

Spring 2011
Volume 3
Issue 1

UMF BFA Creative Writing Newsletter

Individual Highlights:

- Graduate Success Stories 2
- Two BFA faculty members publish books 3
- Bill Roorbach returns to UMF 4
- Senior BFA readings 5
- Other BFA students news 5
- Other BFA faculty news 6

“Yet no matter how much support you have, how many schedules you make or how many books you’ve written before, there remains the basic irrationality of the task: you are sitting by yourself trying to make something out of nothing, and you rarely know where you’re going next.”

-Bill Roorbach

Editor: Breanna DeLuca

SCREENWRITING STANDS OUT AT UMF

Nathaniel “Teal” Minton is UMF’s newest full-time faculty in the Creative Writing department. Minton comes to UMF with a background in screenwriting, having worked in the field for over 20 years as a filmmaker, casting director, and camera operator. In addition to teaching classes on Stanley Kubrick and New Media, Minton also heads the introductory and advanced screenwriting classes at UMF. In his workshop, students are responsible for producing a screenplay of about 100 to 120 pages, roughly the “equivalent to one feature length film.”

Although many students come into Minton’s classes with little background in screenwriting, he recounts that most of them quickly adapt and understand how screenplays are supposed to look in about fifteen minutes. However, more challenging issues arise when students realize they are locked into a strict form with rigid boundaries, writing from only one

point of view, and not only have to please their viewing audience, but also a professional audience. “There is a shift from typical creative writing media,” Minton says. “It’s different than playwriting. Here, the images come over the words. A screenplay can’t function as a play. There is a conceptual switch of what is being communicated.”

Highlighting screenwriting as one of the most unique and distinctive medias in this field, Minton goes on to say that screenwriters are at the advantage because “everyone has seen movies. Everyone has had an idea for a movie.” It is however, the “collaborative nature of the medium” that can be most daunting. Screenplays have to go through numerous revisions, where everyone from the actors to the musical directors to the editors have a say in how the screenplay is shaped because “everyone in the industry has skills that complement each other. Everyone is master of their skill.”

Minton is quite familiar with the industry because after high school, he attended film school and then moved onto apprenticeships that lead him to Hollywood. “Hollywood is great training, full of trial and error,” he adds. Although working with professionals in Hollywood is essentially how the art of screenwriting survives, Minton states that there is a conflict in purpose for writing. “It’s business versus intellectual, the artistic. This is the most expensive art form, and there is a lot at stake.” After having spent many years as a “cog in the big machine”, Minton found a new drive for screenwriting in the academic setting. At the University of Iowa, Minton worked with fiction to “break out of form and environment”, but it was while attending graduate school that Minton found himself in front of the classroom as well. Discovering his new passion for teaching and the young voices he was working with, Minton recognized that his motiva-



This year will be the third summer of the Longfellow Mountains Young Writer’s Workshop which will now be run by Teal Minton and Shana Youngdahl with guests such as Steve Almond and William Gibaldi, as well as returning faculty Wesley McNair, Pat O’Donnell, Michael Burke, Carey Salerno, and Jeff Thomson.



tion was shifting towards independent and personal work that did not “cater to the Hollywood type of achievement.” “Talking with other writers in a way that isn’t dictated by business is refreshing,” he says. At UMF, Minton enjoys that his classes are full of multi-major students who can bring new tools and diverse conversation to the workshop. “And I always consider myself a student too,” Minton adds. “If you stop learning, you can’t be a writer.”

Most recently,

Minton is in charge of the Longfellow Writer’s Workshop, a summer program in Farmington geared towards high school juniors and seniors who are interested in the creative arts. Workshops in fiction, screenwriting, and poetry will be offered as well as hiking trips, yoga classes, and life in the dorms. Minton is incredibly excited to “show how important it is to encourage young writers to experience Creative Writing as reality, a possibility and not just a hobby.” He is passionate that writing

should not be viewed as such an isolating craft, and through Longfellow, Minton hopes to bring about a strong writing community. “As writers, we’re in it together. Longfellow provides the opportunity for students to spend a week with others who feel the same. We have the responsibility to open up this field.” This is Longfellow’s third year running at UMF and Teal hopes that students will experience the “joy of creativity, the discipline of writing.”

-Max Eyes

Success Stories

Many of our BFA current majors and graduates have received good news this year. A few stories of special interest are below.

Sara Gelston, 2005 BFA graduate, is finishing her MFA in poetry at the University of Illinois, and has been named the Diane Middlebrook Poetry Fellow at the University of Wisconsin Madison. Her duties there include teaching one creative writing workshop per semester, and giving a public reading. The fellowship is to provide writers time and money to finish their first book. Jacques Rancourt was on the committee who picked applicants for Sara’s award. He wrote: “She was my top choice out of the stack of finalists, which were all blind, so I was very excited when

afterwards we found out who we had picked.”

Katherine (Kate) Johnson, formerly Thompson, 2012 BFA graduate, had her novel *The Ghosts of Good Things* signed by New York literary agency Don Congdon Associates. Kate started the novel in the spring of 2009 in Elizabeth Cooke’s “Writing the Literary Novel” class. She completed the novel in several Directed Studies with Elizabeth over the next two years. She did five drafts before she sent it out. Kate researched agents using the Writers’ Digest Agents of 2012, followed by online research. The book is to be a set of three; the agency is considering signing books two and three also. Kate is now in the process of

revising the book yet another time, based on the agent’s suggestions. Kate’s other publications have been in *Ripple* and the *Sandy River Review*. She graduated this spring, but will return to Farmington next year while her husband finishes his degree in Psychology at UMF.

Jacques Rancourt, 2009 BFA graduate, has been awarded a Stegner Fellowship in Creative Writing at Stanford University for 2012-2014. Jacques was an MFA student at the University of Wisconsin Madison from 2009-2011. And this past year (2011-12), he was the Halls Emerging Artist Fellow at the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing. For this Fellowship he taught one creative writing class

Current issues of the Sandy River Review, our student-edited literary journal, are available for viewing online. Go to: <http://sandyriverreview.umf.maine.edu/>



a semester and spent the rest of the time working on his book. For the Stegner Fellowship he is not required to teach, although he may, and he will attend a weekly workshop with other Stegner Fellows.

Some of the most important writers of the past century have been Stegner Fellows, including Edward Abbey, Max Apple, Wendell Berry, Raymond Carver, Ernest Gaines, Tom McGuane, Larry

McMurtry, N. Scott Momaday, Tillie Olson, Robert Stone, and ZZ Packer.

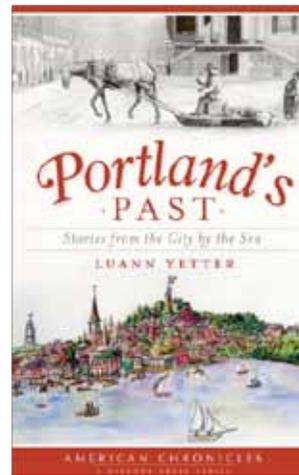
-Pat O'Donnell

Two BFA Faculty Publish Books

Pat O'Donnell, Program Director and Fiction professor, and Luann Yetter, Journalism and First Year Writing professor, both have new books coming out.

Luann Yetter's second book *Portland's Past: Stories from the City by the Sea*, was published by The History Press in the fall of 2011. Her first book, *Remembering Franklin County: Stories from the Sandy River Valley*, was published by the History Press in 2009. A history in stories, *Portland Past* is a collection of true accounts from the years surrounding 1633 up until Portland's centennial in 1886. With a focus on Portland's historical characters, the book gives a unique perspective of what life was like on the peninsula as Portland grew from a rugged outpost through its development into a New England seaport. Says Luann, "After writing the Franklin County book, it was fun to think about other locations to write about. I was curious about Portland's history although I didn't

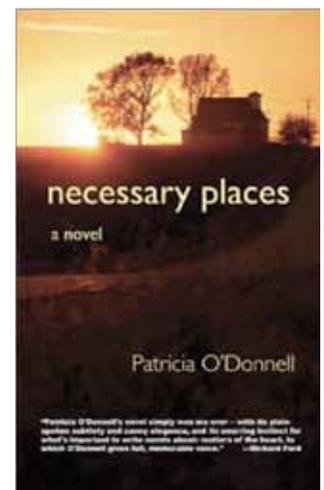
know much about it to begin with. I was fascinated when I started delving into



it writing it." Learn more on www.luannyetter.com.

Pat O'Donnell's novel *Necessary Places* has a publication date of June 1st. O'Donnell's stories have been published in *The New Yorker*, *Agni Review*, *The North American Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and many other places, but this is her first novel. The book is just the fourth offering from a new Maine press, Cadent Publishing. Pat says "My agent, Tris Coburn, decided to start his own press, along with a friend of his from the publishing industry, Jon Eaton." Pu-

litzer-Prize winner Richard Ford says of the book "Patricia O'Donnell's novel simply won me over—with its plain-spoken subtlety and canny elegance, and its unerring instinct for what's important to write novels about: matters of the heart, to which O'Donnell gives full, memorable voice." Learn more about the book, and about Cadent Publishing, here: <http://cadentpublishing.com/necessaryplaces/index.html>



This article was written with the help of Kate Baum, 2007 BFA graduate and UMF Assistant Director of Alumni Relations.

ROORBACH RETURNS to UMF

After seventeen years, established writer and professor Bill Roorbach returns to the University of Maine Farmington to teach once again. Roorbach taught at Ohio State

for some time, but he is currently the visiting professor of the Intro to Fiction class. Though he is familiar with the workshop setting, Roorbach acknowledges that every group of students is different. "I like the laid-back quality of the students here," he

says. "Very sweet and honest and funny, and not worried about what medical school they're going to get into."

Prior to landing into his role as a professor, Roorbach focused his energy into "taking jobs that gave [him] time and didn't use up [his] writing juju." This included every-

thing from ranch hand to bartender to plumber to musician. "I never set out to be a teacher," he says. "And though I love it: I set out to be a writer." Roorbach encourages

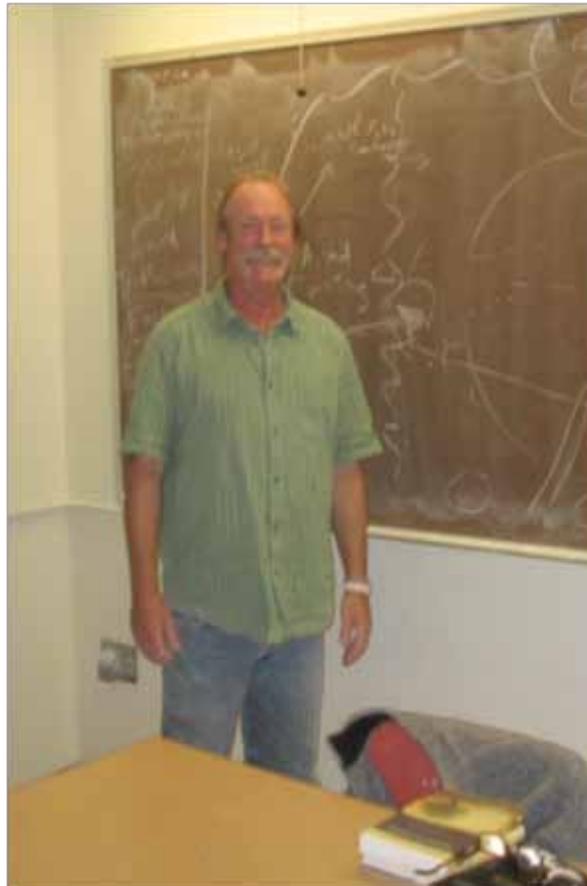
good book, and that has to be your first goal, because there are no guarantees about making money in this game." Roorbach goes onto say, "don't get a job, just get some money,"

emphasizing his outlook that writers must always write and one day "get good enough to get some interest from publishers."

Roorbach is the author of *Temple Stream*, inspired by the stream that runs behind his house in Farmington. His next book is called *Life Among Giants* and will be published in November, by Algonquin.

He will be giving a reading at UMF November 9th.

-Max Eyes



"The 11 Stages of Writing A Book"

1. Inspiration
2. Procrastination
3. Masturbation
4. Perspiration
5. Speculation
6. Desperation
7. Publication
8. Desperation (Part 2)
9. (Imagined) Retaliation
10. Resignation
11. Inspiration

-From "Bill and Dave's Cocktail Hour" by Bill Roorbach and David Gessner.

SENIOR READINGS

Visiting Writer's Series

In spite of the temporary absence of Jeff Thomson, who directs the Visiting Writers Series, we had another successful series this year. The Fall readers were Lia Purpura in nonfiction, Lily King in fiction, and Nikki Finney in poetry. All of these readings were powerful, but Nikki Finney's rocked the crowd, followed just days later by the announcement that her book, *Head Off & Split*, won the National Book Award. Spring readers were Sean Thomas Dougherty in poetry, Justin Tussing in fiction, and Ira Sukrungruang in nonfiction. All six readers visited with the Senior Seminar students before their readings, in an informal and intimate discussion. Readings are now available on podcast on our BFA webpage (<http://creativewriting.umf.maine.edu/>).

Graduating seniors gave two readings again this year, one in December and one in May. The readings are associated with the Senior Seminar in Writing, English 401; students read from their work at the end of the semester during which they are enrolled in the Seminar. The Fall reading was held in the new Emery Arts Center;

the Spring reading took place in the more familiar setting of the Landing in the Student Center. Each reading was well-attended by students, community people and families of the readers. Three awards were given each semester for excellence in Fiction, Poetry, and Nonfiction; in the future an award in Screenwriting may be

part of this line-up. Fall winners were Callie Koenig in Fiction, Matt Daigle in Nonfiction, and Sarah Moore in Poetry. Spring winners were Kate Johnson in Fiction, Elizabeth Walk in Nonfiction, and Darren Smart in Poetry.

-Pat O'Donnell



Other Student BFA News

Kate Baum, 2007 BFA graduate, was recently hired by UMF as the Assistant Director of Alumni Relations.

Peter Biello, 2005 BFA graduate and 2008 MFA University of North Carolina at Wilmington, is an Announcer/Producer at Vermont Public Radio.

Cynthia Bracket-Vincent, as editor of poetry

journal *The Aureorean*, offered for the first time in 2011 a yearly chapbook competition through Encircle Publications. This year's winner was *Nectar* by Lisa Bellamy.

Lee Cart, 2010 BFA graduate, is a book reviewer for *The New Maine Times* and *Kirkus Reviews*.

Devany Chaise-Greenwood, UMF junior, is this

year's winner of the Eisen Creative Writing scholarship. This award is given to "a student in the Creative Writing program who has demonstrated a passion for creativity and great promise as a writer as evidenced by submitted samples." Devany has also recently been hired as Editorial Assistant for Alice James Books.

Kate Chianese, a 2010

Other BFA Faculty News

Michael Burke served on the Fulbright Screening Committee for Student Creative Writing awards for 2011. He had three articles in Down East during 2011 (February, August, and October), and another essay in the February 2012 issue. He facilitated a presentation with author and environmentalist Bill McKibben sponsored by the Maine Humanities Council in Belfast on January 20th.

Professor Gretchen Legler, currently on Fulbright leave in Bhutan, has been named UMF's Trustee Professor for 2012/2013. The Trustee Professorship is a rotating endowed professorship, awarded each year to a UMF faculty member in recognition of his/her distinguished scholarship or creative work. The Trustee Professor for 2011/2012 is Eric Brown; the Trustee Professor for 2010/2011 was Jeff Thomson.

Professor Jeffrey Thomson is currently the Fulbright Distinguished Scholar in Creative Writing at the Seamus Heaney Center of Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland, where he is teaching and writing while on sabbatical. This Fulbright is the only Fulbright offered in Creative Writing.

BFA graduate, is in the MFA Fiction program of the California College of the Arts, where she is Managing editor of *eleveneleven*, their literary journal. Kate's piece, "quiet," won the Editor's Choice Award in the Spring 2012 Sandy River Review.

Marlena Clark, 1999 BFA graduate, is in the MFA Program at Emerson College. Her writing can be read on scissorsandspackle.com.

Ashley Crosby, 2009 graduate of the BFA Program in Creative Writing, has been working as Director of Social Media for the Cape Cod Baseball League. She has accepted a position as Sports Information Intern at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. She writes: "I love my internship, and I'm very glad I took this opportunity. I've learned so much in a very short period of time, I've met a number of very interesting people, I'm getting paid to write for a living, and Nashville is an amazing city to work and live in."

David DiSarro, 2003 BFA graduate and 2011 PhD from Ball State University, is Director of the Writ-

ing Center and Assistant Professor of English at Endicott College in Beverly, Massachusetts.

Mallory Cyr, a 2009 BFA graduate, will enter Boston University's Masters of Public Health program with a concentration in Maternal Child Health in the Fall of 2012. Mallory has been serving as the National Youth Program Manager at Got Transition? Its webpage says that Got Transition? "... is a national resource for health care professionals, families, youth, and state policy makers focusing on a young adult's transition from pediatric to adult health care." In this role Mallory traveled widely and meant many interesting people,



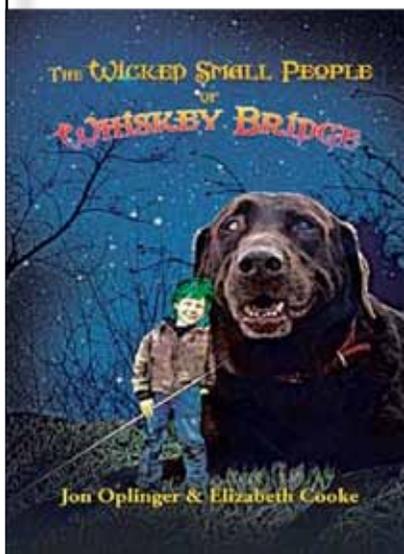
as this photo reveals! **Emma Deans**, 2011 BFA graduate, has created a website called "Maine to

me' (www.mainetome.com) that will, in the coming months, contain multimedia documentary pieces that tell stories about Maine people and places. She writes: "I am researching possible grants to help with equipment and time costs...if any of you happen to know of funding opportunities I could be eligible for, I am open to suggestions! Also, if you or someone you know has a compelling Maine story to share, I would be interested in hearing about it. You or he/she might just be my next interviewee!" Emma was the featured student at her UMF graduation ceremony last year, and has been accepted into a Master's Program in Multimedia Journalism at the University of Oregon for the fall of 2012.

Juliette Guilmette, 1998 BFA and 2005 MFA from Colorado State University, teaches at Kennebec Valley Community College, where she chairs the Humanities dept. She also is on the editorial board for the *Beloit Poetry Journal*.

Leah Kuehn, current BFA major, won a partial scholarship to the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts. Haystack is an interna-

Elizabeth Cooke has recently published a book for children co-written with Sociology Professor Jon Oplinger. It's called *The Wicked Small People of Whiskey Bridge*, and is available from Amazon.



tional craft school located on the Atlantic Ocean in Deer Isle, Maine. The school offers intensive studio-based workshops in a variety of craft media including clay, glass, metals, paper, blacksmithing, weaving, woodworking and more. Leah will work in the kitchen as she completes a two-week program in "Visual Poetry," taught by Jan Bervin. In this course students will "make poems and experiment with ephemeral modes, tactile methods, unusual scale, spaces, and durations in order to create a more open field for poetic possibility. "

Ako Kisuna, 1996 BFA graduate, is a patent translator in Japan, translating Japanese into English.

Julianne LaMay Lefler, BFA 1997 and MA Media Arts Emerson 2003, is the Digital and Calendar Editor at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Matt Luzitano, 2009 BFA graduate, is finishing his MFA in poetry from Warren Wilson College.

Jason MacLeod, BFA 2002 and MFA University of Montana 2009, is adjunct professor (online) at Florida Tech University and Chapman University. He recently bought a house in Portland.

Shanna McNair, 2002 BFA graduate and

2011 MFA, Stonecoast, is a founding editor of *The New Guard*, a Maine literary review.

Jesse Miller, 1999 BFA graduate and 2002 MFA Goddard College, is an adjunct professor at Kennebec Valley Community College.

Sarah Moore, 2011 graduate, will attend the MFA Program at the University of Galway, Ireland. She will live on her sailboat, *Ronan's Wake*, with her partner, Drew. Sarah was last year's Eisen Scholarship winner.

Patricia Patterson King, 2000 BFA graduate, is Director of Marketing & Business Development at Payson Regional Medical Center, Payson, Arizona.

Emily Pottle, 2012 BFA and BA Psychology graduate, will attend University of Maine's Master of Psychology Program. Her first year will be fully funded by the Standish Award.

Cynthia Ravinski, BFA 2005, earned an MA in popular fiction from Seton Hill University. Her work is featured in the book *Scribings*.

Meg Reid, 2008 BFA graduate, earned her MFA in Nonfiction this spring from the University of North Carolina MFA program. She has an essay in *The Rumpus.net.*, and an-

other coming out in *Mat-ter Journal*. As an intern at Lookout Books, Meg was taken to the National Book Awards Ceremony.

Rachel Robbins, 2003 BFA graduate and 2005 MFA University of Southern Maine, is adjunct English instructor at the University of Maine at Augusta and Thomas College.

Kate Russell, 2006 BFA graduate and 2009 MFA University of Indiana at Bloomington, has a story coming out in the spring issue of the *Beloit Fiction Journal*.

Devon Sprague, BFA 2001, is an assistant professor of writing and an associate director of the Center for Writing and Academic Achievement at Stonehill College in Easton, MA.

Carla Worden, 2009 BFA graduate, earned her Master of Arts in Teaching degree in Secondary Education from Sierra Nevada College.

Emily Young, 2009 BFA graduate, earned her MFA in Fiction from the University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast Program.

-Pat O'Donnell