

► My Corner

By Barbara Mallette

"I hope I can be the autumn leaf, who looked at the sky and lived. And when it was time to leave, gracefully it knew life was a gift."

— **Dodinsky**



Fall. The word itself implies a single event. However, the reality of what happens to our area in fall supports the notion that fall is a process.

Am I the only one who continues to be amazed by the changing of the leaves this fall? Some trees, ornamental plum and ash, have lost most of their leaves.

Yet the red maples, silver maples, and paperbark maples are just beginning to show some color. And the leaves on the Bradford pears are as green as they were in spring. The process of leaf change unfolds slowly so we can savor the colors over the course of two plus months. Newspapers, local newscasters, and even the *New York State Conservationist* relay the status of fall foliage, urging us to "leaf peek" during peak times.

This fall we await our first frost with trepidation. Frost brings crisp air that often replaces the heavy, humid air of late summer. Frost also slows the insects. Bees appear "frozen" on remaining blossoms; they return to life when the sun warms their bodies. Banded

wooly caterpillars appear and we try to gauge the severity of the upcoming winter by the color of their bands or the thickness of their fuzz. And the summer birds (e.g., orioles, hummingbirds) have moved onto warmer locations. We recall some Octobers that brought our first snowfall, high winds, and heavy rains. Sometimes our children wore winter coats and boots over their costumes when they trick or treated for Halloween.

Fall marks transition: donning long pants and jackets, and filling our closets/drawers with sweatshirts and sweaters; locating hats and gloves; winterizing mowers and gardens; adding winter emergency kits to our cars; viewing the last of the season's baseball games and endless football games; and enduring all-too-soon holiday displays in the stores.

Fall is also a transition to diminishing daylight. The end of daylight savings time reminds us that the hours of sunlight begin to recede at this point in the calendar. Darkness greets us in the morning and early evening. Yet hardy Western New Yorkers continue to celebrate the outdoors, relishing cooler temperatures and sunshine when possible.

"Autumn shows us how beautiful it is to let things go."

— **Unknown**

The Emeritus Newsletter is also available in electronic form. Please email Denise Szalkowski at denise.szalkowski@fredonia.edu if you are interested in receiving the newsletter through email instead of a paper copy. Thank you!

► Save the Date

Please mark your calendars for these upcoming events:

- Emeritus Holiday Open House, Thursday, December 12, 2019, Noon-2:00 PM, Lanford House, 194 Central Avenue
- Emeritus Spring Luncheon, Friday, March 6, 2020 Shorewood Country Club, 4958 West Lake Road, Dunkirk, NY
- Commencement, Saturday, May 16, 2020, Steele Hall Fieldhouse
- Emeritus Summer Luncheon, Thursday, June 11, 2020, The College Lodge, 8067 Route 380, Brocton, NY

► Events@Fredonia

Please check out the Fredonia website for upcoming events <http://events.fredonia.edu>.

Below are just a few of the great events taking place on campus this winter.

- Annual Pottery Show & Sale, Wednesday, November 13, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Williams Center, Multipurpose Room
- Partners in Health Engage Chicken Dinner, Come for great food, live music, and art raffles to benefit Honduras Health Care medical brigades! Proceeds will be donated to the Stand with Haiti campaign to benefit patients with HIV/AIDS. Dinner catered by La Casa D'Mangia Includes half chicken OR eggplant casserole, mashed potatoes, salad, bread roll, and dessert. Thursday, November 14, 5:00 PM to 7:30 PM, Science Center, Atrium
- Christmas Pops: The Swingles, Wednesday, December 11, 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM, Rockefeller Arts Center
- SUNY Fredonia Learn to Skate, please check the events calendar for dates and times.
- Public Skating, Steele Hall G02, Ice Rink Arena, please check the events calendar for dates and times.

► A Wonderful Opportunity



Help Needed

Volunteers are needed for Commencement, Saturday May 16, 2020. Two ceremonies will be held; one in the morning, the second in the afternoon. Please consider helping for half the day or the full day. Breakfast is provided for morning volunteers; lunch is available for full day volunteers. VIP parking will be available for volunteers.

Add your name to the list of volunteers by emailing the President's Office: Dawn.Hunt@fredonia.edu or Denise.Szalkowski@fredonia.edu

► **A message from Interim President Dennis L. Hefner**

Dear Fredonia Emeriti:

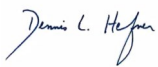
The campus is extremely busy with many enrollment activities. The PA/Ohio "Good Neighbor" initiative has been launched to increase undergraduate enrollments, especially from the Erie, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland-Akron metropolitan areas. The BS in Environmental Science and our first 100% online academic program, a 30-credit graduate Certificate in Educational Leadership, will be submitted to SUNY in late November/early December. These two programs, along with more pathway programs from undergraduate to Master's programs, should assist with next year's enrollment and budget.

The Presidential search has been launched with formation of a committee, selection of a Pennsylvania-based search firm, Storbeck-Pimintel, and an initial meeting of everyone on November 7. The goal is to have Fredonia's 14th President starting July 1, 2020.

One piece of good budget news involves campus construction. The SUNY Construction Fund commitments, which previously included renovation of Jewett and renovation of the Reed Library office areas and Learning Center to support the Student Support Corridor, expanded 10 days ago to include design, construction, and equipment dollars for the 2nd Floor of Houghton Hall, full renovation of Fenton Hall (air conditioning, too!), and full renovation of Thompson Hall. These three projects will bring approximately \$50 million of additional funding to Fredonia over 6 years. Years 1-3 are guaranteed, and include design funding for Reed, Jewett, 2nd Floor Houghton, Fenton and Thompson; Construction and Equipment for 2nd Floor Houghton and Reed Library, and some initial construction funding for Fenton (\$1.5 million) and Thompson (\$2.0 million). As currently configured, full construction and equipment funding would be released for Jewett in year 4, Fenton in year 5, and Thompson in year 6. Securing these additional dollars is my Christmas gift to the new President.

Jan and I are very much looking forward to hosting the Thursday, December 12 Emeriti reception at the President's House from 12:00-2:00 pm. We hope to see many of you. In the meantime, we wish all of you a wonderful holiday season and a very happy new year!

Sincerely,



Dennis Hefner
Interim President

► Emeritus Spotlight

Jim Shokoff

By Barbara Mallette and Jim Shokoff

"Life and the world, or whatever we call that which we are and feel, is an astonishing thing. The mist of familiarity obscures from us the wonder of our being. We are struck with admiration at some of its transient modifications, but it is itself the great miracle."

— Percy Bysshe Shelley



Jim Shokoff recalls his humble beginnings in Teaneck, New Jersey as "a Depression baby born to a Depression family living in a Depression town." His parents were from New York City but moved to New Jersey at some point. The Empire State Building was visible from Jim's neighborhood. One of Jim's grandfathers was a blacksmith who helped build the Panama Canal. In fact, Grandpa lived in Panama for twenty-one years. When reflecting on his own early education, Jim remarked that he wasn't a great student. He found gainful employment driving a taxi after earning a high school diploma (one of the first in his family) from Palisades Park Public Schools. He loved going to "the city," visiting at least once weekly. Walking around NYC was one of his favorite pastimes when funds were too tight for catching a show.

The Army drafted Jim in December 1954. Moving from Fort Dix to Fort Gordon (Georgia) was eye-opening. Jim remembers bivouacking in the sandy Augusta woods under trees with rattlesnake alarms attached. The South gave way to Germany when Jim was stationed in Nurnburg/Fuerth. The tale of crossing the Atlantic on the USS General S. D. Sturgis was remarkable. The Sturgis was making a final trip as the last World War II troop transport to Europe. Because of the rough waters, Jim was assigned the task of distributing bags with wax liners to soldiers in need as they entered or left the mess hall. Fortunately, Jim was seasick free during the voyage.

In Germany and in the Army, Jim first "got the bug for college." With roommates who had some college under their belts, Jim was encouraged to be college bound. The College Boards (SATs) were required for college admission. To take the SAT off base (in Fuerth), Jim needed a pass from his hard-nosed top sergeant. Much to Jim's surprise, there was no pass waiting for him at the gate the day of the test. Was his desire for college to be thwarted by a sergeant who did not sympathize with soldiers who wanted to leave the army for school? Fortunately, his platoon sergeant who did sympathize shoved Jim into his car gave him a ride to the test. You may be reading this thinking... "Jim passed the exam with flying colors and entered college." The real story is that Jim never found out his SAT results because back then SAT results were sent directly to his high school. Luckily, Jim's high school courses aligned with college admission. He was accepted by Rutgers on probation while completing his service in Germany.

Upon Jim's return to the U.S., he had only one week to prepare for college life. With little money and a big goal, Jim found that he had to manage both coursework and employment, even returning to driving a cab. To explore academia, Jim completed a broad array of courses, with English and Physical Geography (Geology) drawing his interest. Making the Dean's List in his first year must have been reinforcing, as Jim earned this honor every year. One of the best parts of being at Rutgers was that Jim met many good people; not surprising, many of these relationships he still maintains. Upon graduation, Jim received a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to attend Columbia University.

Settling in to a five-floor walkup in New York, Jim was introduced by his friend, Julio de la Torre, a Cuban exile (and in Jim's words, "a genius"), to an attractive young Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Iowa. After teaching art classes in Mount Kisco for a year, Ruth moved to New York and worked in the research library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Jim was smitten. He smiles and remembers that Ruth wore a red skirt and red sweater that day. It didn't take him long to ask Ruth out to a Wagnerian opera at the "Old Met" on Broadway and 40th Street. Jim and Ruth's short courtship involved attending medieval

► Emeritus Spotlight—*continued*

music group concerts before they wed in 1962. Jim had completed his course work at Columbia and attacked the ever-present financial problem by taking a job as a case worker at the Harlem Welfare Center and doing his research for his Master's degree at night. To be closer to work, Ruth and Jim moved to East Harlem. The Shokoffs were two of the first tenants in Franklin Plaza, a subsidized housing development. Living here was a real joy; they met people from diverse backgrounds. Jim notes that "the building was full of varied ethnicities, among them: a Jewish family, three Pakistani students, Shirley Verette (a mezzo-soprano opera singer at the Met), several African American families, and a writer for the *New York Times*." It was a good place for Jim and Ruth to welcome and raise their first child, Elisa, who was actually born in a Greenwich Village hospital.

After a year as a Case Worker, a friend's mother, Bessie Schwartz, had won Jim's enduring affection by alerting him to the emergent needs of the NYC School System. The situation was so severe that schools were hiring college graduates without teaching certification to teach on emergency certificates. On a chance, Jim stopped at Benjamin Franklin High School, located just ten short blocks from Franklin Plaza. On the Friday before school started, he interviewed with Isadore Goldstein, the chair of the Department of English. Near the end of the pleasant talk, Izzy said he was sorry but he had just filled his staff needs and advised Jim to take courses for certification if he wanted to teach. At that moment, the chair of the Social Studies Department stepped up to their table and said that he had a last minute resignation and needed to pull back the teacher he had loaned to the English Department. The unflappable Izzy smiled and turned to Jim and said, "Are you ready to start Monday?"

The next four years were an adventure for Jim, and proved to him the falsity of the myth that City schools, especially those in the Harlem area, were dangerous battlegrounds. Again, the saving realities were the nature and number of the people Jim met there—faculty, students and staff. There were rough moments, to be sure. Jim's days as a high-school wrestler proved a valuable asset at times when breaking up occasional fights. Attendance was a big problem in some classes, but not all. One class had thirty enrolled students and never had an attendance of more than sixteen, rarely if ever the same students on a given day. There were, however, the rewards of several good classes, one of which constituted an unforgettable group that Izzy assigned to Jim in each year of his four-year stay at Benjamin Franklin. In his 43-year career, in which he taught approximately 8,000 students, he still remembers vividly with gratitude and affection the names and faces of most of that East Harlem group.

For Jim, teaching full-time for the first time required nightly preparations and inventive foresight. Added to that was his need to work on his Master's thesis at night in the Columbia Library and to attend night classes at CCNY and Hunter College to earn his certification. This trial by endurance was made possible and even joyful by his daily welcomes home by Ruth and Elisa.

Teaching met one of Jim's needs, but delving into research became a priority. Leaving his beloved NYC and armed with his Columbia MA diploma, Jim enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Illinois. He was able to secure a teaching assistantship and later moved to an instructorship. While in Illinois, Jim and Ruth welcomed their son, Christopher, to the Shokoff family. Jim's professional life seemed to take off when the doctorate was awarded. When one of his professors who was friends with Carter Rowland mentioned a position at the State University of New York at Fredonia, Jim was intrigued. His professors saw Fredonia as "an up and coming school" with lots of opportunities for a rookie Ph.D. Jim fell in love with Fredonia during his interview. He liked the village (it reminded him of Palisades Park in 1939) but more importantly, he loved the English Department. After a week of settling in their new home, Jim knew that he, his wife, and children would prosper here.



► Emeritus Spotlight—*continued*

Jim's academic record documents his commitment to Fredonia and his subject area. He has served the English Department as professor and chair as well as served on numerous university committees. Additionally, Jim has published several scholarly papers on Wordsworth, Keats, and other topics, and has presented papers at national and international conferences. Jim describes his thirty-five-year tenure at Fredonia as delightful; he found going to work every day as a pleasure.

One can attest that Jim is keeping busy during retirement. He is maintaining physical fitness at home and at Darwin's Health Club and is expanding his love of reading. Jim is also a devoted lover of opera, music from his youth, and foreign films.

When asked what he sees as his greatest achievement, Jim stated with conviction, "Meeting and marrying Ruth who has been the heart of everything that matters to me." Fifty-six years later, Jim lights up as he talks about Ruth, the love of his life. He noted that the two of them do everything together, including several trips to Europe and many American cities, and twenty years of summer vacations in Maine. Not surprising, Jim and Ruth manage to talk to each other all the time about many topics. Building on her background in the fine arts, Ruth earned a Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Buffalo and was a long-time member of the Buffalo Society of Artist, twice winning the Gold Medal Award at their annual show. Her work was also accepted by a number of national art shows, including her inclusion in the annual National Print Show at the Brooklyn Museum. For more than twenty years, Ruth has shared her love of art by teaching classes in Printmaking, Drawing, and Design at SUNY Fredonia.

Through all of this, Ruth and Jim did not neglect their parental roles. Elisa and Chris thrived in Fredonia. Four years apart, Elisa and Chris both graduated from Fredonia High School, and loved their experiences of growing up here. They have both kept in touch with their teachers, from elementary school through FHS. Upon graduation, Elisa majored in art history at Vassar College, and Chris's favorite college class was art history, although he graduated with a major in government at Cornell University.

In retirement, Jim and Ruth travel mainly to see their children. Daughter Elisa is a Vice President and the Senior Producer of the Audiobook Division of Simon and Schuster in New York City. Elisa has earned five Grammy Awards for her audiobook productions! Son Christopher is a financial corporation and business 401K accounts manager. Christopher lives in New Jersey with his wife and four children, including twins completing their senior year in high school. Jim loves spending time with his grandchildren; he enjoys the repartee of conversing with the twins!

"The best portion of a good man's life, is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love."

— **William Wordsworth**

Informational Website

Retired Public Employees Association –
<https://rpea.org/> - Sign up for informational emails and RPEA newsletters.

► In Memoriam of Campus Employees

Ms. Roxanne R. Logan passed away on Tuesday, September 25, 2019. Ms. Logan was employed from 2010 until 2017 as a Cleaner in the Custodial Services Department, Facilities Services.

Online condolences may be made at <https://larsontimkofuneralhome.com/home.html>

Dr. Jerry Rose passed away on October 6, 2019. Professor Rose was employed at the State University of New York at Fredonia from 1967 until his retirement in 1995. During his tenure, he served as Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts in his memory may be made to a local community theatre or by donating a book in his memory to a library, school, or hospital.

Mr. Colin "Tom" T. Craig passed away on Saturday, October 12, 2019. Mr. Craig was employed as an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of English from 1998 through 2019.

A memorial service will be announced at a later date at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Chautauqua County Humane Society (2825 Strunk Road, Jamestown, NY), the Northern Chautauqua Canine Rescue (7540 N. Gale Street, Westfield, NY), the Westfield Stray Cat Rescue (59 E. Main Street, Westfield, NY) or the Fredonia College Foundation for Rockefeller Arts Center.

Dr. Morton L. Schagrin passed away on Sunday, October 20, 2019. Professor Schagrin was employed at the State University of New York at Fredonia from 1970 until his retirement in 1999. During his tenure, he held several administrative positions including Associate Dean for Arts and Sciences and Acting Chair of the Departments of Philosophy and Foreign Languages and Literatures. In 1988, Dr. Schagrin was the recipient of a Fulbright Award.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org.

To leave a remembrance or to post condolences to the family, please visit the [guestbook](#) at the George F. Doherty & Sons Funeral Homes website.

► Emeritus Newsbit

The last week in June, Janet and I had a most enjoyable "river cruise" on the Rhine, starting in Basel. Viking Cruises do a wonderful job: comfortable ships (though narrow--to fit thru all the locks), excellent food, beautifully organized, and with really well-done land tours every day. The river itself, the varied landscape along the way, and the fascinating cities en route where we had our daily 3-4 hour tours (sometimes morning *and* afternoon) were a real treat. The first few days included Basel, Breisach, Colmar, Strasbourg, and Heidelberg (no it's not on the Rhine, but we bussed to this ancient university town, where my Mother had spent part of a summer... in 1929!). Most had ancient city centers with fully restored medieval houses, city halls, markets, churches, perhaps a castle, some scenic spots, fine cafes--and lots of tourists! One day was "middle-Rhine scenic cruising," past a couple dozen castles, ruined or restored, on the hilltops to right and left; really magical. Got to visit one of the restored castles too. Then to Koblenz (the savvy cruise director was delighted with the famous limerick...), Marksburg, and Cologne; its cathedral is indeed pretty amazing...and huge! One tour took us to a beautiful rococo palace in the country. Once in Holland we got to glide past their rich farmland, and tour actual 18th century windmills, before ending at Amsterdam. A quick trip, but well worth it.

— Dan Reiff



Fall Luncheon at
The Clarion Hotel
Dunkirk NY
October 17, 2019.





Dennis and Jan Hefner
cordially invite you and your spouse or guest
to attend a holiday open house with emeriti

Thursday, December 12, 2019
12:00 - 2:00 PM

Lanford House
194 Central Avenue

Non-perishable food donations will be appreciated for the campus food pantry. Please visit the [Student Food Pantry](#) at www.fredonia.edu for ideas.

R.s.v.p. (716) 673-3456 or dawn.hunt@fredonia.edu
by Friday, December 6

