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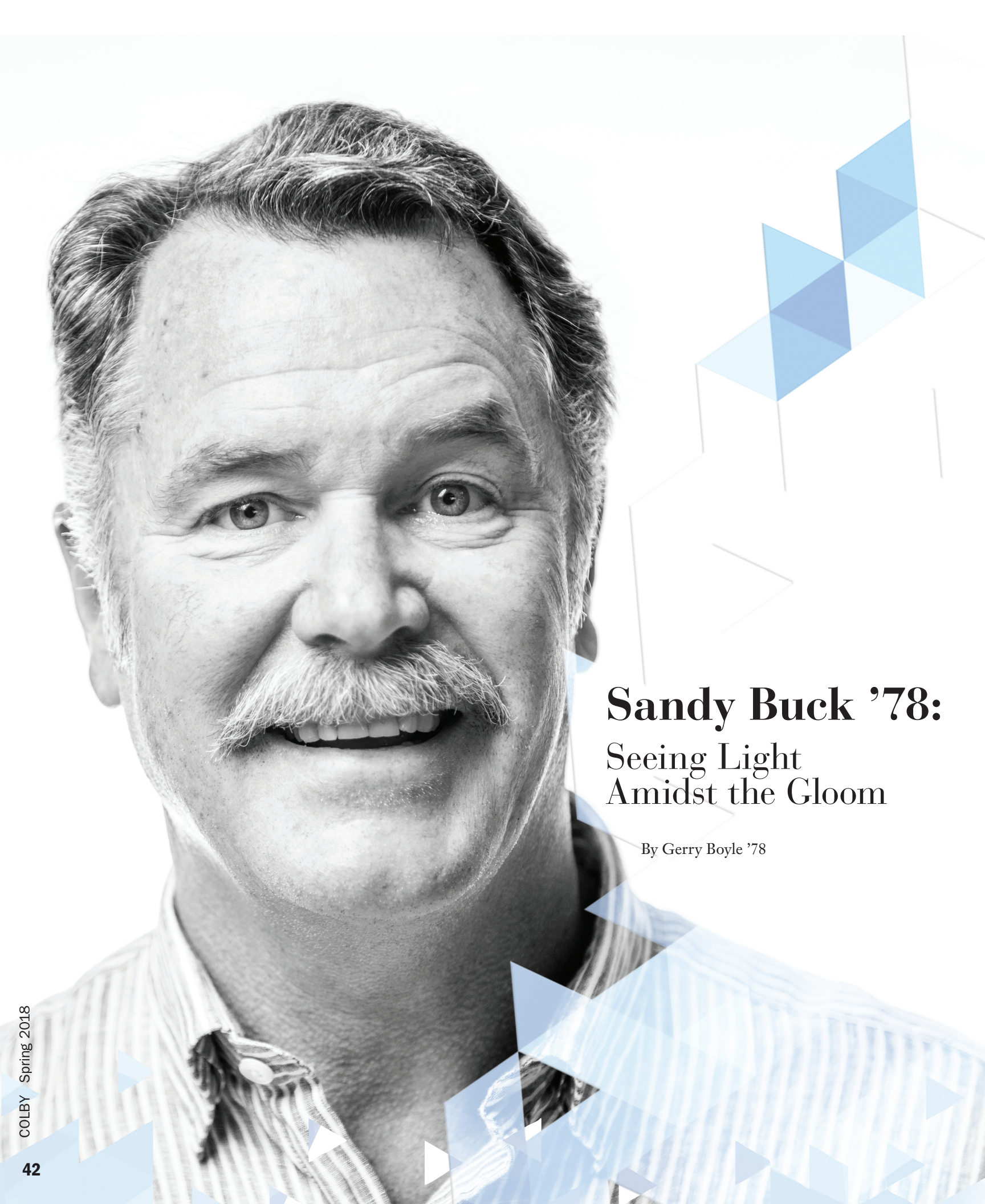
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Sandy Buck '78: Seeing Light Amidst the Gloom

By Gerry Boyle '78

Sandy Buck '78 was in the office of the Horizon Foundation, on Commercial Street in Portland's Old Port, talking about climate change. He also wanted to talk about a Colby alumna, Maggie Parrish '15.

Buck, a Colby trustee who, with his wife, Sissy, established the Buck Lab for the Environment and Climate Change at Colby, had recently met Parrish, a biology major from Falmouth, Maine, who spent a semester studying in Cape Town, South Africa.

"I had a cup of coffee with her this morning," Buck said. "She went back after graduation and got a master's degree at the University of Cape Town. She said, 'I had exposure to a broad, international community of people working on climate change and the effects. But I feel like I can have an impact in Maine.'"



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—Sandy Buck '78

I was like, 'Damn right. We need people like you.'"

Buck eagerly connected Parrish to the Maine Climate Table, a consortium of climate-related organizations, and to other organizations.

"Suddenly the day is a lot brighter," he said. "If you read the macro story, it's doom and gloom and horrifying. We've ceded any leadership to China in renewable energy. We've put all the wrong people in positions of power. ... So if you look at the macro, you could come to a grinding halt and throw your hands up. But when you look at the local, and even state and regional levels, there are reasons for hope."

When it comes to climate, Buck has done anything but throw up his hands.

In its first year, the Buck Lab has facilitated connections between students and environmental organizations for internships and jobs (see related story about Director Gail Carlson, P. 40) and funded faculty and student research, including ice-core study this summer in Alaska and at Colby, among other projects.

It's just one part of the initiatives that Buck has started since returning to Maine, renewing a lifelong relationship with the state and the outdoors. A New Jersey native who spent his childhood rambling around the family farm, Buck attended Camp Kieve in Nobleboro, Maine, and is a longtime trustee there. He moved to the Portland area a dozen years and is more likely to wear boots and jeans to a meeting than a suit.

Both the foundation and the Bucks have funded many climate-related initiatives. But three years ago, Sandy Buck felt that he was "just throwing stuff at the wall" and working in a silo without a real strategy. He decided it was time to bring Maine's climate-funders (as he describes them) together. "What are we all doing?" he asked. "Where are the overlaps? What are we learning? How can we share that information?"

He hired a consultant who helped create a climate-related group with 25 members that now meets every three or four months. With pooled funding and a refined focus, the group has tackled big projects and found success that none of their organizations or foundations could have achieved alone.

The Maine group invited national climate-funders to the meetings and decided to go to work to bolster the Regional

Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which has brought Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By selling emissions allowances, the states boost clean energy and green jobs.

But the consortium was having a hard time explaining the economic benefit. The Maine group, including Buck, helped pay for a detailed economic analysis that showed that the initiative had a major impact in jobs and emissions reductions, especially in Maine, he said.

Buck talks excitedly about the consortium's efforts, from bringing in a marketing expert to better coordinate the message around climate change, to efforts to help Mainers reduce fuel costs and emissions, to finding the way to quantify the impact of climate down to the cost of major storms on town budgets, to climate-friendly no-till farming, to a proposed study of ways to maximize carbon uptake in Baxter State Park. "It's like pulling up the window shade on a whole bunch of really inspiring local and regional activities," he said.

And much of the needed expertise, he said, will come from the next generation of environmental studies and biology majors at Colby, who, like Parrish once was, are being dispatched into the field to do internships and research and will bring that knowledge to the search for solutions.

"This is not an ivory tower," Buck said. "It's not trivial stuff they're researching. They're researching real science that is important and needs to be explored." 