from Buckley and others at KHA, she is now treated for her 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 nutrition guidelines, 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

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.

and I don’t have bad dreams,” she says.

But perhaps the most important piece of “Eat, Walk, Sleep” — and all the support 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 [Scully, clinical director of KHA], Dr. Miller, Connor, Celeste — no fewer than seven times. She says she prays for them every night.

“Broken Courage”

Over the past 12 years, the UConn researchers and their partners at KHA have discovered many ways to break through the particular roadblocks to treating these refugees. In addition to their fear of speaking about their problems, Cambodians suffer a specific iteration of PTSD, named *baksbat* or “broken courage,” by Cambodian psychiatrist Dr. Sothea Chhim.

Those who survived the genocide experience symptoms including fear of fear, wishing that the trauma would

go away, remaining mute, an inability to speak about their fears, and loss of a sense of togetherness, according to Chhim’s published research.

The population-specific symptoms and other cultural factors means “having ethnically specific community health workers has been critical to getting people to understand and accept treatment,” Buckley says.

The researchers’ latest collaboration, funded by a UConn Health Research Excellence Program Convergence Grant and called PLUS CamboDIA — Remote Peer Learning for U.S.-Cambodia Community Health Workers Managing Diabetes — brought Buckley to Cambodia on sabbatical. He spent this January through March in Cambodia’s second-largest city, Siem Reap, setting up a program with the Cambodian Diabetes Association and KHA.

Having laid the groundwork, Buckley will oversee U.S.-based community health





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

“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.”

workers as they deliver a curriculum on “Eat, Walk, Sleep” to workers in Cambodian villages via videoconferencing 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 things, going to emergency rooms [to treat chronic diseases]; they were all screwed up,” Buckley says. KHA hadn’t realized a pharmacist could play such a large role in their efforts.

Today, though KHA has implemented programs to deal with these problems in Cambodian-Americans, similar issues persist back in the home country.

“Cambodians have a misconception that diabetes is a short-term disease. They’ll take medicine for a week, like an antibiotic,” he says. “We’re trying to promote treatment adherence overall.”

Many patients live with symptoms for many years before seeking treatment, and once they do, more hurdles prevent them from being properly treated. According to Buckley, optimal medications are often too expensive for the poverty-stricken locals, so cheaper, less effective treatments are used. 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.

“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 for living every single day I get up. 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.

HIDDEN UConn

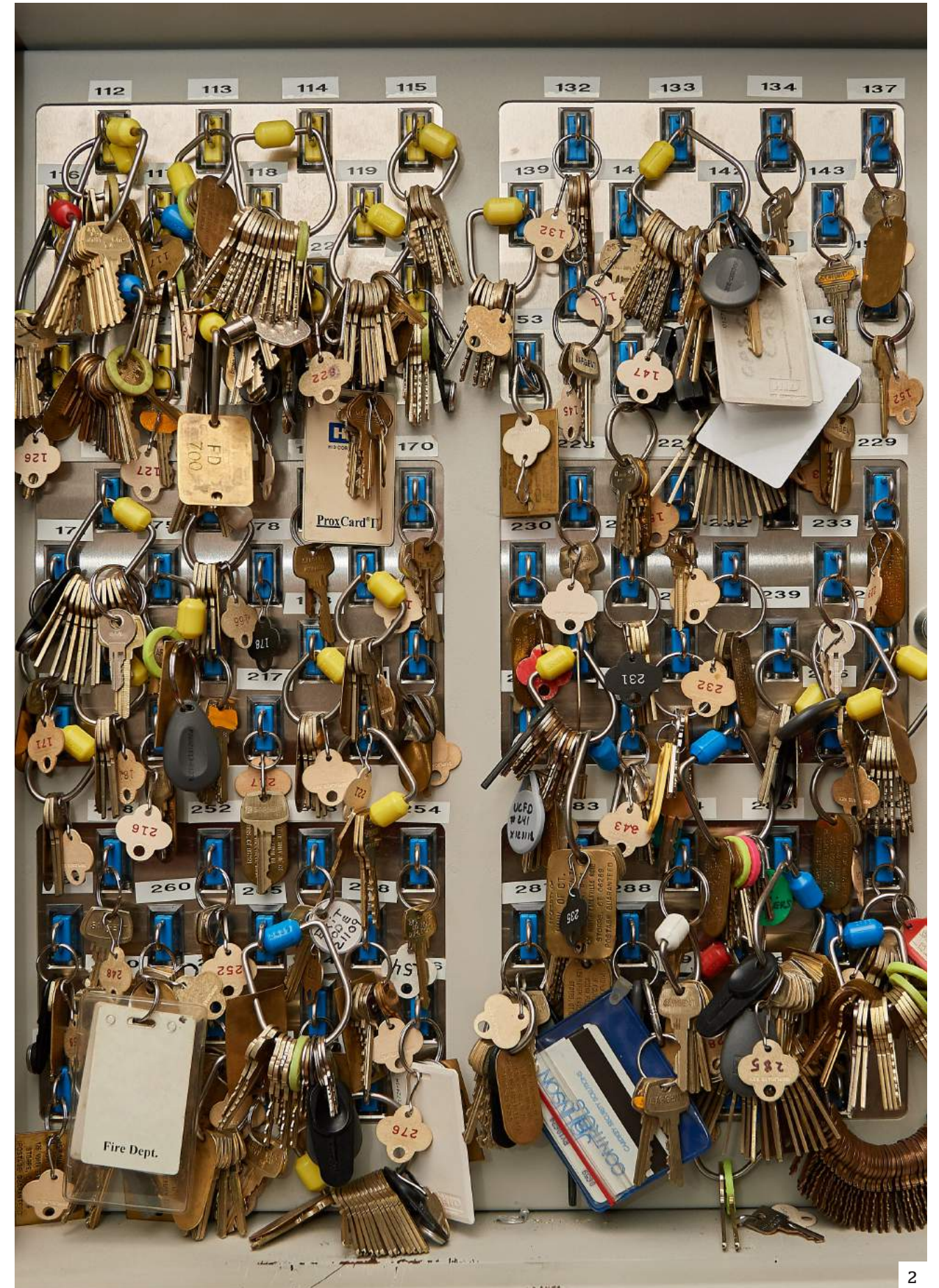
QUIZ

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



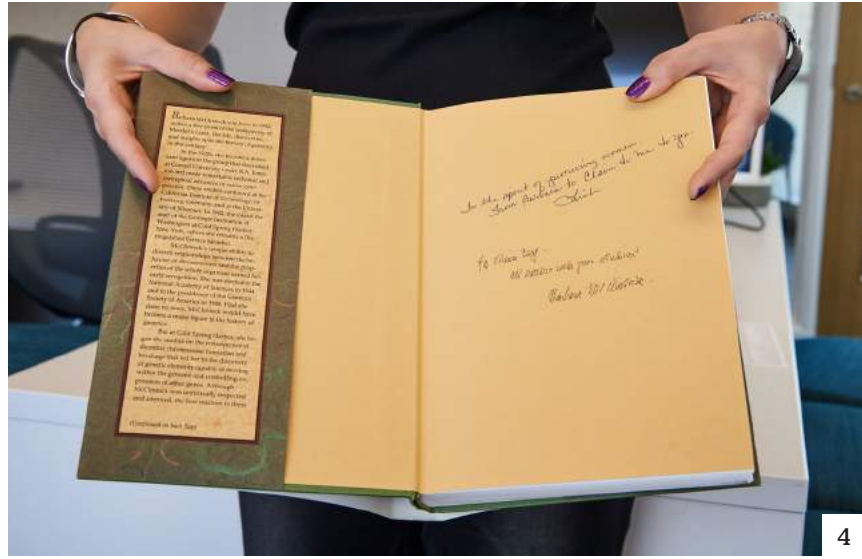
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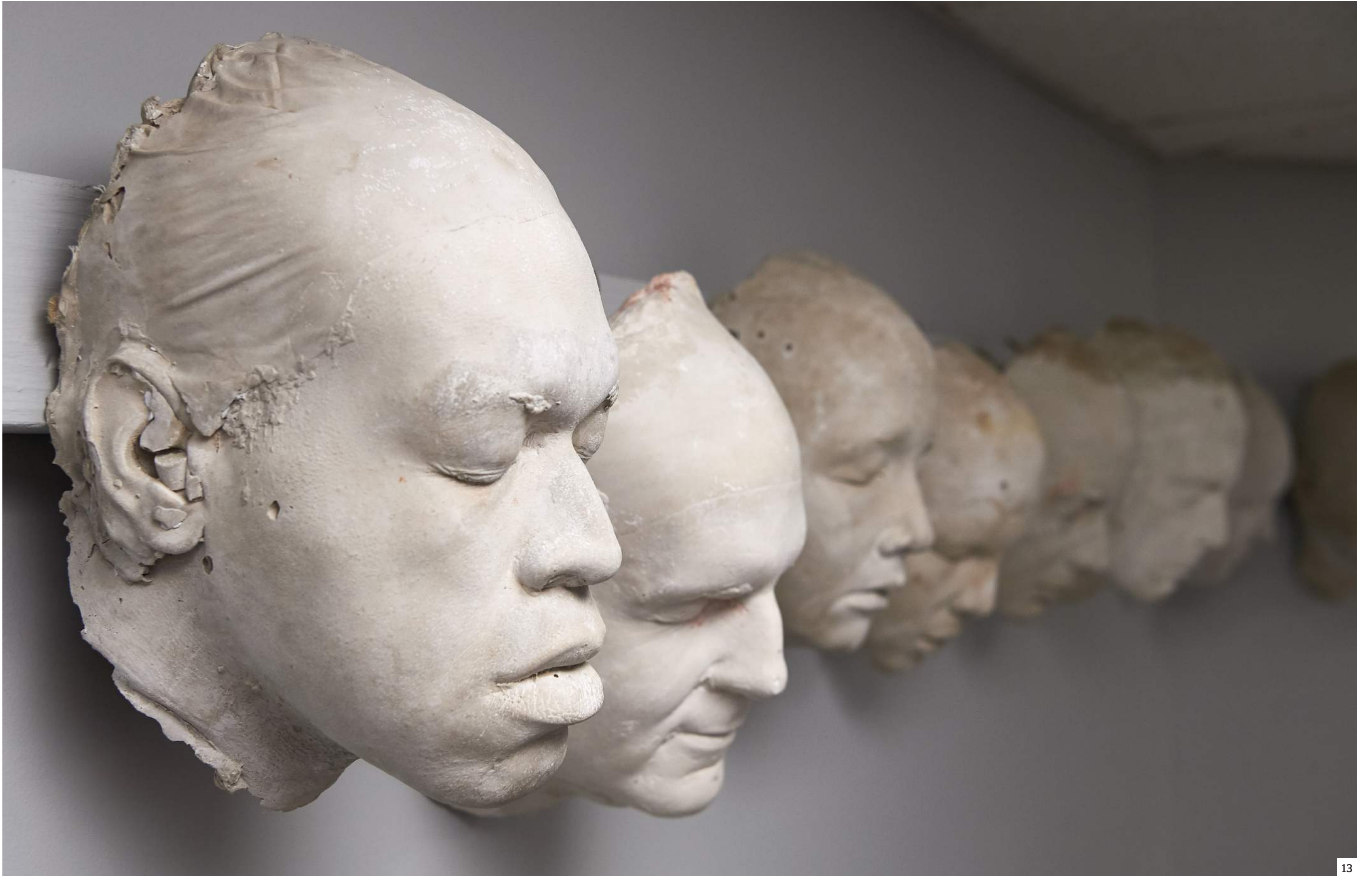
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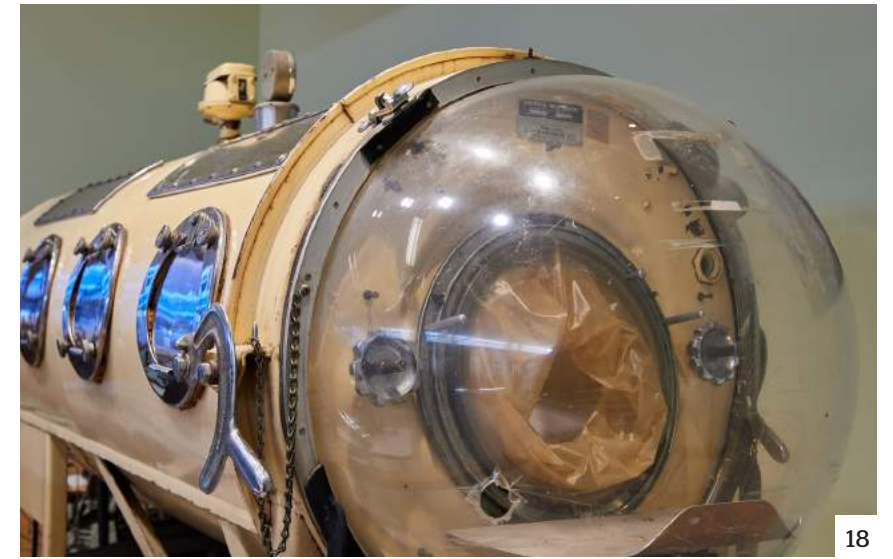
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WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER FLUSH A TICK.

NO, IT WON'T GROW TO GATOR SIZE AND COME BACK TO BITE YOU. BUT TAKING IT TO THIS UCONN TESTING FACILITY COULD REAP SOME PRETTY SIGNIFICANT REWARDS.

Another summer in New England, another boom in the tick population. It seems impossible to miss media accounts of how large the population was last year and how much worse it could be this year.

And you would be hard pressed to find someone — or someone who knows someone — who hasn't been impacted by a tick-borne disease. It's even harder to avoid the terrifying headlines about the latest devastating disease and how rampant it is likely to be. Every mention is accompanied by that feeling that something is crawling on your arm, your neck. One could become inured to it.

But it is important not to let the yearly wave of tick stories simply wash over us, warns associate professor of pathobiology Paulo Verardi. "People have become used to ticks as just something we have to deal with. But this is a big deal."

Typically after an attached tick is found, a patient is advised to monitor for flu-like symptoms or a rash for about a week, an understandable tactic considering how common tick bites are.

However, consider a tick is like an eight-legged syringe potentially loaded with multiple pathogens that may or may not be passed to its host while attached. Ticks literally "dig in" while feeding. After cutting the host's skin, a tick will sink its mouthparts into the wound and insert a feeding tube. Some ticks even secrete a cementlike mixture to help them attach even more efficiently. Some diseases are passed quickly; others may take a day or two.

Now consider that some of the diseases that could result from this encounter may have immediate symptoms and others may have symptoms that don't show up for days, weeks, even months. And even with symptoms, some tick-borne diseases are difficult to test for in a patient — they can hide out and evade routine testing techniques.

BY ELAINA HANCOCK '09 MS
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, carditis, 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.

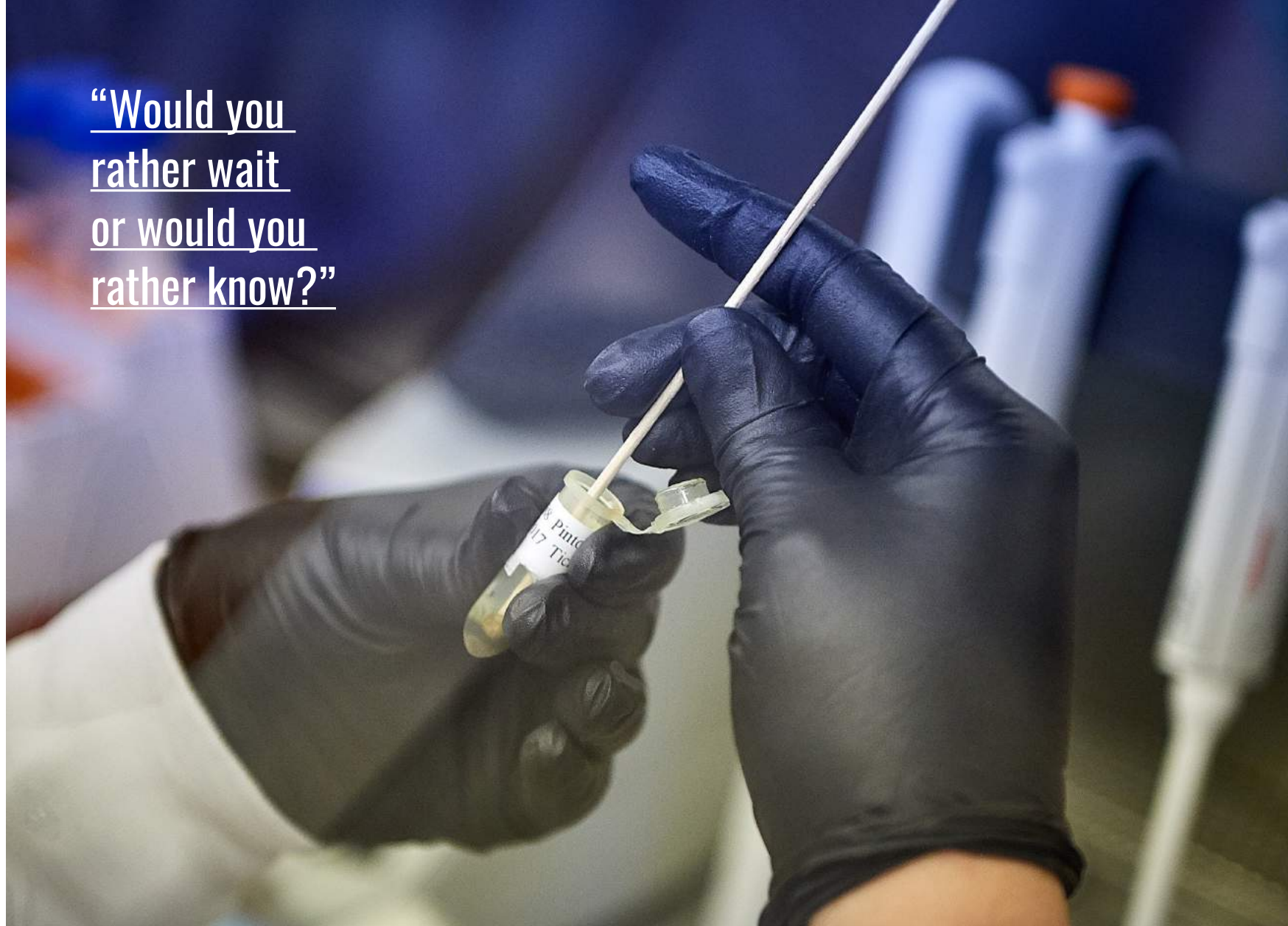
Why have your ticks tested? "Knowledge is power," says lab technician Maureen Sims '06 (CAHNR). The knowledge will get you targeted, appropriate treatment. Or conversely, it will give you peace of mind that the tick you found didn't harbor any nasty pathogens.

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

“Would you rather wait or would you rather know?”



the lights from the scope warm and wake the tick up. Stay tuned: There’s a far ruder awakening in this tick’s near future.

Sims is in charge of the initial steps of tick testing at CVMDL, where she determines the species, the sex, where it is in its life cycle, and the degree of engorgement, which gives an idea of how long the tick was feeding on its host. All of these bits of information help determine how successful the tick may have been in transmitting a litany of diseases to its host.

After the ID, Sims places the tick in a test tube and hands the specimen off to Haycock, who carries on with the processing, first with the ruder awakening — the gruesome job of squishing the tick. She adds a little liquid, then smashes the tick into a brownish-red sludge using a small wooden stick. “This one was pulled off a dog. When they have been pulled off of people, it’s worse somehow,” opines Haycock.

This sludge is where the genetic information for any pathogens the tick was carrying will be. After extracting the DNA, Haycock runs tests for two species of *Borrelia* and another common tick-borne pathogen in the Northeast, *Anaplasma*. Ticks may have feasted on multiple hosts since many ticks, such as the deer tick, require more than one blood meal to complete a life cycle, with each host offering another opportunity to transmit pathogens to the hungry tick.

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 not 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 interested 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 digs 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 burgdorferi* bacterium

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 lead to arthritis, heart problems, nerve pain, and neurological issues, such as depression and memory troubles. Ticks must be attached for 24 to 48 hours for Lyme disease to be transmitted to the host.



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

Spread by deer ticks, this presents with muscle and joint aches and a high fever that often lasts about three days followed by seven fever-free days followed by another three-day

high fever. Transmission can happen as soon as 15 minutes after the tick becomes attached.



Anaplasmosis

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.



Babesiosis caused by the parasite *Babesia*

Spread by the deer tick, babesiosis is often asymptomatic. When symptomatic, the illness may present with flu-like symptoms. Ticks must feed for 36 to 48 hours for transmission to host.

DISEASES AND CONDITIONS NOT YET TYPICALLY TRANSMITTED IN THE NORTHEAST*



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 rash. As many as 20 percent of cases are fatal if untreated; five percent are fatal in treated cases. Estimates vary, but it is suggested the tick needs to feed for 24 hours prior to transmission.



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.

Those who develop encephalitis may be left with permanent neurological symptoms, and 10 percent of Powassan-caused encephalitis cases are fatal.



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 cdc.gov.

“With Powassan virus happening right here,” he says, “it becomes a big deal.”

Now plans are under way to start working on vaccines for both Powassan and Lyme. But vaccine development is a long, expensive process, often involving a lot of trial and error. In the meantime, Verardi and his colleagues here and elsewhere in the Northeast are exploring vaccines for animal hosts. Small rodents, for example, could receive a vaccine that would either block transmission of the pathogens to the tick once it feeds or perhaps kill the tick altogether.

Since Powassan is not a new virus, why are we hearing about it now? It seems like there is a new tick-borne disease popping up every few years. The truth is that you can't test for what you don't know about, and as tick expert and CAHNR associate dean of academic programs Sandra Bushmich puts it, “There are diseases that we do know about that people aren't testing for routinely. Powassan causes encephalitis, and you don't always know the cause of encephalitis, therefore it is probably an under-reported illness.” It likely has been present in Connecticut much longer than documented, lurking in the animal population and only recently making headlines in the human population.

TICK RADAR

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 Powassan. 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 these 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. Bushmich 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 particularly good at hitchhiking, using a behavior called “questing”—clinging to the tips of grass or other vegetation with its rear legs and using its front limbs to grab on to passersby. While the tick hitchhikes a ride and starts chowing 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 eliminating 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 nearest 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. ☺

Consider a tick is like an eight-legged syringe potentially loaded with multiple pathogens that may or may not be passed to its host while attached.



For more strategies on protecting yourself and your yard from ticks, go to s.uconn.edu/ticktalk.

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 liked 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.

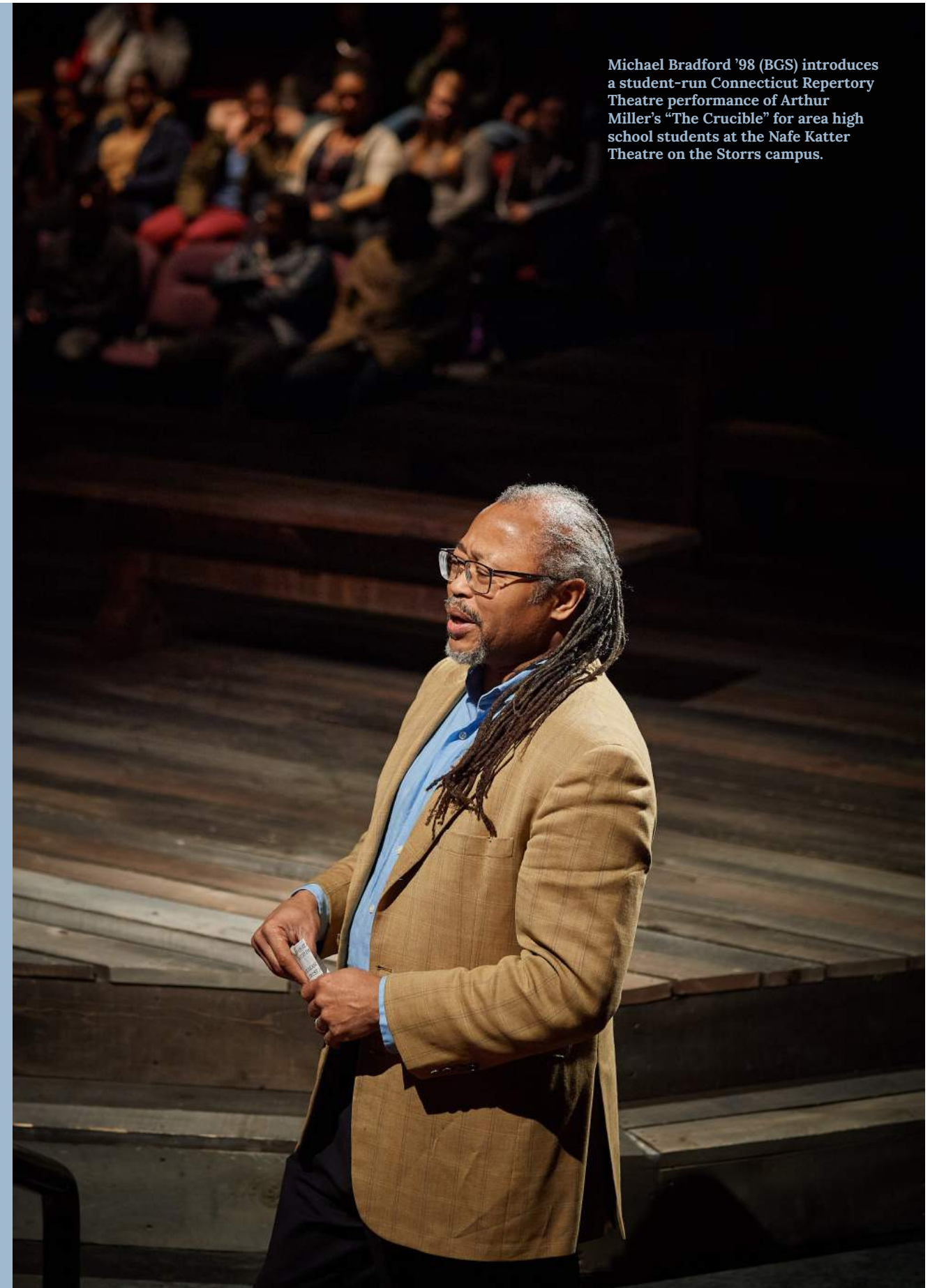
It was during a posting in Seattle, while on a date, that he ended up at the theater. He wanted to see a jazz quartet, but his date had tickets to see "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," August Wilson's landmark play about the African-American experience in the 20th century. For Bradford, the performance was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

Michael Bradford '98 (BGS) introduces a student-run Connecticut Repertory Theatre performance of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" for area high school students at the Nafe Katter Theatre on the Storrs campus.



uate 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.

A reading of one of his first plays, “Living in the Wind,” at the Eugene O’Neill Center in Waterford resulted in a meeting with an Off-Broadway producer

are written lyrically about history. Do you agree?

A. The meter of Shakespeare is something I’m probably not thinking about, but the way he turns a phrase, finds the exact word or words to explain the complication of this moment in a really simple way — “my heart is figured on my tongue” [Richard III]. That’s as good as it’s going to get. We don’t want everyday

“You need a scuba tank to listen to and read Shakespeare — because that brother is diving for the bottom of the ocean.”

and a staging of the play. He went on to write plays, read, and perform in New York City, elsewhere around the U.S., and in the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Romania, and Cuba.

Serving as department head since 2016, Bradford teaches classes in theater history, dramatic literature, and playwriting. He received a Research Scholar Fulbright to Granada, Spain, and continues to work with the nonprofit Lark Play Development Center in New York City. His plays have premiered in Chicago, Seattle, London, New York City, and at the Connecticut Repertory Theatre. His most widely celebrated work is “Olives and Blood,” which highlights the life and controversial death of Spanish writer Federico Garcia Lorca.

Q. You’ve said you don’t like directing your own work. Why?

A. What I have on the paper is not a fait accompli. When there is a director in the room, that director is challenging me. We go into the rehearsal process and the director is still saying, “I can’t get that moment to work; I need something else from you.” That would not happen were I directing my own work. The actors are questioning the work. The director is questioning it. They’re being critical because they want clarity. It’s just so dynamic.

Q. Your writing is likened to poetry, not unlike Shakespeare’s plays that

conversations on the stage. We can live that and have it in our lives. You need a scuba tank to listen to and read Shakespeare — because that brother is diving for the bottom of the ocean. It’s language that I find to be at the top of the game. I don’t know that it’s ever been bested by anybody. I love [Ernest] Hemingway, but even he couldn’t come close.

Q. What is your process for writing?

A. I’m not a writer who can jump about in the play. I have to write the play from the beginning to the end. I will try to knock out five to ten pages at a sit. The next time I sit down, I go back about five pages, read what I have written, don’t make any corrections, but put a mark next to something I want to address. Then I try to knock out another five to ten pages, keep going back a bit, and move forward. Hemingway said to always leave something in the well; never stop when the well is dry. I always try to stop when I know what the next line is going to be, and come back to it the next day. I put it down for a month when I’ve finished the first draft.

Q. How significant is it to you to have your work performed outside of the United States?

A. I’m honored. I may be talking very particularly about these African-American vets returning from World War II somewhere in the South [in “Willie’s Cut and Shine”], but the situation that



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

they find themselves in has a humanist universality that somebody in another country can glom onto; that’s when I feel I might have written something that could stick around.

Q. As head of the Department of Dramatic Arts, what are you hoping to provide for your students?

A. I want our students to be in tune and in relationship with the small number of people that are in the rehearsal room, to recognize the experience and to take full advantage of the experience and professionalism of the equity actors.

What is it to not only learn the craft but to operate as a professional? What is the hierarchy in the rehearsal space? What kind of conversations should you have or not have with the director that you’d like to work with? We’re working with the curriculum to get some of that course work in there so our students are a bit more comfortable graduating.

There’s a lot of actors going out into the world queuing up for the same

audition. What gives you a little more knowledge, a little better way to map out your career as you leave here? All of those things are important to me, those practical ways of operating in the world as an artist. If you can get the craft down, we can make you a consummate artist; then you have to know how to apply it, where to apply it.

Academically we just need to challenge ourselves to be on point. You always have to have foundational courses. The work is moving forward out there. Technology is a great part of that work, and we need to get on board on the tech side, design side, the dramaturgy side.

Q. The resources available at UConn are unique for a theater department, including music, art, digital media, and puppetry. What does that mean for the future?

A. It’s unbelievably exciting. We just got a new head of Digital Media and Design [Heather Elliott-Famularo]. We’ve been in conversation about who we’re sending

over there for their digital filming and green screens, who they’re sending over here to support our projection work. The interdisciplinary work is really exciting. I’m fascinated by it. A lot of that work is starting to bubble up.

It’s not only within the School of Fine Arts. We have some engineers over in our design program helping to build sets by engineering mechanical things. We’re starting to stretch out a bit more than we have in the past and have conversations with others. We’re doing a lot of reaching out to STEM folks. We can all benefit. It’s an exciting time.

Q. What has surprised you about taking over the department?

A. I came in the door with all these ideas about the kind of theater I’d like to see, the kind of opportunities to give our students, shifts in the academics to open up more time academically, and issues of diversity.

How can we diversify the voices of the writers, and how can we diversify the

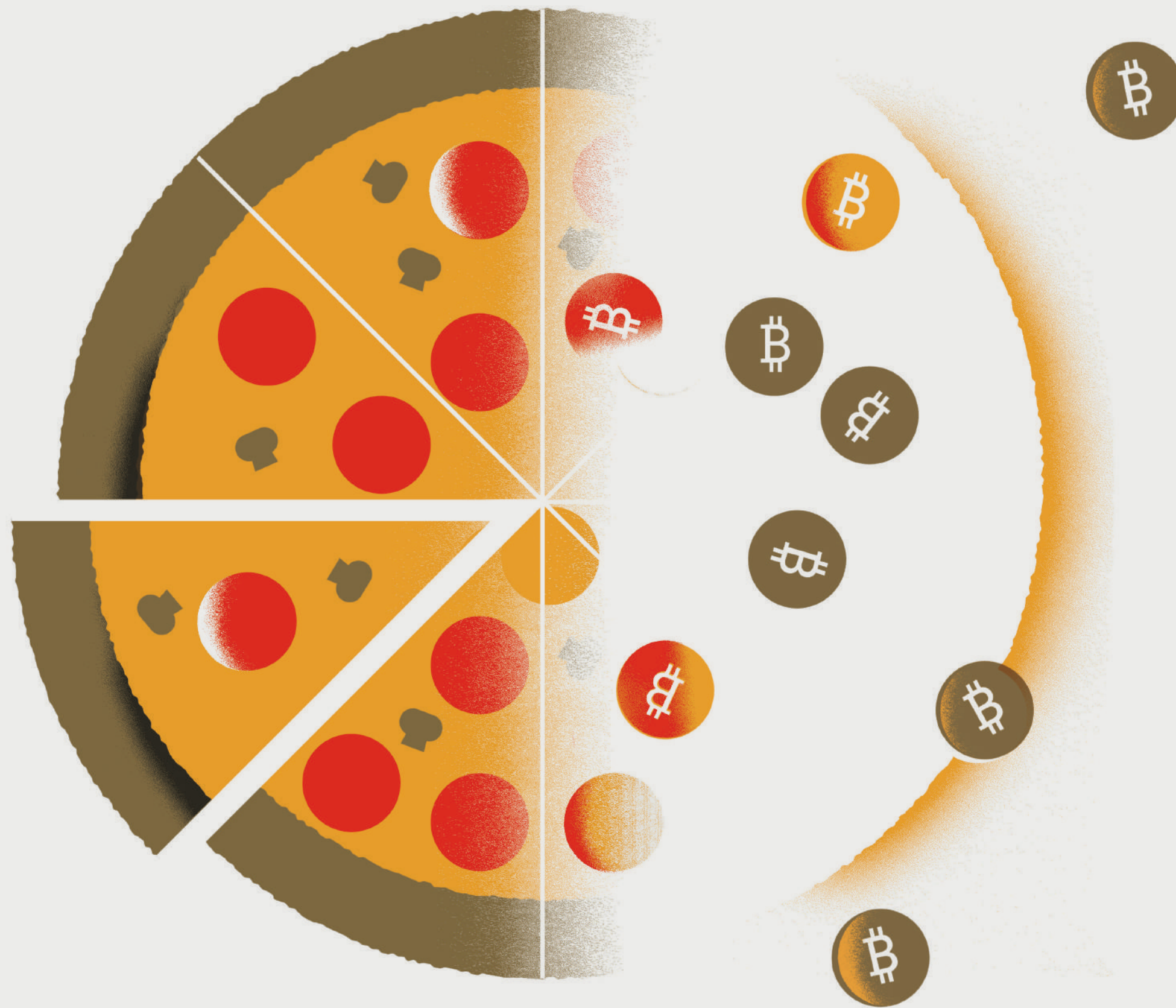
directors coming in the door? It’s been difficult on both of those fronts.

No matter how much you don’t want to think about money, you cannot *not* think about it. I can’t be egotistical or arrogant about what I’m going to put into our season when our subscribers are going to rebel against it and we’re not going to have enough budget to give our MFAs what they need for their thesis projects. It never crossed my mind.

Diversity might have been a simple thing to say, but it’s not a simple thing to do. We’re working hard on both those fronts to move the needle.

I tell our students we’re a big ship, and big ships move slow. You turn that wheel too fast and you’re going into the ocean. But at the very least, you’ve got to turn the dial to start the turn. In my first year, we’ve turned the dial. Don’t expect big changes yet, but we’ve turned the dial. ☺

For behind-the-scenes photos from CRT’s “As You Like It” production, go to s.uconn.edu/bradford.



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

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, here's this thing going on, and if we start collecting data on it, we're gonna know more than anybody. Because there's

nobody in our position, in business schools, management, venture capitalists . . . 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?'"

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

chips, worth ten cents apiece, \$70 total, and they start to play poker, moving chips in and out of play — making transactions. But now suppose you can have more than seven players at the table. An eighth player wants to buy in but offers to pay 20 cents a chip. A ninth player offers to pay 50 cents a chip, and so on. The value of the chips goes up, according to how much people will pay, believing they will be worth even more in the future.

Now imagine you have a million players instead of nine, making wagers, winning and losing chips, all day long, and new players are added every day. Each chip is a bitcoin.

Now take away the physical chips. Instead of shoving a stack of chips into the pot, someone says, “Hey Siri — keep track of this — I bet five chips.” At the end of the game, Siri knows who owes what to whom ... except there is no end of the game.

Then suppose instead of Siri, you have software that’s infallible and doesn’t

think you said “five ships.”

The system keeps perfect track of what everyone in the network of players owes everybody else, what everybody pays when they buy chips or gets paid when they sell them to each other or cash them in. That’s called a blockchain, describing a secure ledger that records and verifies every data block or transaction and makes sure nobody tries to buy or sell the same chip twice.

Participants who run the blockchain software, called mining, earn extra chips, which are added to the collective pot at a controlled rate until a finite number is reached. The agreed-upon ledger is distributed on thousands of computers across the network, creating redundant backup and scale.

Now take away the cards, the table, the chairs, the building, the town, the state, and the country, and imagine instead a million people (or a billion) making transactions on their computers. You now

have a viable virtual monetary system that exists only in cyberspace.

“There’s no physical coin,” Noble says. “People have a very hard time understanding that. I was talking at a high-level insurance conference, where I had to explain that you don’t put it in your wallet. The wallet is more like a key, a code, and the currency is stored there. The ledger exists in the computers of the people who run the mining software. The number 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 “cryptocurrencies” 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 encrypted 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 corporate entity handling or authorizing the transactions.

“The beauty of bitcoin,” Noble explains, “is the combination of technologies 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 groundbreaking piece of technology. It’s the consensus mechanism for proof of work. It started as a nine-page white paper, released 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 Nakogama, 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

“Do you remember saying, ‘I’ll never put my credit card number in a computer?’”



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 anarchy, 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 popularizing 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 technologies 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, or 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 speculation creating bubbles and busts, starting in 1716 when investors overvalued the potential for trade in French-held Louisiana. More recent would be the dot-com bubble of Y2K 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 emotion. 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 bug fixes 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,

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 these 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 exchange accounts 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."

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 cryptocurrency, anyone will, and probably already has. There are now hundreds of cryptos, including Ripple, Ethereum, Dach, ZCash, Monero, Litecoin, and others, all vying for a piece of the pie (for an index of the best-selling coins, see coinmarketcap.com). This year, the state of Massachusetts blocked five companies (18Moons, Mattervest, Pink Ribbon, Across Platforms, and Sparkco) from issuing their own ICOs, or initial coin offerings, in hopes of regulating a runaway market where disreputable 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 amount of fraud that happened in 2017. It's all marketing. This is the way to think about it — the dot-com craze is unfolding again but in a public spectrum. So all the fighting between venture capitalists that

used to happen in Silicon Valley, jockeying for position to get into deals and find out about them first, to get your money in early to get the best valuation, pump it up, sell it — all that is unfolding in a public forum, in cryptocurrencies."

As with any tech innovation, predicting the future is fraught with peril. It's not hard to remember the false promises new technologies made in the past. Cable television was supposed to mean we'd watch TV without commercials. Word processing was going to mean paperless offices. Those of us who grew up with the space program are still waiting for our jetpacks and flying cars. Comedian John Oliver, in a piece on bitcoin, reminds us that someone thought, five years ago, we would all be wearing Google glasses.

"Yeah — that's not a thing," Oliver said. "Do you remember saying, 'I'll never put my credit card number in a computer?'" Noble asks. "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-dial-up. We're dot-matrix printers."

"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 Shoul sold two condos on Manhattan's Upper East Side for the equivalent of \$2,360,000 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 "jumpstart my bitcoin portfolio and become a millionaire." Probably just a coincidence.*

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 partner that can financially and administratively support their efforts," he says. "The Institute cannot be successful without a lot of great ideas and partners."

Begun 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 promotes 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 ChemWerth, 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."



G.J. McCarthy / UConn Foundation

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 campus 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 CASAGRANDE '18 (CLAS)

CLASS NOTES



➔ **Robert Neagle '64 (CLAS)** has created and maintains 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/1732682130108280/. He invites all WHUS alumni to join. ➔ **Michael R. "Rick" Spinell '66 (CLAS)**, an optometrist, was 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 them 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, *Solemn Graves*, will be released by Soho Press in

September. Benn, who was president of the Associated Student Government at UConn Waterbury from 1969 to 1970, is a Dilys and Barry award-nominated author and was recently long-listed for the 2015 Dublin IMPAC Literary Award. ➔ **Vicki A. (Wollkind) Tesoro '77 (CLAS)** was recently elected first selectman of Trumbull, Connecticut. ➔ **Peter P. LoCascio '78 (CAHNR)**, who holds a master of fine arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, reports that his work is part of the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Art by the Paris Gallerist Darthea Speyer. ➔ **Ken R. Craft '79 (CLAS)** has just released a second collection of poems, *Lost Sherpa of Happiness* (Kelsay Books). His first collection, *The Indifferent World*, appeared in 2016.



➔ **Susanne M. Davis '82 (CLAS)** recently released a debut collection of short stories, *The Appointed Hour*. Set in rural Connecticut, the stories are about characters whose roots run deep in the land. In one story, for instance, a *Mayflower* descendant wrestles with the legacy of a controversial monument that honors his ancestor. Davis teaches creative writing at UConn and at Trinity College. ➔ **Thom Parrino '83 (CLAS)** and Laura Shattuck, family law attorneys in Westport, Connecticut, have opened a new law practice, Parrino/Shattuck, PC, that offers solutions to matrimonial conflicts. ➔ **Dr. Alan J. Lipman '84 (CLAS)**, a clinical professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at George Washington University Medical Center, was interviewed by BBC News in February on the causes and consequences of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High

School shootings in Parkland, Florida, and by CNBC News on the mindset of the mass shooter in this and other such tragic national episodes. ➔ **Irwin Krieger '84 MSW**, of Ashford, Connecticut, published two books in the past year, *Counseling Transgender and Non-Binary Youth: The Essential Guide* (2017) and *Helping Your Transgender Teen: A Guide for Parents*, second edition (2018), through the Jessica Kingsley Press. He was also the 2017 recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Connecticut chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. He has closed his private practice and continues to provide clinical supervision and training for clinicians and educators serving transgender youth. ➔ **Leigh Ann Curl, M.D. '85 (CLAS)**, head team orthopedic surgeon for the Baltimore Ravens, was elected president of the NFL Physicians Society (NFLPS) in March. Dr. Curl, who has worked with the Baltimore Ravens since 1997, is also an assistant physician for the Baltimore Orioles. Before joining the Ravens, she was an assistant physician for the University of Maryland Terrapins, USA Women's Basketball, USA Women's Rugby, Johns Hopkins University, St. John's University, and the New York Mets. ➔ **Leslie A. Imse '87 MA, MM**, chair of the Music Department for Farmington Public Schools, was awarded the American Choral Director's Association's Choral Director of the Year 2017-2018 at the Connecticut state conference. ➔ **Scott Baker '87 MBA** shares that he is doing a cross-country bicycle ride to raise money for The Fuller Center for Housing, a nonprofit, ecumenical, Christian housing ministry dedicated to providing adequate shelter for all people worldwide. "As crazy as this sounds, this soon-to-be 61-year-old will be riding close to 4,000 miles to bring

awareness and raise funds for the poor and homeless with a group supporting the Fuller Center," he writes.

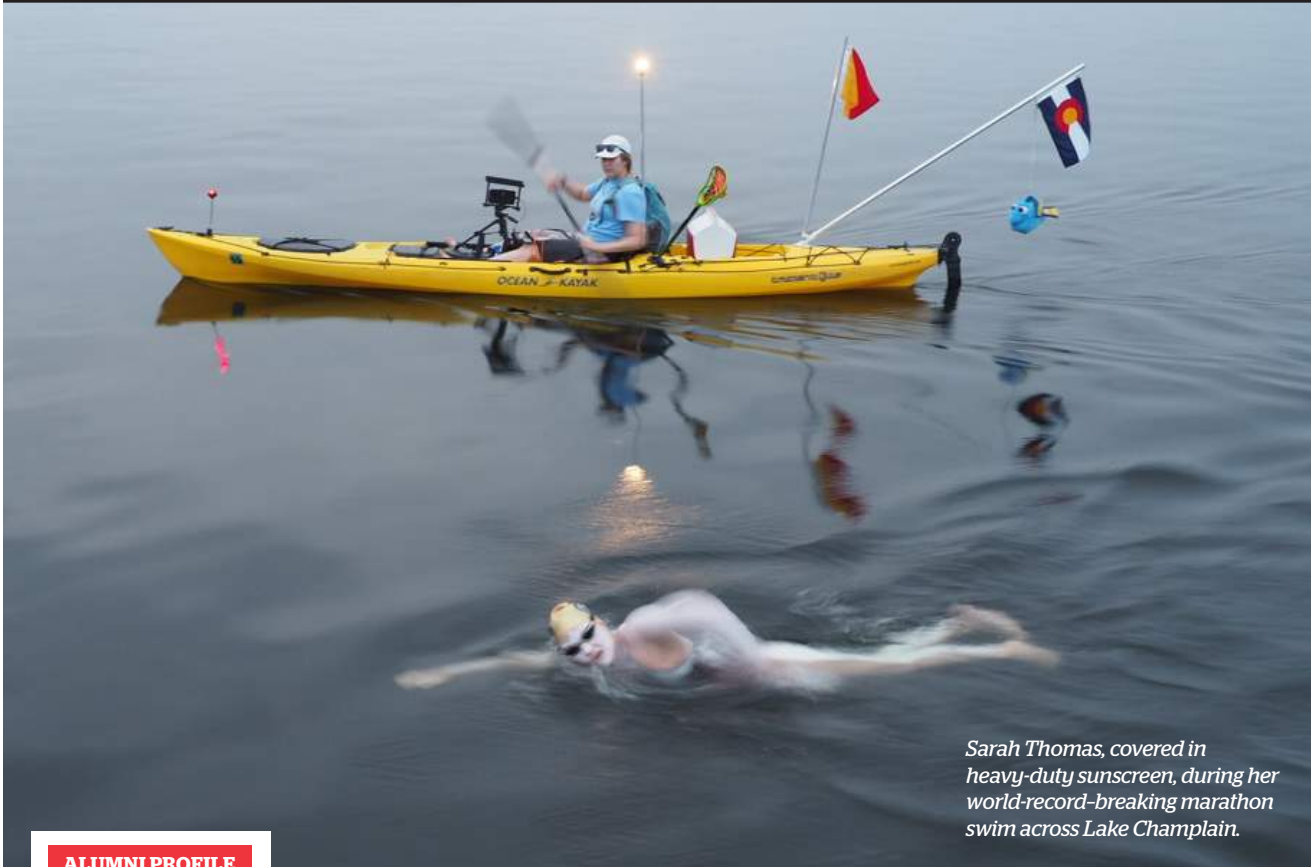


➔ **Eric Stockman '90 (CLAS) '94 JD** recently founded the law firm of Stockman O'Connor PLLC with offices in Southbury and Bridgeport, Connecticut. He has been named to *Connecticut Magazine's* Super Lawyer's Edition each year from 2007 to 2017. ➔ **Joseph Azary '91 (CLAS)** has been promoted to Vice President, Quality and Regulatory at Z-Medica, LLC. He previously worked for Johnson & Johnson, U.S. Surgical, and Fujifilm Medical and owned Azary Technologies before selling it in 2008. He lives in Shelton, Connecticut with his wife and two sons. ➔ **Cathy Cocks '93 MA**, UConn's Director of Community Standards, is the 2018-2019 president of the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA). A national organization with about 3,000 members at more than 1,000 institutions, the ASCA is the leading voice for student conduct in higher education. ➔ **Charles H. Wilson '93 (CLAS)**, an attorney who represents national and international companies against discrimination and harassment claims, wage and hour matters, whistleblowing and retaliation, workplace injury and trade secret matters, recently became a shareholder at Littler Mendelson in its Houston office. ➔ **Daniel R. Blanchard '93 (CLAS)** won a seat on the Mansfield (Connecticut) Zoning Board in November 2017. ➔ **Dominick Cristofaro '93 (BUS)** recently was promoted to director of Finance Services for the District School Board of Pasco County, Florida. He



➔ **Joey Lee Miranda '00 MBA** was appointed secretary of the board of directors for New England Women in Energy & the Environment, a nonprofit organization that aims to harness the passion, intelligence, and leadership experience of women to promote and encourage public interest in the energy and environment sectors. She is a member of Robinson & Cole LLP's Environmental, Energy, and Telecommunications Group. ➔ **Mandy Bundock-Simjian '01 (CLAS)**, who was a full scholarship member of the 2001 Big East Champion softball team, was recently inducted into

started in the district four years ago as a Senior Finance Manager of Treasury. ➔ **Tara Mead '94 (CLAS)** is now account director in public relations for Gavin Advertising, an advertising, marketing, and public relations agency in York, Pennsylvania. She segued from a long-time career in broadcast journalism (radio) in 2008 and served in several capacities in media relations and crisis communications before joining Gavin. She lives in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with her husband Bill and their children. ➔ **Curt Balzano Leng '97 (CLAS)** 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. ➔ **Simone Morris '98 MBA** recently published her first book, *Achievement Unlocked: Strategies to Set Goals and Manifest Them*, and it is available on Amazon. Morris, of Norwalk, Connecticut, is CEO of her own company, Simone Morris Enterprises LLC.



Sarah Thomas, covered in heavy-duty sunscreen, during her world-record-breaking marathon swim across Lake Champlain.

Ken Claesen

ALUMNI PROFILE

A SWIM FOR THE CENTURIES

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

After a seemingly impossible nonstop solo swim across Lake Champlain in New York and Vermont, **Sarah Thomas '04 (CLAS)** was awarded the 2017 Solo Swim 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," followed a strict set of rules — for instance, it had to be completed without a wetsuit and without touching another person or the support boat. The swim capped a career so impressive that this March it earned Thomas an induction into the International Marathon Swimming Hall of Fame. Thomas grew up swimming, was captain of her North Texas high school team, and walked on to the Huskies swimming and diving team her freshman year. It was apparent even during her UConn days that Thomas just couldn't get enough of distance swimming. "There was never quite enough pool for her to get going," recalls teammate **Lindsay (Hansen) Rogers '04 (CLAS)**. During her time at UConn, Thomas

was a member of the distance squad alongside Rogers and **Michelle (Ulatowski) Marino '05 (ED)**. The trio nicknamed "Distance Love" swam the longest event on the college racing docket, the 1,650-yard "pool mile." That event, which takes most college swimmers around 20 grueling minutes, is 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. "I 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, she 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 sought 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 solo 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.

HIDDEN UCONN QUIZ

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 east of Horsebarn Hill was used by skiers in the sixties and seventies.

2. Wall of Keys: When the Division of Public Safety staff needs to get into a locked building late at night, valuable time can't be wasted finding and rousing building managers, so firefighters and police officers have a key for everything.

3. Antique Apothecary Jars: These beauties and more are displayed in the Lois Ann Reynold's Conference Room at the School of Pharmacy.

4. "The Dynamic Genome": "The succession has been from female mentors to mentees in genetics," says biology professor Rachel O'Neill of this book signed by author and Nobel Prize-winner Barbara McClintock.

5. Grave of Jonathan I: UConn had a number of mascots before the 1930s, but nothing stuck until the arrival in 1935 of a husky pup named in honor of Connecticut's Revolutionary War-era governor Jonathan Trumbull. That founding hound didn't have much time to enjoy his new home, sadly, as he was hit by a car shortly after arriving in Storrs. The 14th husky to bear the Jonathan mantle is currently serving UConn, but the first still has a place in the heart of campus: his grave, marked by a simple plaque near the corner of North Eagleville Road and Rte. 195.

6. Wool Blanket: We're not trying to pull the wool over

your eyes: There's something special about these blankets. Each one — baby- to king-sized (scarves, too) — is made with wool from UConn's own flock of sheep, along with other flocks around Connecticut. Offered for sale by the Department of Animal Science and the Connecticut Sheep Breeders Association, there's a new pattern every year.

7. Gardner Dow Plaque: What happens when a memorial plaque outlasts the field it was intended to name? Gardner Dow was a World War I veteran and UConn student who died on the football field during a game at the University of New Hampshire. His fellow students named the new athletic field for him, but as the university grew, the field shrank. Today it's the site of 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 Hawley Armory.

8. UConn Test Kitchen: You won't find TV cameras or Julia Collin Davison 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 cheesy pull-apart garlic bread. Innovation here is constant and necessary: with more than 200,000 meals served up every week, UConn's kitchens have a lot of mouths to feed.

9. Golf in Gampel: Just below Gampel's famed roof lies a putting course used by the golf team for practice.

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 slabs of 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 Internet. You may have heard about the resurgence in popularity of vinyl records, but at 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 peek at the treasure.

12. Physics Observatory: On weeknights during the spring and fall semesters, if the skies are clear, you can journey from Storrs to the stars, courtesy of 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 for members of the public who want to know more about our place in the galaxy. Major astronomical events, like eclipses, are especially busy times at the observatory.

13. Plaster Heads: This collection of plaster face casts used to create theatrical masks hangs on the walls in the Puppet Arts Complex. Some are from former and current students, others are the faces of actors from Connecticut Repertory Theatre shows. The number, at about 40 now, grows slowly over time.

14. Sugar House: At UConn, the venerable early spring New England tradition of making maple syrup goes on 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 around 100 trees in the UConn Forest. It takes about 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. When the sap is flowing, the club has tours, demos, and — happily — sales.

15. Rare Books: With over 300 rare editions, the Fable Collection is one of several collections that comprise the Northeast Children's Literature Collection in Archives and Special Collections in the Dodd Research Center. This 1734 edition of "Aesop's Fables and Other Fables," is from the collection of Richard H. Schimmelpfeng, UConn's first Special Collections librarian and a generous donor.

16. Beehives: Students at Spring Valley Student Farm maintain these bee boxes for Dining Services, which uses the honey in a salad dressing at Chuck & Augie'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 quirkier. New Britain farmer A.P. Marsh donated his collection of stones from each Connecticut county and each of the (at the time) 48 states to the Connecticut Grange, which in turn decided to turn them into a tribute to agriculture on the UConn campus. Dedicated in 1937, identifying plates were added to each stone in the 1960s, with stones from Alaska and Hawaii.

18. Widmer's Iron Lung: A 500-pound piece of medical history, the iron lung (technically a "negative pressure ventilator") on display at the School of Nursing is a reminder of the time before Jonas Salk's famous vaccine, 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. Woodsman Club Training Area: This student club practices for events, such as two-person cross-cut sawing, bow sawing, axe throwing, vertical chopping, and log rolling in front of

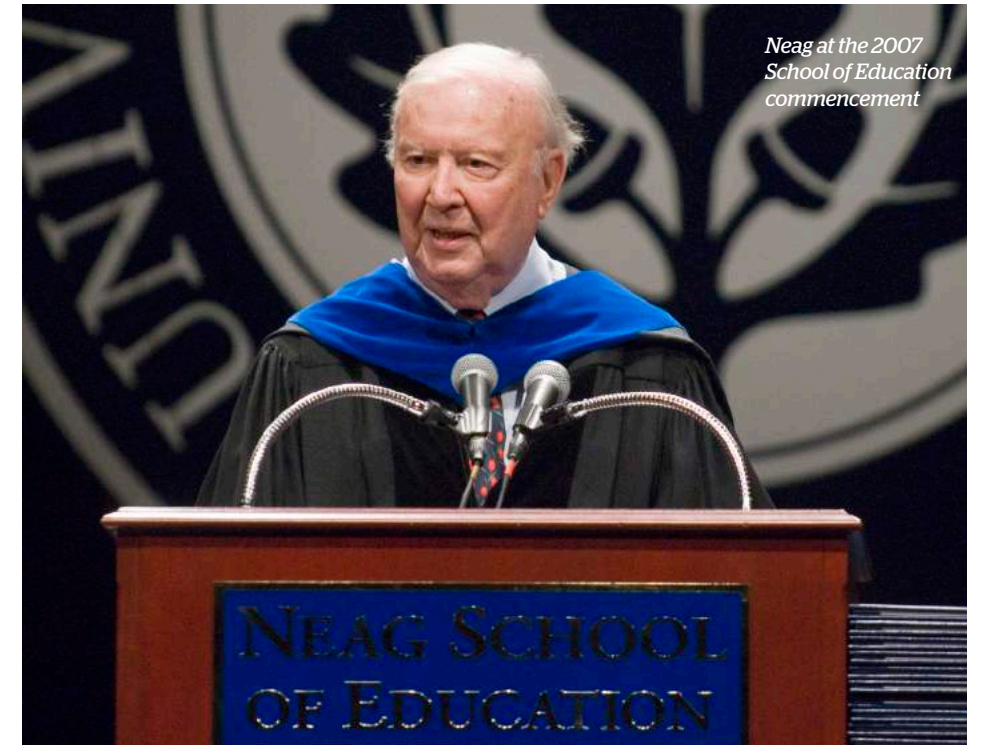
the Center for Environmental Science and Engineering.

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, even examples of graffiti that mark student protests. Examples include a photo of sociology professor Jack Roach being arrested during a 1968 protest; flyers urging students to protest a 1980 rally in eastern Connecticut by the Ku Klux Klan; and a copy of the *UConn Free Press*, a radical student publication that was revived in the 1990s and 2010s.

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 Towers complex. Cookies, cakes, muffins, pies, brownies, you name it: there is something for every sweet tooth, for the gluten-sensitive or otherwise, being baked daily and delivered to eateries all over campus.

22. Wolf Enclosure: These empty pens near Horsebarn Hill once were part of the wide-ranging research of Benson E. Ginsburg, legendary professor and pioneer in the field of behavior genetics. Ginsburg studied fruit flies, mice, dogs, wolves, humans, and "coy-dogs," coyote-dog hybrids, in a program that was the only one of its kind at any university. These pens were part of the enclosure where Ginsburg conducted his research on wolves.

23. Tiny Planetarium: On the shores of Swan Lake, this stargazing chamber was built in 1954 and is the oldest planetarium in the state. It seats just 25, but generations of UConn students remember it as a staple of astronomy and physics courses. Students and faculty members are interested in revamping this venerable facility for the modern era.



Neag at the 2007 School of Education commencement

IN MEMORIAM

UConn Mourns Loss of Ray Neag '56 (CLAS) '01 H

Ray Neag '56 (CLAS), 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 2001, Ray received an honorary degree from UConn.

"Ray Neag 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 life-saving care at the Carole and Ray Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center, the Calhoun Cardiology Center, and many other programs, he played an incredibly important role in our history," says President Susan Herbst. "He keenly understood UConn's potential to be a top public research university and academic medical center, and how to build the momentum to get there. Ray was a visionary who advocated tirelessly on UConn's behalf and inspired so many other alumni to follow his lead."

As UConn's largest donors, the Neags transformed the Neag School of Education and the Carole and Ray Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center and made significant contributions to many other programs. Their legacy, however, bespeaks more than philanthropic generosity. Through a deep connection to the institution and the UConn community, the Neags helped raise UConn's national profile and elevate the UConn Foundation's fundraising operation. Neag was a visionary foremost. He approached philanthropic pursuits using the same acumen that enabled him to build a small medical device company that manufactured hypodermic and textile needles into a pioneering manufacturer of cardiac surgery devices, including, in 1978, the first polyurethane catheter, which is widely used today.

In a 1999 interview with the *Hartford Courant*, Neag explained the timing of his \$27 million gift (including a \$4 million match from the state), which was at the time the largest gift ever to a public university in New England and the largest gift ever to a school of education in the country. He said, "I worried about the commitment of other people to the University, but I could see it was starting to happen."

For more on Neag and his legacy, as well as other obituaries for alums and staff, please visit s.uconn.edu/neag.

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Submissions may be edited for clarity or length.

the Lyman Hall 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 MSW** shared 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 Mangalore, 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 Esplanade Association. The Esplanade Association is a private nonprofit dedicated to revitalizing and enhancing the Charles River Esplanade in Boston. Previously, Michael served as Chief of Staff at the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy in Boston.

➔ **Jennifer Soffayer 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 thebookbabes.org, a free support community for women authors.

➔ **Craig Yannes '07 (ENG), '09 MS** and **Angela (Marchetti) Yannes '08 (CAHNR)** announce the birth of their son, Leo, in December. The family lives in Milford, Connecticut. ➔ **Elizabeth Petrakis '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 English majors, got 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. ➔ **Caitlin Briody '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 manages Nutmeg Technologies' social media platforms, as well as coordinating its online marketing and advertising campaigns.



Peter Morenus

JOB ENVY

CSI Boston

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, and in a few of those he found some DNA — the victim's. With that 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.

KUDOS

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 Legions of Merit, and four Meritorious Service Medals. He led the Coast Guard in its efforts to help in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria, Irma, and Harvey.



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