Evelyn's Wishes

Newsletter of the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation, Inc.

Rowland Ballek's 20-Tear Tenure Sees Prudence and Patience Pay Off for MacCurdy

HERE IN OUR TOWNS, we now seem to be "back to normal" with respect to most of our lives pre-Covid, though reasonable prudence with respect to the infectious virus and its many variants is advised. This past year, MacCurdy Salisbury returned for its usual annual reception and awards presentation, and we've resumed in-person meetings to operate the Foundation.

At our 129th Annual Meeting—held at the Old Lyme Beach Club on a sunny September 21—we honored this successful achievement along with several major changes in administration, chief among them the retirement of Rowland Ballek from his 20 years as Foundation President, and the approval of the new President, Fred Behringer of Old Lyme. Fred has served on the Foundation board of directors and has attended all committee meetings over the past year to familiarize himself with the details of the Foundation's operations.

In recognition of increasing administrative responsibilities required by state and federal regulations, the hundred-year (1921-2021) secretary/treasurer position was split into two entities. Leslie Massa was elected Secretary, with Judith Read re-elected as Treasurer, and Mary Seidner re-elected as Vice President.

Three new Foundation members were also appointed: Ramzi Dagher, Mary Guitar, and Ben Merris.

Earlier in the year, the 24 students from the Class of 2022 who are receiving awards were recognized at our Annual Reception, held on May 31 at the Lyme Art Association. This year a total of $374,750 in educational awards were granted to 98 students (76 from Old Lyme, 22 from Lyme). The average award per student is approximately $3600, renewable every year dependent on the student maintaining a solid grade-point average. The average GPA of MacCurdy students in 2021 was 3.44, with 37 students achieving a 3.5-plus GPA.

The reception also honored two graduating seniors with special awards. Felse (Alli) Kyle received the W.E.S. Griswold Class Valedictorian Award in honor of W.E.S. Griswold, the Foundation president from 1965 to 1992; and Nikolai Stephens-Zumbaum received the Class Salutatorian award in honor of Willis Umberger, the Secretary/Treasurer from 1966 to 1986. Both awardees are attending Yale University. ■

Class of 2022: The newest awardees gathered May 31 at the Lyme Art Association to receive their awards and congratulations. Those present were, left to right, Ryan Clark, Aden Wilson, Aidan Goiangos, Jack Conley, Patrick Flanagan, Sam Mullaney, Mary Wholean, Reese Maguire, Felse Kyle, Jonathan Nichele, Victoria Nichele, Elle Myers, Frank Sablone, Rachael Larson, Alexandra Tinnisworth, Elizabeth Duddy, and Shawn Grenier.

Valedictorian Felse (Alli) Kyle

Salutatorian Nikolai Stephens-Zumbaum

Photo by Lyme-Old Lyme Schools, courtesy of LymeLine.com

New Leadership Award Named for Retiring President Ballek

REFLECTING Rowland Ballek's interest in student success and community participation, the Foundation created the Rowland Ballek Leadership Award for a graduating senior in honor of his 47 years of Foundation service. A lifelong resident of Lyme, Rowland was first elected to the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation in 1975, becoming Vice President in 1992 and then President from 2002 to 2022. He guided MacCurdy on the path of a classic, "long-view" institution, and during his 20-year tenure as President, the MacCurdy team worked to raise the Foundation endowment from $4 million to more than $10 million. During Rowland's tenure, the foundation awarded some $5,021,000 to students from our towns.

After excelling in academics and sports at Nathan Hale-Ray High School in East Haddam and serving as President of the Class of 1955, Rowland studied at the University of Connecticut in the School of Business Administration, graduating in 1959 with a major in Industrial Administration and Finance.

Rowland married Connecticut native Nancy Linderson in 1970, and they have two daughters and two grandsons who live in Lyme and Old Lyme.

As a young businessman, he joined the advertising and marketing firm Dexter Associates in 1972 as a partner and, later, as the owner until selling the company in 2000. His firm assisted a wide variety of clients, and also provided consulting services to several Southeastern Connecticut banks.

New President Fred Behringer, left, congratulates Rowland Ballek on his years of service to MacCurdy Salisbury at the Foundation's annual meeting on September 21.

As his business perspective expanded into banking, he was elected to the Board of Trustees at Essex Savings Bank in 1975, and then elected to the Board of Directors in 1992. He became Chairman of the bank in 1995 and then Chairman of Essex Financial Services in 2000, holding both of these positions until his retirement in 2008.

Rowland's local community service includes 19 years as a member and then Chairman of the Lyme Planning and Zoning Committee, 46 years as the Moderator of Lyme Town Meetings, 40 years as Chairman of the Republican Town Committee, as well as many years on the Lyme Public Library's Board of Directors.

Regionally, Rowland served for 25 years on the State of Connecticut's Property Review Board as a member and then as Chairman, and is a member and former President of the Southeastern Connecticut World Affairs Council. He was also a member of the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra's Board of Directors, and is a member and former President of the Old Lyme Beach Club. ■

Jon Goss Named New Regional District 18 Representative on MacCurdy's Board

BACK IN 1973, when the towns of Lyme and Old Lyme created Regional District 18 to unite the towns' schools under one school board, MacCurdy responded by adding three Board of Education representatives to its governing body to be sure that each town had input into the foundation.

This year, Winnie Bing Edmed stepped down as a District representative and rejoined the MacCurdy membership board where she's served since 2015.

In her place, Jonathan Goss, a veteran 27-year technology and engineering teacher, adds his hands-on education perspective to MacCurdy's goals. He joins Jennifer Burke and Paula Gaudet in the Board of Education role.

Jon is no stranger to our schools—his entire teaching career has been in Lyme and Old Lyme. Though he's an East Haddam native, he points out that his great grandparents and one grandfather were from Old Lyme! His own family has lived in Old Lyme since 2017; he and his wife, Amity Goss, have two boys, Woody at the Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School, and his brother, Gig, at Mile Creek School.

Outside the classroom, Jon has been busy as a leader of the Old Lyme Cub Scouts as well as a volunteer merit-badge counselor and leader with the Lyme-Old Lyme Boy Scouts; a 24-year lead mentor for the high school robotics team, the award-winning Techno Ticks; a co-advisor for the high school's WLYM news team; a head co-advisor for the Class of 2026; and a co-advisor for the high school's Electrathon electric-vehicle race team. ■

MacCurdy PROFILE

Paul Spitzer's Lifetime in Science Aspires to a 'Celebratory Ecology' of Humanism

Our local river valley is a fine source of nutrition, featuring diverse forests re-establishing themselves in pasturelands after three centuries of intensive agriculture. It is also a laboratory, teeming with data, and, with luck, offering a means to preserve its essence, which has been deemed part of the largest river ecosystem in New England. It has been dubbed one of the "40 Last Great Places" in the Western Hemisphere by the Nature Conservancy and America's first "National Blueway" in 2012, in recognition of "restoration and preservation efforts on the river."

Our "MacCurdy Profile" this year explores the life and work of an Old Lyme native and MacCurdy Salisbury award recipient who played an important part in these restoration and preservation efforts, not only locally but in other parts of the U.S. and the world.

Paul Randolph Spitzer graduated from Old Lyme High school in 1964, when the environmental movement in the United States was just beginning. His family home on Neck Road near the Old Lyme Marina had views of marshy Calves Island and the Connecticut River winding northward to Lord Cove estuary.

At that time there were only a handful of osprey nests, and even fewer eagles. These two apex predators depend on fish and small animals who in turn depend on smaller animals, plants, and the myriad insects that surround them. There were not many deer or turkeys in our shrubby, second- and third-growth woods; nature rebounds from human agriculture slowly in human terms.

In 1962, Rachael Carson's book *Silent Spring* reached millions of readers with its warning of natural collapse and led to a public environmental movement and a host of monitoring agencies hungry for science to back up anecdotal observation.

For Paul, the river and woodlands were part of town and his eco-monitoring started early. It was soon to be enhanced by both practical technology and theoretical sciences. To check on long-term results, he was able to simply look upward to see what was flying over the familiar marshes, and how many and when.

Building a Scientist in Society

Paul thanks his early mentors in Old Lyme, including his parents, who taught him about science, history, and community. Paul came to Old Lyme at age ten, in 1957, when his parents moved with Pfizer research labs to Groton from Brooklyn.

"There were 50 in my high school graduating class," Paul reports. "I was salutatorian and received several awards for scholarly excellence in various courses. Yet my favorite award was for Auto Mechanics with Carl Kotzan, a fine teacher who carried his classroom practice onto the actual road, with driver's ed. That mechanical knowledge was to prove extremely practical over the following 50-plus years; I was able to apply it in my careful motorboat operation during those years in marshlands studying ospreys and in my 30-year studies of non-breeding common loons on big-water bay and ocean habitats."

High school in Old Lyme was crucial, Paul says. "My most influential high school courses were biology, chemistry, physics, four years of French, and English. James Barnes, my biology teacher, was great—one summer and fall I did an epic insect collection in the fields, gardens, and forests of the Lymes." Paul also noted that his French teacher, Fred Chapelle, was "world class" and that he has used his French in his travels around the world.

"While still in high school, I became a protege of the famed bird artist and author Roger Peterson. He and his wife Barbara Peterson lived up Neck Road near us.

"With this background, the decision of what college to attend loomed important, but was perhaps guided by the Connecticut River itself. With my broad interests, and Wesleyan University's proximity to Old Lyme, and well-respected science program, it was a fine college for me to attend—assisted by some MacCurdy-Salisbury scholarship funding! The 60s were a great time to be a Wesleyan student. It was natural for me to major in biology, and in my senior year, 1967-68, I was intensely interested in the crash of the Connecticut River's own osprey colony, which was monitored with great concern by the Petersons—who suspected DDT was the cause."

Here it's important to remember that, since 1939, DDT was considered a sort of miracle pesticide, in particular for its ability to control pesky mosquitos in our yards and—as a public-health agent—to reduce general insect populations over vast acreages around the world where they commonly spread a variety of very unpleasant, even fatal, human diseases like malaria and dengue fever. But the downside was that the billions of pounds of DDT distributed before its U.S. banning in 1972 killed insects indiscriminately. The DDT-sprayed insects were a major foundation of global food chains in which animals, including birds and humans, participate.

But proof was essential: was DDT itself the cause of visibly declining bird populations, and if so, how much? Much hard groundwork in the field and in the lab was required to establish cause, and then, in both the public and the academic sectors, do something about it. It was to be a long slog but, Paul found, it included ultimately rich rewards.

Paul arrived in the field at the right time

An osprey success story: Osprey nesting towers on Great Island in the lower Connecticut estuary system are kept occupied in the winter by other, familiar, species which patrol the vital waterway for their food sources year-round.

and found that his research work and his personal inclinations meshed. That causal link with DDT, once established, was to have widespread reverberation in the scientific community. The discoveries were amplified by response from the general public, "ecological alarms" connected with various forms of pollution, and general misuse of natural resources. Science, seemingly detached from everyday life, was coming to the rescue and Paul's work on a major experiment proved critical.

"As a Wesleyan student," Paul recalls, "I devised a now well-known 'egg-switch' experiment between Connecticut, a high-DDT area, and viable—low-DDT—eggs from the Chesapeake. It was published in the *New York Times Magazine* and received wide attention. The hatching success of those Maryland eggs up here in Old Lyme's foster nests further argued for the widespread insecticide DDT as a core ecosystem problem on the Connecticut River. DDT kills insects, who store it in their bodies, which are then consumed by fish. Foraging birds like osprey and eagles eat the fish and the birds' eggshells are weakened by the DDT and are easily crushed before hatching.

"I received a salary from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for two years of this work, enabling me to immediately pay off my student loan.

"Then, with Roger Tory Peterson's guidance, I took my osprey-DDT studies to Cornell University for my doctoral program. I very happily used Cornell as a base for ten years and completed my classic Ph.D. thesis in 1980 on the elements of osprey-population biology and the osprey's initial recovery from DDT in coastal habitats between New York City and Boston.

"The Cornell decade was the making of me as a scientist—and a humanist!"

Beyond Local Ospreys

"This is a critical writing time in my life," says Paul. "I enjoy my base with my wife, Christine, in our cozy home on the osprey-infested Choptank River, on Maryland's eastern shore of the Chesapeake—in the town of Trappe— where we've lived for some 30 years.

"From 1968 to my present age of 76, I have worked as a professional ecologist with diverse field studies, which are mostly supported by grants and contracts. These include bird predation on wintering monarch butterflies in Mexico; endangered kakapo parrots in New Zealand from 1980-82; endangered (now extinct) Siberian cranes wintering in India; Chesapeake ospreys from 1983 to the present; and nonbreeding biology of the common loon along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts from 1988 to present.

"Once I know a species and ecosystem—my 'field laboratories'—I tend to stay with them and accumulate knowledge: thus I preserve my ongoing interest in Connecticut's habitats and species. I began here in my formative years and have been able to link this local work to several parallel ecologies on the huge and diverse Delmarva Peninsula off Delaware and Maryland.

"I am now writing to share my accumulated knowledge. I see this as a legacy. "For nine issues, I have published 'Celebratory Ecology' essays in Old Lyme-based *Estuary* quarterly magazine. My topics have included Ospreys at Great Island ('The Osprey Garden'); Loons in Connecticut; the Brant Goose in Connecticut; the forest as human sanctuary; streamside walking; Plum Island, NY; monarch butterfly migration; and the black gum tree ('My Forest Romance with Nyssa').

"I'm fortunate that there is still more to come. I have a good book on loons in manuscript, and I am actively seeking support and a publisher and editor. I am calling that legacy work "Celebratory Ecology."

Does science work? Just look up . . . and see the results, flying! ■

A Note from the President

Fred Behringer Takes the Helm as MacCurdy's New President

THOUGH HE HAS HIS ROOTS nearby, Fred Behringer lived far away before he thought he'd "come back home" to settle in Old Lyme in 1999. He'd grown up in the Goshen section of Waterford, graduated from Waterford High School, and moved on to Bates College, graduating as a biology major in 1981 before continuing to his Ph.D. degree in plant physiology in 1990 from Cornell University in Ithaca.

He continued with postdoctoral research at Penn State University and Oregon State University. After moving "back east," Fred left academia and worked in industry as a senior scientist, first at Verification Technologies and later Sun Chemical, both in Essex. In 2009 Fred established Surveillant LLC in Old Lyme, which focused on product and material testing, as well as innovative counterfeit detection using signature chemistry.

On the way to Cornell, he met his biology/math-major wife, Julie Martel, at Bates, and taught sciences in the Woodhall School in Bethlehem, Connecticut, an experience he called "eye-opening."

"Students, despite their income levels, are in need of help in their decision-making. At times parents are wrapped up in their careers, and not at home for everyday support that kids need as they grow. The guidance may be particularly important for non-college advanced education at technical schools—where both the opportunities and rewards have expanded greatly from just a few years ago."

His own development as a scientist-turned-businessman mirrors the challenges and opportunities inherent in a broad education, he said, stressing that "the benefit of a sound education is very much a part of the original charter of Evelyn MacCurdy Salisbury when she created the Foundation."

"The Lyme-Old Lyme community is fortunate to have such a unique organization dedicated to supporting further education of its graduates. Evelyn did plant a dream 130 years ago," he muses, "and it's amazing how it's grown!" ■

I look forward to heading up MacCurdy Salisbury in the coming years. My predecessors and other members of the Foundation have worked diligently over many decades to keep the Foundation stable, growing, and resilient. Thousands of students from Old Lyme and Lyme have been supported at critical years in their academic and personal growth by MacCurdy's team of leaders, committee members, and Foundation members. Working together we constitute an extended "family" that demonstrates the faith that Evelyn MacCurdy Salisbury placed in our young people. I'm honored to be part of continuing her vision of improving educational opportunities.

—Fred Behringer

Outgoing President Rowland Ballek addresses award recipients and their families at the annual Scholarship Reception.

MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation Officers L-R, outgoing President Rowland Ballek, Treasurer Judith Read, Vice President Mary Seidner, Secretary Leslie Massa, and incoming President Fred Behringer.

MacCurdy Salisbury Educational
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The MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation has a long-standing tradition of providing financial support to local students going on to further their education at colleges and universities after their high-school years. Founded by Evelyn MacCurdy Salisbury in 1893, the Foundation was originally named the Lyme High School Association, and helped support educational activities in Old Lyme. It began giving direct grants to students from Old Lyme to continue their education beyond high school in 1918. In 1939, the name was changed to the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation. In 1973 Berenice Brevillier started the Lyme portion of the fund at the Foundation so students from both towns—the majority of which attend the Regional District 18 school system—could participate. In 2016 the Old Lyme and Lyme funds merged to better serve the students from both towns.

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Postal Customer

Editor's Note

Ecological Science: Giving Back

Lyme and Old Lyme—and MacCurdy Salisbury—have fostered the academic interests of students for well over a century, including the work of many and varied scholars whose discoveries have been of national interest. Rarely, however, can we trace a lifetime of inspiration directly back to our towns, and rarer still see the fusion of academic and practical ecology that is of direct, immediate benefit to all our residents—past, present, future. The profile in this edition of the newsletter is an illustration of this fusion.

Paul Spitzer notes: "I return to hometown Old Lyme, and still do some scientific field studies here when appropriate. Most recently, I revisited the river's osprey colony at Great Island and beyond to document osprey dependence on migratory menhaden abundance in the estuary over the spring seasons of 2014-17. This study is one way I can give back for MacCurdy's educational support in my youth.

"My educational, 'Celebratory Ecology' essays in the Old-Lyme based Estuary quarterly magazine report topics from the estuary and the whole river watershed. They are my published 'ecological legacy' to Old Lyme and the entire 400-mile Connecticut River Valley." ■

MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation, Inc.
2022-2023 Membership

Officers	Year Joined
Fred Behringer, President	2016
Mary Seidner, Vice-President	2000
Judith Read, Treasurer	2011
Leslie Massa, Secretary	2000

Board of Directors

Cyndi Miller Aird	2019	Kevin McGlinchey	2017
Matthew Cantner	2008	Thomas Richardson	2016
Michael Ganey	2019	Thomas Sherer	1997

Board of Education Representatives

Jennifer Burke	2009	Paula Gaudet	2018
Jon Goss	2022		

Foundation Members

Steven Ames	2004	Jeffrey Hartmann	2009
Christopher Arnold	2007	Susan Hessel	2005
Rowland Ballek	1975	David Kelsey	2017
Nicki Berry	2008	Ben Merris	2022
Rev. Rebecca Crosby	2005	Steven Olstein	2019
Ramzi Dagher	2022	John Pfeiffer	2005
Winnie Bing Edmed	2015	Matthew Sharp	2013
James Fairfield-Sonn	2013	David Speirs	1981
Rev. Carleen Gerber	1986	C. Michael Walker	1996
Katie Gingras	2019		
Leslie Gourlay	2011	Thomas McGarry, Esq.,	
Evan Griswold	2012	*Legal Advisor*	1969
Matthew Griswold XI	2015	Ned Perkins,	
Timothy Griswold	1975	*Administrative Manager*	
Mary Guitar	2022		
Gregory Hack	2003		