

IN THIS ISSUE: MLB UMPIRES, A SCHOLARLY FARMER, DATA SCIENTISTS' REVENGE

UConn

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2022

“There was
suddenly
a fatwa
on my head”

Pakistani journalist Marvi Sirmed
finds sanctuary at UConn

SNAP!

Ropes Course

Urban Forestry and Arboriculture students in the Ratcliffe Hicks School of Agriculture learn to identify, protect, cut down — and climb — trees. Those in the Storrs campus “Fundamentals of Arboriculture” course didn’t have to go far to put theory and science into practice last fall near Hicks Hall.





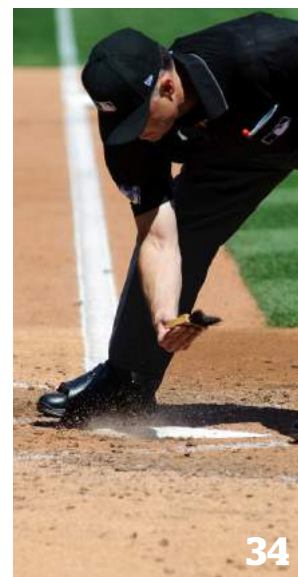
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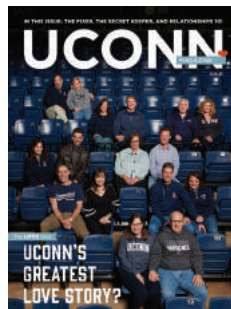


ON CAMPUS

CLASS OF 2022

Millenia Polanco '22 (ENG) and mom Marsha Polanco '02 (CLAS) celebrated outside Gampel Pavilion following the School of Engineering Commencement ceremony on Mother’s Day weekend 2022. Husky dad William Polanco '02 (BUS) was on hand, too. For the first time since 2019, ceremonies took place in UConn’s traditional locations. In Storrs, students in full regalia gathered with classmates in processions to Gampel and the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts, where they heard their names called and joined the great community of graduates stretching all the way back to 1883. After the last four years, that felt spectacular – and well-earned through a combination of individual effort and collective support, including from all those moms.

Find more at s.uconn.edu/commencement



FEEDBACK

We want to hear from you! Please share thoughts, insights, discrepancies, recollections, photos — and how's your Tom's Trivia win-loss percentage coming? Post to our website at magazine.uconn.edu, email me at lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu, or send by regular mail to *UConn Magazine Letters*, 34 N. Eagleville Rd., Storrs, CT 06268-3144.

Here's a sampling of feedback from our last issue. Find more at magazine.uconn.edu.



"The Secret Life of Dexter Gabriel"

➔ He's fantastic, easy to talk to, understanding, courteous, and a great professor x3 — including the current semester. Would recommend his course "The Black Atlantic."

@stephanykeithan

"Walk This Way"

➔ I've been fascinated by trees for many years so found this very interesting.

Carole Noble, via our website

Greetings. Surprised to read that 31% of this year's engineering students are women. During my time, we had only two!

William S. Sanstrom '55 (ENG), commenting on "Engineering Her Best Self"

"Fierce Woman"

➔ I'm glad to have seen this article. My husband and I drove past this mural the other day and couldn't identify Ella Grasso. We aren't from Connecticut! Beautiful work.

Heather Wolfe, via our website

"So Handsome"

➔ LaShawnda, I am so very proud of you! I was your middle school teacher at King Middle School. May God continue to keep and bless you abundantly.

Victoria Weaver aka Ms. Weaver, via our website

➔ Thank you for sharing your story LaShawnda. I love this. I have never been a horse person, always more of a dog person. I never quite understood why people were so into horses. But you made me get it. That emotional connection with an animal is priceless. Thanks for all you are doing to help others get it, too!

Dave Dickson, via our website

➔ Wonderful work, LaShawnda. Please continue your journey and uplifting communication.

Krish Naraine, via our website

INSTAGRAM



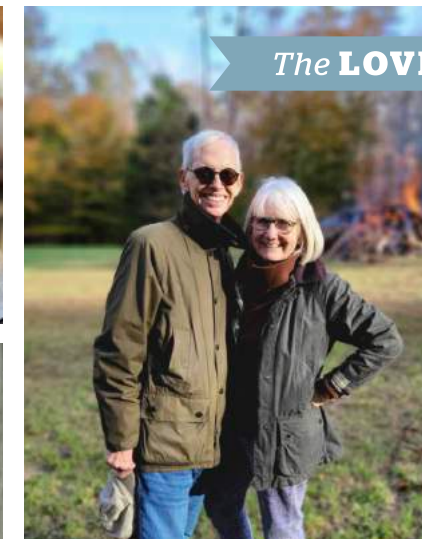
@UConn Thank you, Huskies! HuskyTHON 2022 raised an incredible \$1,340,670.68 to benefit the kids at @connecticutchildrens



UConn LOVE STORIES, ILLUSTRATED

We heard from so many of you who answered our call to reveal your own UConn love stories. Whether together for 2 or 62 (!) years, still in Storrs or on the other side of the planet, what we loved most were the photos you shared. A very few are at right. Find many others, descriptions of these, and dozens more inspirational stories on our website. And please keep sharing!

Find endless UConn love at s.uconn.edu/couples



CHECKING IN WITH

I WOULDN'T HAVE LISTENED TO ME

The I-84 musings of famed sportswriter Leigh Montville '65 (CLAS)

The thought arrived on that mindless stretch of I-84 between Boston and Storrs. You know where I mean. You're heading past what once was RedArt's garage on the right, then a sign for the Ashford Motel, then the Ruby Road turnoff for the TA Truck Stop in Willington, then the billboard for exotic dancing at the Electric Blue Café, all in preparation for Exit 68 and that seven-mile straight shot on Route 195 back in time to the UConn campus you once knew so well.

"Will these kids pay any attention to me?" I wondered.

I was scheduled to speak to Mike Stanton's Newswriting 1 class in a lecture hall in the Nursing School in an hour or so, describing a career as a sports columnist at the *Boston Globe*, a senior writer at *Sports Illustrated*, and as the author of nine books, plus a tenth that I had just started. I certainly had enough experience to talk, but maybe I had *too* much experience.

You know what I mean.

I graduated in 1965. This was 2019. The difference was 54 years. Suppose some character showed up in the office of the *Connecticut Daily Campus* at the Student Union in 1965, some wizened graduate from 54 years earlier, ready to impart some journalistic knowledge to the young editor-in-chief. The visitor would have graduated in 1911.

Would I have paid any attention to someone who graduated in 1911?

"Not a chance," I decided.

Would these kids pay any attention to me?

Born in 1943, I always have considered myself as being in the first shock wave of the baby boomer generation. We, as a group, always have thought we were eternally young, eternally

cool and up-to-date. Hip. (A word that, when used today, translates as un-hip.) This new thought about the 54-year age difference, about the visitor from 1911, was an unsettling reminder of the effects of growing older.

There is a point, somewhere around a person's 65th birthday and certainly above, where describing how it is becomes describing how it was. Technology moves along on its own impatient clock. Relevance is switched into stories, history. What was new, alas, has become old.

The names on buildings, for instance, become people from your past. Homer Babbidge is not the president of the University, the well-dressed and smooth, dignified, Yale roommate of New York mayor John Lindsay and actor James Whitmore — he is the name of the school library. Don McCullough is not the pleasant guy running the Student Union. There is a plaque remembering him in the Student Union. *The Daily Campus* has an entire building of its own. Has had it for years. The Field House was where the basketball team played? When was that? There was no women's basketball team? There were no women's sports? None? [True! There were no varsity women's sports from 1938 to 1974.]

"Tall Men, Short Shorts" is the book I had just begun when I made that visit to the journalism class in 2019. The subtitle is "The 1969 NBA Finals: Wilt, Russ, Lakers, Celtics, and a Very Young Sports Reporter." The very young sports reporter is me.

I look at myself, four years out from UConn, 25 years old, covering this transcontinental series of seven games between the Boston Celtics

and Los Angeles Lakers for the *Boston Globe*. I am interviewing Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlain, tall and talented men I had watched not much earlier on a black-and-white television in the lounge at the Phi Sigma Kappa house in the fraternity quadrangle. (There is no fraternity quadrangle any more? There is no Phi Sigma Kappa?) I had never been to California, never seen the Pacific Ocean, never traveled on a plane long enough to see an in-flight movie. Now I am flying to California and back three times in two weeks. The in-flight movie is "Bullitt."

I use a typewriter, an Olivetti Lettera 32, the one all reporters use. I send my stories back to Boston by Western Union. I call on a pay phone to see if my stories have arrived. There are no cellphones. They have not been invented. There is no Twitter, no Facebook, no social media at all. The interviews are conversations, not staged events with an ad for some bank in the background. Only two of the seven games are on television in Boston, only three in LA. The written word is king. The delivery of a newspaper is an important daily event.

The world is so different. I watch my young self bound through it all. I wince at his combination of great confidence and greater naivete. Turn back the clock to then and I would have great tips, great advice to a journalism class at the University of Connecticut.

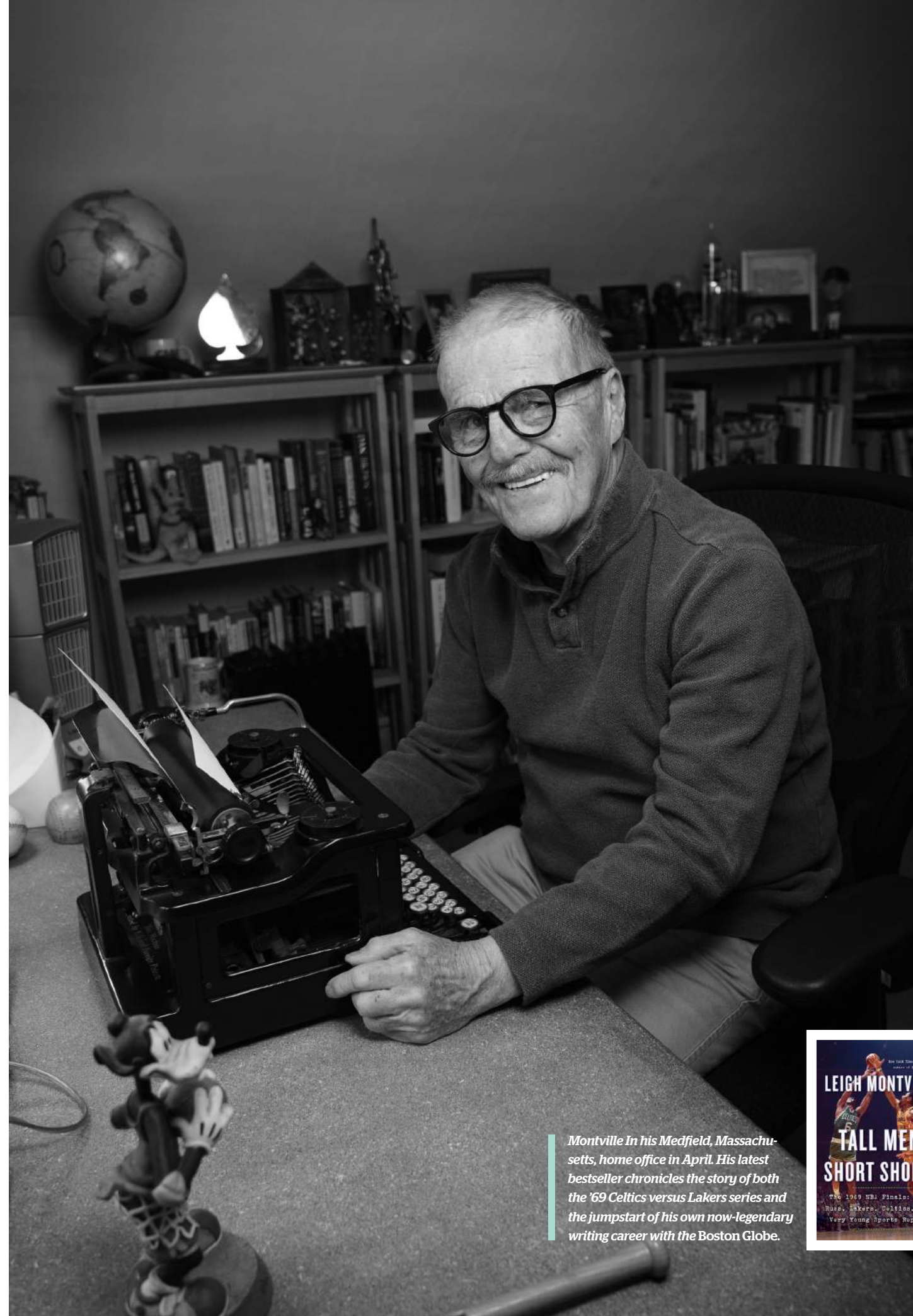
Now?

I try to tell some of it, tell the stories, try to capture the romance of that time. There are maybe 60 kids spread out in lecture-hall tiers in front of me. Each kid has a computer open. Some are typing. Maybe they are taking notes on what I say. Maybe they are playing Donkey Kong. Hard to tell. I do my hour, answer a few questions at the end. The kids head off to their next class. I head back to Boston.

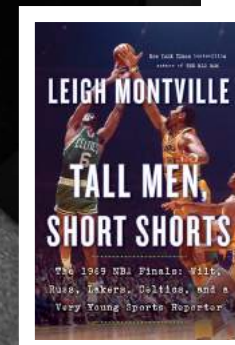
It was all OK.

It was fine.

Says the visitor from 1911. —LEIGH MONTVILLE '65 (CLAS)



Montville in his Medfield, Massachusetts, home office in April. His latest bestseller chronicles the story of both the '69 Celtics versus Lakers series and the jumpstart of his own now-legendary writing career with the *Boston Globe*.





ON CAMPUS

Find more about Hannah-Jones' conversation with history professor Manisha Sinha at suconn.edu/1619.

NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES

The author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning "1619 Project" spoke to the UConn community about racism, trolls, and the power of one great college class.

Journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones had one goal as a history major at the University of Notre Dame: to not take a single class in European history.

Growing up in Waterloo, Iowa, in the 1980s and '90s, she heard all about European influences on America and not a word about Black contributions to the nation's birth. So, when she advanced to college and took her first Black American history class, she pledged to delve only into the stories of other nations, creeds, races, and cultures.

"It was like I could breathe for the first time," she said of that initial Black American history class.

Before college, she said she assumed Black people hadn't had any influence

on the country and its communities, because no one around her made mention of their contributions. Certainly, her teachers would have said something, she noted, because aren't they supposed to spotlight the most significant historical impacts?

But "we have not had neutral history," she told the UConn audience at a capstone event commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Humanities Institute. And Black "history has not been part of the standard way we have studied history."

Since those days, Hannah-Jones has dedicated her career to advocating for people of color and prompting change in how the country discusses race.

"The 1619 Project," which Hannah-Jones describes as a "cultural phenomenon," is a series of articles, essays, and other works that highlight the contributions of Black people and makes the case that slavery influenced the formation of the United States from the outset and continues to play a role in society today.

It was timed to coincide with the 400th anniversary of the first landing of slaves in what was to become America, and since has been used to develop school curricula to change the way history is taught.

"Often the history we are taught is a history to legitimize power. This is a project that seeks to expose that power for what it is," she said. "Narrative drives policy, and if you start to think about and understand your country differently, then you start to support policy that addresses the country that actually exists, not the country we pretend to be." —KIMBERLY PHILLIPS

TASTE OF STORRS

SUMMER SUNDAES

One of the best things about our UConn Magazine offices in the Lakeside Building on North Eagleville Road is being nearly right across the street (Storrs Road) from the Dairy Bar. Since not everyone can be a 5-minute walk from nirvana, we're sharing the "recipes" for some of the seasonal sundaes likely to be back on the menu board this summer.



Red, White, & Blue:

Blueberry cheesecake ice cream, strawberry topping, whipped cream, patriotic star sprinkles, and a cherry.



Jonathan's Sundae:

Vanilla ice cream, whipped cream, peanut butter and hot fudge toppings, chocolate-covered peanuts, and a cherry.

Nacho Average Sundae:

Three flavors of ice cream and waffle cone chips smothered with whipped cream, two toppings, sprinkles, and cherries.



ALL STAR

POLO WIN

Women's polo brought home its 8th national title after besting Texas Tech 15-11 at Legends Polo Club in Kaufman, Texas. It was their first championship since 2008. "We each practice very hard, put a lot of time and effort into this sport, and this weekend, it all paid off," said captain Rylyn Koger. "Every second of stress, every late night at the barn practicing, every past loss made us better and led us to this point." From left: Toni Moore, Madison Robicheau, Kylie Dalton, Koger, Elizabeth Leudesdorff, and coach Anders Carlton '19 (ENG).



UConn's 1961 "GE College Bowl" team included (at left, from left) Lieber, Waugh, Jonathan Ebbets, and Thiffault. The 1970 team with nameplates (below).



PAST PERFECT

COLLEGE BOWL



Fame is fickle. But while it lasts, it sure can be fun. That's one lesson members of UConn's 1961 and 1970 "GE College Bowl" teams say they learned. These fearsome intellectual foursomes appeared on TV's original "College Bowl," which aired weekend afternoons from 1959 to 1970, first on CBS and then on NBC. (Peyton Manning now hosts a revival.)

Before millions of viewers, schools battled each other for scholarship money. To win the honor of sweating under the bright lights, players had to survive round after winnowing round of on-campus competitions. "It was a process of endless, endless stagings of matches" broadcast over Storrs' closed-circuit TV system, recalls Cris Birch '71 (CLAS), a retired IT executive. "We were quick on the trigger when we knew the answer and smart enough not to bang the buzzer if we didn't."

The all-male 1970 team and the 1961 team, which included Gail Waugh Hanna '61 (CLAS), crammed their craniums with obscure facts. Or at least they tried to. The show was not for intellectual lightweights. The 1970 team had to listen to a snippet of Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in C-Sharp

Minor" and identify the key in which it was written. (No one got that right.) But the Huskies aced queries like "What is a Dewar flask?" "Who did Hamlet meet on the battlements of Elsinore?" and "What five-minute barrier was broken in 1956?" (a thermos, his father's ghost, and the four-minute mile).

Wearing skinny ties and sporting tidy hair styles, the 1961 team got "soundly thrashed" by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute 295-70, reported *The Hartford Courant*. Now 81, team member Gene Lieber '62 (CLAS) remembers "It was a matter of the speed of pressing the buzzer. They were a whisker ahead of us." It was RPI's fifth and final appearance. They had more experience.

The UConn quartet did have fun on-air. When host Allen Ludden kept mispronouncing the name of George Thiffault '62 (CLAS), he quipped, "Thank you, Mr. Loodle." Thiffault "covered himself in glory," according to the *Courant*, notably because he successfully sang the first few bars of Brahms' "Lullaby," a feat the paper said was fitting because the part-time student was a father of three.

When the team returned to campus, the April Fools edition of *The Daily*

Crampus greeted them.

"The week before we went on, I was, like, a big man on campus, but when we lost, we had to sneak back," says Lieber, a former professor of American history at Essex County College in Newark, New Jersey. "And one of the big stories in *The Crampus* was that we had thrown the match." April Fools!

Fast forward nine years, and the UConn squad is rocking shaggy haircuts. Birch had far-out sideburns. Jeffrey Davis '71 (CLAS), a retired anesthesiologist in White Plains, New York, made the scene with a groovy Fu Manchu moustache.

First, they nipped the University of Arkansas 180-170 with a come-from-behind overtime win. Physics major Birch blurted the answer to the question "What is the province of Germany that was ruled by three kings?" (Saxony.)

"I was the hero. It was absolutely amazing," he says. Next week they crushed New York University 345-165 before being spanked by Vanderbilt 250-155. "We just couldn't get the motor running," says captain Bob Hill '71 (CLAS).

The network feted teams, putting

them up in swank hotels. The 1970 players stayed at The Warwick, where the Beatles had holed up in 1964.

"That was a big deal," says Hill, a retired corporate training executive.

Players also got \$25 a day in spending money. "It was a lot more than I was used to having in my pocket," says Birch. He frugally dined with Hill at a Horn & Hardart automat, where you used tokens to pay for food behind glass partitions.

The network gave the students their choice of tickets to a Broadway musical.

Steamy was the word for the show Hill's team wanted to see. "Oh! Calcutta!" had full frontal nudity.

"I'm sure that decision went through several levels of NBC executives," Hill presumes. The network let them have their way.

Hill's shining moment came against Vandy. The English major "made his singing debut when he was called upon to 'sing, hum, or whistle' a few bars from 'Ave Maria,'" reported *The Hartford Times*. "As soon as the host said 'Ave Maria,' I nailed that buzzer. I

had grown up Catholic. Then I realized the version I could sing was not the one in any opera. It was a warbled Catholic version that was pretty awful," says Hill, adding, "I never lived that down."

Both teams brought back big scholarship bucks. The 1970 team hauled in \$7,000, nearly \$50,000 in today's money.

"You couldn't walk anywhere on campus without someone saying something to you," says Hill, noting, however, that the attention quickly faded. —GEORGE SPENCER

UConn Talks

On posting her "Telegram Chronicles," which distills news reports for the benefit of English-speaking friends in her native Russia:

"I want them to know about the Russian people who are resisting this war and getting arrested and beaten."

English professor Ellen Litman, *The Forward*, March 9, 2022

On using treats as a way to regain control after the pandemic:

"There's a guarantee that this small little ritual that you have every week will at least satiate something in you."

Philosophy professor Tracy Llanera, *The New York Times*, April 2, 2022

On politicians creating and feeding fears about sexual orientation and trans rights:

"Repressive sexism comes along with a resurgence of nationalism. They go hand in hand."

Psychological sciences professor Felicia Pratto, *The New York Times*, March 31, 2022

On the effects of saying "mass shooting" when the shooter's white, but "gang violence" when the shooter's Black:

"When you call something gang violence, I think people's empathy goes down to zero because they think — those people are killing themselves."

Psychiatry professor and a director of the Health Disparities Institute Dr. Wisdom Powell, *New York Amsterdam News*, April 28, 2022

On looking farther down the food chain to grow protein for human consumption:

"But let's think about bivalves."

Marine sciences professor Sandra Shumway, *Scientific American*, May 1, 2022

On the increase in drug overdoses and deaths:

"It's not that there are more people doing drugs today, but it's much more dangerous to do drugs. And that's because of fentanyl."

UConn Health EMS coordinator Peter Canning, ABC News, March 12, 2022

OUR STUDENTS

THE STIGMA BUSTER

Amanda Brenner '22 MSW has always been a dedicated and accomplished student – she makes good grades, won her college's award for best undergraduate research paper, and received a grant from the Special Envoy for Health at the United Nations right after she graduated from American University in 2016.

She majored in foreign policy, landed a great job a year after graduation, and was preparing to launch her career in international relations.

"I've always loved policy," she says. "I always thought that was a way that you could be a very useful person, and feel like you're useful, by getting involved in policy work."

Years later, and a recent UConn policy practice Master of Social Work graduate, Brenner is still working on policy, but it's an extremely personal mission – she's hoping her lived experience can give others hope, while helping to reduce the strong stigma that exists around severe mental illness.

Questions

Brenner was a first-year undergraduate when she started feeling ill.

"I felt like I had a cold, and I didn't know what it was – it was persistent and very frustrating," she says. "It sort of progressed from there, where first I started feeling just a little bit physically sick, and then it became having weighty thoughts about things like purpose and not understanding why I had this sort of existential dread. And then it shifted into this kind of just straight-up sorrow. And eventually it was much more than that."

She went to the campus clinic but didn't seek out additional treatment or therapy and continued to struggle, not understanding what was happening to her. She struggled as she studied abroad in South Korea, seeking out doctors



Amanda Brenner at UConn's School of Social Work in Hartford.

who were unable to diagnose her with any physical illness. She struggled as she completed her undergraduate degree and looked for a job in the competitive world of Washington, D.C., politics and policy. When Brenner finally landed that job, she struggled even harder.

"I had my first full-time job in international relations, and I suddenly couldn't get out of bed," she says. "I was so upset with my inability to work and the quality of my output that I just didn't want to do it at all, but mostly it was because I felt so physically awful that I just couldn't see how I could continue to go on day by day. It really became sort of a disability, and it is

a disability, but at the time, I didn't realize that."

She eventually quit and moved back to her parents' home in Shelton, Connecticut.

Brenner says she had felt proud of herself for graduating, and "I suddenly had let myself down," she says, feeling that "I'm not going to be able to continue with this level of achievement. I'm not going to be able to continue with this making people proud."

She entered her first mental health treatment program.

"I really felt like that benefited me for a short period of time," she says. "I loved the staff. The staff there is what got me interested in social work.

I didn't know anything about social work. I didn't realize that clinical social workers were mental health therapists. I didn't realize they studied mental health."

She also met others who were living with mental illness, which helped her feel less alone, but the benefits of the program didn't last. She was hospitalized, then hospitalized again, and again, eventually diagnosed first with severe, then later recurrent, major depressive disorder. None of the treatments were helping.

"I didn't want to live, and it wasn't like I hated myself," Brenner says. "It wasn't that type of suicidal thought. I was in so much pain, and I couldn't do anything about it, and I did not know how I could continue to the next day. I was in the hospital three times without making any progress. I had tried every type of medication under the sun. I tried all kinds of talk therapy. Like I was a dedicated student, I was a very dedicated mental health patient, where I was like, 'I'm going to get to the bottom of this. I'm going to figure this out. There's got to be a way to figure this out. It has to get better.' But at one point I stopped believing that it was going to get better."

Living with severe mental illness, she explains, is like running a marathon that has no finish line: You're exhausted, you're uncomfortable, and you're in so much pain.

"You keep looking to see that finish line, and there's nothing," she says. "There's nothing in sight."

Answers

The finish line that finally came for Brenner was a very unexpected place – electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) or induced, controlled seizures. "I thought it sounded really scary," she says. "But it's an evidence-based practice. It really makes a difference in cases where nothing else has made a difference at all over time."

Brenner underwent ECT for months without feeling any better. And then, everything changed.

"It was so very sudden, after re-

ceiving ECT – and they said it could happen like this – but all of a sudden, the pain stopped," Brenner says. "It just stopped completely. It was just gone. You wake up one day, and this thing that has been with you for years and years – suddenly it's gone, and it's just the most shocking thing."

While Brenner is quick to say that ECT did not cure her mental illness – it did not end her worry or her existential dread, or change her thinking patterns – the physical pain that had been unsolvable for so long was gone. She began to reimagine the rest of her life, filled with gratitude for the support and care teams she had garnered along the way and motivated to use her talents to contribute to the well-being of others.

"I was so inspired by the people who were good – the people who were amazing and empathetic and so human and kind and compassionate – that I wanted to go into this field myself," she says. "I want to amplify the voices of people with severe mental illness, because they have their own voices. Everybody has their own story."

She continues, "I really wanted to do policy and study mental illness at the same time, and I found that you could do that in a study program like the one at UConn."

Purpose

UConn's Policy Practice MSW concentration prepares social workers to intervene at the level of service delivery in organizations and government to improve laws, regulations, and policies affecting populations in vulnerable situations. Policy practice involves policy development and policy analysis, program design and implementation, and policy and legislative advocacy.

Students engage in robust, hands-on fieldwork placements designed to offer critical experiential learning opportunities. It was this approach to these all-important field placements that made UConn the perfect fit for Brenner.

"They have such a wonderful field department, and they really care about what you want in your internship experience," she says. "The first year, I said I

"I want to amplify the voices of people with severe mental illness ... Everybody has their own story."

wanted to work at either the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention or the National Alliance on Mental Illness [NAMI], and they said, 'We can make that happen.'"

Brenner worked with the Connecticut chapter of NAMI in her first year. She did a lot of writing – preparing briefing books and background papers, but also writing and delivering testimony on legislation before the Connecticut General Assembly.

"That was a big experience, because I finally felt like I had my platform, and I could stand up and bring my lived experience to the table," she says, "because I think that's important. We're often left out of the conversation."

Brenner also trained as a NAMI "Ending the Silence" presenter, where volunteers engage with children to discuss their experiences with mental illness and help end the stigma that surrounds it. For all of her work and her efforts, NAMI Connecticut recognized Brenner with its 2021 Stigma Buster Award.

"I just felt like everything had come full circle, where I had been so, so ill, and now that I was getting to speak and share my story, people were recognizing it – people were recognizing the value of it," she says. "It was a great feeling."

Brenner finished her MSW this spring and hopes to return to Washington, D.C., to work on policy at the federal level.

"I want to go back and come even more full circle, and work in D.C., and talk on the national level, and bring my story to a wider audience," she says.

"Because I want to reach as wide an audience as possible. I want people to understand that you can fight the stigma that is out there. You can fight the possibility that you feel like there's no hope." —JACLYN M. SEVERANCE

KUDOS

HIGHEST NAACP HONOR GOES TO DR. LAURENCIN

University Professor Dr. Cato T. Laurencin was awarded the 106th annual Spingarn Medal, the highest honor of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Bestowed upon such American greats as Martin Luther King Jr. and Maya Angelou, it honors “the man or woman of African descent and American citizenship who shall have made the highest achievement during the preceding year or years in any honorable field.” It hopes to draw attention to African American achievement and inspire young African Americans. Accepting the honor (*below*), Laurencin said, “This list of those who have won the Spingarn Medal is incredible. I am honored to be in such awesome company. He is the first engineer to receive the honor, the fourth physician, and the fifth scientist. He thanked his father, a union carpenter, and his mother, a doctor and trailblazer in medicine and science, for teaching him Black excellence and Black resilience.



ON CAMPUS

The Shape of Copper

Chemistry Ph.D. student Lamya Tabassum’s prize-winning photo of copper sulfide nanoarrays, taken with a Verios 460L SEM electron microscope that can magnify up to 2,000 times, was a happy accident. “I was growing copper sulfide nanoarray on the copper substrate to use it as a catalyst for water splitting,” she says. The process produces hydrogen, a valuable energy commodity. Tabassum was scanning the particles under the microscope to see if they actually were arrays.

The strange shape of the nanoarray in this image was not what she was expecting to find. In fact, it was new to science, and now Tabassum is publishing a paper about it. —KIM KRIEGER

Find a Q&A with Tabassum at s.uconn.edu/copper

“There was suddenly a fatwa on my head”

For reporting on terrorism, extremism, and atrocities against women in her country, Marvi Sirmed found herself under the most serious of death threats and escaped an assassination attempt. The Pakistani journalist found the freedom to live – and to work and teach – at UConn.

By Jaclyn M. Severance
Illustrations by Sean Flynn

In 1991 in Pakistan, there was a surge of women being burned.

A stove would burst, the official report would say – a terrible accident – and only the young bride of the family would be injured or, more often, killed.

“It was very intriguing for me,” says Marvi Sirmed, a journalist and activist who was one of the rare young women working at a newspaper in Pakistan at the time.

“When I started digging, first they said, ‘Oh, you know, because in the

kitchen, only the daughter-in-law works, so everyone else remains unhurt.”

Most newspapers in Pakistan at that time employed only one woman, says Sirmed, and that woman was known as the “lady reporter,” who would exclusively write for women.

Articles about the latest fashions or recipes or romantic short stories were the sorts of topics that women in the patriarchal society should be reading, according to the

men who ran the newspapers.

Sirmed, who was working as the editor of her newspaper’s weekly women’s edition, felt otherwise. “I kept digging for four or five months for this story, and some of these incidents would be accidental,” she says, “but most of it was because the daughter-in-law did not bring enough dowry. So, it was a dowry killing, or an honor killing, concealed into accident.”

Her enterprising journalism was not welcomed.

“I brought several stories of the survivors of these ‘accidents,’ and my

editor just refused to entertain that,” she says. “He said that women buy the women’s edition because they want to read more about the pleasant subjects. But what you are doing is exactly what they don’t want to know and what we don’t want to put in our publication, because these are not pretty faces. If you want to do a modeling session with a high-ranking model girl who would display good apparel, we are all for it. But these faces of burned women, it’s absolutely a ‘no’ story.”

The stories of the burned women were far from the last time Sirmed would face opposition,

controversy, harassment, personal attacks, and outright violence for the stories she wanted to tell and the light she aimed to shine on some of the darkest corners of Pakistani life and governance.

In fact, she’s still telling those stories and working as an activist for change in Pakistan and other South Asian countries, though she’s now more than 7,000 miles away from her home country, in the United States – teaching at UConn through the University’s longstanding and unique partnership with the international network Scholars at Risk.



A Network to Safety

"It's at the very heart of a university's mission to advance knowledge and to advocate for academic freedom," says Kathryn Libal, an associate professor of social work and human rights at the UConn School of Social Work and the director of UConn's Human Rights Institute (HRI).

Since November 2010, UConn and HRI have worked to help support that mission as part of the Scholars at Risk Network, or SAR. Established in 2000, SAR assists academics who face persecution by arranging short-term positions for them at host universities around the globe.

Turkey, Nicaragua, and now Pakistan. They can stay two years or more, which gives them time to address a number of unmet needs, while gaining their bearings in a safe place.

"It's not just about having a scholar figure out how to write for U.S. journals," says Libal. "Many haven't had access to good health care for some time. Some have experienced trauma and have latent health challenges. So having a couple of years to address health needs is really critical."

UConn can offer this support to its SAR scholars, Libal says, because the entire University community — from the president and provost to the faculty and students — has embraced the network's mission and goals, and has put the structure and resources in place to make the program successful. "UConn is deeply committed to our human rights mission, with this program serving as a powerful example of the impact we can have," says provost Carl Lejuez.

UConn is one of the most active and committed hosts of SAR scholars in the country, says Rose Anderson, SAR's director of protection services. "We have frequently asked UConn to participate in workshops for SAR hosts and scholars to impart their perspective on host support needed for a visit to be as successful as possible," Anderson says. "In this way, UConn inspires other campuses to become involved."

With some 550 members in 42 countries, the SAR network each year places more than 100 at-risk scholars. An increasingly high demand forces SAR to focus its efforts on scholars facing the most immediate and severe threats, including threats of violence, torture, and wrongful imprisonment or prosecution — scholars just like Marvi Sirmed.

When the Threats Come

When, as a budding journalist, Sirmed asked to start reporting on politics, she was harassed by the male reporters who worked in the newsroom.

"It was very difficult, because if you are sitting in the newsroom with all the male reporters, they would be 100 percent sure that you are making yourself available for them, and you are fair game," Sirmed says. "Sexual harassment was not even a word back then. It was considered a fact of life that a woman has to endure — to tolerate harassment — if a woman decides to move out of the four walls of the house."

Sirmed left reporting and started working as a columnist, because it didn't require her to go to a newsroom — she could instead work on her stories on her own time. She spent the next 20 years working as a columnist, often writing about political issues and terrorist organizations and advocating against human rights abuses in Pakistan.

She also worked for the United Nations Development Program in Pakistan as an expert on democracy and parliamentary institutions. And while she says the U.N. was supportive, Sirmed's outspoken activism did not earn her many friends from within the Pakistani government, the military establishment, or the active extremist groups in the country.

In 2012, Sirmed survived an assassination attempt, when unidentified gunmen fired several shots at her and her husband, Sirmed Manzoor, who also is an investigative journalist, in the capital city of Islamabad. They were unharmed.

"That was one point in time where we seriously considered leaving Pakistan," she says. "But we did not. Even at that time, we did not."

She did ultimately leave her position at the U.N. and began working as a consultant, offering research and writing services to international organizations and using any profits to support victims of terrorism, especially women.

"There were very many destitute women who were left because of

"Living in Pakistan and working as

a journalist and an activist was a continuous trauma"



"The scholars hosted through SAR represent all disciplines," explains Libal, a champion of the network who also serves on the organization's steering committee for the U.S.

"They might be physicists. They might be political scientists. They might be molecular cell biologists. And in their home countries, they are persecuted because of their research or teaching. SAR is a global institutional response that supports scholars and practitioners so that they have the freedom to think and exchange knowledge."

Since becoming a part of the network, UConn has hosted scholars from Mexico, Iran, Syria, Ethiopia,

the terrorism in Pakistan,” she says. “For lack of education, skills, and job opportunities, many of them were pushed to abject poverty or were left at the mercy of the extended family — when they were not opting for suicide.”

And Sirmed kept writing. In 2017, she began working as a special senior correspondent for the *Daily Times*, an English-language newspaper, covering topics such as human rights, violent extremism, and terrorism in Pakistan.

“That was a hard area to report for women reporters,” she says. “Women had started reporting on politics, but terrorism was an area that was considered a male domain. Reporting on that area makes many enemies, and that’s where I made my very strong enemy of the Taliban.”

Her home was ransacked multiple times with computers, passports, and other personal items taken. She was publicly slut-shamed while simultaneously being called an angry, sexless feminist. Threats were made against her family, including her young daughter. Her personal phone number and email were posted online, leading to harassing and threatening messages. Personal details about her family members, including her parents, were also distributed online, alongside calls for them to be attacked.

“They were not only threatening my life, they were attacking my integrity,” she says. “Living in Pakistan and working as a journalist and an activist was a continuous trauma.”

Threats were also made against the publications that she wrote for. Sirmed began to self-censor what she published in the newspaper, she says, out of fear of what might happen to others within the organization.

“When the threats come, it’s not just you,” she says. “It’s not about you



always. It’s about so many other people, and you feel responsible. If there is an attack on you, it’s still a concern. But if there is an attack on someone else because of you, that’s something so torturous that you can never live with yourself.”

Not Completely Safe

In October 2019, Marvi Sirmed did finally leave Pakistan — she came to the United States for a fellowship with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and during that time, she began writing a book about South Asian governments and the struggle for freedom of expression.

“Each year, the National Endowment for Democracy awards fellowships to individuals whose scholarship, courageous journalism, and heroic human rights activism have made them targets of persecution in their home countries,” says Zerxes Spencer, director of fellowships at NED. “We recognized Marvi as one such deserving ‘democrat at risk,’ warranting special attention and extended fellowship support, as she recommitted herself to her life’s work

from afar. The fellowship period that Marvi spent at NED offered her the space, time, resources, and peace of mind she needed to take stock of her circumstances, gain skills, and plan for the next phase in her professional life.”

But even though she was on the other side of the world, Sirmed’s activism was still making waves at home in Pakistan. What she did not publish in the newspaper, Sirmed posted on Twitter — and that’s when things really got bad.

“Last month, I sent a tweet — intended as a commentary on Pakistan’s problem of political abductions — that sparked a violent backlash of gender-based slurs, slut-shaming, and death threats,” Sirmed wrote in an opinion article for *The Washington Post* in September 2020. “By the next day, #ArrestMarviSirmed_295C became the top trending Twitter hashtag in my country, with countless people suggesting my extrajudicial murder.”

Section 295-C of Pakistan’s blasphemy laws makes it a criminal offense to make derogatory comments about the Holy Prophet. Use of the

controversial law has increased in recent years, with those accused often subject to threats, harassment, attacks, and vigilantism.

Complaints of blasphemy were filed against Sirmed in multiple parts of Pakistan. Threats to kill, rape, and arrest her escalated dramatically, provoking alerts from international human rights organizations concerned for her safety.

“There was suddenly a fatwa on my head,” she says, “and my family suggested I shouldn’t go back.”

Given the escalation in threats against her in Pakistan, Sirmed was strongly advised to remain abroad for a period of time, while things settled down back home. So Sirmed and colleagues at NED looked for opportunities to keep her in the U.S. and found Scholars at Risk.

Sirmed began corresponding with UConn in August 2020 and became affiliated with the University through SAR in January 2021.

On fellowship with the Human Rights Institute, she teaches HRI courses that draw on her real-world experience (see sidebar at right) and works on her book. While she is able to sleep without fear of being harmed in the night, she says that attacks on Pakistani activists outside of Pakistan, with the government accused of orchestrating those attacks, still leave her feeling unsafe, even in the U.S.

“There was a *Guardian* story last year about how the Pakistani military establishment has ordered assassinations of the Pakistani dissidents who are in the Western world,” she says, “so, there was a panic. It surged throughout the Pakistani activists who are in different parts of the world.”

Warnings issued in February of this year to Pakistani exiles living in the United Kingdom only further highlight the international threats to activists like Sirmed.

“I have not received any threats here, but all of these things, they keep me wondering,” she says. “It’s not completely safe, but safe in the sense that we trust the law enforcement here, at least more than we do in

Pakistan. In Pakistan, we can’t trust the police ever. Even if we are friends with some of their senior officials, and even if they assure us that they will help us, we are sure that they will never be able to help us in any way.”

Sirmed says she hopes that one day she might return to Pakistan, because it’s where she feels she’s needed most.

“But my family is more concerned about my life,” she says. “My husband and my daughter, especially — she says that it’s better if you keep working instead of just trying to work on some story and get killed.”

And so, Sirmed is still writing — publishing regular commentary and columns on political and security concerns in the English-language Pakistani press — and advocating and speaking out about human rights abuses in Pakistan and other South Asian countries. She’s also still tweeting and curating a regular newsletter that she shares on Twitter called *Counter Terrorism Pakistan*.

And she’s also filled with new energy, she says, after the experience of teaching at UConn for the first time.

“The satisfaction that this work carries, it’s unmatched,” Sirmed says. “I mean, you are influencing young minds in such a way that can actually change their professional lives — their lives, actually — they will be able to then think in a different way when they hear about the experiences of other people in other countries, about how these journalists are working, and about what is at stake in terms of the person and their life in order to bring those stories to the world.”

She continues, “Even if they do not decide to work in the developing world, if they decide to work here in the U.S.A., I think they will be able to value the freedoms available to them more than they do. Because you don’t value something, you take things for granted, if you are not aware of what it would be like to live without those freedoms.” ☺

“Learning that lives with you.”

Jarred Riel '24 (CLAS), a double major in human rights and human development and family sciences, was one of the students in a human rights class co-taught by Marvi Sirmed and Kathy Libal.

“It was Marvi who drew me to that course,” Riel says. “I read her story, and it was just so captivating, what she had been through and all the accomplishments she had, but also what she was facing in Pakistan. That she would be teaching this course — I thought it would be something that, honestly, I wasn’t ever going to get an opportunity again to have this type of experience with a professor.”

The course, Libal explains, is meant to lay out the emergent area of human rights journalism while also teaching about freedom of expression and the importance of protecting journalists who are also human rights actors.

“Human rights journalism reflects an explicit commitment to addressing the most pressing moral issues of our time,” says Libal. “It also means that, as a journalist, you aim to honor and value the voices of those who are experiencing human rights violations, or whose human rights aren’t fully realized. We wanted to have the students understand the core principles of defending human rights as a practicing journalist, which is what has been central to Marvi’s life.”

Another student, Eliza Russell '22 (CLAS), said of the class, “It is the type of learning that impacts you for a long time, that lives with you.” Russell, who plans to attend law school, added, “Those types of stories change your understanding of the world.”



For more about the many educational and experiential opportunities available through UConn’s Human Rights Institute, please visit humanrights.uconn.edu.

Making SAR work at UConn

“The University of Connecticut is deeply committed to the Scholars at Risk program and the remarkable individuals that we host,” says UConn’s vice president for global affairs Daniel Weiner. “These scholars remind us every day of the importance of practicing human rights with vigor and resolve.” Over the years, HRI has partnered with SAR, the Institute of International Education’s (IIE) Scholar Rescue Fund, IIE’s Artist Protection Fund, and the National Endowment for Democracy to identify participants. The University also is part of the New University in Exile Consortium, and HRI works with the Open Society University Network’s Threatened Scholars Integration Initiative to develop more opportunities to host scholars and practitioners in the future.

For more on UConn’s Human Rights Institute, Scholars at Risk, and the National Endowment for Democracy, please visit s.uconn.edu/SAR.

GIANTS AMONG US

*A walk with
Frank Costigliola,
a gentleman farmer
and a scholar*

By Julie (Stagis) Bartucca '10 (BUS, CLAS), '19 MBA | Photos by Peter Morenus



T

he first lesson imparted by Frank Costigliola as we motor and meander around his 195-acre farm a few miles from campus in Storrs is his secret to balancing research, writing, teaching, and farming: a carefully calibrated system of napping.

“What I do, and I recommend it, is short naps. Five to 20 minutes. You wake up feeling like it’s a new day,” says Costigliola, a U.S. foreign relations history expert in his 50th year as a professor, his 24th at UConn. “First of all, I don’t drink coffee because coffee interferes with naps. Coffee is a zero-sum game. What I do for a quick boost sometimes, is eat one of these chocolate-covered cherries, which are superb, and one of those, because I don’t drink coffee, does the job.”

He has a lot more to say about the naps, but the point is he needs the energy. Costigliola wakes in the predawn hours to respond to students’ online discussion posts for the seminar he debuted last fall, “Personality and Power Since 1900,” and

tend to his 12 beef cattle, or work on his latest book (a “cradle-to-grave” biography of Cold War-era diplomat George F. Kennan), or lead the loving restoration of his property to honor its history and carry on the farming tradition of the area.

The land, called Dunhamtown, as it was owned and farmed by the Dunham family from 1695 to 1873, contains multitudes, like Costigliola himself. Corrals and pastures, flowing water and out-buildings, wooded trails — each enclave a stunning backdrop for a meandering two-hour conversation about history and farming and, really, about life. Join us, will you?

THE WINTER QUARTERS

From his house, which is just about a mile from the south edge of campus, we ride through his backyard in an RTV utility vehicle down what Costigliola calls “The Great Road” to reach this spot. Contained by an electrified fence to keep coyotes at bay, this tree-studded clearing is home to the cattle in the winter and The Complex, a pine- and cedar-shingled building for food, hay, machinery, and other supplies.

Wearing a trapper hat and a heavy cream-colored knit sweater, Costigliola exits the orange mini-truck we’re riding in, unfastens a chain from a metal farm gate, opens the gate, drives us through it, leaves the cab again, closes the gate, and refastens it. It’s a series of methodical movements, but therein lies a bit of elegance, even magic — things are slower here on the farm, a little bit more the way things used to be. Perhaps even more magical: waiting on the other side of the gate are 11 gorgeous, auburn cows (and one sweet black-and-white one).

Costigliola first became a gentleman farmer in 1972, when he started his career at the University of Rhode Island and bought 10 acres near that campus for \$4,500.

“You could do that then,” he says. He raised cattle there until he left for UConn in 1998. “I didn’t think I’d ever do it again.”

But with a property for sale in his actual backyard, Costigliola wanted 10, maybe 15 acres to “play around with.”



The owner would only sell all 195, and that’s how he and his wife, Diann, ended up with this sprawling, picturesque plot.

He wasn’t going to raise cattle, either, but as with most things, Costigliola is all-in, a subject-matter expert on raising and breeding his grass-fed Devons (supposedly the breed brought to America by the Puritans), connected with people in his community who take care of the artificial insemination and humane slaughter.

He had a grandfather with a farm growing up, but he didn’t know him very well — “He never learned English, I never learned Italian,” — and was inspired by the back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s to buy the land in Rhode Island. He had planned to live on a commune in Ithaca, New York,



CLUB MED



Pens and sheds are crafted from trees on the property, stone walls are lovingly recreated. “Every one of those stones, someone picked up and moved — that work, that effort, you wish the stones could talk and say where they’d been . . .” says Costigliola.

after graduate school at Cornell — “If you got a job, you were a sellout.” He didn’t think he’d be a good teacher, but he took a position at URI anyway, and the rest is, well, history.

FORT LEE/ BRADFORD BEACH

Driving out of a gate on the other side of the cow pen, we come to another storage structure and exit the truck. To the left, you can cross a shimmering stream via the bridge Costigliola built using planks from his white oaks, or sit along the water at a table made from hearthstone uncovered on the property. Based on an 1870s deed, Costigliola estimates the house it came from was built in the late 1700s.

Frank and Diann call this area Fort Lee, as in New Jersey, near where Frank grew up alongside the George Washington Bridge; the table sits on “Bradford Beach,” a nod to the spot on Lake Michigan in Diann’s hometown of Milwaukee.

Frank Costigliola was born in Spring Valley, New York, in 1946. The son of Italian immigrants who weren’t educated past the fifth grade, Costigliola took a liking to school right away (so much so that his kindergarten teacher was invited to his 5th birthday party).

In early 1945, Costigliola’s uncle Charles died of blood poisoning after an injury at a war production plant. His mother had immigrated to the U.S. at age 9 and was sent to live with Charles,

who was her much older half-brother. “He was a giant in my mother’s mind, like a father,” Costigliola says, his voice cracking. “I grew up with stories about him. As a little kid, 2 years old, people talked about Franklin Roosevelt, who died around the same time.

“And I think, in my mind, I blurred the two of them. There was this sense of giants who had walked the earth,” he says. “It’s a sense of — there was something important before.” That sense, good high school history teachers, and the feeling that “the present is very confining” led Costigliola to study history.

“If you need to look beyond the present, the only way you can have an idea about the future is to have an idea about the past in general,” he muses. “The past adds richness, texture, and meaning to understanding . . . you don’t really know who you are — as an individual or as a nation — until you know how you got there.”

Such is the root of Costigliola’s life’s work as a preeminent scholar of United States foreign relations, but the tentacles of this philosophy reach out into everything he does — shaping young lives, mentoring graduate students, and tending to his land.

CLUB MED

A bit farther down the wide dirt-and-gravel road, we reach a 4-acre section of the property. An in-progress stone wall encloses a once-and-future corral next to a meadow

THE WINTER QUARTERS

FORT LEE



**“THIS IS A PLACE
FOR SOLITUDE AND
CONTEMPLATION”**

and a small barn. Like most of the buildings here, it's made from Costigliola's trees that were sawed at his neighbor's mill and is where Costigliola will keep a half-dozen sheep procured from UConn.

Dunhamtown was covered in pricker bushes when Costigliola bought it, but he's bringing it back to its former glory. Huge swaths have been cleared, buildings and bridges built, and irrigation systems installed. Remnants of centuries-old stone walls — where much of the stone had been sold off — are being rebuilt, including one that forms a corral Costigliola will use for the sheep (which will also be sold for meat; I wish I had taken a picture of the way he looked at me when I asked if he'll be using them for wool).

“You see that tree?” he asks, gesturing to one growing just inside the stone corral. The tree is around 150-200 years old, and in order for anyone (human or

animal) to allow it to grow where it did, the wall must not have been used as a corral anymore — so this hasn't been used as a corral in at least 150 years.

“At the edge of every field here, there's these piles of stones. Every one of those stones, someone picked up and moved,” Costigliola says. “That work, that effort, you wish the stones could talk and say where they'd been and what people had done with them.

“The big thing here is me just restoring what people worked very hard” — his voice catches, one of several times his reverence for those who came before causes emotion to overcome him — “people worked very, very hard to do. I'm trying to restore it. I have enormous respect for them, whoever they were.”

BIG PINES

We leave the RTV behind near Club Med and continue on foot, hanging a left after a small pond next to the new sheep barn.

Ahead is a wooded area with trails running through it and fallen leaves covering every inch, and a brook you can cross on a foot-bridge of big, smooth stones when the water isn't too high. This is a place for solitude and contemplation, leading to another road that goes down to wide-open pastures.

We've talked a lot about farming, getting in the weeds on everything from how the cows are bred to where on the property trees were cut down to make lumber for each structure. I finally ask about Frank's career and the way he relates to students.

Weeks before visiting the farm, I sat in on a session of his new seminar, “History 2205W: Personality and Power Since 1900,” where students analyze how the personalities of Adolf Hitler, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, Hillary Clinton, and Donald Trump affected their approach to power and what they accomplished.



Introduced last fall, it was a hit among students. In the four books he's written, Costigliola explores how culture, emotion, and even gender norms dovetail with international relations, so the seminar discussions live in his sweet spot. Even for nonhistorians, the course content is fascinating. “I have to admit, I knew you couldn't miss when you had Hitler and Trump in the same course,” Costigliola quips — but in speaking with students one learns the true draw lies in Costigliola's teaching style and his humanity.

“I've never felt so heard by a professor before,” says Jessica Paxi, a third-year economics major from East Windsor, Connecticut.

Students praise the way Costigliola draws out their opinions, daring them to substantiate their views and articulate themselves in ways they might not have felt comfortable doing before.

“Everything you say is accepted



evergreen trees, a vegetable garden, and a huge shed that Costigliola's wife calls the "E Shed," for "excessive." The E Shed houses round hay bales, and the adjoining "Shed Sback" is where Costigliola splits firewood in the winter and where a cow might go for solitude and protection just before she gives birth.

It's so easy to get wrapped up in Costigliola's passion and general menschiness that you almost forget his accomplishments as a U.S. foreign relations historian. His books have won awards and introduced culture as a legitimate topic for analysis in foreign relations history; in 2016 he was named a Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor, the University's highest honor for faculty; he has received fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton (where he met Diann), the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Norwegian Nobel Institute, and UConn's Humanities Institute.

"Frank is an astute and empathetic critic, an excellent guide to history and to life, a great sort of companion in learning," says History Department head Mark Healey. "In addition to being an exceptional undergraduate teacher, he is a really excellent graduate mentor — he has a distinguished crew of folks. He's had a big impact on the profession and on the field."

Costigliola's graduate students have gone on to be teachers, professors and heads of history departments at other universities, and national security analysts.

"I can't imagine a better advisor for supporting my project and my voice, and taking my career where I want it to go," says Megan Dawson, who works for the Department of Defense in Washington, D.C., and is currently writing her Ph.D. dissertation on Ukrainian denuclearization in the early 1990s. "In what's historically been a very male-dominated field, Frank has been very supportive of myself and other graduate students, making sure everyone has equal access to opportunities, making sure everyone's voices are heard," particularly women, she says. "He tries to give a wider perspective

and there's no judgment, but he asks questions and challenges you to back up your opinion. I surprised myself because I didn't think I had strong political views," says Sammi Peters, a recent digital media and design grad from Southbury, Connecticut. "Writing a lot about [my views] challenged ideas I thought I had."

He's here to teach them history, sure, but Costigliola feels "we have an obligation to help students feel better about themselves and maximize their talents." He sees himself, a first-generation student, in many UConn students and wants to encourage them to go after what they deserve and equip them with the tools to do so.

"I respect students. I like them," he

says. "Students at elite universities pay for all kinds of services, pay for the networks, the letters of recommendation. Parents feel they're paying for . . . this fancy education, you owe us this. Our students don't feel that way. It's rare they challenge a grade.

"I tell them, if you want a top position, you're going to be competing with people who think they're wonderful — you're wonderful too, but you don't know that; you don't insist on it."

EAST FIELD AND WEST FIELD

The forest trails lead to the road used to bring the cows from winter quarters to these big open pastures of green grass where they live in the warmer months, dotted with

"YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW WHO YOU ARE — AS A PERSON OR AS A NATION — UNTIL YOU KNOW HOW YOU GOT THERE."

on panels and when choosing books for a syllabus."

The summer before Dawson started at UConn, Costigliola ushered her in to a conference of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations — an organization over which he used to preside, which recently honored him with its lifetime achievement award. He introduced her to "many people whose books I would read throughout my studies," says Dawson. "He really wanted to make sure the door was open for me to walk through."

Toward the end of our journey through the farm, Costigliola acknowledges the good fortune that put him in the position to help others through those doors.

He's keenly aware of his privilege as a white male baby boomer, and as a professor whose "schedule is largely his own" and who can afford to do what he does.

"So you're not slowing down?" I ask. "No. People say, 'What's your end game?' End game? I'll die!"

Until then, he'll continue to host the History Department's Foreign Policy Seminar series, bringing in experts from around the world to talk diplomacy over Indian food in the Wood Hall basement. He'll plan an end-of-semester party for the undergrads in his "Rise of U.S. Foreign Power" lecture. He'll work on his next book, tentatively titled: "Hope over Fear: The Feelings that Got Franklin D. Roosevelt and his America through Depression and War." Tend to his animals. Restore his land. Shape young lives. Take naps.

"I'm the oldest person left in the department. Retired friends tell me they manage to kill time," he says.

"Why would you kill time? Time is precious." ☺



EAST FIELD



E SHED, WEST FIELD



Revenge of the Data Scientists

Talitha Washington '98 MS, '01 Ph.D. is turning tables on the data science that has worked against Black and Brown people — by creating science and math pathways for students of color.

Speaking last year with the late UConn professor Joseph McKenna, he recalled a colloquium on mathematical studies of bridges he'd once given at Bryn Mawr College. He happened to run into Talitha Washington, one of his graduate students, who was there visiting friends. They said hello and McKenna went off to his colloquium.

"Usually these talks are fairly dull, with about five or six faculty members who attend out of a sense of obligation more than anything else," he said. "But when I came to give my talk, somehow Talitha, in wandering around the department, had rounded up 10 to 20 undergraduates to come to my talk."

It must have taken a certain amount of courage to go into a completely strange place and gather up all those people, said McKenna. "That's just the way she was. Talitha made things happen. She wasn't intimidated or awed by anyone. She said, 'Here's a great talk, let's all go to it.'"

Making things happen has been a way of life for Washington '98 MS, '01 Ph.D. She holds fast to the phrase "I'll find a way or make one," which is the motto of Atlanta University (now part of Clark Atlanta University), the oldest historically Black university in the South, where Washington is a professor of mathematics.

It's also her mantra, she says, as she directs the Atlanta University Center (AUC) Data Science Initiative to bring underrepresented voices into the exploding field of data science. She likes

how so much lives in the statement: possibility, resolve, carving a new path.

"We have all these examples of how data science has negatively impacted Black people," she says, noting facial recognition software and all manner of algorithms where the science can lead to more harm than good "if data sets aren't culturally relevant or if they aren't taking into account all the nuances. Last year there was a big cry from the math community to stop doing work with the police because of predictive policing models built on biased algorithms. The consciousness of the data science community was born out of what happened to George Floyd and others."

At the AUC, Washington is flipping that narrative, working to "develop talent and become a significant producer of African Americans with expertise and credentials in data science," she says. "We also want to create new knowledge and lead national efforts to address race, gender, and social justice aspects of data science, focusing on topics that impact Black America."

The Tap

Washington was teaching at Howard University and starting her first year at the National Science Foundation (NSF), where she had built and coordinated a STEM program across 532 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). She loved what she was doing at Howard and the NSF and hadn't planned to make a change. But when she was "tapped on the shoulder" and asked to consider applying to Atlanta, she says she kept thinking about the impact of data science. Despite its use in nearly every field from healthcare to banking, education to hospitality, this arena of developing algorithms and analyzing data continues to lack diverse voices.

A Spelman College graduate, she was



Washington honors some of 2022's rising and graduating data science students.

also drawn to AUC's deep roots in social justice. "In 1960 student leaders of AUC member schools [Clark Atlanta, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Spelman] came together to challenge the scourge of segregation and created a manifesto appealing for human rights," Washington says. "Our Data Science Initiative is built on this backbone of students really motivating social justice throughout our history."

The job, though, might have intimidated a less courageous soul. "I work across six different institutions, four schools, a library, and the AUC Consortium," she says. "I have direct lines to all the provosts, the director of the library, and the AUC Consortium's executive director, and dotted lines to all four presidents. That creates an interesting dynamic. Normal people would probably have run for the hills."

Add It Up

Growing up in Evansville, Indiana, Washington never imagined going into mathematics or data science. In high school, she excelled in English, winning a city-wide writing contest. "I liked creative writing, painting pictures with words, I still do," she says.

But math started to work its wonders on her, too. She went to Spelman to study engineering, but upon discovering it was a five-year program, decided to

major in math. She hadn't planned on graduate study either, but her Spelman advisor, Jeffrey Ehme, urged her to continue her studies, and she came to UConn.

It was a tough time at first, she says. "Everyone asked me what country I was from, and I'd say, 'I'm from Indiana.'" While the master's and doctoral programs in mathematics had international students, she says, "I was the first U.S. Black American in the program."

She found support from Willena Kimpson Price, director of the African American Cultural Center. "She was a Spelman alum and super outgoing, and it was so nice to be received by her and the cultural center." She was encouraged, too, by professors McKenna and Yung-Sze Choi. When she became pregnant with her first child as she pursued her doctorate, she doubled up on teaching in the fall and "had my daughter on Christmas Eve." She asked McKenna if she could take her nursing daughter to classes in the spring. He said yes, and her daughter quickly became a fixture at lectures and seminars. "The joke was that a talk was good if it put the baby to sleep," says Washington.

"One can imagine the obstacles for being a new mother while being a mathematics doctoral student," says Choi. "Not only did she perform superbly in both

roles, but she was also the chairwoman of the Black Graduate Student Association and a graduate student senator. Maybe it was through these latter roles that she began to develop an interest in promoting under-represented voices in the field of science."

McKenna said she was so talented, the mathematics faculty vied to have her become their thesis student. "Mathematics is very much a spectrum of people, some who are very good at nitty-gritty details stuff, the sort of people who, if you asked them what day of the week the 13th of December fell on in 1571, they would be able to figure that out," he said. Others see the broader plan.

"Talitha very much fell into second category," he said. "She was good at the technicalities, but her strength was the big picture."

Multiplication

Washington's trajectory went through Duke University, where she did postdoctoral research, to the College of New Rochelle, the University of Evansville, Howard University, and the NSF. At the same time, she raised her three children (now all pursuing STEM studies), coached their sports teams, and continually encouraged young Black and Brown students to become involved in math and science.

The secrets to navigating her busy life: always seeking out support systems, taking power naps, and working out. "I'm a fitness fanatic," she says.

It was at Howard that she got involved in data science, led to it by her students. "They'd say, 'Dr. Washington, let's do data science, let's do programming, this is going to get me a job.'"

In her first year at the NSF, she developed the \$40 million STEM program for HSIs, creating programming across hundreds of research universities and

"Everyone asked me what country I was from, and I'd say, 'I'm from Indiana.'"

community colleges. Wondering how she would reach all of those colleges and all of those students, she says, "I began by listening."

Listening with that data-science, big-picture brain allowed her to build a program "around what people wanted, not what we wanted. When I listen, I'm translating what people are saying into programs and into initiatives. It's like my brain is interpreting what I'm hearing, and my job is to develop the kinds of programs, supports, and innovative spaces where students can thrive." Her team devised curricula, helped hire professors, and created data science clubs for students.

"She has done wonders for the mathematics community," says Choi.

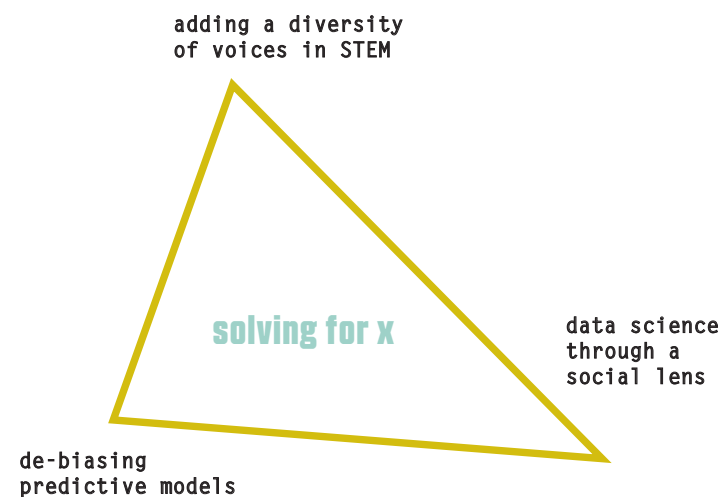
Washington's work has garnered many industry accolades, among them an NSF Women's History Maker award and a Howard University Outstanding Faculty award. She recently became the first person ever to be named both a 2021 Fellow of the American Mathematical Society (AMS) — one of just 46 Fellows from around the world — and a 2021 Fellow of the Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) in the same year. She is now the president-elect of AWM.

None of this surprised McKenna. "Indomitable is the word I'd use," he said. "You could see the joy she had in doing what she did. And she was just not intimidated by anything."

In making her a Fellow, AMS noted Washington's "decades of work using mathematics and science to enable research, foster collaboration among diverse groups, inspire interdisciplinary exploration, and empower women."

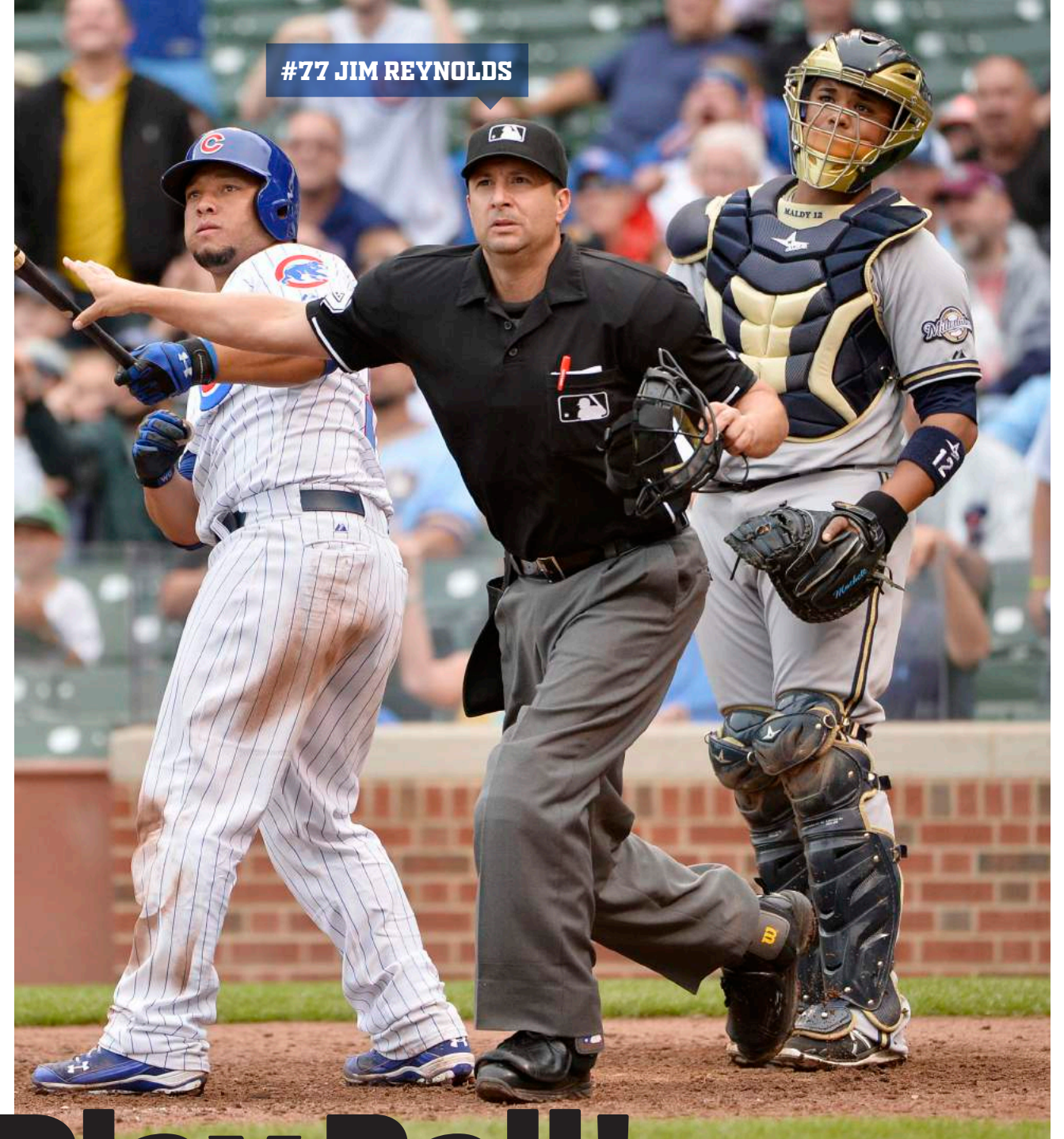
She says being the first person to be named a fellow in two esteemed mathematical societies was a huge honor.

But it's clear what matters most to Washington is the platform it gives her to usher more young Black and Brown people into fields where their voices matter. "It has been an honor to create a space where we can support the development of scholarly work to address these key issues," she says. "I'm very humbled by it." ☺





#58 DAN IASSOGNA



#77 JIM REYNOLDS

Play Ball!

From spitballs to spin rates, these two alums have stayed with every curve thrown at them in a combined four decades of umpiring Major League Baseball.

“The last three years our roles have changed,” says Jim Reynolds ’91 (CLAS). “The scrutiny with the pitch track system, the box, has added a lot of pressure. When Danny and I started, each umpire had their strike zone, and as long as they were consistent, everyone was happy.”

Reynolds has been umpiring in the major leagues for 22 years and Danny, aka Dan Iassogna ’91 (CLAS), for 21.

Each has two World Series to his credit. Lately the game’s different.

“I’ve got a guy out there throwing 97 miles an hour, trying to fool a batter. He fools the batter. I’ve got a catcher trying to catch it, trying to pull me to where it actually crosses the plate, while going through a box — and I’m the only guy that can’t see it,” says

By Jon Caroulis

Reynolds. It feels overwhelming at times but “our guys are really, really good at what they do. The ability of umpires right now is the best it has ever been.”

Another recent challenge is Major League Baseball’s crackdown on illegal substances — tasking umpires with banned substance inspections, which makes for some awkward encounters. Last season, the Oakland A’s Sergio Romo dropped his pants when Iassogna headed to the mound to inspect the baseball. Substance checks, spin rates, electronic strike zones, and instant replays are now status quo at the major- and minor-league levels.

“When Jimmy and I came up,” says Iassogna, “if you had a play that you wanted to see after the game, you asked the club to get the VCR tape and hopefully they taped the game, and you’d put that tape in, and you’d rewind it and it’s standard quality. You would say, it looks like I got it right or it looks like I got it wrong. Now everybody in the stands has an HD TV in their hand, and they’re watching everything, and in real time.”

Spring Training

It was the first week of classes in September of 1987, and a fire drill commenced at Tolland Hall on North Campus. Two Connecticut freshmen noticed each other wearing high school football jackets and realized they had played against each other.

Iassogna had been at St. Joseph High in Trumbull, and Reynolds went to South Catholic High in Hartford.

They discovered they both had played baseball at various levels and Iassogna, the son of a high school football referee, said he thought it would be cool to be an umpire. Reynolds agreed.

Their initial gigs came at the hands of longtime UConn baseball coach Andy Baylock, who had them practice the mechanics of making safe and out calls and taught them how to position themselves to make the right call (be perpendicular to the play to get the best view for a call on the bases, he said). Eventually, they earned one classroom credit and graduated from umping JV to varsity games.

“Coach Baylock considered his umpires part of the baseball program, and we were treated that way. Although the players were not always happy with our performance, they never took it past the ball field,” recalls Reynolds. “In fact, the best player at UConn at the time was Pete Walker, now the pitching coach for the Toronto Blue Jays, and I can remember several times where if guys were getting out of hand with the student umpires, he would actually shut it down.”

“I never had any negative interactions with any of the baseball players,” agrees Iassogna, adding, “I do remember officiating some intramural basketball games that got a little dicey!”

Baylock has their umpire jerseys framed on a wall in his house. “They were dependable as undergraduates, and they’re still that way. They’re very good at what they do,” he says. “I’m very proud of what they’ve done.”

The Minors

After graduation, Reynolds and Iassogna were roommates at the Jim Evans Academy of Professional Umpiring in Arizona where, after a 5-week, \$2,000 course, they were each assigned to work in the lower levels of the minor leagues. “We didn’t work together

“When you get hired by MLB it’s a feeling of utter relief,” says Iassogna. “When the World Series call comes, it’s pure joy.”

again until the big leagues — postseason during championship series in 2015 (see the photo on page 37) and 2020,” says Iassogna.

Like players, umpires progress through the minors, with top prospects getting promoted. And it requires sacrifice. There are only 76 major league umpire jobs, and umpers tend to work for decades. The primary way for someone working in the minors to get to “the show” is to wait for a retirement or resignation.

“There were probably 100 nights while I was in the minor leagues that I questioned the path I chose after graduation,” says Reynolds. “There’s little pay, a lot of long nights driving, and not a lot of support. I was living with my parents until the age of 29 and didn’t own a car. So yeah, there were a lot of times where I thought about doing something else. But I enjoy the challenge of the job, and once I started the journey, my goal was to get to the big leagues, so they were going to have to release me before I ever quit.”

Iassogna worked 12 years before reaching the majors full-time. “I spent almost five seasons at the A ball level. I was ready to pack it in at the end of the season because there weren’t supposed to be any more promotions. My wife Denise drove up from Atlanta to Maryland, and encouraged me to keep the faith. One day after she left I was promoted to AA. I spent 1 ½ years there, then a little over 1 ½ years in AAA, and then went to the big leagues.”

The Show

Reynolds was prepping for a game in Rochester, New York, on June 2, 1999, when he got a call from the American League supervisor of umpiring

informing him he’d be working major league games on a fill-in basis starting in two days, when the Atlanta Braves would take on the Boston Red Sox.

“Growing up in New England my family were Red Sox fans, and I grew up going to baseball games at Fenway Park. When I got the call to work my first big league game and found out it was going to be at Fenway, it made it even more special,” says Reynolds, who worked third base that game.

“I really had no impactful calls,” he says, “but just remember being amazed at how much quicker the major league game was than the minor league AAA game. It was also extra special because my whole family was able to attend and spend the weekend in Boston with me.” By late July, he was a full-time major-league umpire.

Iassogna also started as a fill-in umpire at third base during a Red Sox game — against Texas on Aug. 20, 1999. “I just remember it feeling like the

biggest stadium that I had ever worked,” he says. In 2004 he got the call that he’d be working in the majors full-time. “Like everyone that’s ever been hired, it was a mixture of pure happiness and unbelievable relief. Of course I called Jimmy.”

Unlike players, umpires have no home-stands, and are on the road most of the season, with a one-week vacation four times a year. When they make mistakes, it’s in front of thousands of fans and a television audience of millions.

“After almost 30 years of doing this job, they still eat me up. Actually they bother me more than ever before. In real time, I have to quickly move on, refocus on the job, but afterwards it’s always bad dreams and anxiety. Even after I dissect the play, I’m not very

sympathetic to myself,” says Iassogna.

Reynolds agrees. “Mistakes will affect me more than anyone else, I promise you.” After each game he watches video to see why he made the wrong call so “I won’t make that mistake again,” he says.

There’s a physical toll, too. Umpires do get hurt. Reynolds, who now lives in Arizona with his wife Deanna and son James, says he’s had eight concussions while umpiring in the major leagues. On Aug. 24 of last season, he was hit on his face mask by a foul ball in the second inning of a game between Houston and Kansas City. He felt okay at first, but in the fifth inning began to notice his vision was off. A trainer took him out of the game. He was out for the season and disappointed. “I’d like to think I’d have been asked to work in the postseason, but it was the right decision.”



Reynolds, left, and Iassogna, center, before Game 3 of the 2015 American League championship series in Toronto.

The Top

Both Iassogna and Reynolds have been named crew chiefs, giving them the final say in decisions such as stopping a game for bad weather or getting colleagues to debate a call or interpret a rule.

In 2012, Joe Torre, then head of field operations for MLB, told Iassogna he’d be umpiring in the World Series. “When you get hired by MLB it’s a feeling of utter relief,” says Iassogna.

#88 DAN IASSOGNA

Iassogna during Boston Red Sox vs. Minnesota Twins in Minneapolis May 7, 2017.

“When the World Series call comes it’s pure joy.”

“The series feels like an entire season compressed into 10 days. It’s intense, but everyone wants to be there more than anywhere else. The crew bonds together, roots for each other, and is entirely focused on every pitch,” he says. “The second World Series is probably more difficult because you know the level of concentration needed to excel. You’re more comfortable though with the peripheral aspects, like the crowded locker room, crowd intensity, media attention. The first time you’re wide-eyed and everything is new.”

When Reynolds got his first World Series in 2014, he admits to some nerves. He wondered, “Can I do my job on the biggest stage at the biggest time? Like in golf, would your swing hold up on Sunday at the Masters? It’s a tremendous honor, the culmination of everything.”

Umpiring at this level is extremely challenging, says Matt McKendry, MLB’s VP for Umpire Administration. “The expectation is perfection and umpires are evaluated on each pitch, play, and situation handled on and off the field. The job has evolved quickly in recent years as we have expanded our use of technology for strike zone tracking, instant replay, and other fan engagement efforts. Both Dan and Jim have performed well in adapting to this ever-growing role.”

“Danny and I understand the world we’re living in now as far as our profession,” says Reynolds. “We’ve made the adjustments the best we can, and we go out there and we still do the things that got us to the big leagues. We’ve also recognized that the game’s changed. And you have to get on board. If you’re not on board, then the game is gonna pass you by.” ☺



Recent School of Engineering grad Mihir Nene joined the elite club of "Jeopardy!" winners.

I'll Take Mihir Nene for \$27,000, Ken

"Mihir Nene from Rochester once lived across the hall from some of the greatest sports champions of all time," said interim "Jeopardy!" host Ken Jennings to introduce a contestant on a March episode. "Where was this?"

"That's right, I went to college at the University of Connecticut, which — as I'm sure many people know — has an excellent women's basketball team," Mihir Nene '20 (ENG) replied. "And they were also my neighbors my senior year."

"Were they good neighbors?" Jennings followed up. "Now's the time to reveal all the dirt."

"Oh, they were great neighbors. They worked so hard that you hardly saw them," Nene admitted. "But those were some women I looked up to."

"There we go . . ." Jennings said with a laugh. "You had that planned."

Another plan of Nene's: being on the show — ever since age 7. That year, he received a keychain listing notable people who shared his July 22 birthday, including former host Alex Trebek. Nene started watching the show then in his Fairfield, Connecticut, home, applying every year starting around age 10 for various iterations, including the now-defunct kids version and later the annual teen and college versions.

At UConn he claims, "I never missed a trivia event, whether in the Student Union or at Ted's."

After graduating with a major in mechanical engineering and a minor in computer science, he moved to upstate New York for an associate engineer job with utility company Avangrid. Then, shortly before Christmas last year, he received what "Jeopardy!" contestants know as The Call.

Except, in his case, it was more like The Text. A producer asked him if he had a minute to chat, to ensure the (continued on p. 41)

CLASS NOTES



➔ **John Natale '59 (CLAS)** and **Barbara Gustafson Natale '59 (CLAS)** wrote to say that they recently celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary at home in East Orleans, Massachusetts. The English majors met at UConn Hartford, transferred to Storrs, and after graduating, were married at Saint Thomas Aquinas Church on campus. They now have three children, nine grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren. John worked for the City of Hartford after being employed by Combustion Engineering and retired as a senior project manager in the Hartford Redevelopment Authority. Barbara, who went on to earn a master's in library science from Southern Connecticut State University,



➔ **Bob Bowen '70 MBA** published his third novel about America's favorite pastime. Bowen says "Stingray Field" tells the story of two helicopter pilots who carve a baseball diamond in the Vietnam jungle and their difficult transition back to civilian life. Finally back home in Connecticut, warrant officer Billy O'Hara, playing for a shot back to the College World Series, experiences an epiphany when he comes to realize you can leave Vietnam, but the 'Nam doesn't necessarily leave you. ➔ **Edwin Slade '70 CLAS** is making moves. He has completed his residency

retired as library director at Manchester Community College. They say they look back fondly on their UConn experience and all their many friendships.

in oral and maxillofacial surgery at UConn Health and was named board chair of the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care.



➔ **Thom Perkins '71 (SFA)**, whose work is in the permanent collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum, shared this write-up from a recent exhibit of his sculpture: "Perkins' sculptures reflect his reference to shapes, with an emphasis on drawn edges and the space between

objects. Early figurative pieces evolve into later conceptual constructivist shapes using intuitive imagery that seems to be part of the human genetic code without relying on duplicating nature. Several study drawings and two constructivist photographs from 1976 show the evolution of the work. For decades, he put his sculptural talent to use in the design and construction of Jackson, New Hampshire's cross-country ski trail system. To Perkins trails are just large earth sculptures. Now these recent pieces are a return to earlier concepts, which remained dormant in the intervening years. Perkins lives and works in Center Conway, New Hampshire. He enjoys summer on his sailboat on the coast of Maine and winter skiing in the mountains in New England." ➔ Congratulations to **Gerry DeRoche '72 (BUS), '80 MBA**, who was named chair of the board of trustees of Lasell University in Newton, Massachusetts. DeRoche, who had served as vice chair for five years, had a long and successful career in commercial and retail banking, holding several senior executive positions. He currently serves as CEO of NEADS, a nonprofit that provides service dogs to individuals with disabilities. ➔ **Susan Carroll '73 (CLAS), '75 MA, '81 Ph.D.** writes that she and her husband, **David '74 (CLAS), '77 MSW**, who hold an impressive five UConn degrees between them, have written a new book called "Statistics Made Simple for School Leaders." Together, Susan, a former faculty member in UConn's School of Allied Health, and David run Words & Numbers Research, a research and evaluation firm that provides strategic information to educational institutions. ➔ Talk about a prolific author: **Jeff Davidson '73 (BUS), '75 MBA** has just published his 68th book, "Simpler Living: 1,500



UConn Rugby circa 1973 and at a reunion in November 2021.

➔ More than 200 UConn rugby alumni and current players representing six decades gathered last November at the Tunxis Country Club in Farmington, Connecticut, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the UConn Rugby Football Club. Alumni ruggers from around the nation and as far away as Israel and Kenya came to reminisce and enjoy the camaraderie of friends and teammates from their playing days. The night of dinner and live music was topped off with toasts and speeches from Alumni Board president **Dave Cormier '86 (CLAS)** and UConn Men's Rugby coach **Bob Merola '75 (BUS)**. Since its founding in 1971, the club has boasted a number of All-Americans, some of whom, including **Tom Brewer '86 (CLAS)**, went on to play for the U.S. National Team.

The event was hosted by the UConn Rugby Football Club Alumni Association, which can be reached at ucrfa.alumni@gmail.com.

Ways to Declutter, Organize, Streamline, and Reclaim Your Space and Your Time!” So where does he store all those books?

➔ **Robert “Bob” Krakovich ’73 (BUS)** shares a life update. He has spent the past 20 years as chief financial officer for the Bridgeport Insulated Wire Company and lives in Oronoque Village, a 55-plus community in Stratford, Connecticut, where he serves on the board of directors. Krakovich, who is divorced, enjoys spending time with his two grandchildren. He also volunteers at a local Boy Scout camp, sings and produces local variety shows, cruises in the Caribbean, and is active in his church. ➔ **Donald Tremblay ’74 (BUS)**, managing

principal in the San Diego law firm of Tremblay Beck Law, APC, writes to say he’s been a trial attorney for 40-plus years handling mostly complex business litigation both nationally and internationally. In addition to managing his law firm where his eldest daughter, Katharine Tremblay Beck, is a principal and trial attorney, he is chief legal counsel, executive vp, and board member for the biopharmaceutical research company Intratus, of which he is a founding part owner. Intratus holds patents for ophthalmic therapy technology in more than 50 countries. ➔ **Gary Levi ’74 (CLAS)** reports that his story, “Dora’s Deathbed: First Movement,” was published in a recent issue of

The Write Launch online literary magazine.



➔ **David Fetterman ’76 (CLAS)** celebrated his award for Anthropologist of the Decade and Lifetime Achievement from the International Association of Top Professionals in Times Square, New York City, with his family.

➔ **William Fowler**, who attended UConn from 1974 to 1976, has a life update. After graduating from Monmouth University, he interned for U.S. Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin, then held several positions over the years, including spending seven years as a management consultant. Fowler, who has four children and seven grandchildren, lives in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, where he works part time as a sales associate with Red Wing Shoes. He published his first book of poetry, “I Am America,” in 2018 and is now working on his second, “Lieutenant Dan.” ➔ **Tom Morganti ’76 (CAHNR)**, a veterinarian for 40 years in Avon, Connecticut, recently published two works of science fiction, “The Ziyarat Heresy” and “Night Sky.” He is married and has two children, two wonderful grandkids, and a dog named Slick. ➔ **Bob Lorentson ’77 MS** recently published his first book, “Hold the Apocalypse — Pass Me a Scientist Please,” a collection of humorous, science-themed essays. ➔ **Mark A. DeMaio ’77 (CLAS)** is rockin’

it. DeMaio, who performs as Mark Anthony, signed with Iron Gate Records in Nashville as one of their newest recording artists. His first single, “Running Away,” was released on more than 80 platforms worldwide in October. ➔ Congratulations to dentist-turned-educator **Maureen (McSparran) Ruby ’77 (CLAS), ’78 MS, ’82 DMD, ’07 Ph.D.** She was just named the first endowed chair at Sacred Heart University, where she will help prepare educational leaders as the new Isabelle Farrington endowed chair of social, emotional, and academic leadership. This is just the latest highlight in Ruby’s exceptional career, which includes being named teacher of the year for North Branford Public Schools, serving as program coordinator of the graduate reading program at Eastern Connecticut State University, and becoming assistant superintendent of the Brookfield Public Schools. ➔ After a long and exciting career in medicine — first in family practice, then in the ER — **Rhema Sayers ’77 MD** retired and became a writer. Now, 10 years later, she has just published her first novel, “Wind out of Time,” on Amazon. ➔ Congratulations to **Vicki (Wollkind) Tesoro ’77 (CLAS)** who was overwhelmingly re-elected to her third term as First Selectman of Trumbull, Connecticut. ➔ **Louis Liro ’78 (CLAS)** reports that he has retired after 41 years in the oil industry. After graduating from UConn, he went on to earn a master’s in geology from the University of Chicago, then spent his career working in research and on exploration and development projects. He taught several courses on petroleum exploration methods, published 20 peer-reviewed papers, and spent his final career years as a global earth science training manager for Chevron. He and his (continued on p. 43)

Mihir Nene (cont)

call would be answered. “This might be it,” Nene recalls thinking, “but you don’t want to get your hopes up too much. Maybe there was just an issue with my application or something.” Instead it was “the best present I could have hoped for.”

A few weeks later on Jan. 19, Nene taped his first episode on the Sony Pictures lot in Culver City, California, just outside L.A. “It was a little weird on set because there was no studio audience at that time,” due to Covid-19 precautions during the worst weeks of the Omicron variant.

“So there was a particularly great sense of camaraderie between all the contestants — even though you’re about to try and crush them.”

Wearing a navy blue suit jacket and light blue shirt with no tie, Nene successfully answered clues on topics ranging from African geography to Greek gods. Nene cites those specific clues as two of the more interesting ways he learned his correct answers: He knew the geography answer from a map on the wall of his childhood bedroom, while the Greek god answer came from the Percy Jackson children’s book series.

Nonetheless, Nene stood in third place heading into the Final Jeopardy question with a still-impressive \$12,500 versus Boston e-commerce professional Caitlin Gillooly’s \$15,400 and New Jersey attorney and defending champion Margaret Chipowsky’s \$20,600.

It would all come down to the final category: Historic Nicknames. The clue: Napoleon’s troops gave him this nickname not to mock him but for showing the courage of an infantryman in battle. Nene was the only contestant to answer correctly: the Little Corporal, which he credits to reading a biography of Bonaparte a few years prior — for fun, not for class. He bet everything save one dollar — a risky move that paid off. Flush with winnings of \$24,999, he stormed into the next match with a target on his back.

Alas, Nene lost to San Diego app developer Tim McCaigue. The Final



Nene’s loss came on a triple stumper.

Jeopardy clue of that episode: The title of this poem comes from a 1920 book that refers to its possible “restoration to fruitfulness.” Answer: “The Waste Land” by T. S. Eliot. Didn’t know it? Don’t feel bad. All three contestants answered incorrectly, what “Jeopardy!” fans call a “triple stumper.”

Still, Nene earned a score of \$6,400 and second place, which means his actual consolation prize was \$2,000. (On “Jeopardy!” only the winner of each episode receives the actual dollar amount they appear to earn, while second and third place receive \$2,000 and \$1,000, no matter how high their apparent dollar earnings — as opposed to “Wheel of Fortune,” where all three contestants receive their apparent dollar earnings.)

Nene admits it was hard to keep the results of his show secret for the two months between taping and airing. But that made it all the more exciting to see his friends’ reactions at his watch party, held at a popular Rochester bar where he often plays Tuesday night trivia.

What does he plan to do with his \$26,999 two-episode total? “I don’t really know what I’ll do with most of it!” he admits. “I was hoping to travel right after graduation, backpacking in New Zealand, but then Covid hit. So I’ll take some of the money and do that.”

The Friday of his *UConn Magazine* interview, Nene was asked what he would be doing that night. Not missing a beat, he replied, “Watching the women’s Final Four game, of course.”

—JESSE RIFKIN ’14 (CLAS)

Try your hand at some of Nene’s questions at right; find answers on page 44.

Can you answer these questions Mihir got right on his winning “Jeopardy!” episode?

- 1. Category:** “G” as in Geography. **Clue:** This country is surrounded by Senegal.
- 2. Category:** Investing. **Clue:** Warren Buffett says most people should simply hold a fund that tracks the S&P 500, short for this index.
- 3. Category:** Ice cream flavors. **Clue:** Beginning and ending with the same letter, it’s [also] a term for someone from a big city on Italy’s west coast.
- 4. Category:** Football and football [as in “soccer”]. **Clue:** This Premier League system of sending the 3 bottom-finishers to a 2nd-tier league is like sending 3 MLB teams down to AAA.
- 5. Category:** Scientific initials. **Clue:** N.B., a great Dane.
- 6. Category:** Those darn Etruscans. **Clue:** A messenger and an intermediary between the gods and man, the Etruscan god, Turms, was equivalent to this Greek god.
- 7. Category:** National historic trails. **Clue:** The website for this trail that traces a 19th-century Cherokee route calls it “a journey of injustice.”
- 8. Category:** Characters named Alex. **Clue:** On this sitcom Ariel Winter was Alex, the smartest member of the Dunphys.
- 9. Category:** Silent letter starters. **Clue:** This type of “device” helps you remember something.



➔ **David Pear ’66 (PHAR)** donned one of his favorite Fasnacht costumes, a dragonfly, and played the drums for us in May. For 35 years now, he has made an annual trip to Basel, Switzerland, to participate in their festival of Fasnacht with a fife and drum group, or clique as it is known. Find more at s.uconn.edu/drummer.



TRAJECTORY

WHEN THE WHITE HOUSE CALLS

The Biden administration wasted no time tapping this alum

For Karen Dahl '99 (CLAS), lead architect of the Biden administration's ambitious Public Health AmeriCorps job-training initiative, the path to a presidential appointment began with a chance encounter one spring day during her senior year. A few weeks shy of graduation, Dahl was crossing campus and happened upon an informational table for AmeriCorps, the federal agency for volunteering and community service. A double English and French major who'd helped start

UConn's women's club soccer team, Dahl intended to go on to law school. But first she wanted to try living and working in Manhattan.

"Growing up in Danbury, I had always wanted to move to New York right after I graduated," she says. After talking to the AmeriCorps reps, Dahl took home an application — "the internet was a baby thing, we still used paper" — checked off education as her area of interest and New York as her preferred destination, and dropped it

in the mail. A round of interviews later, she was accepted into the program and assigned to Jumpstart, an AmeriCorps partner providing educational support to young children in underserved communities. She did everything from training college students in early childhood reading to creating partnerships with local businesses, Dahl says of her year of service.

Flash forward two decades to the fall of 2020. A senior administrator at the corporate training enterprise Guild Education with a master's degree from Harvard and years of nonprofit leadership experience, Dahl takes a phone call. It's the Biden transition team. Would she be interested in a position?

Make It Happen

The administration brought her in on day one as Senior Advisor for Covid-19 at AmeriCorps. On day two, President Biden signed an executive order to create a public health job corps. Dahl's task: Figure out how to make it all happen. Fast.

"We got on the phone with a lot of different agencies to try to imagine what the program would look like," she says. "What makes sense? How could this work? Very quickly we landed with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and started building a partnership."

Public Health AmeriCorps, a collaboration that leverages the CDC's expertise in public health and AmeriCorps' track record of job training, launched last May. It aims to recruit, train, and deploy new workers from coast to coast to support the country's chronically understaffed public health system. The program's twofold goal would be to provide immediate short-term relief in neglected communities while simultaneously opening pathways to meaningful careers in public health to a generation of workers. These recruits would not be doctors and health policy professionals but street-level service providers: vaccine clinic staffers, community outreach

Karen Dahl '99 (CLAS) speaking with AmeriCorps leaders outside New York City Hall in April.

specialists, communicable disease investigators, companions to isolated seniors, mental health advocates. For many trainees it would be a first professional experience.

The agency has recruited a first wave of nearly 3,000 members who soon will begin service with public health departments and private service agencies in vulnerable communities around the country. Their assignments will last from nine months to a year, during which time they will receive a living allowance while gaining marketable skills.

Home Base

Some 50 members of this initial cohort, Dahl notes, will be doing mental health training with the Connecticut-based nonprofit Health 360. "Covid-19 has exposed and exacerbated existing health inequities. We're very much focused on getting services into those communities that need them the most. On the workforce-development side, our goal is to expand the scope of what public health work can look like. We're providing national-level training, so everyone

who completes this program will get a foundation in public health. I'm really hopeful that this is the first step in what is possible for the future of public health."

A first step for a new kind of federal partnership. But for Dahl, the continuation of a journey that began years ago in Storrs. "There's a joke that once you are part of AmeriCorps, you can never leave," Dahl says. "But I never imagined when I stopped at that table it would lead to a presidential appointment." —KEVIN MARKEY



▶▶ Celebrating her exhibit of travel paintings at the Homer Babbidge Library is Elizabeth Pite '77 (CLAS) with, left, Lois Hessert Blawie '75 (SFA) and, right, Rebecca Earl '69 MA, '82 Ph.D.

wife, Kathy, live in Woodway, Texas, where both of their daughters are medical professionals. They spend their time now with their five grandchildren and volunteering.



▶▶ **Kudos to Susan Austin '80 ED**, who was named superintendent of schools for Groton, Connecticut. ▶▶ No stranger to politics, **Houston Putnam Lowry '80 MBA** was elected to the board of finance for the town of Avon, Connecticut, in November. He previously served on the town's board of education for 14 years, including as board chair. He is also an adjunct faculty member at UConn

School of Law. ▶▶ **Jane Dewey '81 (SFA)** received the 2021 Kentucky Governor's Award in the Arts in the Education category. Gov. Andy Beshear announced the nine recipients of the commonwealth's most prestigious arts award in recognition of their dedication to sharing Kentucky's rich arts history with its citizens.

▶▶ In January, **A. Andra Grava '81 (CLAS)** became president of the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors—Texas. Grava, an association member for more than 35 years, owns an insurance agency selling life and disability insurance in Allen, Texas.

▶▶ **Lauren Baratz-Logsted '83 (CLAS)** published her 41st book, "The Great Gatz," a romantic comedy she co-wrote with her daughter, Jackie Logsted.

▶▶ **Tom Connors '83 MS, '86 Ph.D.** shares a life update. He was named the 2022 president of the board of education in the Piscataway, New Jersey, Township. After earning his doctorate at UConn, he was named the Harold Spencer Schwenk Postdoctoral Fellow at the Connecticut Department of Health's laboratory bureau. He and his wife, **Abby Connors '83 MA**, then moved to New Jersey, where he accepted a position in the R&D division of Colgate-Palmolive. After a

30-year career, during which he generated 33 scientific publications and 41 patents of various consumer product formulations, he has retired. They live in Piscataway, where they have raised three children, Matt, Steve, and Shannon. ▶▶ **Richard Goodwin Sr. '83 MBA** recently published "Baseball Life Matters," which celebrates the game of baseball and the historic accomplishments of the 1967 New York State American Legion Baseball Championship team from Rochester, New York.

▶▶ **Donna Pearlman '84 (CLAS)** is starting a new venture. She joined American International Group, Inc. (AIG) as reinsurance operations lead. Her career move comes after running her own business, D.P. Consulting Co., for more than two decades

▶▶ Congrats to **Joseph Briody '86 (BUS), '95 MA, '96 Ph.D.**, who was appointed assistant vice president/executive director of UConn's Division of Student Affairs.

▶▶ Congrats to **Edelyn (Cintron) Bishop '88 (NUR)**, who completed her Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Program from the University of Tennessee and became board certified last July. ▶▶ **Andrew W. Bray '88 CLAS, '91 JD** is stepping up. He was elected to the national board of the Green Beret Foundation and

now serves as board secretary. The board provides Special Forces soldiers and their families with emergency and ongoing support. He served in the 7th, 11th, and 20th Special Forces groups on active and reserve duty.



▶▶ The Middlesex United Way honored retired Middletown, Connecticut, School Superintendent **Patricia Charles '90 6th Year** with its Community Service Award.

▶▶ That's the spirit: **Burt Osterweis '90 (ENG)** shares the news that he started a new absinthe company. He says that "knowledge acquired in a very special and unique UConn class, ITAL273 Humanism and Mysticism, set me on a path of mysticism — spending years in India — and helped to inspire" the label artwork for the product.

▶▶ **Benjamin Bielak '92 (CLAS)** sends word that he is on the executive team at iSpecimen, where he serves as chief information officer.

▶▶ **Tom Carroll '92 (CLAS), '00 JD** is moving up — and helping out. He was recently promoted to principal counsel at ESPN and was a guest instructor discussing (continued on p. 44)

employment law for UConn's Executive MBA program.

➔ Also making moves is **Todj Gozdeck '93 (BUS)**, who was named partner-in-charge of Transaction Advisory Services at Marcum LLP. ➔ Congrats times two to **Jamahl Hines '93 (CLAS), '14 6th Year**, assistant principal at Conard High School in West Hartford, Connecticut. He was named 2022 Assistant Principal of the Year and promoted to interim principal at Conard. ➔ **Rob Carolla '94 (CLAS)** made another career

move in the sports field. He's now director of industry relations at Learfield, a collegiate sports marketing company.

➔ Congrats to **Kerry A. Kelley '95 (CLAS), '01 MPA** on being named vice president of finance and administration and chief financial officer for Connecticut State Community College. Previously, she served as a section director in the governor's budget office.

➔ **Anne McAuley Lopez '96 (CLAS)** writes that she has published her first book,

"We Don't Get to Ring the Bell: My CML Story." In it, she writes about her battle with chronic myeloid leukemia (CML), a rare and incurable cancer she was diagnosed with just four months after getting married in 2016. Lopez, who runs a writing business based in Chandler, Arizona, says she has reconnected with the University in recent years. She sat on an alumni panel about careers in writing in the fall and partnered with economics professor **Natalia Smirnova '04 Ph.D.** to create video content for a writing course she is teaching. "I've loved getting back in touch with the University and helping students," she says. ➔ Kudos to **Nicholas Richard '96 (BUS)** on being promoted to director of advanced practices at Mandiant. ➔ Kudos to **Valerie Kiefer '98 MS, '19 DNP**, a nurse practitioner at UConn Student Health and Wellness, who was elected to the board of directors of the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care.

➔ **William "Bill" Pizzuto '99 Ph.D.** is getting a well-deserved break. The former director of UConn Waterbury retired this past February after 16 years in the post. Previously, he was associate vice provost for the UConn tri-campus program for Waterbury, Torrington, and West Hartford and was director of the Waterbury and Torrington campuses before the Torrington campus closed.



➔ Kudos to **Tom Tedesco '00 (BUS), '02 MA**, who was promoted to president and CEO of The Music People, a designer and manufacturer of the global brand On-Stage. He lives with his wife, **Becky '05 MSW**, and

JEOPARDY QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1: What is The Gambia?
- 2: What is Standard & Poor's?
- 3: What is Neapolitan?
- 4: What is relegation?
- 5: What is Niels Bohr?
- 6: What is Hermes?
- 7: What is the Trail of Tears?
- 8: What is "Modern Family"?
- 9: What is a mnemonic?

daughters, Makenna and Addison, in Glastonbury, Connecticut. ➔ Teaming up for the win: **Katherine (Robinson) Walas '01 (CLAS)** recently founded Indigo Specialty Underwriters with fellow alumnus **Steve Adam '86 (CLAS)**. Walas spent 18 years at AXA XL in financial lines, cyber underwriting, and operations roles, while Adam spent 30 years underwriting and leading teams in all facets of professional liability.

➔ **Jocelyn Tamborello-Noble '03 (ED), '04 MA, '09 6th Year** is on the rise. She was named assistant principal for Conard High School in West Hartford, Connecticut. ➔ Kudos to **Chris Finazzo '04 (CLAS)**, who joined SeaWorld Entertainment as chief commercial officer. Prior to joining the theme park and entertainment company, he was president of Burger King, overseeing marketing, operations, franchising, field operations, finance, and development for nearly 10,000 restaurants across the U.S., Canada, and Latin America. ➔ Three UConn graduates were among the largest ever class of lawyers promoted to partners at Day Pitney. Congratulations to **Lynn M. Fountain '04 JD**, who specializes in energy and utilities and previously served on the faculty at UConn School (continued on p. 46)



➔ "The Trail" by **Ethan Gallogly '87 (CLAS)** recently reached Amazon bestseller status. It explores the 211-mile John Muir Trail in the Sierra Nevada, along with its history and lore. In the novel, the UConn chemistry and biology major, now a professor of physical sciences at Santa Monica College, uses his 30-plus years as a

hiker and backpacking leader to demonstrate how nature helps us reconnect with ourselves.



ON CAMPUS

DAD AND DAUGHTER WALK THE GAMPEL STAGE — TOGETHER

"They say the best-laid plans are not planned at all," Kyle Muncy says, "and we didn't plan it. Not a stitch of it, I promise."

Kyle's daughter, Taylor Muncy, knew from the outset that she'd finish her MBA in 2022, but what she didn't know was that she'd end up graduating alongside her father.

"She had gotten a jump on me in terms of knowing that she was going to go into the program," says Kyle, who is UConn's long-serving director of brand partnerships and trademark management.

"For me, it was more just on a whim. I literally came in on New Year's Eve morning of 2019 and said, 'Jeez, I'm turning 50 next year, and it's 2020, and what am I doing with myself?'" he explains. "And I said, you know, why

don't I just apply for the program? So, I showed up in the morning with nothing on my to-do list, and by the afternoon I was like, 'I think I'm going to be in grad school.'"

Kyle enrolled in the Master of Science in Human Resources Management program because, despite his now 28-year career with the University, he had little work experience with human resources administration or, at the time, managing a staff.

"I've kind of done the business thing," he says. "But what I didn't have, and what I feel like I have a much better handle on now, is people management and leadership development and the different types of personnel skills."

For Taylor, a passion for human rights and a strong interest in corporate social responsibility that grew

during her time as an undergraduate led her to seek a master of business administration.

She enrolled in the general business track MBA program, taking five to six courses each semester to complete the program in two years. She was nervous initially, she says, because she'd only worked for a year at the time.

"That's not typical for an MBA — usually it's more mid-career," but, she says, "I felt like a lot of my experiences here at UConn — whether it was the work experience I had or just the classes, the clubs — were a lot more relevant to what we were talking about in the MBA courses than I would have expected."

For Dad's part, "I thought the master's program would be a little bit of a way to get a do-over. I had an undergraduate degree that I got — I don't know that I'd say I earned it. This one I've definitely earned, and so it's a big difference. There's no doubt." —JACLYN M. SEVERANCE

TOM'S TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. B, 2. A, 3. C, 4. D

of Law; **Andraya Pulaski Brunau '13 JD**, a litigator who specializes in intellectual property and technology; and **Justin M. Hannan '11 (BUS)**, who specializes in tax law. **➔ Nick LeFort '06 (CLAS)** shares a life update. Though he started out as an English major at UConn, he switched to engineering during his senior year when he began working for Thule. When his first daughter was born in 2013, he returned to his true passion and began writing a couple of outdoor gear blogs. He switched again in 2017 to become a marketing director, helping open the Kinsmen Brewing Company. Now LeFort is a content strategist at Julia Balfour in East Haddam, Connecticut, and is raising his two daughters in

a cottage in the woods where they've been planting lots of apple trees and blueberry bushes. **➔** Meanwhile, **Brandon Guishard '07 (BUS)** is senior director of marketing for the New York-based menswear brand Todd Snyder. **➔** Also on the rise is **Matt Quaranta '09 (ENG), '11 MS**, who was promoted to vice president of the structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing and environmental engineering divisions of Loureiro Engineering Associates in Plainville, Connecticut.



➔ Violet Lumani '10 MBA published her first novel, "Foretold," a supernatural tale of a high school girl who foresees the death of a neighbor and tries to stop it. Lumani, who earned a BA from Barnard College of Columbia University, lives in Connecticut with her husband, two children, and a pair

of chihuahuas. **➔** Congrats to attorney **Kelly F. O'Donnell '11 (CLAS)**, who was promoted to partner at the Pullman & Comley law firm in Bridgeport, Connecticut. **➔** Way to go! **Melanie Thomas '11 MA, '12 MA, '20 6th Year**, a third-grade teacher at Truman School in New Haven, Connecticut, was selected New Haven's 2021 Teacher of the Year. **➔** Welcome back to campus: **Will Aloia '12 (ED)** has taken a job as assistant director of athletics for UConn Compliance. He previously had a similar role at Seton Hall University. **➔ Taylor Kielpinski-Rogers '12 (ED)** is moving from the gridiron to the parquet floor. She has taken a job as vice president for communications for the Boston Celtics. She previously worked as communications director for the National Football League.



➔ Mac Cerullo '12 (BUS) and **Kristina (Simmons) Cerullo '12 (CAHNR)** welcomed a son, Anthony Michael Cerullo, in July and report that he is already a huge Husky fan. He arrived the same day that Mac was supposed to start his new job covering the Boston Red Sox for the *Eagle-Tribune* newspaper in North Andover, Massachusetts. Mac had covered UConn football and men's basketball for *The Daily Campus* while at UConn and has spent the last decade or so in sports journalism. Kristina is now a marketing lead with SmartPak Equine. **➔ Justin Michaud**



➔ Alex Molina '10 (CLAS) was a Husky football team walk-on who ended up playing four seasons here and heading to Denmark after graduation for a couple semi-professional seasons. Upon returning home, he tells us he made a career shift into acting, received an MFA from Harvard's theater program, moved to New York City and worked in regional and off-Broadway productions of musicals. Midway through the pandemic he took a road trip to L.A., and decided to stay. He has starred in two independent feature films, one of which, "DASH," he is producing. The film, he says, is "a feature-length drama/thriller shot entirely in one continuous take. No doctored shots, no hidden cuts, shot while driving the untamed streets of Hollywood at night. This film is a true one-take, something that has only been successfully completed a few times in the world."

'12 (BUS), '14 MA added a new career move to his résumé. He was hired as a math teacher for Mercy High School in Middletown, Connecticut, having previously worked at Sacred Heart High School in Waterbury, Connecticut. **➔ Elizabeth M. DeVitto '14 (ED), '15 MA** published a children's book, "Safe Spot," designed to help children understand emotions. **➔ Zach Townsend '14 MPS** has been promoted to vice (continued on p. 48)



➔ Former Husky **Carla Berube '97 (CLAS)** led Princeton into the NCAA Tournament Round of 32, where her team lost a one-point game to a 3rd-ranked Indiana that was then knocked out by UConn. Sociology major Berube played for UConn's first national title team in 1995 and was an assistant coach at Providence College and head coach at Tufts University before heading to Princeton in 2019. Berube's 11th-ranked Tigers knocked off 6th-ranked Kentucky in the Round of 64 and went 14-0 in the Ivy League this season.

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Tom's Trivia Mark Brand

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president of human resources at Verified First, a background screening company. He also is an adjunct professor of management at Boise State University, where he teaches a human resources and training course to seniors. He and his wife adopted a dog from the same breeder who raised Jonathan XIV. "We saw that his parents were having another litter a year after he was born, so we got one of his brothers!" he says. ➔ **Drew Hillier '15 JD** is making moves. He joined Morrison & Foerster in San Diego, California, where his intellectual property practice focuses on patent litigation, with an emphasis on the pharmaceutical, biologic drug, diagnostic equipment, and medical device sectors. He says he looks forward to warmly welcoming any UConn alumni who find themselves in San Diego. ➔ Congrats to **Zachary Smith '15 (CAHNR)**, who received his MPA from George Washington University in May 2021 and now works for FEMA's Office of Response and Recovery in Washington, D.C. ➔ **Wura Olusekun '16 MS** scored a career goal. She was hired by Major League Soccer as a senior coordinator in New York City, New York, where she will be involved in community engagement and outreach. ➔ Kudos to **Charles Macaulay '17 MS, '21 Ph.D.**, who is an assistant professor in the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. ➔ **Jackie Millisits '18 (ED, CLAS)** reports that she is now a media strategist at Fandom in New York City, New York, having previously worked at World Wrestling Entertainment.

➔ **Veronica Schorr '19 (CLAS)** writes in that she has published a debut poetry chapbook, "Conscious Blue." ➔ Former UConn women's basketball player **Batouly Camara '19 (ED), '20 MS** continues to do amazing things off

the court as CEO of Women and Kids Empowerment (WAKE). In the past year, WAKE has built two basketball courts, launched six full scholarships, held three basketball camps, and built a water pump in a village that did not have access to clean drinking water — all in Guinea, her family's ancestral home. ➔ **Justin Pedneault '19 (NUR)** reports that 2021 was a great year for him. "Outside of working as an ICU nurse amidst the Covid pandemic, I was extremely blessed to gain some new titles. I am engaged to the love of my life, Ashley Durkin, and now the happy father of our little girl, Emily Charlotte. I also graduated paramedic school as I continue working towards my care goal as a Flight Nurse. I can't wait to see what 2022 brings for me and our new family!" Neither can we, Justin. ➔ **Kayla (Kay) Wong '19 MA** is making an impact. She is the Pride Center Coordinator at San Diego State University in San Diego, California, having most recently worked as a social worker for the Aurora Behavioral Health System.



➔ Congratulations to **Sam Marshall '16 (BUS), MS** and **Olivia Schipani '17 (CAHNR)** who tied the knot on the UConn Avery Point campus in the fall of 2021 before many friends and family members who are fellow Huskies.

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➔ To submit a Class Note send an email: alumni-news@uconnalumni.com or write:

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Submissions may be edited for clarity and/or length.



Peter Morenus

JOB ENVY

Bright Lights, Music City

"I'm with the band" doesn't just work for groupies and roadies — it gets you past the bouncer if you're the band's lawyer, too. So knows Nashville entertainment lawyer **Ricky Hernandez '12 (BUS)**.

Back when Hernandez was a law clerk, he recalls, "our firm did some work for an amazing band called Loving Mary, made up of a diverse group of singer-songwriters. I had always wanted to see them play." One of his partners found out that the band was playing downtown at the Wild Horse Saloon and they went. "Loving Mary had opened for Steven Tyler when he was on tour, and occasionally, he fronted the band. This was one of those nights! It was a great show — a mix of Aerosmith and Loving Mary originals that was otherworldly, and to top it off, we got to go backstage to say hi to the band and Steven. It was a surreal experience, but it's emblematic of the types of nights that we get to experience all of the time outside of the office."

Hernandez knows you won't believe him, but he says he finds the in-office work equally entertaining. His latest job is vp of business and legal affairs at Concord, which represents artists from James Taylor to John Coltrane to Oscar Hammerstein.

"They've got a publishing branch, a recorded music branch, and a theatricals branch. They've done a lot through acquisitions in the past five years, and they are growing rapidly." It's crazy how every month, every week, in the short time that I've been here, I've been pivoting and trying to think of new ways to do things or creative ways to structure things. It's fun. It keeps it fresh." —PETER NELSON

➔ What UConn band was Hernandez's ticket to Nashville? Find that and more at s.uconn.edu/nashville.

TOM'S TRIVIA

CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO TOM'S TRIVIA!

Go to magazine.uconn.edu or p. 46 to see if you know as much as King of UConn Trivia Tom Breen '00 (CLAS).

- 1. Life got a lot easier for students here starting in the fall of 1994, thanks to the arrival of what?**

A: Free bus service to Willimantic
B: Touch-tone telephone registration for classes
C: Dial-up internet service in the computer labs
D: Late-night food delivery to residence halls

- 2. The common hackberry tree on the northeast corner of Storrs Hall was planted in 1916 and dedicated four years later to the memory of BT Avery. Who was BT Avery?**

A: An alum who died while serving in World War I
B: The founder of the History Department
C: The first graduate to later become a faculty member at UConn
D: A Hartford businessman who donated the bricks that built Storrs Hall

- 3. The 1963–64 edition of the “Coed Code,” an official handbook for women at UConn, prohibited women from wearing long pants in classrooms and other common areas, except under what circumstance?**

A: The annual Sadie Hawkins dance
B: Final exams
C: Extremely cold weather
D: Utility outages



- 4. Which of these is *not* the name of a UConn-branded rhododendron developed by horticulture professor Mark Brand?**

A: Buzzer Beater
B: March Madness
C: Slam Dunk
D: Double Dribble