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From the Hill

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Intercollegiate Sports and the Athletic Ideal

William D. Adams, President

This year the Colby C Club is celebrating its 100th anniversary. It's a remarkable milestone for any organization, but it is especially meaningful in light of the depth and importance of the history of athletics at Colby.

Our athletic programs had humble origins. In their earliest days, teams were supported entirely by those who played on them. Students recruited and paid coaches, devised competition schedules and practiced when and where they could. The first intercollegiate contest in which Colby participated was a croquet match versus Bowdoin, and no one bothered to record the score.

The College now supports 32 varsity teams and nearly a dozen club teams. The Colby-Bowdoin football rivalry, dating back to 1892, is the third oldest in Division III. Among proud firsts, Colby (thanks to the persistence of students) was one of the first colleges to organize a varsity women's ice hockey team. Last year, women's crew became the first NCAA champion team in College history, adding to an impressive number of individual championships earned over the years.

As proud as we are of the competitive accomplishments of our students, the important thing to remember is that Colby supports its teams not primarily because they bring luster to the College, enjoyment to fans and pride to alumni/ae, though they do, and all of these things are good. We do it because we want to create opportunities for students to experience the educational outcomes that athletics almost uniquely provide.

Participation in athletics fosters mental and physical discipline and toughness, experiences of teamwork and close community provided by common challenges, a sense of fair play, the capacity to persevere and succeed in conditions of extraordinary pressure and challenge (physical, mental and emotional) and the knowledge of a particular kind of excellence. Athletics also provide important opportunities for creating balance in the context of academic life. And they create the same kinds of close student-faculty interaction that our teaching faculty members prize.

In these ways, athletics at Colby embody the broader mission and guiding tenets of the undergraduate liberal arts curriculum. Across the educational program, we have been and will remain a student-centered institution. Teaching is our first duty, and we are committed to making certain our students are developing in the ways we have identified as crucial to the whole person. These ways include, prominently, the notions of intellectual breadth and balance. Against the grain of much of contemporary life, our mission continues to insist on broad exposure

to the principal forms of human understanding and to the development of fundamental intellectual capacities that we believe form the basis for a creative and engaged life in the world beyond Colby.

Within that context, some aspects of the recent evolution of intercollegiate athletics and the athletic culture of the country are worrisome.

We know, for instance, that the meaning and standards of athletic excellence have changed hugely over the past several decades. These changes are in great measure the result of the specialization that is now endemic to athletics generally. Young people concentrate more and more on single sports and increasingly on single skill sets within particular sports. At the same time, and not surprisingly, coaching also has become more specialized, both following and leading the evolution of sports and talents.

The results at Colby and beyond are several. Athletes tend to be more focused on individual sports than ever before, and the time commitments are more demanding. It is increasingly uncommon for coaches to teach multiple sports with comparable confidence, ease or interest. Multiple head-coaching assignments have declined steadily at Colby and across the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC), and there is pressure to follow the Division I single-sport coaching model.

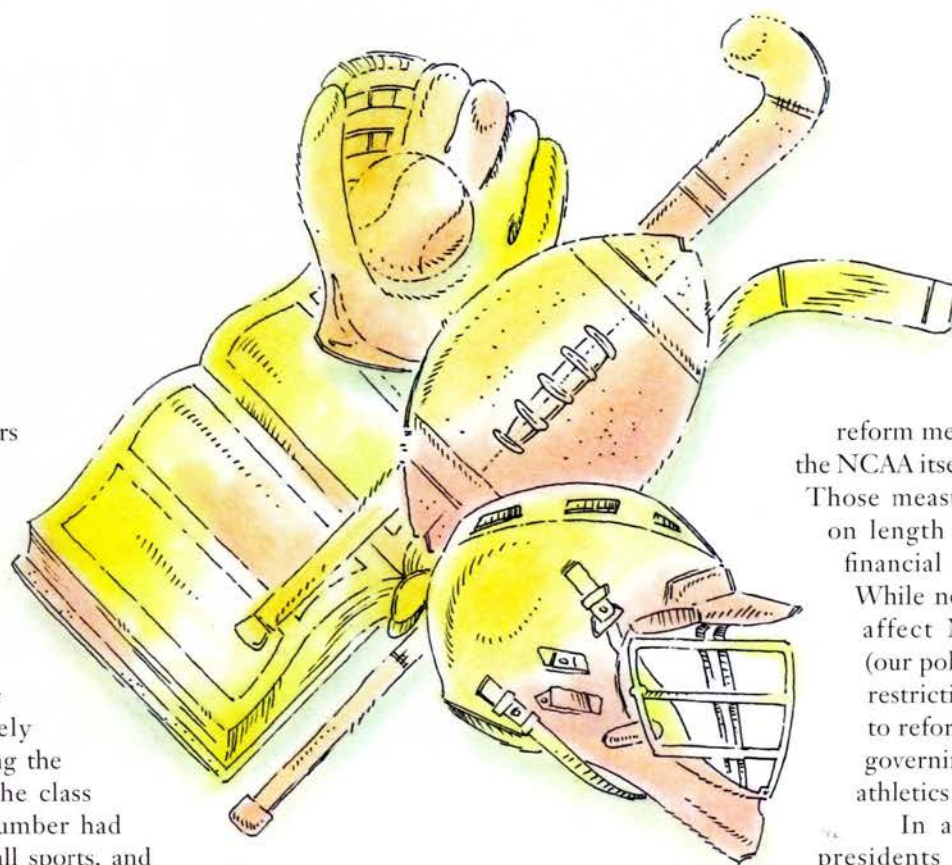
A second important national development is the dramatically increased scope and intensity of competition. At the collegiate level, the upward pressures on season length and on non-traditional season practice opportunities have been intense.

In this regard, few things compare in impact to the growth of the importance of the NCAA championships on the aspirations of players and coaches alike. The NESCAC did not permit NCAA post-season team play until 1993. In the short time since that decision, success at this ultimate level has become an important measure of programmatic quality and achievement. The size and complexity of Division III—more than 400 institutions—make this competitive aspiration particularly challenging.

What's wrong with specialization and escalating competitive intensity? The answers point back to the athletic ideal in a liberal arts setting and forward to unsettling trends that seem to conflict with that ideal. Consider the following:

Recruitment: Competitive success in athletics at Colby and in NESCAC is requiring intense and specialized forms of recruiting. The associated pressures on coaches and admission officers are significant. Coaches spend more and more time recruiting, and there is increasing

pressure on admission officers to meet coaches' precise needs. The statistics are compelling. Among members of the class that entered Colby in 1993, approximately 31 percent of those who participated in our athletic programs were actively recruited by coaches during the admission process. For the class entering in 2001, that number had grown to 55 percent for all sports, and to fully 70 percent in "high-profile" sports (football, ice hockey and basketball). The "walk-on"—a phenomenon integral to the history of the athletic ideal and its sense of opportunity and learning—is becoming a thing of the past.



The Athletic/Academic Divide: Faculty and coaches alike are reporting a widening divide between their respective spheres of activity. The pressures of coaching in the recruitment-intensive contemporary atmosphere have limited the participation of coaching staff in campus-wide activities, including service on faculty and College committees. And faculty, feeling their own sorts of pressures, are less and less understanding of the athletic program and its educational values and outcomes.

Performance: In 2002-03, Colby athletes earned 38 national, regional and NESCAC academic honors, and for three years running the men's soccer squad has earned the National Soccer Coaches Association Team Academic Award. But a recent study of NESCAC and the Ivy League, *Reclaiming the Game*, by William Bowen and Sarah Levin, demonstrated academic "underperformance" among some student-athletes in those conferences. From that study and a replication of it at Colby, we learned that we are no exception. Underperformance is a measure of the difference between predicted and actual performance in the classroom. We are not sure yet how to explain this phenomenon, but the studies raise concerns about time commitments and other factors that may be affecting the academic performance of some student-athletes.

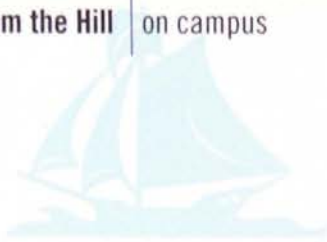
There are encouraging signs of national interest in dealing with specialization and escalating competitive pressures, including

reform measures being proposed by the NCAA itself at the Division III level. Those measures include restrictions on length of season, red-shirting, financial aid and other measures. While none of these changes will affect NESCAC dramatically (our policies already are the most restrictive in the nation), the call to reform being made within the governing body of intercollegiate athletics is significant.

In addition, the NESCAC presidents have been involved for three years in constructive conversations about how best to deal with several issues at the conference level, including common approaches to recruiting and ways of assessing learning outcomes across the conference. Mutual commitment to addressing these issues within the NESCAC will be essential to institutional competitiveness (a key ingredient in the educational process) in the context of a level playing field within the conference.

At Colby we are actively pursuing ways of ensuring that all our student-athletes achieve academic success in the ways that they and we expect and deserve. In the spring semester of 2003, I appointed the Task Force on Athletic Recruiting and Academic Performance, which made several recommendations about how we might better serve our student-athletes. Among other things the task force recommended ways in which prospective student-athletes can be better acquainted with Colby's academic programs, processes which would involve coaches more closely in the monitoring of academic performance, and ways in which student team leaders can support athletes in their academic efforts. We also are encouraging faculty to take a more active role and interest in athletics and to view that program as a fundamental dimension of the educational program for many of our students.

Our touchstone in all these efforts should be the athletic ideal that is so strongly part of Colby's history and that, more generally, is unique in higher education in this country. The goal is not to de-emphasize athletics but to revitalize the educational vision and commitments that have inspired us to provide generations of Colby students with challenging competitive opportunities that nurture their fullest intellectual development.



Green Power

Colby taps geothermal energy, clean power to meet environmental responsibilities

It takes a lot of electricity (approximately 14 million kilowatt hours per year) to run Colby College, with its 1,800 students, 24-7 computer labs and more than 60 buildings. But, as of October, no fossil fuels were being burned to generate the electrical power that Colby purchases to keep lights burning and desktops humming. Half of the electricity now comes from Maine hydropower and the other half from Maine biomass, such as wood chips and sawdust.

Constellation NewEnergy, working through the not-for-profit energy-purchasing consortium Maine PowerOptions, is providing Colby electricity produced by Maine generators and businesses. The College had been seeking an environmental power package for several years and signed on with Constellation NewEnergy this fall because its package was the right fit, says Patricia Murphy, director of the Physical Plant Department (PPD). "We'd been offered other packages before," said Murphy, "but none of them seemed to meet our needs as well as this one." Murphy says the Constellation NewEnergy package was chosen because it was completely "green," competitively priced and 100 percent from Maine. "We felt that the support for the Maine economy was an important factor."

Previously, 30 percent of the energy that Colby purchased came from hydropower and 70 percent from coal-burning plants. With the new electricity package, nitrogen oxide emissions, which cause smog, will be reduced 41 percent and sulfur dioxide emissions, which cause acid rain, will be reduced 98 percent. Hydropower produces no carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, which cause global warming. Biomass is considered CO₂ neutral because CO₂ released during biomass combustion is equal to the CO₂ absorbed by plants during their growth cycle, and plants produce CO₂ whether they are burned or allowed to rot.

Tom Tietenberg, Mitchell Family Profes-

sor of Economics and an international expert on environmental economics, emissions and climate change, says the College's commitment to purchase only electricity generated from renewable, more environmentally friendly sources already has had a stimulating effect on the market for green power choices. "An important part was that Colby was actively seeking these commitments and thereby helping to make the market even before suppliers had surfaced," said Tietenberg. "Colby's role is really very important in making sure that other institutions now have green power choices."

Green power is just the latest initiative in a campaign at Colby to use environmentally friendly energy sources, which Tietenberg says has recently "taken on renewed vigor." Since 1999 Colby's own steam plant has provided approximately 12 percent of the College's annual electricity through co-generation—an innovative system in which steam for heating campus buildings spins a turbine to produce kilowatts on its way through the Colby system. Co-generation produces an average of 1.7 million kilowatt hours of electricity annually, saving Colby more than \$150,000 in power purchases each year.

And in the same month that the power contract was signed, three geothermal wells were drilled to provide heating and cooling for a new 27,000-square-foot alumni center to be built on campus beginning next spring. Colby Green Project Manager Steve Campbell (PPD) says geothermal heating and cooling is relatively new, so the public doesn't have much



understanding of it.

According to Campbell, it took about four days to drill each of the six-inch-wide, 1,500-foot-deep wells and another half day just to pull the drill casings out. Geothermal wells work for both heating and cooling because the water temperature at 1,500 feet below the ground stays consistently in the middle to upper 50s. When that water is pumped up into the building in the summer it is cool compared to ambient air temperatures and it helps cool the building; in winter the water is relatively warm and heats the building as its warmth is transferred to the liquid in the building's heating and cooling systems.

Tietenberg, who has conducted climate change research with the United Nations for more than a decade, says it is important for institutions like Colby to lead by example in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Reduction will not only decrease environmental degradation but also will help to foster national security by reducing dependence on imported fuels. Being a leader in this area has other benefits for a college, Tietenberg says. "An increasingly large number of prospective students are using environmental leadership as an important criterion in their selection of colleges to attend," he said.

This fall Colby became a Green Power Partner with the U.S. Environmental Protec-

Lovejoy Award Recipients Use Press to Free Innocents from Death Row

Steve Mills and Maurice Possley navigate between different versions of reality.

One world they know is official and on the record, where criminals confess to their crimes, justice is blind but fair, and society is comfortable with punishments that are sometimes harsh in the extreme.

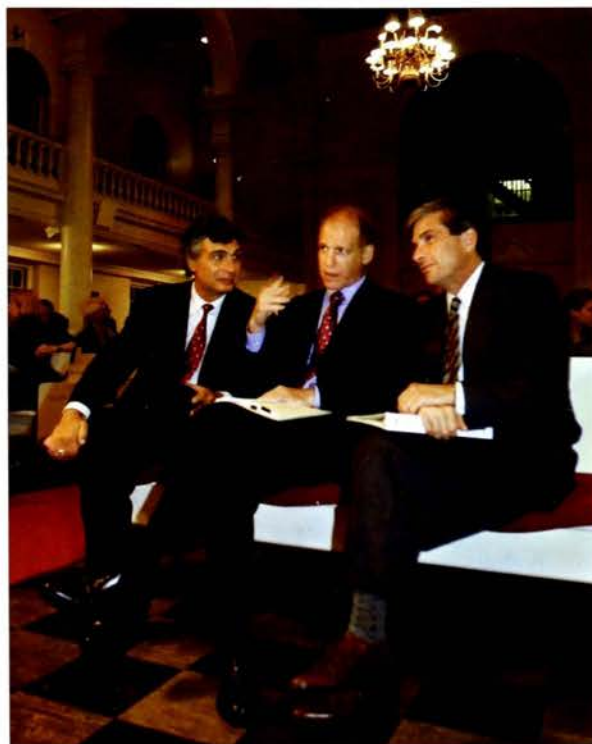
The other reality they discovered is harder to pin down. It lurks in claims of innocence by convicted and often despised murderers and rapists and in alibis already rejected by courts. When it exists, this version of the truth is at the far end of an inverted spyglass, and few have the acuity to sense it, the tools and determination necessary to pursue it or the requisite compassion to seek it.

Mills and Possley, reporters for *The Chicago Tribune*, were honored in October with the 2003 Elijah Parish Lovejoy journalism award for their dogged pursuit of the sometimes-elusive truth. They received Colby's highest honors—the award and honorary doctor of laws degrees—for daring to listen to men whose deaths, according to the state of Illinois, would improve society.

Possley and Mills cover the criminal justice system for the *Tribune*. As a team they have uncovered evidence so compelling that Illinois has released convicts from death row after being convinced that innocents had been wrongly convicted. When former Illinois Governor George Ryan announced a moratorium on executions, he credited Mills and Possley's work with helping to change his thinking. They proved that the system is fallible, and they showed that reforms and safeguards are well advised if the state is to resume capital punishment.

In their talk in Lorimer Chapel on October 15, Possley and Mills inspired a large audience with stories like that of Aaron Patterson, an inmate convicted of the murder of an elderly couple in South Chicago. Patterson told the reporters that, though he had done some bad things in his life, he had not stabbed Vincent and Rafeala Sanchez—a crime for which he was sentenced to die. He told them he was beaten by police and suffocated with a typewriter cover, tortured to confess to a crime he hadn't committed. Their investigation revealed that there was virtually no evidence in his case and that the forced confession along with testimony from a teenaged girl—testimony she told them was false—were the reasons Patterson was condemned to execution.

They told of Daniel Taylor, a 17-year-old serving a life sentence for a different double murder. Again a forced confession led to his



Chicago Tribune reporters Maurice Possley, left, and Steve Mills, center, speak with President William D. Adams in Lorimer Chapel before the Lovejoy Convocation in October.

conviction, despite the fact that there was evidence—official Illinois court records—showing Taylor was locked up in police custody when the murders occurred.

"We followed the Aaron Patterson trail, and we followed the trail of Daniel Taylor and so many other trails to give voice to those who have no voice, to help them to expose the myths of the criminal justice system and, if we are lucky, to correct an injustice, to restore freedom to someone who has had freedom taken away," Mills said.

Possley described another case they worked on in which DNA provided the proof of innocence for four wrongfully convicted men, one a 14-year-old with an IQ of 70 who had signed a paper because he thought by cooperating he would get to go home. "The emergence of DNA, the most phenomenal investigative tool in criminal justice, is providing our country with an incredible learning moment," Possley said. In Illinois alone, 135 convicts have been exonerated and released from prison, 10 percent of them from death row.

"The true value of DNA is what it is telling us about the criminal justice system as a whole," Possley said. "DNA has proven positively—with an exactitude heretofore unknown in criminal justice—that eyewitnesses make mistakes or are steered by police to pick out the wrong assailants, that jailhouse snitches lie, that laboratory scientists are negligent or commit fraud, that police lie and that men and women do confess to crimes they did not commit."

Daniel Taylor remained in prison as the pair received the Lovejoy Award. Though there was no DNA evidence in Taylor's case, "there is no doubt in our minds that he is innocent . . . but authorities so far have refused to agree," Mills said.

Neither was there DNA in the case of Aaron Patterson. But describing the rewards of their work, Mills related the experience of working in the *Tribune* newsroom late on the night that Patterson was released. After a stop for dinner, before he even went home, Patterson came into the newsroom to shake hands and say, "Thank you for saving my life."

"The power of that is unforgettable," Mills said. "Aaron Patterson was supposed to die by a lethal injection. And here he was, holding a Starbucks coffee, no less, and standing in our newsroom." —*Stephen Collins '74*

Visit www.colby.edu/lovejoy/ for the complete text of the Lovejoy Award acceptance speeches by Steve Mills and Maurice Possley.

tion Agency, which recognized the College's commitment to cleaner, renewable and reliable alternatives to conventional electricity generation. The College also is a supporting organization of Maine Green Power Connec-

tion, a network of businesses, organizations and residents working to create a viable market for greener electric power in Maine.

"Educational institutions have always been agents of change in part because effective

change requires new information," Tietenberg said. "Changing the way we operate will be necessary if we are to prevent altering our planet in ways that we can now only dimly perceive." —*Alicia Nemiccolo MacLeay '97*

"Her death has touched this community in ways that are still unfolding."

FATHER PHILIP TRACY, Catholic chaplain, in remarks at a memorial service for **DAWN ROSSIGNOL '04**, held November 8.

"If there was a military draft in this country and we were at war, young people would read the newspapers. Trust me."

MATT STORIN, editor emeritus of The Boston Globe, at the Goldfarb Center symposium on journalism.

"I'm going to use one of those clichés: It is like ticket to life."

ANDRIY AVRAMENKO '04, a Davis-United World College Scholar from Ukraine, speaking at a dinner with Shelby and Gail Davis about what the four-year scholarship has meant to him and his fellow Davis-UWC Scholars.

"Sunday is not a day off. Sunday is not Sunday anymore. People don't have time for a Sunday paper."

REX RHOADES, executive editor of the Lewiston Sun Journal, speaking on "Journalists and their Communities," at a symposium on journalism offered by the Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement in conjunction with the Elijah Parish Lovejoy convocation, October 15.

"If it weren't for the government or the air, Beijing would be a nice place to live."

ERIK ECKHOLM, former New York Times Beijing bureau chief, speaking in the Lovejoy Building on the anniversary of Elijah Parish Lovejoy's death (November 7) about press freedom and the role of the foreign press in contemporary China.

"It's ten degrees colder in Minneapolis this weekend. I'm in good shape."

Vice President for College Relations **RICHARD AMMONS**, formerly vice president at Macalester College, listening to complaints about the first blast of winter a week after his arrival at Colby.

"Incoming" . . . "The rounds are dangerously close."

President **BRO ADAMS** and Dean of Admissions **PARKER BEVERAGE** (one Vietnam veteran to another) in December, after yet another dynamite blast on the Colby Green construction.

"Next to an uppity eighth grader, they're a piece of cake."

Sunrise Professor of Physics **ROBERT BLUHM**, in a talk to trustees, contrasting his experiences teaching in a New York City middle school with teaching physics to Colby pre-med students.

Race-Oriented Events Raise Awareness and Objections

A week of events aimed at raising awareness of race and racism did just that—and also raised objections on campus from some students that slogans on banners and campus sidewalks were offensive and insulting.

Racial Awareness Week, planned by Students Organized Against Racism (SOAR) and the Pugh Cultural Board in November, included a well-attended panel discussion on "microaggressions," the term used to describe sometimes unintentional but still hurtful slights directed at students of color. Events also included a film, a dinner discussion and a coffee-hour forum. But messages displayed in sidewalk chalking and on banners were the most controversial.

Among the slogans on banners was "You only got in 'cuz you're white," a reversal of a comment students of color say they hear from white students. Chalked messages included profanity and racial epithets aimed at raising awareness of racist attitudes and intended to be a provocative and ironic way of getting the attention of the campus community.

"The problem was, when you have a poster or some banners [that say] 'Come to this,' people can say, 'Whatever.' Or, 'That's for those kids. That doesn't affect me. I've got practice. I've got work to do,'" said Chelsea Downs '06, a SOAR board member. The plan was to find

ways to get students' attention, Downs said; to "hit 'em and make them literally stop in their tracks, look, read, comprehend and think."

The messages sparked immediate and heated debate, including postings on the Digest of Civil Discourse, an e-mail digest where students exchange ideas. Some students supported the Racial Awareness Week campaign; others decried the use of profanity, epithets and the general tone of the messages.

"The slogans scrawled all over our campus sound much more like war cries than ideas or facts intended to facilitate productive discussion," one student wrote. "If you want a civilized discussion you should treat the people on the 'other side' like rational beings, otherwise they likely won't respond in a rational way and/or will assume that you are too irrational to participate in discussion."

While some students were indignant, others urged their peers to recognize the broader purpose of the slogans. "None of them was personal, none of them was serious," one student wrote. "Look at the meaning instead. Just put yourself in somebody else's shoes. That's the whole philosophy. Nobody accused you of getting into Colby because you are white. But how would you feel if somebody actually thought so and said it in your face?"

SOAR board member Antonio Mendez '06,

one of the event organizers, said he e-mailed students who had posted messages. He congratulated some and asked others to come to events and enter into a face-to-face discussion of issues related to race. Mendez said he hoped more students would find ways to talk about the issues rather than ignore them or tune out of the discussion. "If anything, it's the apathy that hurts," he said.

President William Adams and Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students Janice Kassman both weighed in with messages to students urging civility and constructive dialogue.

"Although the College does not prohibit the use of profane expletives or the right of students to express themselves, it is difficult to see how such language fosters meaningful dialogue," Kassman wrote in an e-mail to the Colby community.

"Not walking away from the conversation is an expression of belief in the necessity of civility and of your fundamental willingness to learn," Adams advised students in a message urging civil discourse in such debates. "I hope that when you leave Colby after graduation you will be stronger, wiser and more assured of your ability to wrestle with moral issues that arise in a diverse society," he told students.

—Gerry Boyle '78



RealWorld

Student leaders offer training for life after college

Colby students can't complain their needs aren't provided for on campus. The dorms are comfy, the jitney drivers are accommodating, and the dining halls serve up three square and tasty meals a day. But Student Government Association President Derek Taff '04 and Vice President Josh German '04 want Colby grads to have skills that will help make their post-Mayflower Hill lives just as manageable.

The pair's campaign platform for last spring's election included a pledge to help prepare graduates for life after Colby. Their first

project has begun to take shape in the form of a book seminar-style course this spring based on *A Car, Some Cash, and a Place to Crash: The Only Post-College Survival Guide You'll Ever Need* by Rebecca M. Knight, a Wesleyan graduate and stepdaughter of Colby's Goldfarb Family Distinguished Professor of American Government G. Calvin Mackenzie. Participants will consider tips the book offers and will attend discussions and skill-building classes on topics ranging from car maintenance to retirement planning.

Taff and German aren't going it alone. They enlisted Douglas Professor of Economics and Finance Randy Nelson to sponsor the project. Taff and German plan to augment the book material with guest experts from a variety of fields, including Colby faculty and professionals within the Waterville community. "We've got some great leads that we're pursuing for people who can help us, especially with some of the financial and legal areas," Taff said.

"We also pitched it at the Alumni Executive Council, so we may find some more leads from there."

Some topics they hope to cover include banking, credit cards, real estate, insurance and computer skills.

In another initiative designed to help ease seniors into the "real world," Taff and German also have sought SGA funding to bring daily newspaper distribution to the campus to heighten students' knowledge of current events. During February, *The New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Portland Press Herald* and *USA Today* will be delivered to selected residence halls "to see how the program will operate and what kind of demand there will be at different locations such as a small dorm, a big dorm, a dorm with a dining hall and so on. Ultimately, [newspapers] will be in every dorm," Taff said. If all goes well during this free trial run, funding will be provided to make the newspaper program an ongoing service. —Abigail Wheeler '04

Journalists on Stage for Inaugural Goldfarb Center Event

The Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement's inaugural event was a program titled "Journalists and their Communities," held in conjunction with the Lovejoy Convocation. Three panel discussions held in Lovejoy 100 during the afternoon featured national and Maine journalists with faculty members as moderators. Among participating journalists were Rebecca [Littleton] Corbett '74, assistant managing editor of *The Baltimore Sun* and a member of the Lovejoy Selection

Committee; J. Christian Davenport '95, a *Washington Post* reporter; Chris Morrill '81, vice president for multimedia at *The Hartford Courant*; and Matthew Storin, retired editor of *The Boston Globe* and chair of the Lovejoy Selection Committee.

Panelists and an audience including Maine journalists and students spent the afternoon discussing: "The Food Chain," examining career paths in journalism; "Descendants of Lovejoy," probing the difficulties and dangers in report-

ing news honestly; and "Media Agglomeration," examining the effects of the trend of large media companies acquiring newspapers large and small.

By inviting more than 100 editors and publishers from Maine newspapers, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Government L. Sandy Maisel, director of the Goldfarb Center, responded to the center's mission of building bridges between Colby and groups outside the College that are engaged in public affairs.



From artificial intelligence to bioinformatics,
Clare Bates Congdon senses new
applications for computer science

Clare-voyant

For Assistant Professor of Computer Science Clare Bates Congdon, computer science is about much more than programming languages and microchips. It is a means to many ends.

While her main areas of expertise are artificial intelligence, machine learning and data mining, her research and teaching often are far more interdisciplinary, incorporating fields as diverse as art, biology and mathematics.

One such foray is into the emerging field of bioinformatics, which uses computer technology to manage biological information. Bioinformatics may not be in your spellchecker yet, but it has broad implications for advancing our understanding of biology, genetics and medicine. Bioinformatics provides the computer science applications that allow geneticists to study the human genome and microbiologists to select HIV strains for vaccine development, for example.

Last spring Congdon teamed up with Judy Stone, Clare Boothe Luce Assistant Professor of Biology, to offer a bioinformatics course. "Bioinformatics is a unique thing for a school of this size," said Congdon. Often professors would need training just to offer it, but Stone and Congdon were more than up to speed: "Judy and I both did bioinformatics theses before anyone was using that word."

Back in the early and mid-'90s Congdon was a graduate student working in the University of Michigan's artificial intelligence lab. Her thesis compared genetic algorithms (step-by-step sequences of actions that can evolve a solution to a problem) to other machine-learning approaches to complex epidemiological problems. Specifically, Congdon used data mining (a term she avoids since it raises some biologists' hackles) to look for patterns in the genetic and biochemical characteristics

of people who did and didn't have a family history of heart attacks. Her conclusion? Genetic algorithms are a superior approach.

Bioinformatics wasn't even a term a decade ago, let alone its own discipline. Now, the subject is incredibly hot, says Congdon. "Bioinformatics really took off with the success of the Human Genome Project," she said. Biologists collected the necessary data, but there was too much to sift through with standard approaches. "Up till then, there was just a handful of computer scientists who thought that biology was an interesting area to apply their skills to," said Congdon.

Now biologists recognize that science is increasingly about data, and computer science students are excited to have a real application for their subject. "Biology has appeal to people," said Congdon. "It's about us, it's about our lives."

Chris Blomberg '04, a biology major and research assistant for Stone, was one of the six computer science students and six biology students who enrolled in Colby's first bioinformatics class. Like most of his fellow biology majors he had no formal computer science background, and the reverse was true for the computer science students. "There was an awful lot of learning to come together in the middle," said Congdon, but it "was a great dynamic and they really embraced it."

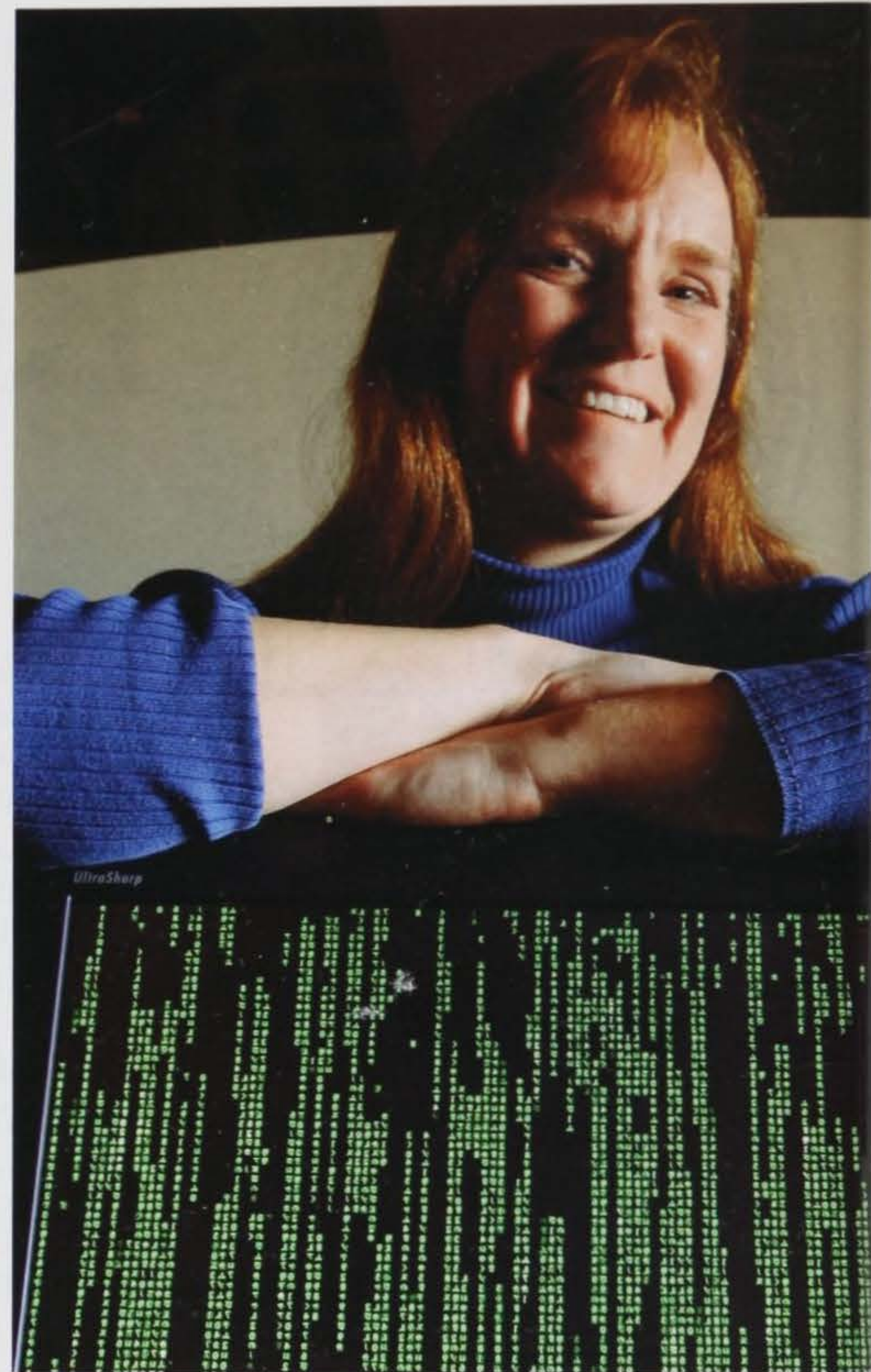
Blomberg had noticed in his student research that while software programs for biologists were helpful, they didn't always satisfy a researcher's needs. "I was inspired to take this class to see if there was any way I

could learn to improve them," he said.

For his class project Blomberg learned how to write in the programming language Perl, which can be used to manage the data of DNA and RNA sequences. Now Blomberg wants to try to write a program for his research that would look for genetic sequences rather than to count nucleotides and aligning sequences by hand, as he has done.

"The most important thing that I learned," said Blomberg, "was what computer science can actually do to make the job or research of a biologist easier."

Making genetic research easier with the help of genetic algorithms is Congdon's current research. Geneticists used to look at physical traits of species to find phylogenies, or evolutionary relationships, among scores of species, says Congdon. Now one can program genetic algorithms to look at data



Clare Bates Congdon

and reevaluate how species might be related through evolutionary history or even how individual organisms are related. Since HIV mutates fairly rapidly, phylogenetics can be used to trace its transmission by looking at DNA sequences of HIV collected from different people.

The system Congdon is developing has found some phylogenies, tree-like structures of 40 species, not found by the most commonly used phylogenetic software, Phylip. "It's not necessarily true that Phylip can't find these phylogenies but that it couldn't find them in comparable time," said Congdon, who sees

promise in her approach.

Genetic algorithms have been able to find solutions to problems that better human-derived solutions, says Congdon: "This is a big thing for computer scientists because it means that sometimes you should let the computer 'evolve' or 'learn' the best solution rather than trying to engineer it yourself."

It's not all hard science for Congdon, or her students, though. With a background in art (including a minor in studio art as an undergraduate at Wesleyan), she has been uniquely positioned to help students combine art and computer science into independent majors.

She proudly describes how one student created an abstract world that responded to emotion—a project featured in the Museum of Art's annual senior art exhibit. And she is eager to show off another recent graduate's laser touch screen. "He had the potential to be a computer artist and show his work in galleries," Congdon said.

Congdon's field is wide and ever expanding, but whether it's in new art media or bioinformatics, taking new approaches is essential. That's true, whether it's in teaching, helping computers evolve or studying evolution. —*Alicia Nemiccolo MacLeay '97*

Professor Russo is Back



Richard Russo is coming back to the classroom.

Russo, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist (*Empire Falls*) and former professor of English and creative writing at Colby, returns to Mayflower Hill second semester to teach Creative Writing 478, a fiction workshop.

He said he is looking forward to working with bright, young college students, to being on campus with his daughter Kate '04 and to spending time with former office mate Jenny Boylan (English).

"With me being here in Camden and Jenny being in Belgrade, we don't see as much of each other as we'd like to," Russo said. "This is an opportunity to have some of the kind of meddlesome fun we used to have back when I was teaching there."

Russo, who has done a couple of guest spots in Boylan's classes since he left Colby, said he misses the actual teaching tremendously. "As soon as I walk into the classroom and start talking to students, I realize how much I've missed their youth and their enthusiasm and their good thoughts," he said. "It's going to be a kick for me, too, to see if I still have anything left in the hopper with these bright young people."

Students in Russo's course can expect a rigorous fiction workshop. Writers who enroll should have "a thick skin" and a desire to work hard on the fundamentals of fiction, he said.

Russo said his own writing may benefit, too. "The beauty, I always found in teaching, especially teaching undergraduates, is that you are forced day after day after day to deal with fundamentals," he said. "And revisiting fundamentals, even for mid-career writers, forces them to be thinking about these fundamentals themselves, in whatever novel that you happen to be working on. You cannot help saying to yourself, 'Yeah, alright. Sure. But how does it apply to what I'm working on? Is my own conflict clear enough? Is this the right point of view to be telling the story?'"

He said he will steer clear of one subject—recounting his own experience of seeing his novels adapted for the screen. Writing for the movies may be seductive, Russo said, but the fundamentals of good fiction writing come first. "We won't be talking about what's happened on the set," Russo said, "or what Paul Newman is really like."

Pioneering Studies

JIM FLEMING (STS) has been elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science "for pioneering studies on the history of meteorology and climate change and for the advancement of historical work within meteorological societies." The sitting president of the International Commission on History of Meteorology, Fleming also is the Ritter Fellow at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography this year. He's been busy doing talks here and there, and in October he published an op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* on the role of climate in the California wildfires.

Distinguished Fellow

Goldfarb Family Distinguished Professor of American Government **G. CALVIN MACKENZIE** has been elected a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration. Evidently he is the first person from Maine so honored. Mackenzie was inducted in Washington, D.C., on November 21. An independent, nonpartisan organization chartered by Congress, the academy is the nation's preeminent organization dedicated to improving the performance of governance systems. Fellows include leading members of Congress, governors, mayors, cabinet secretaries and agency heads, journalists and scholars. Their election recognizes careers of significant contribution to the practice and study of government.

Honoring Collaborative Practices

On October 24 the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW) presented **JEAN DONOVAN SANBORN** (English) the 2003 Ron Maxwell Award for Distinguished Leadership in Promoting the Collaborative Learning Practices of Peer Tutors in Writing. The award recognizes Sanborn's dedication to promoting the work of peer tutors and her years of service as director of Colby's Farnham Writers' Center, a position she retired from in 2003. The presentation, in Hershey, Pa., came at the 20th annual meeting of the NCPTW, an organization Sanborn helped to found.



'Girlfighting'

Lyn Mikel Brown's new book explores
the forces that turn young girls against each other

Girlfighting: Betrayal and Rejection among Girls
By Lyn Mikel Brown (education and women's,
gender and sexuality studies)

New York University Press, 2003

The nasty, backbiting, manipulative adolescent girl—like most stereotypes—is widely accepted. Girls deride and undermine each other mercilessly, while boys—easygoing, uncomplicated, transparent—stand away from the fray.

So says the conventional wisdom, recast in countless popular books, movies, even kids' cartoons (Angelica on *Rugrats* comes to mind). But does the stereotype mirror reality? If it does, even in a few cases, then why do some girls sometimes behave this way?

Lyn Mikel Brown (education and women's, gender and sexuality studies) set out to answer these questions, interviewing hundreds of girls from various backgrounds and thoughtfully considering their experiences. While she resists the temptation of a single answer, Brown does find common themes in the story of girlfighting. "It's a story about containment and dismissal that gets acted out by girls on other girls because this is the safest and easiest outlet for girls' outrage and frustration," she writes in her third book, out this winter.

Why outrage and frustration? "Simply put, girls' treatment of other girls is too often a reflection of and a reaction to the way society sees and treats them," Brown says.

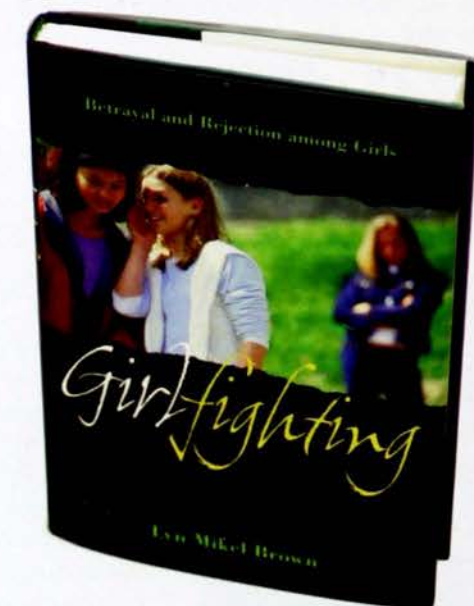
Her case is compelling, her evidence comprehensive and far reaching. From Barbie to Britney to Buffy the Vampire Slayer, girls are taught early and often what is expected from them: to be nice, thin and generally pleasing and pliant to boys, Brown says. When that mandate to please becomes a competition for boys' favor, it isn't the boys who are torn from their positions of dominance; it's the girls maneuvering to try to keep from being shunted aside.

Using gossip and exclusion, girls inflict on each other what Brown calls "relational violence." Consider the shunning ritual recounted by one mother: "This time last year, my happy, friendly seventh-grade daughter was voted off the island. The stars aligned, the dice rolled, the ballots were cast and she was 'it.' She went from being a member of the 'in crowd' to becoming its designated exile. She was talked about, hated, despised, not invited, ridiculed, but mostly, most cruelly, ignored."

It's a scenario that will ring regrettably true to many readers who have experienced firsthand the humiliation of being targeted, the relief of being part of the in crowd or even the short-lived pleasure of being on top of the clique. Consider Sarah, a college student who recalls her middle-school reign: "As the leader, I encouraged my friends to find fault in others. I didn't see any other way for us to maintain an image of perfection unless others were imperfect. In this way I wanted to ensure that I would remain the leader of our group. I'd seen others fall from the throne, finally seen for their conniving and hurtful ways, and I worked overtime to be sure that didn't happen to me."

It did, however, and by eighth grade a coup had toppled Sarah and exiled her to the remotest social fringe. Fear of the same fate keeps girls allied to those who are in positions of power and forces them to join in inflicting "relational violence" to keep from having it turned on them.

Brown does more than analyze the cultural forces that sustain girlfighting. She also offers an action plan, realistically recognizing that there is no quick and easy solution for adults to apply. "Even if we could detect and respond to the largely invisible dynam-



ics of girls' relationships I doubt this would come close to solving everything," she writes. "Micromanaging will only make girls more adept at covering their tracks and protecting what power they have."

The solution is to begin to dismantle the culture that holds girls down and turns them against each other, Brown concludes. She urges readers to look closely at their children's schools and to question whether school cultures inadvertently denigrate certain girls and elevate others. She advocates consistency in school and at home, where adults demonstrate the role of women in the relationship and in society. Brown also warns against accepting the roles to which our culture assigns girls.

"Don't label or put down 'girly girls' or buy into . . . adolescents' labels for 'other girls; don't put down girls who want to be like boys or want male power; don't adopt or offer up mean girl-nice girl or good girl-bad girl language to teach, reward, punish or justify suffering and pain," Brown writes. "As we've seen, these terms are laden with judgment and they serve to divide and control girls."

The alternative, she concludes, is to unite girls and empower them. Her book is an important step. —Gerry Boyle '78

Content with the Blues

Scott Perry '86 first was touched by the blues when he heard a Taj Mahal album at Colby. Perry, who had an old guitar under his bed but had never learned to play it, promptly marched over to guitarist Carl Dimow (music teaching associate) and asked to be taught how to play this mesmerizing music. Dimow began Perry's blues education with a Mississippi John Hurt tune called "Oh Papa."

Now that song appears on Perry's new CD, *Hero Worship*, which follows earlier releases of original works by the Virginia-based blues guitarist and singer. This time Perry, who has learned from and played with blues masters in Chicago, South Carolina and other blues hotbeds, pays tribute to the musicians who broke both musical and racial ground in the early 20th century. "They fought oppression with their instruments and their voices as their only weapons, and faced injustice and brutality with creativity and humor," Perry writes in the liner notes for *Hero Worship*.

Perry offers his interpretation of blues standards, including Willie Dixon's "Back Door Man," Robert Johnson's "Stop Breakin' Down" and Muddy Waters's "I's Be Troubled," among others. A handful of sidemen pitch in while Perry offers vocals and his signature National reso-phonic guitar. It's pure acoustic blues from a musician who has appeared at countless blues clubs and festivals over the years (at his touring peak he played more than 200 gigs a year) and also has dedicated part of his time to handing down his passion for this music to the next generation. A former teacher and coach (he played football at Colby), Perry created the Blues in the Schools program and describes himself as both a blues musician and blues teacher. He ventures into schools from the Virginia farm where he lives with his wife and their two sons.

There is more about the music and the musician on Perry's Web site, ohpapa.com. The site also includes what he calls his "musings," including an account of his blues "testing" by South Carolina blues legend Drink Small. The tale is a treat to read, as Perry's picking is a treat to hear.



Hero Worship

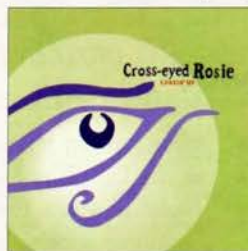
Scott Perry '86

recent releases

Lookin' Up

Cross-eyed Rosie

Uncle Ostrom Records (2003)



Cross-eyed Rosie's bluegrass-inspired music is laid-back and enjoyable. The six-member band features strong vocals (credit singer Zoë Kaplan '97) and a guitar-mandolin-fiddle-bass combination with Jon Ostrom '94 on the guitar. The band's repertoire includes traditional tunes they've arranged ("Wayfaring Stranger" and "Ragtime Annie") as well as originals, including several selections from contributing songwriter James Loveland '96 ("Rosalie" and "Hole in the Road," to name two). Check out the talented group and their debut CD at www.crosseyedrosie.com.

Traveler

Tim O'Brien '76

Sugar Hill Records (2003)

Thus far, O'Brien has explored country, bluegrass, Cajun, Celtic and traditional influences in his music. In *Traveler* his singer-songwriter inspiration came from the literal, spiritual and emotional journeys he's made over the past 30 years. The 11 original songs (and a cover of "I've Endured") range from the upbeat "Kelly Joe's Shoes" ("Now I had a lot of fun in those black Chuck Taylors . . . I can see where I've been in the color fadin'") to the sweet love song "Fell Into Her Deep Blue Eyes" ("I'd never leave her, I wouldn't compromise; I'd rather end it all if I couldn't fall into those deep blue eyes.")

Because I Could Not Stop My Bike—And Other Poems

Karen Jo Giammusso Shapiro '86

Matt Faulkner, illustrator

Whispering Coyote Press (2003)

Shapiro took 26 classic poems from English and American literature and translated them into lighthearted parodies for kids and parents. Written in the styles of such well-known poets as Emily Dickinson, Robert Burns, Christina Rossetti and William Shakespeare, the charming takeoffs include "Oh, Mommy! My Mommy!" (Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!") and "Macaroni and Cheese" (Poe's "Annabel Lee"). Each is accompanied by witty illustrations and apologies to the original poet.

Pretty Dead

Gerry Boyle '78

Berkley Prime Crime (2003)

It's journalist Jack McMorrow's girlfriend, Roxanne, a social worker, who takes center stage in Boyle's seventh mystery novel. Roxanne receives a report that a child may have been abused. The alleged victim is the daughter of David and Maddie Connelly, scions of a wealthy and politically connected Boston family. The Connelys, summering in Blue Harbor, Maine, appear to have done nothing wrong—until one of David's young assistants is found dead. Are the Connelys good people or are they killers? As he pursues the story, McMorrow must ask himself whether his need for answers is worth putting Roxanne's career—and life—at risk.

Love Bridges a Cultural Divide

A moat built to keep out invaders defends a citadel in Hue, Vietnam. James Sullivan, a journalist from Quincy, Mass., on contract in 1992 to write an article about his bicycle journey through the country, aspires to the hand of Thuy, a descendant of mandarins. To cycle to Thuy's home, Sullivan must cross over the moat—an emblem of the gulf between two races, languages, cultures, social classes and courtship customs.

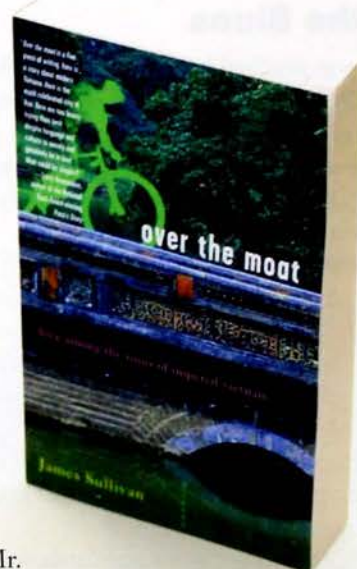
Over the Moat sounds like the treatment for a movie love-story, but Sullivan's true-life love for Thuy is the tie that binds together threads of travelogue, descriptions of the country and observations of daily life in post-war Vietnam. It's a tale of love bridging differences that war has made even more formidable.

Trying to secure a marriage license, Sullivan is sent by a Vietnamese clerk through "shifty hoops of paperwork" that would drive a less determined lover away, but he meets "the

same kind of terror" from a clerk in the U.S. Embassy in Thailand. Nobody wants the two races and countries coming together.

Small episodes of comedy rise out of this sometimes bleak but always elegant memoir. Sullivan writes of his introduction to the delicacy, cooked over a wood stove aboard a river sampan, of water buffalo penis. Thuy's father's name, Mr. Bang, translates as Mr. Blackboard; Sullivan's name in Vietnamese, Ca Rem, means Mr. Popsicle. Explosive episodes left dangling like cliffhangers conclude later in moments of insight and understanding.

When Sullivan first touches Thuy, "my arm brushed her shoulder, and then as if by accident stuck there. . . . That otherwise indifferent swatch of arm suddenly turned on . . . dispatching bolts of pure feeling." That



***Over the Moat: Love Among the Ruins of Imperial Vietnam*
James Sullivan '87
Picador (2004)**

he remains "stuck" and defuses familial and bureaucratic hostility to the union proves to be a testament to humanity. In the end it's the lovers who cross over the moat together. —Robert Gillespie

It's Deadly at the Top

At a Connecticut country-house party, top executives of a giant textile corporation crave the division president's job. Hormones of ambition being as prevalent as hors d'oeuvres, it's no surprise when the prez turns up dead in a 15-foot hole.

Killer of Presidents has one foot in the genre of the lighthearted country-house murder. Everybody in the company is suspect, especially Matt Harris, a young executive on the fast track. All evidence points to Harris when the replacement president also is bumped off.

Harris's general cheekiness makes the cops predictably grumpy and eager to haul him in. What's a fellow to do but engage in witty repartee with a local lovely, Peg DeWitt. Although the aptly named DeWitt doubts Harris's innocence, the two indulge in the saucy banter of courtship.

The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit meets *The Thin Man*.

On the less sprightly side, Cohen draws on his many years in the textile industry for the sociology of business: sales orders, per-

formance bonuses, insider secrets, alpha males and alpha females jockeying for place in the division's pecking order, failed expectations of advancement.

***Killer of Presidents*
Mike Cohen '35
Xlibris (2003)**

Sardonic authorial asides on the way things are done in American business spice up the narrative (the term "president" has been killed off by the proliferating number of people in command and control positions).

Ambition in action is always arresting.

Cohen cranks up the pace of the story to an all-out sprint with gleefully strung-along sentences (more commas and occasional white spaces to signal transitions would clear up some thickets) and staples of suspense such as a car chase and a climax in a pitch-black house, the power cut off by the evildoer. Catch the killer, you catch the girl.

Lippincott published Cohen's first novel, *The Bright Young Man*, in 1966. *Killer of Presidents* is his first suspense novel. Wouldn't it be something if an author were nominated for a "best" original paperback at the age of 91? —Robert Gillespie

Fresh Off the Field

Field hockey players first knew coach Marcia Ingraham
as a teammate—and role model



Marcia Ingraham '02, interim head coach for field hockey and women's lacrosse, faced an interesting challenge this season—coaching her former teammates. As a student-athlete, Ingraham, an American studies major from Massachusetts, was one of Colby's top players. She was a NESCAC first-team all-star in field hockey and a two-time All-America selection in lacrosse.

She thought about getting into coaching during her senior year and was hired for the assistant coaching position for both sports at Colby for the following season. "I figured that there was no better place to start than my alma mater, where I was already familiar with the program," she said. Having coached at summer camps in both sports and leading her teammates on the field, Ingraham was ready.

As assistant coach last year, Ingraham was in charge of recruiting and admissions ratings and also got a lot of coaching experience. Last fall she took on a lot more: practice planning, game plans, away travel and, perhaps trickiest, assuming an official leadership role for players

with whom she used to share the field. "It was definitely a challenge, and I think that it took a lot for the girls . . . having played with me as one of their teammates and then having to turn around and take advice from me as a coach," Ingraham said. "They were very receptive to me, and I think it was pretty successful."

The players, having looked up to her as a teammate, eased the transition. Field hockey co-captain Injoo Han '04 said that as a player Ingraham was a terrific role model. "It was not surprising that Marcia out of any of the other girls in her class would be the one to end up coaching us in the future. . . . Her fellow teammates always looked to her for advice and leadership," Han said.

The field hockey team finished its 35th season well. This year's Mules went 9-6 and were ranked fifth in NESCAC. Wendy Bonner '05 was named third-team All-America, the only Colby field hockey player to receive that honor twice.

So what's next for Coach Ingraham? "I feel that there's a lot of things that could dictate my future right now. I'm debating whether I'll stay here or go pursue [a master's]," she said. While she's looking into graduate programs, she also wants to keep coaching.

"I feel like I've really been honored to be able to continue to work with a program that was so great to me, and it just means a lot to me personally to be involved with both the field hockey and the lacrosse programs here," Ingraham said. —*Anne Marie Sears '03*

sports shorts

Head **FOOTBALL** coach **TOM AUSTIN** made a surprise announcement at the end of Colby's 5-3 season that he was retiring as head coach after 18 seasons. (A full story will appear in the spring issue of *Colby*.) The Mules won the CBB title with a 27-14 victory over Bates at home and a 7-6 win at Bowdoin. Running back **AARON STEPKA '05**, offensive tackle **ROB VAIL '04**, defensive back **BRANDON IRWIN '04** and kicker **JOHN GOSS '06** all made the NESCAC All-Conference second team. Stepka, All-America last year, had 836 yards rushing. Goss broke the NESCAC single-game record for field goals in a game with four and set the Colby field goal distance record with a 49-yard boot in a win over Middlebury. . . . **VOLLEYBALL** setter **KIMBERLY PRESCOTT '04** and outside hitter **CAIT CLEAVER '06** earned American Volleyball Coaches Association Regional All-America honors. Prescott, who holds nearly

every Colby assist and service ace record, finished her career with 3,671 assists and 309 service aces. Cleaver set the single-season school record with 417 kills. Colby finished 23-9. . . . In **WOMEN'S SOCCER**, **LAURA WILLIAMSON '07** earned NESCAC Rookie of the Year honors, leading the conference in points (14 goals, 7 assists, 35 points) and goals per game. Williamson and midfielder **LIBBA COX '07** (7 goals, 1 assist) both made the NESCAC second team. Colby improved to 8-5-1 from 5-9 in 2002. . . . **MEN'S SOCCER** finished 6-6-2. Midfielder **RYAN BOCCUZZI '05** led the scoring (9 goals, 3 assists, 21 points). He has 11 goals and 12 assists for 34 career points. . . . **FIELD HOCKEY** forward **WENDY BONNER '05** and defender **KRISTIN PUTNAM '05** both were named to the National Field Hockey Coaches Association Division III All-Region squad. Bonner, who also made the

NESCAC first team, led the scoring with 15 goals (a school record) and 33 points. The Mules finished 9-6 and made the NESCAC tourney for the third straight year. . . . In **MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY**, **NAT BROWN '04** made the NCAA Division III national championship meet for the fourth straight year after placing 15th at the New England regionals. Brown also earned NESCAC all-conference first-team honors. **ERIC REINAUER '04** made the second team by taking 13th at the conference meet. . . . **WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY** placed 10th among 35 teams at the New England regional championships and was third at the Maine state meet. **KARINA JOHNSON '05** finished 18th at the NESCAC meet. . . . **COED GOLF** won the Colby Classic Golf Tournament over Bates, Bowdoin and UMaine-Farmington at the Waterville Country Club. . . . In **WOMEN'S TENNIS** **ALLISON DUNN '07** went 5-4 at first singles.

On Parle Français Ici

Playwright Gregoire Chabot uses theater to rekindle Franco-American culture

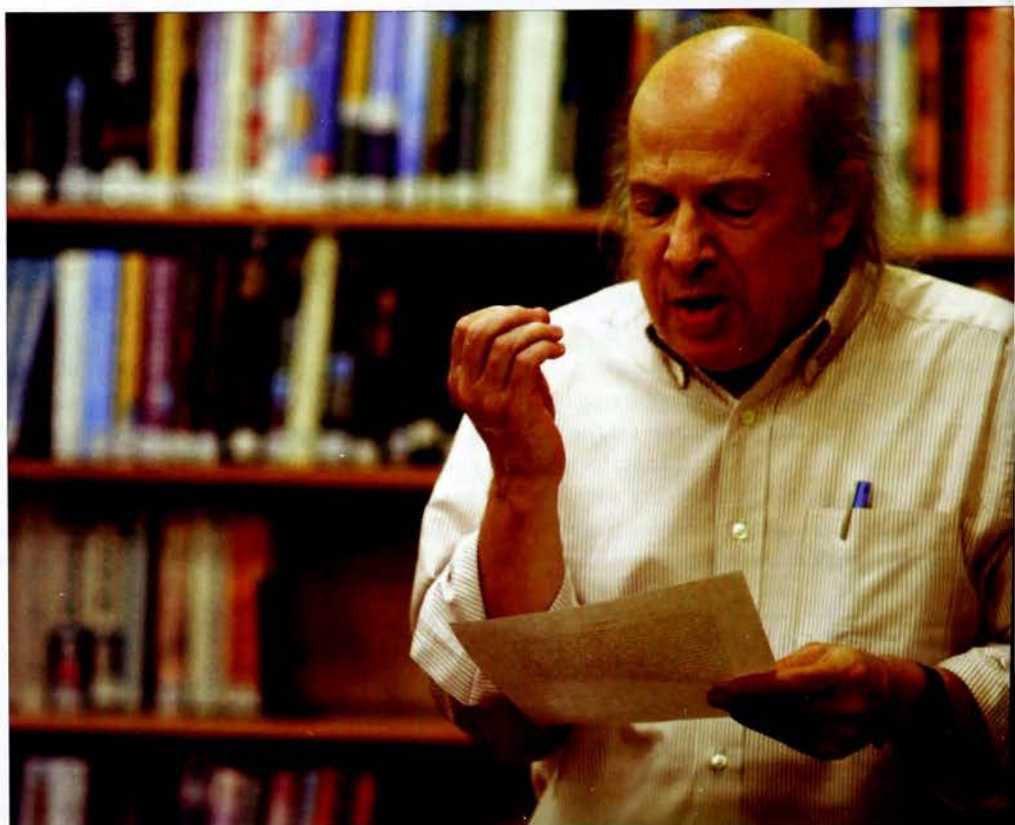
As film crews and Hollywood stars poured into town last summer for the filming of Richard Russo's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *Empire Falls*, the buzz in Waterville coffee shops and at dinner parties was that actor Ed Harris would play the beleaguered character Miles Roby, and what would Waterville look like on the screen?

But while hundreds of residents stood in line for the chance to be extras in the film, a smaller audience gathered to hear a different story about the intersecting lives of a man down on his luck and a powerful older woman—not Russo's Robys and Whittings but Gregoire Chabot's Fortins and Desbleuets.

Chabot '66 has stories of his own to tell about life in a mill town in central Maine.

Set in Waterville, Chabot's play *A perte de vue* (*As Far as the Eye Can See*) is a bittersweet and often wryly comical story about coming to terms with one's community. And it resonates on many levels with Les Bavards (roughly translated as "conversationalists"), a group of Franco Mainers who meet regularly to speak and live in French. They have gathered to hear Chabot's story, set in the neighborhood many of them grew up in. Afterwards they trade half-remembered French expressions from their childhoods and speculate not about movie stars but on the real-life inspirations for Chabot's characters.

Like many Americans with an ethnic



Playwright Gregoire Chabot reads from his work at a recent performance in Waterville. Chabot's work explores Franco-American culture in milltown New England.

identity, Chabot has a double life. As owner of Chabot, INK, a New Hampshire marketing, communications and consulting firm, he makes his living as a writer in English. But he writes in French in order to survive as a Franco American. "It's a way of being and expressing myself to my community," he said. Eager to reach anyone who will listen, Chabot also translates his stories into English, often weaving back and forth between the two versions, though his characters and situations are more

vivid, as he is, *en français*.

Chabot grew up in Waterville in the '50s and '60s when "preservation" was the watchword for keeping French language and culture alive. But this attitude had the opposite effect he said: "In order to preserve it, you have to kill it; you embalm it and you set it there for everyone to admire, but you can't touch it or you'll go to hell." Faced with such a stark choice, many of Chabot's young peers said "to hell with French," which is why his audience

today is mostly grayer than he is. At a time when French seemed to be all about the past, many chose a future in English.

Ironically, becoming a French major at Colby was Chabot's solution to remaining connected to his heritage without getting trapped in the nostalgia of the preservationists. Though it meant leaving behind the familiar accents and vocabulary of home, there were compensations: "My name wasn't murdered by Anglos anymore," he said, laughing.

Meanwhile, across the border in Québec, the Quiet Revolution was proving that a vibrant French cultural life was possible in the present. Pursuing graduate studies in French at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Chabot encountered Professor Don Dugas, who found Chabot's Franco heritage something worth celebrating, not erasing. Chabot, whose love of theater had been fostered at Colby through the student theater group Powder and Wig, began to write skits with Dugas for a French-language show on the local public radio station. "Using theater is nice and subversive because you can put the language right in front of people," he said. (In Waterville, when Chabot and Marie Cormier performed his satirical mock commercial for *Assimilo*, their Les Bavards audience talked right back to them, ignoring the "fourth wall.")

Chabot's success with French theater in the 1970s led to a contract for *Jacques Cartier Errant*, a play that is now studied at Colby, UMO, Brown and SUNY-Albany as part of a living canon of North American francophone writers. But oddly enough, Colby professors Jane Moss and Arthur Greenspan both learned about Chabot's work from their colleagues elsewhere, despite the fact that he still has strong ties to Waterville (his mother lives there) and lives in New Hampshire.

While attending a conference in Frederickton, N.B., Robert E. Diamond Professor

of Women's Studies and Professor of French Jane Moss says her head "snapped" when she heard a reference from the back of the room to "this wonderful playwright from Waterville, Maine." What she discovered in her own backyard was a unique voice in francophone literature. "Rather than looking back with nostalgia he looks back with a more analytical, satirical sense of humor," Moss said. "He never goes for the easy explanation or falls into victimhood."

Why isn't Chabot better known in his own community? "We're always on the edge of disappearing," he said. In fact, Chabot himself "disappeared" for 10 years, disillusioned with attempts to revive French. After his initial success with French theater, he had become the assistant director of a bilingual resource and training center at Boston University. When funding evaporated in the early 1980s, Chabot headed into the English world of commercial writing for high-tech companies.

His frustration with the francophone community is still palpable: "We're in a paper bag and the opening is here, and we keep going *that way*," he said, pointing in the opposite direction. "Francos are wonderfully process-oriented, which is great, but after a while the American side of you says, give me a product!" And here he slips into one of his zany characters: "We've been processing for the past

twenty-five years, for chrissakes! Give me a product—anything, just the smallest thing—I'm not asking for much. Gimme a radish, I don't know, something!"

Chabot finally received a "radish" in 1996, when the University of Maine Press published a collection of his plays, including *Jacques Cartier Errant*. That led to the formation of a theater troupe, Les gens d'à côté (The folks next door), based in Waterville, which has since taken Chabot's stories of Franco Maine to Québec, Louisiana and France. In 2001 he participated in a panel discussion

on Franco-American history, literature and culture at Colby, organized by Jane Moss. Extracts from his witty essays, *Entre la manie et la phobie* were published in a 2002 volume of *Québec Studies* on Franco America, which Moss edited.

These days, Chabot is cautiously optimistic about an apparent renaissance in Waterville, where 40 percent consider themselves Franco Americans. In addition to groups like Les Bavards, there have been film festivals at Railroad Square Cinema, a Franco-American Festival hosted by the city and plans to develop a French cultural center. In addition, Chabot is excited about a new generation of college students who think it's cool to study Franco-American culture and don't carry the baggage of his generation.

He's determined to document the experience of his own community. With "creativity" as his watchword, he is writing his way out of that paper bag with his unique blend of delicious wordplay and sharp cultural analysis. According to Moss, it's a fine line he is walking between respect for the old community and those who have lost their language.

It may be a delicate balancing act but Chabot seems to thrive on the edge, and he notes with pride that French is still spoken after 300 years in North America. It doesn't look like Chabot's audience will be disappearing any time soon. —Rebecca Green



Gregoire Chabot and actress Marie Cormier perform one of Chabot's works in French at Waterville Public Library.