

ROCKY NOW

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May 2010



Rocky Now: Keeping our friends and supporters informed about what's new and exciting at Rocky Mountain College



Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Always colorful, the annual Rocky Mountain College Commencement found the Fortin Education Center gymnasium filled with nearly 200 graduates, their families and friends, the RMC faculty decked out in bright robes, and honored guests.

THE 128TH



Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Guest speaker Lowell E. Baier's theme came from Wallace Stegner - "The Geography of Hope" - and he challenged the graduates to find new answers to the challenges of modern life and, in the words of Winston Churchill, to "never quit."



Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Alisa Werner graduated with a degree in elementary education, a cause for a celebratory swing compliments of her husband, Heath.

Rocky Mountain College celebrated its 132nd year in style, wrapping up the year with a gala 128th commencement that included the traditional baccalaureate and graduation ceremonies, but also celebrated a renown conservationist, a devoted member of its staff, and a world famous artist. There were plenty of speeches, with welcome interludes of wonderful music, compliments of the RMC choir and band, and there were plenty of tears along with lots of laughter as nearly 200 graduates became alumni.

Facts about this year's class show, once again, the full value of an RMC education. Of the 197 graduates, 87 were dean's list honorees. Of those who made the dean's list, 24 achieved a 4.0 GPA at least once. At least 50 were student athletes. Twenty three performed with the RMC choir; 17 with the RMC band.

Of this year's class, 25 earned master's degrees in the physician assistant program; 15 in the master's of educational leadership program; and five in the master's of accountancy program.

This class held a special place in the heart of RMC President Michael Mace. It was the first class coming in when he was named president.

This was a class that excelled in community leadership, working with Habitat for Humanity, the Billings Food Bank, and the Montana Rescue Mission. The children of homeless families found willing tutors among the members of the Class of 2010, and RMC's Battlin' Bears again pitched in to help deliver food baskets to needy homes at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Members of this class also volunteered with a variety of Earth Day activities, such as recycling, planting trees, and hosting Green Week programs.

They served as work study students in virtually every department on campus. Some were RMC Ambassadors, helping Admissions with recruitment.

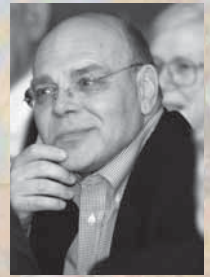
Through concerts, theatre presentations, and art exhibits throughout their years at Rocky, members of this class delighted audiences with song, dance, drama, and creativity.

(Please see **The 128th** on back page)



Insider

by Michael R. Mace, President



Everyone Plays a Part in What We Will Do

I vowed to keep my remarks short this spring when I delivered welcoming remarks, introductions and speeches before, during and after commencement.

It's not an easy task when there are so many wonderful things happening during this season of award banquets, special receptions and dinners, concerts, baccalaureate and graduation.

I want everyone to know how proud we are to have new alumni heading out into the world. I want everyone to experience our happiness with making new friends who come to our campus for one or more of the many events. And, while telling the Rocky story, I want to talk about the Rocky future.

I did some of that. I told how we are succeeding in our goal of 1,100 students. I mentioned our plan for the new science building. I even got in a word about how, by watching our budget closely, we survived the Great Recession.

Each ending is also a beginning, and that's how I regard this year. I came in with the class of 2010. It was exciting to be nurtured by this College along with them. I am graduating, too.

I am entering a new era as president of Montana's oldest institution of higher education just as this year's graduates will enter into new careers and challenges.

New beginnings always demand new pledges. And here are some of mine:

We will achieve our enrollment goals.

We will maintain a balanced budget and build our endowment so we can provide more scholarships to more students.

We will complete the new Bair Science Building.

We will continue to be engaged in the community, maintaining a strong and visible presence.

We will build graduate research programs, a responsive curriculum to an ever-changing world, and enhanced responses to our constituents whether they be students, faculty, staff, alumni, or friends.

These goals will not be achieved by me. They will be accomplished by everyone, collectively. I hope you will support us.

Guests & Gifts & Grants



Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Dan Raviv shares a laugh with U.S. Senator Conrad Burns (seated) while Ann Dickinson, RMC Board Member John B. Mowell, Dori Raviv, Phyllis Burns, and Montana Senator Roy Brown look on. Raviv, a bestselling author and expert on the Middle East, delivered a lecture following the reception, titled "What is at stake in the Middle East for America."



Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Happy with a gift from Dr. Allen Keebler, RMC'98, chief resident in anesthesiology at Cleveland Clinic, are members of RMC faculty, (l-r), Dr. Mark Osterlund (molecular biology), Dr. Cristi Hunnes (biochemistry), Dr. Claire Oakley (physiology and anatomy), Dr. Phil Jensen (cell biology), and Dr. Dan Albrecht (ecology and behavior). The acquisition of dissecting scopes and a camera system was made possible by a \$3,000 donation from Dr. Keebler. "Having the dissecting scopes will be extremely beneficial in general biology, genetics, and cell biology classes. With our newer faculty members, we will be using *Drosophila* (fruit flies) and the dissecting scopes are essential. We are quite excited by this gift," said Dr. Oakley.

RMC Receives \$45,000 Grant from Charles M. Bair Trust

The Charles M. Bair Family Trust has awarded a \$45,000 grant to Rocky Mountain College that will be used for a laboratory renovation, named the Bair Family Demonstration Lab.

The grant will help the Bair Science Building Renovation and Expansion Project, according to RMC President Michael Mace.

"Rocky Mountain College's unique character, architecturally and educationally, is due in great part to the generosity of the Charles M. Bair Family Trust," Mace said. "With this contribution, the Bair Family Trust is once again participating in the growth of one of Montana's most progressive and distinguished science programs."

RMC currently has 280 students, or approximately one-

third of its student population, declaring majors in math and science.

"We are working to ensure that the best and brightest science students continue to pass through our doors," Mace added.

The Charles M. Bair Family Trust board of advisors meets annually to consider grant applications. The Trust was established to commemorate the legacy of one of Montana's most influential families, which was dedicated to philanthropic work, according to the wishes of its last surviving member, Alberta M. Bair, who died in May 1993. The Trust benefits educational institutions, hospitals, and organizations providing health-related services, and cultural, civic service, and human service organizations.

Focus on Faculty & Staff

Dr. Leaf Brings Magic to Campus

When spring arrives, the Rocky Mountain College campus hears voices.

The voices are expressed in verse, short stories, essays, and plays. The voices come across in photography and paintings.

"Voices" is the name given to the awards event held in April to recognize outstanding student writing and art awards.

"Voices" is orchestrated by one of RMC's most beloved faculty members, Dr. Linaya Leaf, professor of English and theatre arts.

Soon after "Voices," comes "Soliloquy," RMC's annual journal of student and alumni artistic expression.

"Soliloquy" is inspired by 240 submissions of writing and art from more than 50 students, which is judged by 11 faculty members from many disciplines.

The effort to nurture young talent comes from her own experience learning to write.

"Make time," she told a reporter for *The Billings Gazette*, is the best advice she can give to aspiring wordsmiths. Her son, Aaron, also helped. He built her a poet's cottage in her backyard where she can concentrate on her writing.

Her other advice: "Give yourself deadlines instead of saying, 'I'll get to this.'"

The advice always comes with encouragement, according to students who admire her.

When Mal Tift was hospitalized, Dr. Leaf, her faculty advisor, came with a present, a cat figurine.

"She said it was infused with good luck to make me better," she said. "Then she gave me an assignment -- to write a poem about that cat."

She also inspires those whose career interests might be in a different direction.

"I'm a pre-med student, but she still tells me I have talent and urges me to keep writing," said Anne Frickle., who won a second place writing award this year.

That's because no matter who you are or what you want to be, Dr. Leaf believes everyone should have some magic in their lives, and magic comes from words, art, music, and the joy of creative expression.

Dr. Leaf received her bachelor's degree from Linfield College, her master's from Northwestern University, and her Ph.D. from the University of Oregon. She completed a post doctoral year in dramatic literature/theater history and poetry writing at the University of California, Davis. She



Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Dr. Linaya Leaf congratulates Shad Scott, a first place winner in the writing category of the annual "Voices" competition. Scott was also the recipient of the outstanding academic award for English in 2010.

has taught English and theatre in Micronesia and Sweden, and has studied and taught a course for the Fort Peck Tribes (Assiniboine and Sioux).

For 28 years, Dr. Leaf has brought magic to teaching. For 18 years, she has brought magic to Rocky.

Focus on Alumni & Friends

Maybe We Need to Give More. . .

A check for \$91,010.31 that Obert Undem, director of major gifts for Rocky Mountain College, received in April, began with eight oxen breaking 60 acres of prairie and 96 steers hauled from St. Paul, Minn.

"Rocky is forever enriched by the decisions made 42 years ago by two brothers and one's wife," noted Undem. "Members of this hard working family, suffering and enduring much hardship and sacrifice, preserved their hard won resources for charitable use."

In 1914, Elias Paulsen, after enduring a 12-day ocean voyage and a six-day train trip that ended where the rails ended, arrived to stake a homestead claim near Scobey, Mont. Within a year, his younger brother, Marius, joined him. They lived in a 12' X 14' shack. It was another epic western story of survival and then success, of feast and famine. The land they bought was added to section by section. Their wealth was improved by occasional oil strikes, but mostly they worked hard, overcoming the dry land farming challenges that farmers along the highland have faced for more than a century.

Not until late in life did Elias marry. Julia Renner was from North Dakota

where, before earning a nursing degree, she was known as a standout high school basketball player. In 1933, when times were tough, she arrived in Scobey to help a doctor there "for a couple weeks." A couple weeks turned into 40 years, delivering babies while she never had any of her own. She was 48 when she married Elias, who said he "was so well to do, I got the best girl in town."

In 1967, the couple, with Marius, did a remarkable thing. Together they executed a will, drawn by Scobey attorney Kenneth W. Hoversland, which was never altered. They agreed to provide 11 charities with proceeds from their estate.

They believed it was not important which church you belonged to as much as the fact that your church was a neighbor to another, so they agreed to leave some of their estate to the Lutherans, Catholics, Methodists, Evangelicals, and Episcopalians.

They believed in medical care, so they left money to the Memorial Hospital and Home (which later became Daniels County Healthcare).

They felt strongly that young people should be cared for, so they left money to Shodair Children's Hospital and the Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch. They also



There were few photos available of the Paulsen family, but one of Julia fits the description many had of her: she was "quite the lady." Family friends said she was kind, compassionate, and intelligent. Her husband said he was so well to do, he "got the best girl in town."

helped with the Scobey Ball Park.

They believed in education as a means to a better life and knew that education provides a passport from lives of poverty. They had helped individuals attend college. Now they agreed to help Concordia College, the College of Great Falls, and Rocky Mountain College.

They did their good work with little fanfare but great enthusiasm.

Once, when the brothers worried that the hospital would not get completed, Elias said to Marius, "Maybe we need to give more to make sure it gets done."

And they did.

Elias died in 1980 at the age of 86; Marius died in 1988 at the age 94; and, the survivor of them all, Julia, died November 19, 2008, at the age of 97.

No one expected to receive as much as they did, although each recipient had been told they were named in the estate.

(Please see **Focus on Friends** on back page)

Neighbor to Neighbor

The Paulsens Had Long Arms

By Barb Skelton,
Chairman of the Board of Rocky Mountain College

In my Commencement welcome, I used an expression that moved me after I heard RMC alumnus Emmanuel Romulus use it. He was interviewed about the tragedy in his native Haiti. The earthquake that devastated that country plunged Emmanuel into despair as he worried about his family. Did they survive or were they buried beneath tons of concrete? Living and working in the United States, there was nothing Emmanuel could do. "My arms are too short," he said in a television interview. He needed to pray that others had longer arms and could reach out to help his country. I asked

our graduates to be good neighbors -- I know I get preachy about that, but I believe in it so strongly -- and to help those whose arms are not long enough.

This month's Focus on Alumni is a wonderful example of how much good can be done by good neighbors. Brothers Elias and Marius Paulsen came from Denmark to homestead south of Scobey, Montana, in 1914. Elias married and his wife, Julia, became part of a family that decided how to distribute their estate early in their lives. Rocky Mountain College became one of the beneficiaries of their estate. When you read the story of their gift, I think you'll appreciate why I feel so strongly about neighbors helping neighbors. It is clear the Paulsens had long arms.



All About Our Students

Meet Mal Tift

In 2008, when Mal Tift was told she might not survive college, it was not about her academic standing. It was about her life. Surgery done to correct the deformed large intestine she was born with turned into a nightmare when she developed an infection. Over a three-year period, Mal had six surgeries.

"I have had a total colectomy, numerous abdominal drains, an ileostomy, two feeding tubes, adhesions, multiple infections, including an infected PICC line (peripherally inserted central catheter line) that landed me in ICU in septic shock, and now a J-pouch (the official term for the way my small intestine has been reshaped to function the way one's colon should).

It's an impressive list for a 24-year-old college student," she wrote in a column about surviving for The Billings Gazette.

For Mal, the answer to her physical dilemma was located on Poly Drive.

"Against medical advice, I made it to my first day of class, with several tubes hanging out of my shirt. I hauled around an IV bag that fed me intravenously, but I was there. Rocky, I believe, is what kept me alive," she said.

Fortified by "overwhelming support and prayers from the staff, faculty, and friends" - they visited her in the hospital, and also brought her homework - she learned to stay alive.

Many of those friends are among the first who encouraged her to attend Rocky after she graduated from Skyview High School in 2004.

"They told me, and it's true, nobody is a stranger here," she said.

Her Rocky family soon showed up to encourage and support her. Her academic advisor, Dr. Linaya Leaf, brought her a figurine of a cat to keep at her bedside in the hospital, with an assignment to write a poem about it.

Though Mal prefers writing fiction in the form of long and short stories, Dr.



Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

For Mal Tift, plagued with medical problems, college means life.

Leaf has encouraged her to branch out with poetry and plays over the years.

"She keeps me on my toes," said Mal, a statement which also applies to the many other professors she has had at Rocky.

"Linaya, Dr. Steve Germic (associate professor, English), Wilbur Wood (adjunct instructor, writing), Dr. Andrew Kirk (professor, English), and Dr. Sean O'Grady (former assistant professor, English) pushed me to the limits with writing. Dr. Barb Vail (associate academic vice president and professor, psychology) has put up with me through half a dozen psych classes. Robyn Cummings (assistant professor, math) and Dr. Ulrich Hoensch (associate professor, math) managed to prod me through my math requirements; I'm grateful that they were patient enough to encourage me, even though I have always been hopeless at math. All of the professors I've had have been so passionate about their subjects that -- even if they weren't classes I was bound to be really successful at -- I

could at least come out with an appreciation for those areas of study."

Her penchant for writing propelled her toward her major, with a second major in psychology added "because it is good background for much of what I write that has psychological themes."

The creative writing program is just the right fit for Mal. She thrives on anticipating the annual "Voices" event leading up to publication of "Soliloquy." This year she was senior editor for the fine arts journal. Independently judged by 11 faculty members, Mal won first place awards for her writing, and praise for a moving dedication to Obert Udem, RMC director of major gifts and an ardent supporter of campus creative arts.

"If you're an athlete, your skills and hard work are constantly on display; with writing, it isn't often that you get a chance to show everyone what you've been working on and can do," she said.

Mal also found a home in theatre, beginning as a stage manager -- and finding a talent for writing plays -- and then appearing in "Almost, Maine," and "The Shadow Box."

Her advice to newcomers is simple: get involved in an array of activities. There is much to be learned in classrooms and much to be experienced in extracurricular activities. Don't hole up in a dorm room playing video games.

"I know it's a cliché, but life really is short. Maybe I'm lucky to have learned that the hard way," she said. "It motivates me to cram as much into each day as I possibly can."

A senior, Mal didn't graduate as she hoped in May, but this December she'll wind up classes and then complete an internship in psychology. No doubt she'll continue to accumulate awards along the way. In 2009, she was the outstanding student in creative writing; this year, she was outstanding student in Services for Academic Success.

And that will be just fine.

"Everyday with Rocky makes me feel I'm back among the living, immersed in the energy of learning."



The 2010 President's Dinner honoring Russell Chatham was sold out. The dinner, to introduce a new project for creating a Russell Chatham Fine Arts Pavilion in the new Bair Science Center, included a raffle of an \$8,000 Chatham lithograph.



Newly elected Billings Mayor Tom Hanel, and his wife, Robin, visit with RMC Board Chair Barbara B. Skelton.



Rockwood and Marilyn Brown visit with Patti Morledge at a reception for Obert Undem at the Granary prior to the President's Dinner.



The attendees enjoyed the humor and insights of Russell Chatham, who spoke of becoming an artist, always perfecting his craft, and his love for Rocky Mountain College.

Celebrating Mr. Chatham

Photos by Dave M. Shumway, RMC



Former Yellowstone Art Museum Executive Director Donna Forbes, who is also this year's Governor's Art Award recipient, gave a memorable introduction to her friend, Russell Chatham.

Coming Attractions

Please note that in June and July, we will not be publishing a Rocky Now. Instead, during the summer months, as we watch our pennies as well as our dollars, we will only publish the President's and Annual Report, which will be issued after we close our fiscal year, June 30, 2010. We will return to monthly publications of the Rocky Now newsletter in August.

JUNE, JULY & AUGUST: SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION

For information about and to register for RMC Summer Camps, offered in basketball, soccer, basketball, cheerleading, volleyball, football, golf, fly fishing, and art academy, go to www.rocky.edu, click on alumni & friends, and then summer camps.

The annual Festival of Cultures always features diversity. From country bands to bagpipers, that diversity is also represented in the music.



JUNE 13

Treasure State Export Seminar, organized by Sen. John Tester, D-Mont. Free to the public. Time and place TBA. Topic will be how to increase Montana's export economy.

JUNE 13

2010 Festival of Cultures, hosted by the Institute for Peace Studies of Rocky Mountain College. The Festival is held on the RMC Green from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. For more information, contact Cindy Kunz, IPS Administrator, at 406-657-1042/email: kunzc@rocky.edu.

JUNE 25

10th Annual Alumni Golf Scramble, with a shotgun start at 1 p.m., at Peter Yegen Golf Club. BBQ follows. Prizes include a \$10,000 hole-in-one prize, and flag prizes on every hole. Cost, which includes green fees, golf cart, and BBQ, is \$85 per person or \$340 per team. For more information, contact Vicki Davison, director of alumni relations and annual fund, 406-657-1005/email: vicki.davison@rocky.edu.

AUGUST 21

The Absaroka Region Porsche Club of America of the Greater Billings and Yellowstone region of Montana/Wyoming holds its third annual All Euro Car Show at Rocky Mountain College, on the Green, 1511 Poly Dr. Registration opens at 9 a.m. Pre-registration is encouraged at: www.clubregistration.net. The show runs from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The show is for those who like to display their European car and/or talk to others about their life with cars. A portion of the \$10 per car entry fee is donated to RMC. The club website is: <http://vista.pca.org/abs>. For more information, contact Fred at 245-6733 or Dan at 697-1333.

The 128th

(Continued from front)



Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

RMC President Michael Mace met a roommate of Obert Udem from his undergraduate days. Udem, RMC director of major gifts, has had a 55-year friendship with Dr. Frederick Phelps III from when they attended Carleton College. Dr. Phelps is a senior faculty member in graduate studies in physics at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Mich.

It is a smart class with 13 summa cum laude, 19 magna cum laude, and 19 cum laude graduates, for a total of more than 50 honor graduates. There were five senior honors projects.

The majority of the class are Montanans, but it also included students from Hawaii, Alaska, Maine, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Minnesota, Nevada, Washington, North Dakota, Texas, California, Colorado, South Dakota, Utah, and New Mexico. International

students in this class are from Taiwan, Sweden, Brazil, Canada, and China.

For many, it is a class that will be remembered for its high energy, for contributing to help win a national basketball championship, and for winning regional and national trophies in aviation, cross country, golf, equestrian, and skiing.

It is a class that typified three words President Mace used in his Charge to Graduates – elevate, educate, and lead. “Go from this place . . .” with a higher purpose, continue to learn and, by moral integrity and ethical behavior, be a leader, he said.

It is a class that knew what RMC Chair Barbara B. Skelton was talking about when she told the story about an alumnus from Haiti who watched helplessly when the earthquake struck his country and he could not be there to help. My



Photo: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Emily McGeachy, who graduated summa cum laude, had family who traveled all the way from Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, to celebrate her accomplishment. A small fan presents her with a little bouquet.

arms were not long enough, he stated. Ms. Skelton told this class to “help others whose arms may not be long enough.”

And it is a class that could understand Lowell E. Baier’s final words, borrowed from Winston Churchill. “Never quit, never quit, never quit.”

Enjoy even more photos and video to see at Photos.Rocky.edu.

Focus on Friends

(Continued from inside)

In addition, each of the beneficiaries has a continuing pro rata interest in a trust, which holds mineral rights to the Paulsen lands.

“Wouldn’t it be fantastic if the Williston Basin and its Bakken Formation is found to underlie this blessed acreage to generate additional strength to these eleven charities,” said Udem.

Across their prairie graves still blows the wind of their lives, bringing good news to the future.

* * *

Thanks to the Daniels County Leader and especially to Vera Lynn Transgrud, who researched their archives and shared information on the Paulsen family; to Kenneth W. Hoversland, attorney for the family, who also shared information; and to Obert Udem, who urged this story -- motivated, in part, by his personal knowledge of the hardships growing up in that part of Montana -- and contributed to it.

