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## Art Movement: With a world-class collection and a new director, the Museum of Art is ready for its next chapter

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*With a world-class collection and a new director, the  
Museum of Art is ready for its next chapter*



# Art Movement

*By Lynne Moss Perricelli '95*

Sol LeWitt, American, b.1928  
Wall Drawing #803 - Wavy Color Bands, 1996  
Colored inks, 10' x 27'  
Colby College Museum of Art  
Gift of the Artist

**H**ugh Gourley, recently retired director of the Colby College Museum of Art, recalls a party he attended in New York City shortly after coming to Colby in 1966. A woman asked what he did for a living, and he told her he was with the Colby art museum. “She said, ‘Oh, so you’re there in the summer,’” Gourley said. “‘But what are you doing in the winter?’”

Today, few would place the Colby College Museum of Art on the edge of the art-world tundra.

Two major wings have been added to the museum in the last decade, one exclusively for works by renowned contemporary artist Alex Katz. More recently Colby commissioned a Richard Serra sculpture for the museum’s courtyard, acquired the complete collection of prints by American minimalist Terry Winters, bought a Robert Rauschenberg assemblage and added a prominent wall sculpture by conceptual artist Sol LeWitt. These are artists usually associated with major metropolitan and university museums. The National Gallery and the Guggenheim. The Tate and the Museum of Modern Art. Stanford and Princeton. And Colby.

Daniel Rosenfeld, the new Carolyn Muzzy Director of the Colby College Museum of Art, was hired after Gourley retired last year. Rosenfeld came to Colby from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and, before that, the Rhode Island School of Design. He says that when he went to New York last February for the Art Dealers Association of America Art Show, almost 40 years after Gourley’s early trip, the Colby museum’s reputation preceded him. “I introduced myself as the new director of the Colby museum, and the people I met were enthusiastic and positive,” he said. “Some of them had never been to the museum, but they all had the notion it was a special place.”

That’s great for the museum and great for the College, Rosenfeld says. “It produces a way to realize this is a sophisticated, worldly place,” he said. “When students and parents look at colleges, these intangibles have an impact on their interest.”

So how sophisticated is it? Today the museum is Maine’s second-largest (eclipsed last year by an expansion of the Portland Museum of Art), with more than 28,000 square feet of exhibition space. It showcases a prized collection of 18th-, 19th- and 20th-century art, among other treasures, and is the definitive repository of work by Katz. In the newest addition, The Lunder Wing, completed in 1999, the largest academic-museum collection of paintings and drawings by the expressionist John Marin is on permanent display.

All this hasn’t gone unnoticed. Some 30,000 visitors stroll the galleries every year, by the museum’s estimates. And it’s all free of charge. “It was always important to see Colby as a resource, to reach out to the broader community,” said Bill Cotter, president emeritus. “The museum was a natural.”

Pieces from Colby’s collection are loaned for exhibitions across the country and around the world. A traveling Alex Katz show recently was the toast of Frankfurt and Baden-Baden, Germany, and Lugano, Switzerland, and this year an Italian publication devoted to LeWitt’s sculptures had a photo of Colby’s *Seven Walls* splashed across two full pages—the most prominent image in the publication.

“Bravo to the people who brought you the Richard Serra and the Katz and all of the art that you have,” said Christine Temin, art critic for *The Boston Globe*.

There’s no question that the museum has risen in prominence since Gourley was asked where he spent the winter. Its Board of

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## Art Every Minute: From Serra to Katz, Dylan to the Dead, Paul Schupf studies artistic creation

A wet spring snow falls on the campus of Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y. In front of the administration building, a stately stone Victorian, two people wait. A security guard pulls up, unlocks the front door and follows as the pair makes its way through the foyer and up the staircase to the third-floor office of Rebecca Chopp, Colgate’s president.

Lights go on.

One of the pair, Paul Schupf, a 60-ish man in sweatpants and Asics running shoes, strides into the room and turns. On the wall to the right is a series of black-and-white abstract etchings, shapes that soar toward the ceiling like buttes toward a desert sky. This is Richard Serra’s suite, *WM—WM-V*. On another wall is *Weight and*

*Measure*, an etching (with aquatint) derived from a sculpture Serra did for the Tate Museum in London. Chopp selected it from Schupf’s voluminous collection of Serra’s works. Her office has become a stop on the Schupf-Serra tour.

“You can tell how he started out with an almost-literal description of the works,” Schupf said as the security guard waited patiently. “It’s almost like a Grateful Dead jam. He just jammed. It’s extraordinary.”

Welcome to the world of Paul Schupf, where his passions—Serra and contemporary art, the Grateful Dead and Bob Dylan, history and liberal arts colleges—intersect in extraordinary ways.

This is the Schupf whose name appears

on the Colby museum’s Paul J. Schupf Wing for the Art of Alex Katz, which houses major works, many of them donated by Schupf. He is the Schupf of the museum’s Schupf Sculpture Court, the setting for Serra’s monumental steel-block sculpture 4-5-6.

This also is the Schupf of Colby’s Paul J. Schupf Scientific Computing Center at the Computational Chemistry Laboratory and the “S” in what is known at Colby as AMS—the Anthony-Mitchell-Schupf residence hall.

His is a prominent, if not unprecedented, place in Colby’s roster of benefactors, most of whom are Colby alumni, spouses, parents or some combination of the three.

Not Schupf. A Colgate alumnus, he had no ties to Colby prior to his first visit in 1985.

Governors is knowledgeable, influential and well-connected, with personal ties to prominent artists who have figured in several of the museum's recent acquisition coups. Its healthy endowment for acquisition (now at \$7.6 million) is the envy of many. All of which combines to make it "a place that's going places," wrote critic Grace Glueck in *The New York Times* in 2001.

When the late Ellerton Jetté (then owner of C.F. Hathaway Co.) and his wife, Edith, made their first sizable donation of art work to Colby in 1956, the collection of prized American Primitive paintings was hung in Dana Dining Hall.

But by then the nucleus of benefactors had formed for what would become a substantial museum of art at Colby. With Professor of Art James Carpenter leading the charge, the museum project had attracted the Jettés, Willard Cummings (co-founder of the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture) and President J. Seelye Bixler. Those key supporters and others were reaching out to patrons who could make a museum happen. Among them were the Wing sisters, Adeline and Caroline, Smith College alumnae from Bangor. Bixler, who had come to Colby from Smith, brought them into the fold.

The Wings donated major works, including art by American Impressionist William Merritt Chase, and made substantial contributions toward the construction of the Bixler Art and Music Center, where the museum got started. Bixler also involved Jere Abbott, first associate director of the Museum of Modern Art, who remained engaged with the Colby museum until his death. When Abbott, whose family owned Maine textile mills, died in 1982, he left the museum \$1.7 million for an acquisition fund. Ed Turner, a long-time and loyal

Colby development officer and arts patron, later left \$1 million, and the Colby museum has been on sound financial footing ever since.

With the endowment, Gourley worked to develop a teaching museum that would contain the most desirable contemporary and historical art. Gabriella De Ferrari, the former director of Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art and a member of the Colby museum's Board of Governors, explained it simply: "Good things happen when the chemistry is right. Hugh was so receptive and generous and ambitious for the museum that everyone wanted to help him."

In the 1970s the Jettés donated their American Impressionist collection. John Marin Jr. and his wife, Norma, gave the Marin collection (to be featured in a catalogue due out this summer). The Payson Collection of American Art made its way to Colby in 1992 after it was moved from Westbrook College to the Portland Museum of Art. The collection is loaned to Colby every other year, adding to the breadth of the museum's offerings. And as the collection has grown, so has the constellation of benefactors.

De Ferrari, an art collector and arts writer, met Gourley in the 1970s in Boston when Colby loaned work for an exhibit she was curating. They stayed in touch, and De Ferrari's involvement with Colby grew when her daughter, Bree Jeppson '93, enrolled as a student. Now both De Ferrari and Jeppson are members of the museum's Board of Governors, providing, with others, important ties to the larger art world. Paul Schupf (see accompanying article) contributed the naming gift, and some of the finest pieces of art, for the wing that bears his name and holds the works of Alex Katz. Waterville philanthropists and long-time museum supporters Peter '56 H'98 and Paula Lunder H'98 gave the naming gift to build The Lunder Wing



*Paul J. Schupf*

In fact, he had only vague knowledge of the College before it came under the million-candlepower spotlight that Schupf focuses on any of his interests. "I didn't seek out Colby," he said. "It just kind of happened."

Newcomers to Colby hear bits and pieces about Schupf. That he is an avid and erudite collector of contemporary art. True.

That he works in an office in a home in Hamilton, monitoring financial markets via a bank of computer screens. True.

That he supports liberal arts colleges—and not just Colgate, his alma mater. True.

That he followed the Grateful Dead and also can talk authoritatively about Bob Dylan, Duke Ellington and other musical masters. True, true, true.

Somehow all of this adds up to an image of a freewheeling financier, a tie-dyed stock trader who navigates the wine-in-hand world of New York art openings. False.

"I just like to read my books," Schupf said. "I'm not a person who likes to go to dinner parties, cocktail parties. I find those kind of things death."

But not nearly as deadly as talking about himself. The CliffsNotes summary is that Schupf is a New Yorker who grew up in New Rochelle, went to summer camp in southern Maine and didn't set foot in Maine again for nearly 50 years.

Schupf attended Colgate, where he earned a bachelor's degree in history and lettered in tennis. He lived in Europe after college but eventually returned to work on Wall Street. In New York he began collecting con-



Students turn the Museum of Art into workspace, a use of the museum Director Dan Rosenfeld wants to encourage in the future.

to exhibit the museum's permanent collection of American art.

"When people come to Colby, they really feel strongly about it and follow through for years and years," said Paula Lunder, a member of the Board of Governors and a Colby trustee.

Now Rosenfeld is determined to fulfill the museum's unique and vital role as an academic resource. He arrived with extensive curatorial and administrative experience as well as a promise to reach out more aggressively to the Colby community and beyond.

The value of a college art museum rests in the quality and diversity

of its holdings. The Colby collection of some 4,000 objects offers a range of periods and styles, with examples ranging from ancient Asian art to French Impressionism to folk sculptures. Its strongest group is American paintings, representing, among other important artists, Winslow Homer, Albert Bierstadt, John Singleton Copley and Mary Cassatt. The museum also boasts paintings, drawings and sculptures by leading contemporary American artists, including LeWitt, Winters, Jennifer Bartlett, Chuck Close and Eric Fischl.

And the first-rate collection is housed in a physical space planned by some of the world's foremost museum designers.

When the College decided to add The Lunder Wing, it hired architect Frederick Fisher, acclaimed for his redesign of the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in New York, among other projects. Intended to resemble the early American homes for which most of the works were intended, the \$1.3-million wing added 9,000 square feet divided into 13 galleries for exhibition of Colby's permanent collection. The wing has a domestic feeling; the works are well-spaced with adequate

and, in some areas, natural lighting.

Just past the lower level of the Jetté Galleries is The Paul J. Schupf Wing for the Art of Alex Katz, completed in 1996. The 10,000-square-foot wing consists of four galleries with vast space, raw materials and natural lighting that best complement Katz's spare, large-scale works. The renowned British architect Max Gordon, internationally known for designing masterful exhibition spaces, was hired to design the wing but passed away before the job was completed. After Gordon's death, Scott Teas of TFH Architects of Portland, Maine, expanded

temporary art. He was introduced to Serra's work by Hugh Gourley, then director of the Colby College Museum of Art, who one day led Schupf to a Serra drawing, *Out of Round*, then in the Colby museum's basement racks. For Schupf the reaction was immediate and intense, an artistic out-of-body experience. "I hadn't seen a work of art that impacted me like that—ever," he said.

Since then Schupf has amassed all of the famed sculptor's prints and drawings, 145 works that fill both of the Schupf homes (one an office/gallery, the other a residence/gallery) in Hamilton, N.Y., hang in several Colgate administrative offices and are loaned to museums around the world, including Colby's.

It's Schupf's modus operandi to immerse himself deeply in the work of an artist he

feels is vitally important. In the late '80s and early '90s he focused on the music of the Grateful Dead, taking in 150 shows after being turned on to the iconic band by a Colgate student. Schupf once excused himself from a trustees' committee meeting at Colby by saying he had to catch a Dead show, a likely first in the history of the College.

Schupf also focused intently on the paintings of Alex Katz, which led to his involvement with Colby. Schupf's first post-summer camp visit to Maine was in 1985 when he was asked to loan his Katz paintings (with their Maine thread) for shows at Bowdoin and Colby. Schupf attended the openings and came to know Gourley. Schupf also met Bill Cotter, then Colby's president, and they clicked, too. "Bill said immediately, 'Would you like to become an overseer?' That was

Bill," Schupf said. "When Bill saw an opportunity he moved instantly and efficiently."

Schupf's involvement in Colby grew, with the museum wing (one of the first public wings devoted to the work of a living artist), other major contributions, a seat on the Board of Trustees. Asked why he plunged so deeply into a college where he had no family history, no children enrolled (he's single) and little prior experience, Schupf said, "Colby had process."

The College, he said, rigorously adheres to its decision-making process with an "inclusive" philosophy. Not only do all trustees carry equal weight in discussion and debate (not the case at all colleges), but students appointed to College boards are treated respectfully and taken seriously, Schupf concluded. In this way, he said, Colby avoids

and completed the design. Emphasizing glass, steel, cement and wood, the space is a stunning backdrop for the directness of Katz's artwork. Alex and Ada Katz, both members of the museum's Board of Governors, gave more than 400 works and memorabilia, and with completion of the Schupf Wing, Colby became one of a handful of museums with a wing devoted to a living artist.

In the museum's courtyard, the Serra sculpture 4-5-6 is a site-specific composition of three rectangular forged-steel structures, each measuring four feet by five feet by six feet, and each positioned on a different side. With no identifiable subject matter or narrative content, the work prompted some to complain, "anyone can do that." From another quarter, Serra devotees questioned whether a Serra work would be seen and appreciated in Waterville, Maine, far from the art centers of New York and Europe.

Rosenfeld is unfazed. He believes Serra's work, like that of LeWitt's (including the colorful *Wall Drawing #803* at the museum entrance), serves a crucial role in an academic setting because it challenges the viewer's assumptions. "Serra's work forces us to ask, 'What is the artist trying to do? Why is the work here? Why does the museum think it is important?'" Rosenfeld said. "Students will come to appreciate the seriousness and ambition of the work itself, and that teaches us all something about the world. Serra's work is not about fashion; it is about ways of seeing."

Thomas Colville, an art dealer with galleries in New Haven and New York City and a member of the museum's Board of Governors, says there is no substitute for seeing great original art as opposed to



An installation crew, with sculptor Richard Serra kneeling at left, positions one of three 30-ton steel blocks that compose Serra's sculpture 4-5-6.

looking at photos or going to Boston to view it. "If there are paintings in the museum that touch a student's life and open his or her eyes to art, that is a huge accomplishment that is immeasurable," he said.

It's particularly important that students at a college like Colby—where students don't have easy access to major public art museums—have first-rate art on campus, agreed Temin, the *Globe* art critic. After all, expanding the visual language of a community in this way is a primary objective of an academic museum.

Elizabeth Broun, director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum,

pitfalls in process that cause some colleges to lose focus on their mission and goals.

Schupf said he also felt welcomed into the Colby community, to the extent that it was Cotter who appeared in Schupf's hospital room in 1994 two days after Schupf had undergone cancer surgery. "He comes in with this huge smile and says, 'Get out of bed. Let's go for a walk,'" Schupf recalled. "It was one of those things that you never forget. To me that was a symbol of the best of Colby."

While he said he has enjoyed his friendship with Cotter and his wife, Linda, President Bro Adams, board Chairman James Crawford '64 and others, Schupf also likes to see clearly the impact of his contributions. That doesn't necessarily happen with general charities where even major gifts can disappear into what he calls "a slush fund."

Compare that lack of impact with the case of Cazenovia College, southeast of Syracuse, where Schupf established a scholarship fund (in the name of Enid and John Morris, close friends in Hamilton) that allows two students to attend every year. He also endowed the school's first and only faculty chair. The chair is held by John Robert Greene, a specialist in American history and the American presidency who has used the endowment to teach linked classes with other faculty and to establish an annual history lecture series.

"To see what he has been able to leverage that gift into—it made just a huge difference to that college," Schupf said.

And why give to colleges at all? After all, there is a multitude of places to practice philanthropy. "It's motherhood and apple pie," he

said. "Colleges are good, and liberal arts colleges are better. You can really identify something that is of value and there's an impact on an ongoing basis. There's no dilution."

As he put it in an e-mail response to a question about his involvement with the Colby museum: "Try to have any impact on a major city museum."

At Colgate the impact includes a Schupf fellowship that sends students to Oxford. He endowed a chair in Far Eastern studies (named for his father, Willem Schupf), and a gift helped make possible a major library renovation. Schupf bought a former telephone company building in Hamilton for the university and turned it into a studio art center.

At Colby he showed up unannounced one weekend to assess his impact firsthand, appearing one day at the door of the compu-



A Colby student puts the final touches on Sol LeWitt's Wall Drawing #803-Wavy Color Bands in the museum's foyer.

said at the Lunder Wing dedication, "I am full of respect for and awareness of the opportunity that a museum like this creates for people. Being in a place like this allows a student to acquire a new language."

Colby museum supporters privately lament that the museum is better appreciated away from Colby than on campus. Rosenfeld, in fact, hopes to make the museum as central to the academic life at Colby as the library or chemistry labs. In his view, the role of the college art museum is especially critical in our time. "The museum has the potential to open non-art students to an experience that in our culture risks

being overwhelmed," he said. "The static image is challenged by the way we are inundated with information. Everyone benefits in ways that are an extension of a liberal education through the ability to look at works of art and to think of them as part of a visual, cultural and intellectual life, not just as a way of decorating a bathroom."

Another way Rosenfeld hopes to challenge museum visitors is with innovative programming. Unlike directors at municipal museums, he need not concern himself with the constant need to improve the bottom line by boosting attendance. While other museums install predictable blockbuster shows, the Colby museum offered "Wire and Plastic, Leather and Grass" this spring—a show juxtaposing South African street-vendor art forms with the works of the rural cultures of Somalia and West Africa. Planned by Associate Professor of Anthropology Catherine Besteman, who has taught extensively at the Colby-Bates-Bowdoin Center in Cape Town, South Africa, the show challenged stereotyped dichotomies in African art (traditional vs. modern, rural vs.

urban). Three students—Laura Collins '03, Leah Robertson '03 and Susannah Clark '03—received academic credit for participating as curatorial assistants. They presented a gallery talk on their research and produced a portfolio. "As curator, I was delighted with the level of enthusiasm and commitment," Besteman said.

The show incorporated recordings of contemporary African pop, jazz and hip-hop performers as well as video of dance styles. Calling it a multimedia, multicultural venture, Rosenfeld said, "It brought into the museum a whole matrix of cultural and academic interests. The

tational chemistry lab that bears his name. Professor Brad Mundy (chemistry, now emeritus) showed his visitor around, answered questions and assumed the stranger—in his customary sweatpants and running shoes—was from Waterville. When Mundy asked what had piqued the visitor's interest in the lab, the man declared, "I'm Schupf."

"After a nice chat in the space, Paul looked around and said, 'We can do better than this,'" Mundy said. Schupf subsequently funded a renovation and computer upgrade. Schupf and Mundy became friends and Schupf once appeared at the door of Mundy's faculty apartment in the Anthony-Mitchell-Schupf residence hall, joking that he was there to collect the rent. Mundy later paid him in Monopoly money.

Schupf said he enjoys the direct involve-

ment in colleges he supports, that he was pleased when students he steered to Colby coincidentally lived in the dorm he helped fund. "I'm really able to see the impact from day one," he said.

And the impact is evident at the museum, where the Serra and Sol LeWitt sculptures kindled a "But is it art?" debate on campus, a discussion Schupf declines to dignify. "Many people are put off when artists disturb the status quo," he said. "People didn't like Picasso's *Guernica*. The French didn't like the Eiffel Tower."

And they called painter Jackson Pollock "Jack the Dripper," Schupf points out, though, as he put it in a recent note to a close friend in Hamilton, Pollock was "so revolutionary and so brief that he had an impact like none other. He was there,

painted supreme painting for three years and then was gone. . . . Those art people who grew up at that time experienced something so profound and electric that Pollock inadvertently became the standard against which all 'modern' art was compared."

**T**here are no Pollocks hanging in Schupf's side-by-side Federal period homes on a side street in Hamilton, but the Serra prints and drawings and Katz paintings are illuminated like beacons and visible from down the block. The two-story homes are showcases for the collection, which also includes important works by Jean Dubuffet, Francis Bacon and Chuck Close. The ground floors are as sparsely furnished as galleries, with gleaming hardwood floors, white-painted walls and UV-shielding windows. There is art on every



Visitors at the opening of "Afterlife" last fall. The show featured Asian tomb art from the Colby collection and was organized by students enrolled in an interdisciplinary course combining art and East Asian studies.

show is an example of how the museum can become a lively institution that touches on parts of the College's teaching mission that are not self-evidently part of a fine-arts curriculum."

In July the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) will use the Colby museum to kick off the first national tour of its renowned collection of art and artifacts. "Cherished Possessions: A New England Legacy" features 175 fine and decorative arts objects that form a picture of life in mid 17th- to mid 20th-century New England.

In another effort to broaden the museum's reach, Rosenfeld foresees the museum becoming a regular venue for non-art related activities, such as poetry readings, performances or other programs. "The museum has always bent over backward to make its resources available," Rosenfeld said, "and I aspire to continue to do that. But I have a more fundamental goal. I want to encourage the faculty across the board to use the museum." Some faculty members have already responded: Sociology Professor Tom Morriane recently brought a class to look at portraits that related to a seminar on representation.

Rosenfeld is interested in reaching out to students in any way that will interest them. Last spring he noticed a group of physics students studying for their final exam on the couches near the entrance to the Schupf wing. They congregated there over a few days, apparently attracted to the leather couch and coffee table facing a window. Whereas some museum directors might react by removing the couch, Rosenfeld has considered ordering more couches and additional seating.

Rosenfeld's desire to meet the needs of students stems, he says, from his undergraduate experience at Johns Hopkins, where he spent much of his time at the Baltimore Museum of Art. Some of the shows, especially those he saw in his junior and senior years, had a profound impact on him and his motivation. "I understood that there was something meaningful that can occur in a museum that is connected to the real world," he said.

Rosenfeld and others behind the Colby College Museum of Art want those meaningful occurrences to happen more and more often. ✨

available wall space, including an addition beyond a garage that was built as a gym but soon filled with Serra prints and drawings.

And walls that don't display art hold books: art books, history books, shelves of biographies, books in several languages. Books on Dylan, at least one on the Dead, all of them, when inspected, found to be full of Schupf's scribbled comments. "The dog ears and everything else," said Greene, the Cazenovia College professor. "They're not there just for show."

There's little of the showman in Schupf (he agreed to be interviewed for this article only after long deliberation, and then acquiesced only when convinced it would benefit the museum of art) for the simple reason that he doesn't often break his focus to worry about what others think. He says one

of the benefits of running his business from Hamilton rather than Manhattan is that he no longer wears a tie. And he doesn't dress up for many special occasions, either. "If they don't like it . . ." he says.

So what is Schupf's focus? It's business, history, music and colleges that are devoted to the liberal life he embodies. And art, of course. "I think about art every minute," he wrote in an e-mail. And that doesn't just apply to Serra or Pollock or Katz.

At dinner at the Poolville Country Store, an unpretentiously upscale restaurant in Poolville, N.Y., the tables were filled with well-dressed Colgate students, a faculty member or two, a student having a birthday dinner with her friends and her dad.

At a table to the side of the room was Schupf, wearing Colby sweatpants and a

Phillips Academy sweatshirt (a recent gift from the school, which is mounting a show from Schupf's collection) and talking about the "Rock and Roll Circus" video shot in the 1960s and released nearly 30 years later. Eric Clapton played, along with John Lennon and The Rolling Stones and others. But The Who stole the show, Schupf said. Pete Townshend didn't just play guitar, he said. Townshend's power chords were really a new, groundbreaking form of percussion.

To some it might have been an unlikely context in which Schupf would encapsulate the important and even miraculous moments when artistic creativity unexpectedly moves an entire culture forward. But it wasn't, and he did.

"Art," said Schupf, "does not have to be what it was." —Gerry Boyle '78