

# Horizons

Spring 2009

## Lifelong Education at Colby-Sawyer College

### The Master of His Class

**E**ven as a small boy growing up in Iowa, Ron Luchsinger had dreams of a future in the performing arts. Early memories of the swirls of green and lavender tulle that his mother transformed into tutus for a local ballet company drew him into the magic and excitement of being on stage. Ron's early attraction to the dance gave way to a serious interest in singing due in part to his musical training that strengthened his fine tenor voice. Always, however, throughout his high school career he found himself working in theater – immersed in the excitement and drama of acting and music. As an undergraduate student at a small college in Dubuque, he directed his first opera. This defining experience led him to the Hartt School in Hartford, Conn., where he earned a master's degree in music. Ron has been on the move ever since.

Thinking that the world was his "aria," the "rube" from Iowa migrated to the cultural paradise of New York City and began a career teaching acting, conducting master classes and directing an opera touring company. In 1973 Ron took a giant step by



Ron Luchsinger

launching himself into a freelance career as an opera director. The pool of operatic directors worldwide was relatively small; he knew he was making an esoteric choice. It is clear to see from the biography on his website that Ron has been a great success in his chosen field. He has directed over 100 operas, 12 Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and many other musical theater productions. His work has taken him from Abilene, Texas, to Anchorage, Alaska, and back to New England. The man continues to move!

Ron has been involved with Opera North for over 20 years. It was here he met Louis Burkot, and the two have been working together ever since. So familiar are they with each other's working styles that consultation is hardly necessary as they begin each new Opera North season. Ron particularly sings the praises of the early impassioned backers of Opera North, often Dartmouth graduates retiring to a beloved area and refusing to leave the opera of the city behind.

Which brings me to the question: Why is Ron teaching at

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Adventures in Learning *Horizons*, published three times annually, highlights the activities of the lifelong learning program at Colby-Sawyer College.

The thoughts and opinions expressed in the articles in this publication are strictly those of the respective authors.

Information offered should not be considered authoritative or complete, nor should it be construed to reflect the views or opinions of the Adventures in Learning program or Colby-Sawyer College.

## SAVE THE DATE

for

### Adventures in Learning's 10th Annual Meeting

Thursday, May 21,  
from 4 to 6 p.m.

*Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served from 5 to 6 p.m.*

## *Adventures in Learning: An “Uncommon School”*

### Nancy Merz Nordstrom: An Uncommon Speaker

In 1854, Henry David Thoreau advocated the development of “uncommon schools” that would enable men and women to continue liberal studies not just at university but throughout the rest of their lives. In 2009, another distinguished advocate of lifelong learning, Nancy Merz Nordstrom, will update Thoreau’s vision in her keynote address on May 21 at Adventure in Learning’s annual meeting. Scheduled for 4 p.m. in the Ware Campus Center at Colby-Sawyer College, the program will be followed by a wine reception.

**“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether they are twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning is young.”**

—Henry Ford

Nordstrom, who lives in New Hampshire, will not have to travel far to join us, but her experience as author, researcher and director of the Elderhostel Institute Network (EIN), North America’s largest educational organization for older adults, has taken her on journeys both literal and intellectual around the globe. She provides resources for, and facilitates communication among, more than 350 lifelong learning programs across the U.S. and Canada, as well as linking these programs to similar ones in Europe, Australia, Japan and New Zealand.

The Board of Adventures in Learning voted in December not only to invite Nordstrom to speak in May but also to affiliate with the EIN organization. Nordstrom will delineate the opportunities and resources now available to Adventures in Learning members as a result of

this new liaison. She will also share the history and current research associated with the learning-in-retirement movement, a subject she has spoken about extensively in interviews with *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, and the Cable News Network.

In 2005, Nordstrom, along with her son Jon F. Merz, co-authored the book *Learning Later, Living Greater: The Secret for Making the Most of Your After-50 Years*, which will be available for purchase at the annual meeting. A comprehensive look at lifelong learning today, the book focuses in particular on the latest brain research regarding the mind/body connection, on educational travel opportunities, and on lifelong learning through community service. It offers an invaluable section on what and where specific educational and volunteering resources are available in the U.S. and Canada.

*Learning Later, Living Greater* concludes with a

**“Just as iron rusts from disuse, even so does inaction spoil the intellect.”**

—Leonardo da Vinci

thought from Goethe: “One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words.” This gently inspiring tone is indicative of Nordstrom’s work as a whole. The Board invites all Adventures in Learning members to gather on May 21st to hear Nordstrom share “a few reasonable words.”

~Ann Lang

**“It is time that we had uncommon schools...that we did not leave off our education when we begin to be men and women. It is time that villages were universities and their elder inhabitants the fellows of universities, with leisure—if they are, indeed, so well off—to pursue liberal studies the rest of their lives.”**

—Henry David Thoreau, 1854



Nancy Merz Nordstrom

## The Story Behind the Annual Speaker Story

**T**here's generally a story behind every news story, and the one behind "Nancy Merz Nordstrom: An Uncommon Speaker" involves our own Janet St. Laurent in the Adventures in Learning administrative office.

As Janet explains, "I looked around for a conference or group where I could learn a little something about programs for seniors, and not finding one close enough to New London, decided to see if other New Hampshire lifelong learning administrators wanted to get together."

Representatives from six New Hampshire colleges were invited for lunch at Colby-Sawyer in November 2007. The group shared organizational structures, available resources and other common concerns. "It was such a productive gathering," says Janet, "that the group decided to reconvene this past October at Rivier College in Nashua and to invite a guest speaker."

The speaker was Nancy Merz Nordstrom. Janet was impressed by both her delivery and her expertise in lifelong learning as director of the Elderhostel Institute Network. Janet thought we might want to highlight Nancy's book in *Horizons* and consider Nancy as an annual speaker. Since none of us on the committee had ever heard Janet's own story of jump-starting the N.H. lifelong learning group, we felt her initiative should also be highlighted in *Horizons*, which we are proud to be doing in this issue!

~Ann Lang

## The Master of His Class (continued from page 1)

Adventures in Learning and ILEAD? Well, he teaches because he loves to. His knowledge of opera is encyclopedic, his personal collection of CDs and DVDs is world class, and he derives great pleasure in bringing his talents to small classes of eager learners. From his first opening statements, Ron is truly the "master of his class." Almost always in motion, his hands punctuate his every remark. He moves back and forth, his face alive with the delight he gets in delivering his subject to

his students. And then...then comes the moment when he inserts a CD into his Bose player. He pushes the button that will release a glorious wave of music. Suddenly he is still, hands thrust in his pockets. His eyes register a satisfaction that the first notes have begun. The close observer will see a very small smile of pleasure appear on Ron's face. The familiar notes take over the class, and Ron is once again very, very still as he absorbs the music he knows and loves so well.

~Sally Southard



## Still Teaching at 90

**J**im Moore recently set a new benchmark for longevity by becoming the first 90-year-old to lead a course at Adventures in Learning. To commemorate the occasion, Betsy Boege, president of Adventures in Learning, surprised Jim by bringing a birthday cake into his climate change class on February 12, three days after his 90th birthday.

After a chorus of "Happy Birthday," Betsy thanked Jim for the many courses he has led and congratulated him on his longevity, saying that he was a testament to the fact that "you are never old until you stop learning."

Jim has led six courses for Adventures in Learning. He also took part in last fall's course on "The Greatest Generation," reminiscing about his experiences during World War II.

Congratulations, Jim.



Jim Moore and Betsy Boege

## Thursday's Child

This year the Adventures in Learning program was pleased to be invited by Rockwell's at the New London Inn as one of the local organizations to benefit from their Thursday's Child Dinners. On March 5, our designated Thursday, many of our members enjoyed a fabulous meal from Rockwell's menu while supporting Adventures in Learning's new endowed scholarship fund.

At the end of the evening, as is the Thursday's Child custom, Rockwell's donated 50 percent of the evening's proceeds to the Adventures in Learning Achievement Award. This scholarship, established in 2008 in honor of the program's 10th anniversary, will provide an award each year for a junior student at Colby-Sawyer College whose achievement in scholarship demonstrates the potential for lifelong learning and whose



A group of Adventures in Learning supporters. From left: Julie Machen, Sue Wood, Bryan Jones, Katrina Wagner, Peter Machen and Bill Wagner. Not pictured: Cindy Jones.

commitment to the college demonstrates the potential for lifelong contribution to the college.

Many sincere thanks to all who participated in the Thursday's Child dinner benefiting Adventures in Learning.

## The Adventures in Learning Visiting Speaker Program

It began with a suggestion to President Tom Galligan, and with Tom's encouragement, continued in meetings with Deborah Taylor, vice president for Academic Affairs, then Kathy Taylor, director of Career Development, then the Adventures in Learning Office with Sharon Ames, Janet St. Laurent and Joyce Kellogg. Soon, the Adventures in Learning Visiting Speaker Program was ready to be launched.

The first step was sending a letter to all study leaders who had offered courses in the past five years. The letter outlined the program and invited the study leaders to join as volunteer speakers. Their principal role would be to serve as guest speakers in Colby-Sawyer classes. Other possibilities would be to speak at meetings of student organizations and at reunions of Colby-Sawyer alumni/ae. Subject areas could be drawn

from professional experience, from courses given at Adventures in Learning, or from experience as participants in historic events.

Responses came within days and continued for weeks. To date 27 study leaders have volunteered, an impressive response, but even more impressive considering the group's qualifications and other responsibilities. Included are physicians, attorneys, clergymen, retired military personnel, educators, and science and business people from an array of fields. Twenty-two hold graduate degrees and 12 have taught at the college or graduate level and range from adjuncts to full professors. Adventures in Learning may have begun with peer-led classes, but over the years it has built a study leader corps that rivals most college faculties.

The next step is for the college to introduce the program as a new resource. Introduction will begin

with posting the speaker names and subject areas on a computer blackboard addressed to the faculty. This will be in place by the beginning of Colby-Sawyer's spring semester. Other proposed steps are a statement from the administration introducing the program, an announcement in faculty and student media, and the designation of a faculty member as the program's champion.

The Visiting Speaker Program should provide a gratifying experience for all participants, an important resource for the college faculty, and most important, it should enrich the student experience. Our hope is that it will become a continuing program and, together with other activities, will help Adventures in Learning fulfill its objective of embracing and enriching the entire community.

~Art Rosen

# Summer Education and Pleasure

Adventures in Learning continues to grow—in the number of courses it offers, in its scope and in its influence in the greater Kearsarge community. Last summer, for the first time, two courses were offered to give summer residents an opportunity to take Adventures in Learning courses. "It was a trial move," said Morris Edwards, the chair of the Curriculum Committee. "We weren't sure how it would be received." The response was very gratifying and encouraged expansion of the summer program into a fourth term with its own catalogue and four courses to choose from. The information about days and times has not yet been established, however enough is known about the subject matter to tempt not only summer residents but also those who are here year round.

Art Rosen, a veteran Adventures in Learning study leader, will present the course "Religion in Collision: The First Millennium A.D." It will focus on the histories of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and how and why these religions grew. Classes will combine PowerPoint augmented lecture and question and answer sessions as well as a study guide prepared especially for this course.

"Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Lives On" is the title Chuck Kennedy has chosen for his summer course. Participants in this course will watch and discuss the three quintessential examples of the Gilbert and Sullivan portfolio: "Trial by Jury," "H.M.S. Pinafore" and "The Mikado." Chuck has been a Gilbert and Sullivan buff for most of his life and has led Adventures in Learning courses before to great acclaim.

"The Life, Works and Legacy of Augustus Saint-Gaudens" is a new course for Adventures in Learning. Henry Duffy, curator at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, and Eric Johnson, curator of The Fells Sculpture Exhibit, will lead the course. It will be held at The Fells, but there will also be a field trip to the national historic site in Cornish, N.H., and a guided tour of The Fells Sculpture Exhibit. The course will explore why this master sculptor was revered in his own time and how his influence endures.

"Bringing Opera to Life" will be led by Ron Luchsinger, the director of productions for Opera North. He has led five previous Adventures in Learning courses and has delighted course participants with his wit and seemingly encyclopedic knowledge of opera and opera lore. This course will take participants behind the scenes and show them what goes into

creating a world-class, live opera performance. There might even be a sneak preview of this summer's opera productions for Opera North, "Carmen" and "The Barber of Seville."

The Curriculum Committee is excited about the summer program but is concerned that some area residents won't hear about it except through word-of-mouth. The courses, however, are open to all, so Morris Edwards' advice is "Tell your friends. These are terrific opportunities for summer education and pleasure."

~Heidi Beckwith

## In Memoriam: Barbara Johnson Stearns

We note with sorrow the passing of Barbara Stearns, a well-known member of the New London community, a supportive and esteemed alumna of Colby-Sawyer College, and an active participant in Adventures in Learning since its inception in 1998.



Barbara Johnson Stearns  
1912–2008

If one were to rank Adventures in Learning enthusiasts according to their level of participation, Barbara would surely be near the top. During these past ten years, she took more than 50 courses in a wide variety of subjects. A devoted ambassador for Adventures in Learning, Barbara was, at 96 years of age, the quintessential lifelong learner. A few years ago she was quoted as saying, "I think it's important to stay involved: if you don't keep up, you get left behind." Barbara will be sorely missed in the community and by the college she loved, but particularly in the Adventures in Learning classrooms by those privileged to have learned beside her.

## Adventures in Learning

Colby-Sawyer College  
541 Main Street  
New London, NH 03257  
[www.colby-sawyer.edu/adventures](http://www.colby-sawyer.edu/adventures)

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Lisa Swanson  
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Planning this spring issue of Horizons way back on a snowy December afternoon are Public Relations Committee members Heidi Beckwith, Ann Lang, Pat Stewart and Maureen Rosen. Committee members not pictured here are Sheldon Boege, Sally Southard, Janet St. Laurent and Gusta Teach.

In addition to writing the newsletter, the committee is responsible for Adventures in Learning publicity in general, as well as for planning special events such as the annual trip. We are always looking for people who enjoy writing! It's a good way to become involved with the Adventures in Learning community. If you are interested, please contact Janet St. Laurent (603-526-3690).

## Summer 2009 Courses

### Religion in Collision—The First Millennium A.D.

Art Rosen

### Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Lives On

Chuck Kennedy

### Bringing Opera to Life

Ron Luchsinger

### The Life, Works and Legacy of Augustus Saint-Gaudens

Henry Duffy and Eric Johnson