

Alumni Gazette



Birth Pangs

A longtime advocate for alternatives to hospitalized childbirth, Suzanne Davis Arms '65 explores the bonds between newborns and mothers.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, **SUZANNE DAVIS Arms '65** has been an activist and social critic on behalf of a natural approach to childbirth and maternal care.

In the 1970s, she was among the most articulate among a small group of feminist critics of mainstream American medical practice who began to argue that medical interventions in childbirth, while appropriate in some circumstances, had become standard for most women, raising the risk of harm to both mother and baby.

Her book, *Immaculate Deception: A New*

unnecessary trauma for newborns, disrupting the bonds between mothers and babies in ways that lead to other social ills.

“Our approach to childbirth is an unending sequence of interruptions in the biological process—of overriding it with artificial substances, chemicals, and other interventions,” she said this spring.

Moreover, she says that modern medicine has been so successful at handling genuine emergencies in childbirth that the obstetrical approach to childbirth has been structured to avoid emergencies that happen far less often, she maintains, than most women fear.

“Our approach to childbirth is an unending sequence of interruptions in the biological process—of overriding it with artificial substances, chemicals, and other interventions.”

Look at Women in Childbirth (Houghton Mifflin), included in the *New York Times* “List of Noteworthy Titles” for 1975, earned Arms a place on the syllabi of many women’s studies courses at colleges and universities in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1995, she published a revised and updated 20th-anniversary edition, *Immaculate Deception II: Myth, Magic, and Birth* (Celestial Arts), in which she built on the themes she had introduced at a time when chemical and surgical interventions in childbirth were far less prevalent.

In April, she organized a gathering of experts in medicine, psychology, and anthropology—20 in all, from five continents—on the island of Tenerife, off the western coast of Africa, for a six-day roundtable that she hopes will spark a larger exploration of whether such medical interventions create

Betsy Naumburg, a professor of family medicine at Rochester and a contributor to the 2010 volume *Woman-Centered Care in Pregnancy and Childbirth* (Radcliffe), agrees, pointing to many reasons for the evolution of modern childbirth.

“My sense is that the main factors include the illusion of a perfect outcome that technology offers, the pressures on mothers to be perfect, values that place a priority on freedom from any pain rather than on the empowering experience of childbirth, and a medical field that continues to practice on the basis of fear of litigation rather than on the basis of the medical evidence.”

In a foreword to *Immaculate Deception II*, Christiane Northrup, a Dartmouth-educated obstetrician, wrote that as a self-described progressive in the 1970s, she believed that Arms had “overstated her case” in the earlier edition. Twenty years later, Northrup praised Arms for the updated edition that was no less sweeping, expressing the view similar to Arms’s that “our system for birth flows seamlessly out of the

values of the technologically driven, materialistic society we live in, a society that is too often cut off from nature’s wisdom.”

With no formal medical education when she launched her critique in the 1970s, Arms has earned respect among some in the medical profession by making her case through her own research in medical libraries, interviews, visits to maternity wards arranged by physicians sympathetic to her views, the experience of giving birth herself (her daughter, Molly, was born in 1971), and, she adds, her studies in English and anthropology at Rochester, which “opened my mind and honed my sensibilities in so many ways.”


In a new initiative, Arms and her partners hope to spearhead an exploration of the mother-baby bond and whether trauma during the “primal period” from conception to age one is connected to later social problems for children, such as violence, depression, and social alienation. The goal of the Tenerife roundtable was to create a blueprint for the project, which she calls *The Time Is Now*.

Arms says research in the field of epigenetics—the ways in which environmental factors permit or inhibit gene expression—buttresses her case. Through our environment, she says, “we literally program ourselves to be in a state of growth or defense.” By traumatizing humans in their earliest stages of development—as their brains, nervous systems, and other organs are forming—“we create a more defensive, fear-based human being,” Arms says.

Naumburg says it’s an important discussion to have.

“I do think that the environment a fetus is exposed to throughout pregnancy, including the emotional and physiological state of the mother, probably does have an effect,” she says, adding that a birth marred by unnecessary medical interventions and personal stress “is a missed opportunity for women to experience their own power, which can then translate into a solid foundation for mothering.”

Arms, who describes herself as “passionate” on the subjects of childbirth and the mother-infant bond, agrees.

Far from simply a means to an end, birth is a process with inherent value. Says Arms: “It matters how we bring humans into the world.” 

BIRTH DAYS: “It matters how we bring humans into the world,” says Arms, the founder of the nonprofit Birthing the Future (www.birthingthefuture.com).



Smart App

Dave Moreau '98S (MBA) creates an app to help you learn a little history.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

DAVE MOREAU '98S (MBA) SAYS HE'S "NOT really a computer guy."

But he says if you've got an idea, "don't let the technology stop you, because there are experts who are good at it who can walk you through it."

An engineer at the Marietta Corp. near Syracuse and a self-described history buff, Moreau says that when he drives through unfamiliar towns, he likes to know something about their history. A small GPS device got him thinking.

"I said to myself, 'What if it told me something else about this town that we're driving through? How would I take this device and modify it?'"

DRIVING PAST: Because it can be hard to read historical markers while driving, Moreau's phone app, GeoReader, does it for you.

The result is GeoReader, an app for smartphones that provides historical narration about sites as you approach or pass them.

Moreau is hoping to tap into the blossoming market for apps, specialized computer programs that have been developed to take advantage of the arrival of smartphones—Blackberries, iPhones, and Android-powered devices.

Built for Google's Android operating system, Moreau's app combines the location technology of the built-in GPS in most smartphones, a database of "talking points," and the phone's ability to "read" text aloud. GeoReader was a finalist in the 2010 European Satellite Navigation Competition, which recognizes the most innovative uses of satellite navigation.

After initial inspiration struck,



Moreau turned his attention to his own smartphone, knowing that it had a built-in GPS, the ability to hold large quantities of data, and the ability to “read” data aloud.

“I went online and started reading about how to make an app,” recalls Moreau. “And I quickly realized this was way beyond my personal capabilities.”

No matter. “I formed a little LLC,” he says. He explained the concept to programmers and hired them to do the technical work, while maintaining all the rights to GeoReader.

Moreau maintains a website, www.mygeoreader.com, which contains an introduction to the app along with written instructions and a video demonstration.

As programmers were building the app, Moreau collected the information to place in the GeoReader’s database of talking points.

“I was befriending people who had websites that contained large amounts of data,” says Moreau. “And they graciously offered it to me to include in this app. I was able to get a lot of data as a starter set so no matter where you were in the country you could hear something.”


Moreau estimates that he edited between 30,000 and 40,000 bits of data into discrete, crisp talking points associated with specific sites or geographic coordinates. “I would do that every evening,” he says.

Moreau no longer shoulders that burden alone. The app allows users to enter talking points themselves and make them “public” to all GeoReader users. “Everybody is an expert in their local area. It definitely is designed to encourage people to contribute,” says Moreau.

A free application, GeoReader has made no money for Moreau; it’s been a net expense. Underscoring that point, Moreau says, “My plan is to launch it on the iPhone when I get enough funds.”

Moreau doesn’t envision GeoReader—primarily a labor of love—necessarily as a profitable venture.

Nonetheless, the Simon School graduate who credits that program with enhancing his problem-solving skills—“I felt like when I graduated I could handle almost any problem thrown at me”—notes he’s begun to court advertisers, whose messages could be activated on GeoReader much like talking points.

“Space in a high-traffic area is more valuable than in the middle of the woods,” he says. “But there’s value everywhere.” 

In the News

STRIKE UP THE BAND

The U.S. Coast Guard Band, under the direction of composer and arranger **Ken Megan** ’73E and saxophonist and assistant conductor **Richard Wyman** ’92E, ’93E is scheduled to perform a gala concert over Memorial Day weekend featuring the music of George Gershwin. The concert celebrates the reopening of the band’s home, Leamy Hall, in New London, Conn., after extensive renovations to enhance the hall’s acoustics and other amenities. Established in 1925 to perform at official functions and promote public goodwill toward the Coast Guard and the United States, both at home and abroad, the ensemble features several Eastman School alumni, including **Robert McEwan** ’90E (percussion), **Stephen Lamb** ’00E (tuba), and **Megan Sesma** ’02E, ’02RC (harp).



Ken Megan ’73E

NORMAN NEUREITER ’52 HONORED BY JAPANESE GOVERNMENT

Norman Neureiter ’52 received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star decoration, among the highest honors bestowed by the Japanese government, at a ceremony at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo last November. Neureiter, who earned a doctorate in organic chemistry from Northwestern after graduating from Rochester, was recognized for his many years of work promoting U.S.-Japan relations and cooperation in science. In 1963, he joined the National Science Foundation’s Office of International Affairs, becoming the first permanent U.S. program director for the U.S.-Japan Cooperative Science Program initiated by then president John F. Kennedy. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, he was the director of Texas Instruments Japan and the vice president of Texas Instruments Asia. From 1994 to 2000, he cochaired the American side of a joint U.S.-Japan panel to negotiate trade disputes and, in 2000, he was appointed the first science and technology advisor to the secretary of state. He’s a senior advisor for the Center for Science Diplomacy and the Center for Science, Technology and Security Policy, an office he directed for five years after it was created in 2004.

JONATHAN SAMET ’70M (MD) APPOINTED TO NATIONAL BOARD

Jonathan Samet ’70M (MD) has been appointed by President Barack Obama to the National Cancer Advisory Board. Samet is the Flora L. Thornton Chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine at the University of Southern California’s medical school and director of the school’s Institute for Global Health. An internationally recognized expert on indoor and outdoor pollution and the health effects of smoking and secondhand smoke, Samet has served as an expert witness in litigation challenging tobacco companies and counseled legislators at the federal, state, and local levels on a variety of issues related to public health.

A. JOHN POPP ’63 WINS HONOR IN NEUROLOGY

A. John Popp ’63 is the recipient of the 2011 Harvey Cushing Medal, a prestigious honor named for the pioneering brain surgeon and awarded for distinguished service by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons. A specialist in the treatment of aneurysms, vascular malformations, and brain tumors, Popp is the chair of the neurosurgery department at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston and training director for the neurosurgery residency programs at Boston Children’s Hospital as well as Brigham and Women’s.



Seniors in College

Five years into retirement, Bob Carlson '69W (EdD) embarked on a new challenge.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS, **BOB CARLSON** '69W (EdD) taught in the education school at the University of Vermont, served as an independent educational consultant, and authored three books on school reform. Then the Buffalo native retired along with his wife, Donna, to the milder clime of southwest Florida.

Five years later, he was back at work.

"I think I was looking for some challenge having been out of the university and missing that kind of dynamic socialization with faculty and graduate students," he says. He's now in his seventh year as executive director of the Pierian Spring Academy, a Sarasota nonprofit that offers college-level,

▲ **CONTINUING ED:** The zest for learning is ageless, says Carlson, the director of the Sarasota-based Pierian Spring Academy, which offers enrichment education to retired seniors.

seminar-style courses targeted to the area's sizeable population of retirees.

Carlson first encountered the academy as a student. He began taking courses on philosophy, and in discussions on thinkers from Plato to Camus, Carlson made an impression—so much so, that seven years ago, the academy's director asked Carlson to be his replacement.

"He had heard about me and my background from some of the students in the classes I was taking," Carlson explains. "I was a little hesitant to take it on.

"But I saw a lot of interesting possibilities."

The Warner School graduate whose research, administrative, and consulting work had all focused on topics such as organizational change and educational planning and evaluation, adapted easily to the task of building the then modest-sized academy into a thriving institution modeled after a small college.

"We had one venue and maybe about a

dozen courses, and I just saw so much more potential for its growth," he says. Now the academy offers more than 70 courses to more than 600 students at three venues. A dean of faculty is in charge of recruiting and retaining the academy's instructors, most of them professors at local colleges and universities or retired professors from around the country.

Stan Nikkel, a former professor of sociology who serves as the academy's dean of faculty, says "the instructors we've recruited are very, very good, and Bob has had a role in that."

Nikkel adds that Carlson has offered "a sense of direction, as well as the practical side of finding venues and handling registrations." Those registrations became numerous enough under Carlson's watch that the academy also hired a full-time administrator.

"Obviously we're fulfilling an important need," says Carlson.

Indeed. Retirees in the United States are

not only becoming more numerous; they're becoming better educated. And that means an expanding market for educational and cultural programming targeted to people over age 65.

It's a need that's being filled by retirement communities, assisted living facilities, or independent organizations like the academy. Sometimes universities play a direct role. Rochester, for example, offers "UR Always Learning"—a series of lectures and enrichment courses taught by university faculty—to residents of the Highlands, a senior community affiliated with the University.

The academy is similarly focused on the liberal arts and sciences, as opposed to "how-to" courses. And academy students—many of them retired doctors, lawyers, teachers, and even a few college presidents, according to Nikkel—are frequently adventurous, delving into the controversial, new, and contemporary. Courses on the politics of race and gender, modern geopolitics, and world religions are popular standards. Carlson, who's also a faculty member, teaches Understanding American Education, an examination of a system he describes as "overly subscribed and undernourished" as well as "the most complex and political of any educational system in the world."


Students can delve into courses to the degree they choose. Some, according to Nikkel, come to listen, while others will devour the recommended reading assignments.

Carlson offers a similar assessment.

"We have some pretty interesting and challenging courses," says Carlson—who, in one of the academy philosophy courses, developed a keen interest in the not-so-accessible 20th-century French philosopher Michel Foucault.

"The people who show up to those classes—not everyone, but a lot—have read the background material, they've got questions, they engage the faculty member, and sometimes they have as much background as the faculty member, if not more."

Not surprisingly, however, things don't always go smoothly. "With 1,000 registrations, 50 faculty, 2 staff people, and 12 board members, there are issues that come up," he says, laughing.

His most striking observation is the motivation of the students. "This is something that is almost ageless: I see it in people in their mid-80s. They'll tell you they have not lost the zest for learning," says Carlson. "To me, that's a very interesting phenomenon." 



INTERPRETIVE VIEWS: Focusing on the contemporary history of his native Lebanon, Raad works in several media, including still photography—above, prints from the series, "Sweet Talk: Commissions (Beirut)_Plate 050"; below, a print from "We Decided to Let them Say 'We Are Convinced,' Twice."

Documenting War

Contemporary media artist **Walid Raad** '96 (PhD) has a long list of awards to his name. In March, he added another, one that some fine art photographers consider the grand prize in the field, the Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography.

Working in a variety of media—still photography, video, audio, performance, and essays—Raad has focused his art on the contemporary history of his native Lebanon, and in particular, on the representation of traumatic events during the civil war that took place there from 1975 until the early 1990s.

Raad spent most of his childhood and his early teens in East Beirut and settled later in the United States, where he earned his undergraduate degree in fine art photography from the Rochester Institute of

Technology. In 1989, he entered Rochester's then new Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies.

In an online chat moderated by the foundation following the announcement, Raad said, "Some extreme situations permit artists, writers, and thinkers to produce new concepts and forms." As far as his focus on the wars in Lebanon, he said, "There are certain images, sounds that I cannot get out of my mind. They stay with me."

The Hasselblad Foundation has recognized a single photographer annually since 1980. "Walid Raad is one of the most original and singular contemporary artists using photography," the five-member award committee noted in a joint statement regarding their decision.

—Karen McCally

