

Clarksdale, June 26, 1964

Dear Folks and Sara:

Just a note to say that we are starting to get a good community response and that my work is beginning to show results. There has been absolutely no violence, and police harassment has stopped. I think there will be no violence at all here, but harassment may pick up as the project picks up. There isn't really any way I can convey what I feel about Andy.

Love,

Mat

P.S. I got all your letters and that kind of encouragement really raised my spirits. There are daily frustrations which will be much easier to overcome if you all keep writing.

Love,

Mat


ON DAY ONE, TRAGEDY:
Zwerling writes home (above)
as an FBI poster announcing
the disappearance of Goodman,
Chaney, and Schwerner receives
national media attention.

MISSING


CALL
FBI

THE FBI IS SEEKING INFORMATION CONCERNING THE DISAPPEARANCE AT PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI, OF THESE THREE INDIVIDUALS ON JUNE 21, 1964. EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATION IS BEING CONDUCTED TO LOCATE GOODMAN, CHANEY, AND SCHWERNER, WHO ARE DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:


ANDREW GOODMAN



JAMES EARL CHANEY



MICHAEL HENRY SCHWERNER



‘We Were NOT Afraid’

Fifty years ago, Matthew Zwerling '64 risked his life during Mississippi Freedom Summer. His friend, Andrew Goodman, gave his. But the biggest heroes of the civil rights movement, Zwerling says, are only starting to be recognized.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

THINKING BACK TO HIS SUMMER 50 YEARS AGO IN CLARKSDALE, Miss., Matthew Zwerling '64 recalls the warmth of the Friday night gatherings in the backyard of the man called “Doc Henry.”

Aaron Henry was a World War II veteran, the president of the Mississippi state chapter of the NAACP, and a pharmacist with a small drugstore in downtown Clarksdale. When Zwerling arrived as part of a group of northern white volunteers to participate in Mississippi Freedom Summer, Henry was there to greet them.

“He just kind of rallied the troops,” says Zwerling. “He had a great sense of humor, which I admired in particular because he was under so much stress.”

Henry had known danger. Both his home and his pharmacy had been firebombed by members of the Ku Klux Klan. His friend Medgar Evers, an NAACP leader in Jackson, had been shot to death in his own driveway.

“With 50 years of perspective, I’m astounded at the courage of the local people who had been doing civil rights work for years,” Zwerling says.

Freedom Summer was among the most ambitious initiatives of



ICONIC IMAGE: One of the last images of Goodman (above) was taken during a training session in Ohio that he and Zwerling attended together.



the civil rights movement. Organized by a coalition of civil rights groups including the NAACP, the bulk of the effort came from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, or SNCC, an organization of black college students that had grown out of the Greensboro sit-ins. Led by Robert Moses, a Harlem-born, Harvard-educated SNCC activist, Freedom Summer organizers recruited several hundred northern white college students who would be trained by experienced civil rights workers, grouped with experienced leaders, live in the homes of black Mississippians, and fan across the state to be ground troops in a concerted effort to register black voters in a state in which less than 6 percent of voting-age African Americans were registered, according to data compiled by the United States Commission on Civil Rights during a 1964 investigation.

In late June, to mark the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer, many veterans of that summer will gather at a four-day conference in the state capitol of Jackson. The planners of the conference have a single clear message: Freedom Summer “was more than theory and faith. It was more than uplifting rhetoric and freedom songs—It was pragmatic and tedious, dangerous and deadly.”

Zwerling will not be able to attend the event. But his experience of the summer was just as the planners describe. In a series of letters he wrote to his family during that summer, and which he’s donated to the University of Southern Mississippi Archives, Zwerling told of canvassing residents in tiny towns and rural areas in the heat of the Delta summer. Of spending hours in a small office helping to organize meetings that drew many locals in some cases—or in others, none at all. It was a summer filled with heat and boredom, frustration and fear. And exuberance at any progress, large or small.

Like virtually every northern college student who took part in Freedom Summer, Zwerling had participated in civil rights activity, albeit in smaller ways, before. He got his start in high school, traveling to Washington, D.C., to participate in the Youth March for Integrated Schools, organized by the Congress of Racial Equality, or CORE, in the fall of 1958. Zwerling’s parents, Israel and Florence, lent their support to the movement by participating in sympathy pickets, offering financial support to civil rights organizations, and placing pressure on their elected officials through meetings and letters.

At Rochester, Zwerling had been one of a small but committed group of students and faculty members who sought to bring attention and support to the southern civil rights movement. During spring break in 1964, Zwerling had been all set to travel with a group of students to Greensboro, N.C., to help register voters. But he came down with mononucleosis just before the trip. “If somebody were to punch you in the stomach,” Zwerling recalls the doctor telling him, “they could rupture your spleen.”

It was a major disappointment. But within weeks, SNCC’s

charismatic leader, John Lewis, came to the River Campus where he’d address a crowd of nearly 250 people, according to the *Campus Times*. Lewis, now a member of Congress from Georgia, had addressed the March on Washington the previous summer, and came to the University as part of a concerted effort among Freedom Summer organizers to recruit volunteers.

As Bob Calhoun ’64 reported in the *Campus Times*, Lewis “pointed specifically to the summer project that [SNCC activists] are now organizing in an all-out attempt to break the voting barrier in Mississippi.” Zwerling, having missed his chance to go to Greensboro, had his heart and mind set on Freedom Summer.

Mississippi was far more dangerous than North Carolina. As NAACP executive director Roy Wilkins famously said in a press conference following Evers’s murder, “There is no state with a record that approaches that of Mississippi in inhumanity, murder, brutality, and racial hatred. It is absolutely at the bottom of the list.”

Freedom Summer organizers were frank about the dangers faced by civil rights workers in the state. The potential for physical harm and how to respond to threats were major themes of a weeklong training session for volunteers held on the campus of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. It

wouldn’t be long before Zwerling would be confronted with the depth of the risk he’d taken on.

Zwerling would be driving to Oxford with Andy Goodman, another volunteer whose family lived in the same New York City apartment building as the Zwerlings.

“We were more acquaintances than friends,” Zwerling says, describing the relationship over the years in which they shared a building and their parents, all committed civil rights supporters, shared a circle of friends. Goodman had attended the Walden School on the Upper West Side, while Zwerling had gone

to the Bronx High School of Science. Zwerling had left the city, seeking a small liberal arts college, while Goodman was a student at Queens College, part of the City University of New York.

They would spend the entire 10-hour, 600-plus-mile drive to Oxford, Ohio, and much of the next week of training, together. “We were not afraid,” Zwerling says today, thinking back to the ride and to their training. It wasn’t that they weren’t aware of the dangers. “I think we were just kind of blocking that out. There’s a reason governments recruit soldiers at 19 years old. At that age, we think we’re going to live forever.”

After a week of training, Zwerling and Goodman parted ways, Zwerling having been assigned to work in Clarksdale, and Goodman in Meridian. “That was the last I saw of him,” Zwerling says.

Zwerling would drive his car to Mississippi with two other white volunteers and an African-American Mississippian named James Jones.

As they traveled south, Zwerling was struck by the landscape. Entering Mississippi around dawn on June 20, he saw his first



NOW & THEN: Zwerling, a retired public defender, at home in San Francisco (opposite) and with fellow volunteer Margaret Hazelton at a backyard picnic hosted by Clarksdale NAACP leader Aaron Henry in June 1964 (above).

cotton fields. As he slowed down to take in the view, Jones grew anxious. Zwerling recalls Jones telling him to speed up. As Jones knew, a car like theirs was sure to attract attention among a police force that, in many counties, had close ties to the Ku Klux Klan. It had New York tags, and blacks and whites traveling together, highly unusual in Mississippi. As Zwerling would learn years later, when he'd exchanged his New York license plates for Mississippi ones, his name, local address, and new Mississippi plate number had been passed promptly on to the Klan.

On June 23, when he wrote his first letter home, all seemed well. "Safe and sound in Clarksdale," he wrote. "So far community is extremely friendly and no harassment so far." The letter was unlikely to have reassured his parents. They'd been wary about his going. "Apparently, without telling me, they had very deep questions about whether they'd be willing to let me go to Mississippi, given the level of danger," Zwerling says. "They spared me that agonizing by just coming to me and saying, 'If you feel like you want to go, we're behind you all the way.'"

BY THE TIME THEY RECEIVED THE LETTER, GOODMAN, ALONG WITH two other civil rights workers—James Chaney and Michael Schwerner—had been reported missing. The news was a source of deep worry for northern volunteers, and it cast a pall over Zwerling's first week in Mississippi. "There isn't really any way I can convey what I feel about Andy," he wrote to his parents on June 26.

Few veteran activists doubted the fate of the three workers, whose bodies would be discovered, buried in a ditch outside Philadelphia, Miss., in August.

Zwerling was slower to acknowledge their likely fate. "It didn't register until Andy had been missing for about a week," he recalls. "Once a week had gone by, it was clear that they had been killed somewhere."

But like soldiers in battle, they weren't to dwell. "I did the thing

that people from SNCC were trained to do. Just to say, 'I'm not moving. They can't scare me out of here. I'm staying and registering voters.'"

The disappearance of the three workers quickly became national news. That Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner would become three of the most recognizable faces of the movement is evidence of what African-American veteran civil rights workers knew from long experience. It was far from the first time that ordinary citizens had been murdered in Mississippi for advancing civil rights. Had Chaney, who was black, been the only victim, it's unlikely anyone outside the activist organizations would ever have known. Among those making that charge was Schwerner's widow, Rita Schwerner, herself a SNCC activist in Mississippi. In numerous memoirs, veterans including Henry note that the recruitment of white students to Freedom Summer was a deliberate means to place national focus on the violence and lawlessness in Mississippi. When volunteers like Zwerling signed up to go to Mississippi, they were lending more than manpower. They brought power in the form of white skin and connections to elite institutions. In his memoir, *The Fire Ever Burning*, Henry wrote that Mississippi civil rights workers needed "national publicity and coverage that would reflect the significance of our efforts." In 1963, when a group of white students from Yale and Stanford came to help with a voting rights project, Henry noticed a curious thing: "They were able to get the news media to almost every mass meeting that we held in the state."

Moses had worked for three straight years trying to register black voters in Mississippi. But as scholars such as Clayborne Carson, professor of history at Stanford and author of *In Struggle*, a history of SNCC, explain, Moses found that neither his nor anyone's efforts had borne much fruit. The dearth of African-American voters demonstrated the effectiveness of the threats against blacks who attempted to vote—from firings, foreclosures, and evictions, to sniper fire, fire bombings, and murders. Indeed, a 1963 U.S.

Q&A

Civil Rights and Civic Lessons

Maya Sen, assistant professor of political science, explores the legal significance of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Freedom Summer is considered pivotal in President Lyndon Johnson's decision to introduce the Voting Rights Act in the spring of 1965. But during that same summer, Congress passed a legal landmark that was arguably even more significant: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited racial discrimination in public accommodations.

It wasn't the first such effort, says Maya Sen, assistant professor of political science at Rochester. The legal twists and technicalities on the road to ending legal segregation began nearly a century earlier. Sen, who joined the faculty in 2012, holds a law degree in addition to a doctorate in political science and teaches courses on law, judicial politics, and the politics of race and ethnicity in the United States.

From a legal standpoint, why was the Civil Rights Act of 1964 so significant?

It was significant in two major ways. First, we think of the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 as being that definitive moment when we knew that separate was inherently

unequal and that segregation was no longer the law of the land. It galvanized the civil rights movement, starting with the Montgomery bus boycott. Segregation was still the informal law of the land, even if it had been declared unconstitutional. As several political scientists have shown, the percentage of African-American children attending desegregated schools in the South was close to zero for many years after the *Brown* rulings. It wasn't until passage of the Civil Rights Act that things changed. The new law called for desegregation of schools and empowered the federal government to sue for enforcement. One could say that the Civil Rights Act really implemented the spirit of the *Brown* rulings.

Second, it outlawed discrimination in places of public accommodation, such as hotels and restaurants.

President Ulysses Grant signed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1875, also outlawing discrimination in public accommodations. Why did the 1964 law succeed while this one has been all but forgotten?

The 1875 act was enacted under Congress's authority under the Enforcement Clause of the 14th Amendment, and the Supreme Court ruled very soon after that Congress had exceeded its author-

Commission on Civil Rights investigation found “open and flagrant violation of constitutional rights in Mississippi,” carried out by intimidation and violence.

Despite pleas from civil rights leaders, the federal government under President Kennedy had not intervened to protect voters, leaving the job to local police. Moses calculated that federal intervention was the only way to secure voting rights in Mississippi. And the only way to get federal intervention, he reasoned, was to invite the sons and daughters of elite white Americans to join the struggle in Mississippi.

The Mississippi state legislature responded to Freedom Summer with multiple new laws targeting political activity and a near doubling of the state’s highway patrol. Gov. Paul Johnson told a television news reporter that the police would respond to Freedom Summer with “Mississippi-style” justice. But the influx of northern whites also made the internal politics of the civil rights movement complicated. Many African Americans in the civil rights movement were opposed to recruiting white participants, fearing the implications of dependence on whites.

As a volunteer in Clarksdale, Zwerling would feel that tension more acutely than volunteers in almost any other area of the state. “Freedom Summer was different in Clarksdale because of the very

strong NAACP presence in the town and an already vibrant movement taking place,” says Françoise Hamlin, an assistant professor of history and Africana studies at Brown University.

In her 2012 book, *Crossroads at Clarksdale: The Black Freedom Struggle in the Mississippi Delta after World War II*, Hamlin explores the leadership of Henry, and of another Clarksdale NAACP leader, Vera Mae Pige, who died in 2007, virtually unknown to the history books.

“There were strong movement leaders in Clarksdale, Pige among them, who did not necessarily support Freedom Summer as enthusiastically as Aaron Henry, which made for some interesting interactions between the older grassroots leadership and the young volunteers,” Hamlin says.

As it turned out, Zwerling would be among Pige’s first volunteer houseguests. Through her, he would become acquainted with the complicated internal politics of the civil rights movement.

Pige owned a hair salon in downtown Clarksdale. As a hairdresser, she knew more than just about anybody about the daily lives, circumstances, and opinions of the black residents of the town. For years, she helped build the NAACP’s membership in the region, helping Clarksdale to become the stronghold of the NAACP in the state. From the back of her salon, she ran Freedom Schools to educate locals on citizenship rights



AT WORK: Aaron (Doc) Henry, an NAACP leader and a pharmacist, “rallied the troops” in Clarksdale, Zwerling says.

ity under that clause. But the 1964 act was not passed under the 14th Amendment. It was actually passed under Congress’s authority to regulate interstate commercial activities, what we would call the Commerce Clause. This is an important distinction, and it led the court to uphold the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. It’s hard to know where we would be today were it not for the 1964 law.

Do you think the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act is secure?

There have been challenges as to whether the law usurps Congress’s authority under the Commerce Clause—i.e., whether this really constitutes interstate commerce as the founders intended it. It appears to be settled that the constitutionality of the law isn’t in question.

Whether there continues to be popular will in support for the Civil Rights Act is a different question. And I think there continues to be. We’ve agreed as a society that it’s wrong for hotels, movie theaters, and restaurants to discriminate against customers solely because of their race or ethnicity.

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. Last year, the Supreme Court struck down a portion of that law. What was the significance of that ruling?

In *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Supreme Court struck down the formula used to determine which jurisdictions were “covered” for purposes of the Voting Rights Act, a designation that triggers additional scrutiny from the Department of Justice. The coverage formula struck down by the Supreme Court is based on historical data. Chief Justice John Roberts, who wrote the opinion, said we can’t rely on a formula that uses 40-year-old data. He argued, quite reasonably to a lot of people, that a lot has changed in the last few decades.

It’s not that the entire act is invalid after *Shelby County*, or that it can’t be worked through. But it does raise the question of whether Congress will try to rewrite the coverage formula that *Shelby County* struck down. The Voting Rights Act has in the past enjoyed broad, bipartisan support. For example, the last time it was reauthorized was in 2006, and that was under a Republican president and a Republican Congress. So there is good support for it. In addition, the Voting Rights Act has been by most markers quite successful. In some states, the percentage of eligible black registered voters went from approximately 10 percent to 60 or 70 percent.

Time will tell whether Congress will take up the challenges posed by the *Shelby County* decision.

—Interview by Karen McCally '02 (PhD)



SAYING NO TO JIM CROW: Zwerling (right, standing) and fellow Clarksdale Freedom Summer volunteers at work in the Freedom Office.

and strategy. “At times,” writes Hamlin, “Pigee could literally hold clients hostage to a continuous barrage of information and persuasion while working on their hair.” Hamlin argues that Pigee saw the northern white volunteers as a potential distraction from work already under way, as well as a competing force on turf she’d staked out for her own efforts.

While Henry saw the potential of SNCC and welcomed the volunteers, Pigee went along only reluctantly, resenting the presence of SNCC.

Writing home, Zwerling noted that Pigee’s circumstances were far better than those of most black Mississippians. She had air-conditioning in her home, for example. But he felt some tension in the air, and got wind that it was in part due to a disagreement between her and Henry.

“There is some conflict here between the NAACP and SNCC which sort of stays a little beneath the surface,” he wrote.

While Zwerling felt Pigee to be less welcoming than Henry, today he sees her as an unsung hero of Freedom Summer, whose bravery, like Henry’s, is astonishing. A bullet had passed through her living room window the same night that Henry’s house had been struck. Yet, like Henry, she continued her work and agreed to host—at least for the first week—the northern volunteers, an act that would place her in even more danger. “Talk about courage,” says Zwerling. “She still agreed to put us up, and she continued to work after we were gone.”

Over the years, Zwerling has become more impressed with a

point driven home to the volunteers during Freedom Summer. During training, they were told their presence might strike great fear among many black locals. Many residents were fearful of all whites, especially if they were approached by more than one. Those who trusted the approaching volunteers would know that fraternizing with Freedom Summer volunteers could place them in danger. While the volunteers would return back home at the end of the summer, the local residents would remain in Mississippi where they would be potential targets for retribution. As Zwerling got to work, he wrote that the residents he canvassed were “very receptive and friendly.” He added, “I found four people willing to go to the courthouse tomorrow and attempt to register. The real test will come tomorrow to see if they’ll actually go; if we workers will be arrested and if they will be registered.”

AS THE WEEKS PASSED, ZWERLING GREW MORE EXCITED ABOUT THE prospects of the new political party growing out of Freedom Summer. He was helping to set up meetings to inform potential voters about the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. By registering as a member of the new party, they’d help launch a direct challenge to the Democratic party, which planned to seat an all-white Mississippi delegation, elected by only a small minority of the state’s eligible voters, at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, N.J.

“I’ve called a meeting at the biggest church in town,” Zwerling wrote home, referring to a Baptist church in the black community of Riverton. “If the meeting works out I’ll feel that I’ve done something direct and important. If not, it means more slow plodding on.”

As it turned out, Zwerling was pleased with the results of the



STYLIST & ACTIVIST: NAACP activist and beautician Vera Mae Pige (center) instructs citizens on voting rights and movement strategy in a back room of her Clarksdale salon.

meeting. About 50 people attended. And with the deacon late in arriving, he even led the attendants in a prayer. “I prayed for courage for us all to fight for ourselves—sort of a secular prayer,” he wrote to his family.

“I’ve been working like crazy on the Freedom Dem Party,” he wrote on July 20. He’d since moved from Pige’s home to more rugged—and typical—accommodations, a home with no refrigerator or stove, and little electric lighting. “Tomorrow is the precinct meeting and I’ll be like a chicken-minus-head.”

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party would hold its convention in Jackson in early August. Zwerling would not be present, however. “The SNCC people who were involved in the Democratic convention politics were mostly just the real top leadership—Bob Moses, Jim Forman, Fannie Lou Hamer. Most of the white students left before the convention, as planned.”


It underscored the role of the northern white volunteers as foot soldiers in a black movement. As Zwerling was leaving Mississippi to head back home to New York, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegates, including Henry, were in Atlantic City to challenge the Democratic party to seat them as Mississippi’s only democratically elected delegation. The national party offered the Freedom party a compromise, which the Freedom delegates rejected. But Zwerling says he had no opinion on the events in Atlantic City by that time. “I was exhausted,” he recalls. “I felt I had done my job. It didn’t matter to me what disputes there might still

be.” They’d challenged the national party, and forced it to respond. “We had achieved so much.”

Like many Freedom Summer volunteers, Zwerling says the summer changed the course of his life. He passed up an offer from Stanford Medical School and began preparing for a career in law instead. He worked for his home district congressman, Rep. William Fitts Ryan, who gave him a pass to be in the chamber as President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law in August 1965.

He went to Yale Law School, overlapping one year with Calhoun, who in addition to covering Lewis’s visit to the University for the *Campus Times*, participated in the spring 1964 trip to register voters in Greensboro. Zwerling worked as a public defender, and later as executive director of the First District Appellate Project, founded by Calhoun to offer legal services for appellate cases involving indigent clients. Zwerling would serve as the project’s executive director for 26 years before retiring in 2008.

Zwerling maintained contact with the Goodmans over the years, especially Andy’s mother, Carolyn Goodman, who died in 2007. “My parents and [Andy’s] parents worked together as soon as he was missing. They kind of formed their own support group as they went through the horror of finding out what had happened,” he says.

Looking back to Freedom Summer 50 years later, Zwerling echoes the view of most historians today. There was nothing inevitable about the progress made that summer. “In a nutshell, Freedom Summer was absolutely one of the reasons we got the Voting Rights Act,” he says. “It’s too bad it had to be through the mechanism of white kids getting involved. But I don’t see how anybody could look back and not see the impetus that that summer gave.” 



▲
**Physical World:
Category Winner**

EGYPT

*A Backflip
into the Red Sea*

Dillon Bowman '15, an
international relations major
from Yardley, Pa.
June 2013

Photo Favorites

Students share their photos in *Rochester Review's* sixth annual Study Abroad Photo Contest.

For the sixth edition of our annual Study Abroad Photo Contest, we received more than 200 photos from more than 50 students who took part in academic programs sponsored by the College Center for Study Abroad during 2013. We also invited international students to submit their photos of the United States.

Submitted in the categories of culture, people, and physical world, the photos were taken in 38 countries, representing five continents. Grand prize winners receive a gift certificate to the University bookstore. Category winners and other finalists also receive prizes. 📍

—SCOTT HAUSER



► **People:
Category
Winner**

THAILAND
*Big Fish
of the Mekong*
Marissa Stanger '14,
an environmental
studies major from
Lake Worth, Fla.
October 2013



▲ **People:
Honorable Mention**

UKRAINE
Polishing Icons
Katie Dickson '14, a Russian
major from Clermont, Fla.
April 2013



► **Culture:**
Honorable Mention

INDONESIA

Ride to a Distant Shore

Deborah Korzun '14, an ecology and evolutionary biology major from Clifton Park, N.Y. June 2013





► **Physical World:
Honorable Mention**

SENEGAL

*Pelican Mating Season
at Djoudj Bird Park*

Antoinette Esce '15, an economics major
from Syracuse. November 2013

**People:
Honorable Mention**

INDONESIA

Children of Bali

Deborah Korzun '14, an ecology and
evolutionary biology major from Clifton Park,
N.Y. June 2013



► **International:
Grand Prize**

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Capitol Dome

Boao Song, a
materials science
graduate student
from Beijing.
June 2013



**Grand Prize:
Study Abroad**

CHINA

Leap Frog

Emily Hein '14, a Chinese studies major from Clive, Iowa.

August 2013

► **Culture: Category Winner**

EGYPT

*A Walk through Egypt's
Largest Camel Market*

Dillon Bowman '15, an international relations major from Yardley, Pa. April 2013



▲ **Physical World:
Honorable Mention**

DENMARK

Chalk Cliffs at Klint

Phillip Cohen '14, a microbiology major from Dedham, Mass.

September 2013



Thanks to Our Judges

Our panel of judges included Allen Topolski, professor of art and art history; Brandon Vick, digital assets manager for University Communications; and Maya Dukmasova '12 (T5), a former winner in the contest and now a journalist based in Chicago.

Jacqueline Levine '80, '84 (Mas), director of the Center for Study Abroad and Interdepartmental Programs, helped coordinate the contest.



◀ **Culture:
Honorable Mention**

IRELAND

Comeragh Mountains

Louisa Bauer '14, a biomedical engineering major from Bedford, Mass. February 2013

Liberal Arts & *Artisans*


Whether it's their main job
or a second vocation, Rochester alumni
are masters of their crafts.

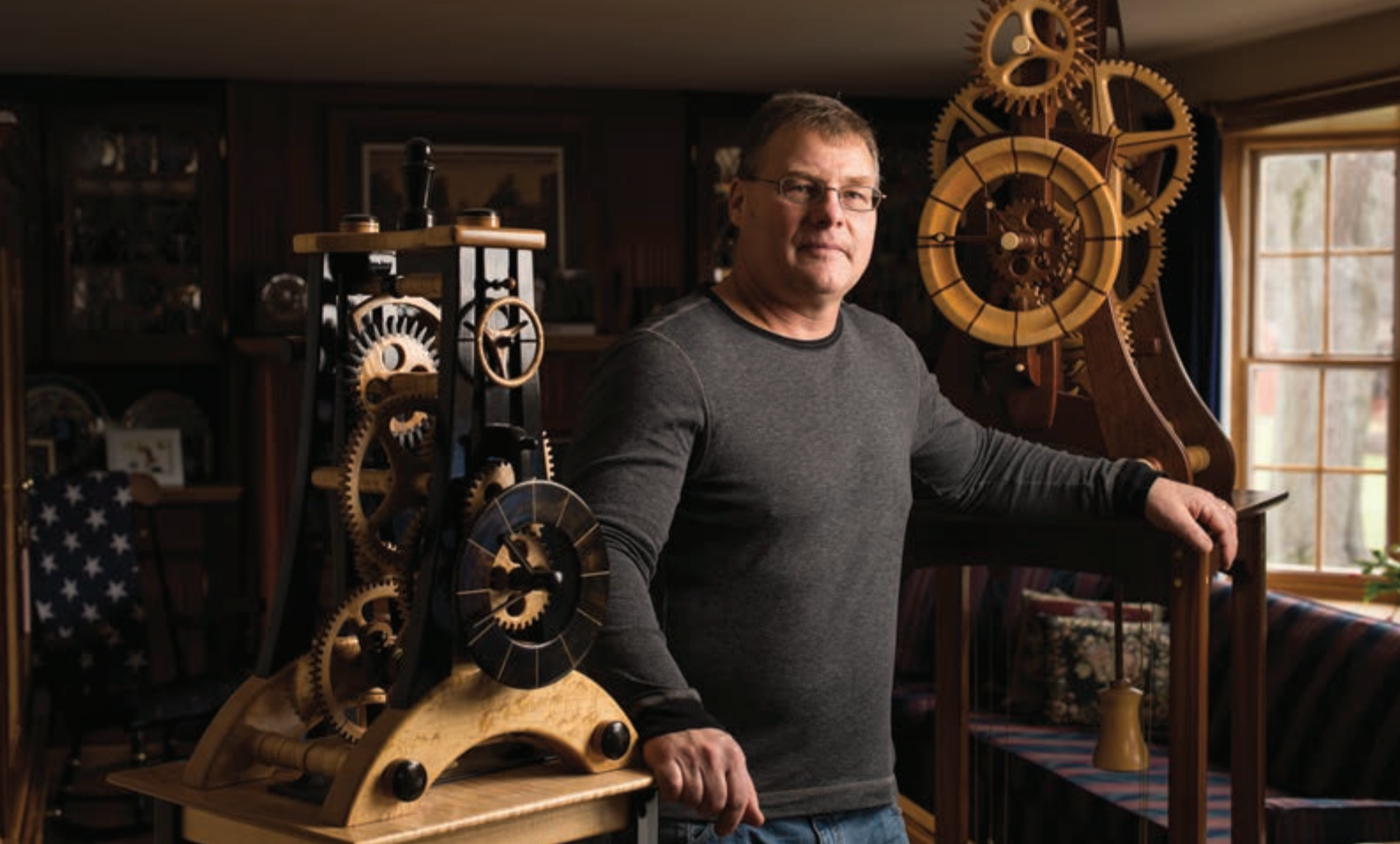
By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

IN THIS COMMENCEMENT SEASON, GRADUATES will hear a lot about following their passions. For some of those graduates, the question will be, which one? For others the question will be, will I be able to make a living?

For the graduates of liberal arts colleges, one of the less trodden paths is artisanship. As traditionally defined, artisans (or craftspeople) make objects by hand that are both useful and beautiful. More recently, that definition has

expanded to include culinary artists crafting food and beverages that combine use value and visual aesthetics with the aesthetics of taste.

Rochester's alumni include craftspeople working with a wide variety of materials. Some have made their craft their living. Others have pursued it as a second vocation. In all cases, they've wrestled with how to market and sell their work as changing technology has offered both challenges and opportunities. 



Clock Work

Years ago, Charles Maxwell '06S (MBA) studied fine art and elementary education at a small college in his native New Jersey. Years after that, as executive officer of Rochester's Naval ROTC, he picked up an MBA at the Simon Business School. In the interim, he earned a master's degree in quantitative analysis from the University of Wisconsin. He's earned his share of degrees. But he's an autodidact at heart, as well as a polymath.

At an early age, he began keeping sketchbooks. He filled them with drawings of things he wanted to build—go-carts, tree forts, a 6-volt battery electric motor he built from scratch in the fifth grade. “My grandfather said, ‘You’re an inventor,’” Maxwell says, sitting in his Pittsford, N.Y., home, full of cabinetry and furniture he designed and built himself.

Now retired from the Navy, Maxwell focuses on building wooden clocks, most of which stand more than five feet tall. His work makes good on a promise he made to his wife, Pat, on a museum visit during their honeymoon in Hyannisport, Mass., more than 30 years ago.

“I saw this big, wooden clock with all wooden gears, and I thought that was the most beautiful piece of kinetic art I’d ever seen,” he recalls. “I looked at Pat, and I said, ‘You know, one day I’ll build you one of them.’”

GEARED UP: Maxwell, a former art teacher and a retired Naval officer fascinated by mechanics and old navigation tools, taught himself how to make clocks entirely from wood.

He didn’t know how a clock worked. But with a lifelong fascination with mechanics, he was undeterred. He searched libraries, museums, and the Internet, and with the sources he compiled, taught himself. He worked out specifications and sketched out designs with pencil and paper. He built mock-ups from spare material.

“The hardest part was to get the escapement to work,” he says, referring to the oscillating weight and rotating gears that allow a clock to keep time. “I went to an MIT website to help me with that.”

Complicating matters considerably was his chosen material, wood, which expands, contracts, cracks, and wears. But he’s developed methods to meet the challenges posed even by his favored ebony and hard maple, which are among the most durable woods.

He’s also designed his super-sized clocks to be easy to move. “These clocks come apart in about five minutes,” he says, unscrewing an ebony cap near the base of one of his clocks. The idea came about as a solution to a problem. “Every time you build one, you end up taking it apart a million times to get the fittings right.”

Maxwell says he hasn’t had to market himself to secure the small number of clients it takes to sustain his time-consuming craft. And as a retired military officer, he doesn’t have to make a living at his art either. He can focus with singular attention on his goal.

“My goal is to have one of my clocks in the American Arts and Crafts Museum in New York City,” he says. (The museum changed its name to the Museum of Arts and Design in 2002.) “I have a friend who’s a naval officer who has a canoe in there.”

Maxwell has received advice, of course, on how to achieve the ambitious goal. But the key lies in the craft of clock making itself. And it’s fairly simple, in concept at least, if not in practice. “You have to have the best one out there,” he says.



When Glass Was King

If you ask Bill Glasner '69 what's most satisfying about being a craftsman—or what, for that matter, makes one—he'll tell you "it's the connection with the material." So it's not surprising that he abandoned his first stab at craftsmanship—making dulcimers—when he found himself spending more time fiddling with machines than working with wood.

It was the early 1970s. He'd joined the Rochester Folk Art Guild, an artisanal and farming community located just east of Canandaigua Lake. Glasner, who is a board member of the guild, says, "One day I walked out of the woodshop, and it was about nine o'clock at night, and the door to the glass shop was open, and the furnace was glowing. And my name is Glasner. It was fate."

At the time, glassmaking was on the rise. Although people have made glass since ancient times, for most of its history, glassmaking has been the work of guild members working in factories.

"Up until the 1960s, there was essentially no such thing as a glass studio," Glasner says from his studio outside Victor, N.Y., in a barn that he converted himself. Glass blowing "wasn't anything that an individual would do."

But when the technology was developed in the 1950s by Toledo ceramicist Harvey Littleton, the individual glass artisan came into being.

From the late 1970s until just a few years ago, glass blowing was Glasner's full-time job. His work has appeared on three continents, at museums such as the Smithsonian, the Victoria and Albert Museum

in London, and the Musée des Arts Décoratif in Paris. His work is also part of the permanent collection at the Corning Museum of Glass.

Like many of his baby boom peers, he's scaled back as he nears retirement age. While at the peak of his career, he operated a furnace around the clock, producing vases and other art objects with the help of assistants he was training in the craft, these days he makes glass jewelry. Requiring little overhead, it's a business decision that makes sense in the changing glass art market.

"There was a period of time, from the early 1970s until around 2005, when handmade American craft was getting a lot of press and a lot of people were getting educated about what it meant," he says. "And glass was the king of the scene."

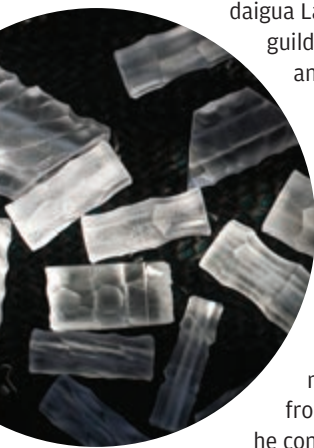
"I never had to actually convince people that I'm this great artist and this is great glass, and you should buy it because it expresses this fantastic idea—whatever people do."

He says he could market his jewelry more aggressively if he had to. But with most of a successful career behind him, he finds that sales were never an end in themselves.

"Had I not been able to make a living at this, I probably would have ended up as a history teacher," he says. As a glass artist, his contribution is in what he calls "intangible aspects to people's lives."

"I've tried to make beautiful things that will add value to people's lives, that people enjoy having and seeing and using," he says. "I hope, if we're still around in 1,000 years and someone sees one of my pieces, they'll say, 'Hey, that's really nice.' That's all. That's fine."

REFLECTIONS ON GLASS: Glasner's first encounter with a glass studio was like love at first sight. "It's the connection to the material," he says, that's the essence of his work.



Ever-Changing Horizons

To find her inspiration, Heather Krawiec '92, '93 (T5) simply looks out from her bedroom window.

The view is magical: the Alaskan Range, about 150 miles south of her home in Fairbanks. In the winter, when the sun makes only a brief appearance in late morning, the mountains form a dark silhouette against the low-rising sun, which casts a pink and orange glow, before dipping down in early afternoon. As spring comes, the sun remains long enough for that fluorescent glow to turn yellow, then dissipate, revealing a bright blue sky.

"It's so hard to capture in a photograph," she says.

She captures the view instead in fabrics.

As a child, she played with fabrics, mixing and matching, mimicking her mother, a quilter. Today, Krawiec makes fabric hats as the sole proprietor of the business she's called Mountain Heather Creations, playing on her name and one of her favorite Alaskan wildflowers.

She makes the hats out of fleece or cotton. Wrapped around each hat is a band—a patchwork of printed and batik fabrics representing an imaginative recreation of the ever-changing Fairbanks skyline.

Krawiec moved to Alaska shortly after graduating from Rochester, where she completed a degree in geological sciences and a Take Five Scholars program based in studio art. She entered graduate school for marine biology at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. She wanted to find a way to combine science and art, and sought to carve a niche for herself designing museum displays. "There was an Alaskan sea life center that was being built," she says. She made a proposal to the museum, but it was unsuccessful. "I knew I didn't really want a fish and game job, which is where I was headed, so I just quit."

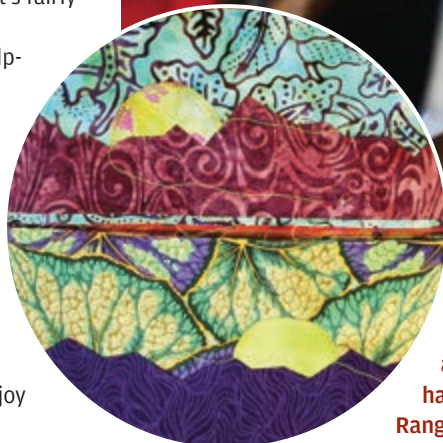
Hat making, which had been a hobby, became her full-time job. It was possible to pull off in Alaska.

Fairbanks is home to a robust craft market, and Krawiec attracted buyers almost immediately when she began selling her hats at local craft bazaars. It didn't amount to a lot of money, but it didn't have to.

"My life had been super simple, and that's why making hats was a viable source of income to keep me going. Life was just a one-room cabin with a couple of dogs," she says, describing a pared down way of life that's fairly common in Alaska.

Now married, she spends much of her time helping her husband run his business, Dreamworks Cabinetry. But she continues to make hats, taking orders through her Mountain Heather Creations website and Facebook page, and filling a standing order from the museum store at the University of Alaska's Museum of the North. She makes about 200 hats per year for the museum.

"I have these 50 or so fabrics in my studio and I just lay them out and put them together," she says. "Just putting all those colors together is the joy for me."



HAT MAKER: From her home in Fairbanks, Alaska, Krawiec creates hats from fleece, cotton, and an array of batik fabrics. Each hat features a depiction of the Alaska Range.



A New Kind of Computer Art

Amanda Preske '12 (MS) started making jewelry before she was 10, and went into business by the time she was 15. But it wasn't until she embarked on a whimsical experiment with resin and computer circuit boards that she found her niche in the crowded handmade jewelry market.

Today, the PhD student in materials chemistry is noted for turning scraps of computer innards into bright and enticing jewelry. Her work is distinct, unmistakably hers, and garnering attention at arts festivals as well as through online venues such as Etsy.com.

Preske discovered the untapped potential of circuit boards when she was learning to use resin. "Anything that was floating around got cast in resin," she says. Among the items floating around her family's home in Syracuse, N.Y., were computer components scattered by her brother, who was dismantling a home computer.

"I thought, 'Oh, a circuit board. That could be cool.'" She cast some circuit board parts in resin, turned them into jewelry, and displayed them at craft shows. "They received a lot more attention than I thought they would," she says. "So I continued to develop them into the much better product that I have now."

One facet of developing a finer product was developing a keen eye for a striking board.

"I find that there's a lot of really interesting things right under the processor,"

INDIE ARTIST: Preske, who makes jewelry from computer circuit boards, revels in art objects made from unconventional materials.



she says. "If I remove that carefully, I have some really neat things to work with under there."

With the array of chisels, saws, and rotary blades in her Cobbs Hill apartment, she slices out the most visually appealing portions of her sizeable collection of discarded circuit boards. Then she grinds them to the shape she wants.

"Boards are mostly fiberglass and metal, so it's messy," she says, noting her need for protective equipment and methods to contain dust. To ensure the safety of the material for wearers, she chooses boards certain or unlikely to contain heavy metals. "But that's also why I coat everything in resin," she adds.

Preske attended college at the Rochester Institute of Technology. At the school, which is noted for both the sciences and the School for American Crafts, she supplemented her chemistry courses with courses in drawing, collage, and metalwork. It was an entrée into the local crafts scene, in which Preske has become a leader.

A regular exhibitor at some of Rochester's major shows—the City of Rochester's Lilac Festival and the Memorial Art Gallery's Clothesline Festival, for example—she's also spearheaded a new juried show: the Mayday Underground, which she founded with fellow artist Casey Wright in 2010. Held twice a year at Rochester's Village Gate, it's for what she calls "indie" artists and craftspeople—people who use materials in unconventional ways.

"Nationwide," she says, "there are all kinds of weird, different, new approaches to art and craft. We wanted to bring that kind of aesthetic and appeal to Rochester."



Crafting Sound

“Violins are very sensitive and finicky things,” says David Chrapkiewicz ’70, ’72W (MA), explaining the complexity of making one.

The type of wood, its width, the shape and placement of parts such as the bass bar, in the violin’s interior, and the bridge, a thin wooden slab on which the strings rest—all have a striking impact on the character of each instrument’s sound. Chrapkiewicz’s violins are tailor made for his clients, and he makes, at most, four per year.

“Usually the fancier the soloist, the fussier they are,” he says. They’ll notice the effect of, for example, moving the bridge a human hair’s width. “It’s only like seven-hundredths of a millimeter. But it can brighten or make the violin sound harsh.”

Chrapkiewicz is not a violinist himself, but rather, a craftsman with a very keen ear. His grandfather made violins, and inspired by that example, Chrapkiewicz made his first string instrument—a balalaika—in 1969, while still a student at Rochester.

Intending to go to medical school, he loaded up on math, chemistry, and physics. It gave him a base of knowledge that he says “I apply to what I’m doing all the time.”

Chrapkiewicz is regularly invited to violinists’ and violin makers’ conferences to lecture on acoustics. He’s also engineered his own varnish, and unlike many makers, seals the interior of the instrument. The sealed interior “doesn’t make the violin immune to changes in humidity, but it makes it more resistant, so the changes don’t happen quite so fast.”

FINELY TUNED: The wood, the varnish, the shape, the placement of the bridge right down to a hair’s width—all have a discernible impact on the sound of the instrument, says Chrapkiewicz, who both makes and repairs violins and violas.

After graduation, Chrapkiewicz abandoned plans for medical school. He attended the Warner School of Education and taught middle school science just outside Rochester. But in 1975, he decided to devote himself fully to violin making. He moved to Montreal to study with two masters, Alois Vogl and Raymond Forget. In 1979, he set up his own shop.

Today that shop is the basement of his home in Washington Grove, Md., near Washington, D.C. It’s a fairly messy place, with wood scraps, shavings, and “tools thrown all over the place,” Chrapkiewicz says. He’s won multiple awards for his work, including a silver medal for tone at the 2002 Violin Society of America’s international competition.

Most violins are made from maple and spruce. Spruce, used for the face, “is lightweight and relatively strong, and it transmits vibrations very well,” he says. Maple, used for the back and ribs, combines durability and beauty. “Maple is a very beautiful wood, especially when it has curl,” he says, referring to the fibers visible in some cuts of maple.

But Chrapkiewicz has also made violins from osage orange, and before its exportation was banned, Hawaiian Koa. “Violinists are very traditional. Most people, if they heard you’d used Hawaiian Koa, they’d say, ‘Nice knowing you,’” he says. “But even Stradivarius himself experimented with pear woods, willow, and cherry. He used other woods besides maple and spruce.”

