

# VAAS Newsletter

SUMMER 2018

VOLUME 32, NUMBER 1

## VAAS Officers as of June 2018

- Kevin Fleming, President
- John Van Hoesen, Vice President
- William Brown, Secretary
- Matthew Thomas, Treasurer



VERMONT ACADEMY  
OF ARTS & SCIENCES  
SINCE 1965

*Editor's note: Because of a major injury I experienced, this – the first Newsletter of 2018 – has been significantly delayed. Most of these pieces were written and submitted prior to my injury, so this may contain information that is no longer current.*

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Last winter, I learned a new term for extreme northern weather, the 'polar vortex.' With Europe engulfed in a catastrophic polar vortex of its own this year, Vermonters just seem to shrug. Yep, we had one of those last year. This year, I learned another new phrase for extreme northern weather, the 'bomb cyclone.' Now that is a term that only a weatherman primed for the apocalypse could devise, yet now as I sit here writing this Report from the President, under white pounding winds, I shrug. This is our second bomb cyclone this winter of 2018 and we are expecting a third. Vermonters seem to have a reputation for taking winter in stride. In the Northeast Kingdom, it is just another day. Some of us, however, may just want it to end. This is Spring and we are still freezing.

As I write, I am thinking about our many Fellows of the VAAS and how they have contributed to our collective imaginations about our beloved, and sometimes adopted, State and its People. It is with sadness that I must report on the loss last winter of one of our greatest Fellows, Howard Frank 'Schoolteacher' Mosher. His stories of the Northeast Kingdom are now legendary and his own real life experiences with logger Jake Blodgett capture the essence of the human spirit in a remote and hardscrabble corner of Vermont where the rivers do indeed flow north. Mosher crafted characters and wove stories that reflected not only the inner warmth beneath the gruff exteriors of our fellow citizens, but also the difficult situations that have forced us to face painful truths as evident

when the stranger comes to the Kingdom.

At the closing of 2017, VAAS welcomed five new Fellows to the growing list of luminaries in Vermont and I am very pleased to congratulate Brooke Mossman, Alison Bechdel, Major Jackson, Jay Parini, and Geraldine Pittman de Batlle to our membership. As the new President I would like to thank outgoing President James Conley for his service and welcome John Van Hoesen to the role of Vice President. Please enjoy this edition of our Newsletter and feel free to submit materials for future editions.

*-Kevin Fleming, President, VAAS*



## INTRODUCING OUR NEW VAAS OFFICERS!

By Kevin Fleming, VAAS President

### **New Vice-President: Dr. John Van Hoesen**

Dr. John Van Hoesen is a Professor of Geology and Environmental Studies at Green Mountain College. He earned his M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and is a Certified GIS Professional (GISP) with a broad background in the geosciences. Although the majority of his work focuses on modeling landscape processes like landslides and river erosion, he is currently writing a natural history of slate and the links between this industry in Vermont and Wales. Dr. Van Hoesen supports undergraduate research and has organized the VAAS Intercollegiate Symposium at Green Mountain College several times, most recently in 2015.

### **New Treasurer: Dr. Matthew Thomas**

Dr. Matthew Thomas is an assistant professor of Psychology at Norwich University. He earned his Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology from the University at Albany. He teaches courses in Perception, Cognition, Experimental Psychology I/II along with guiding students through a rigorous three course thesis series based on original student research that culminates in presentations at the annual meeting of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has published work on word processing, semantic priming, visual attention,

and false memory paradigms. His current areas of research interest explore the automatic capture of visuospatial attention, rotary-wing aircraft cockpit design, and the influence of video games on attention and working memory.

### **New President: Dr. Kevin Fleming**

Dr. Kevin Fleming is a Professor and Chair of Psychology and Education at Norwich University. He is a graduate of Lehigh University and the University of New Hampshire where he earned his Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience. He has taught for over thirty years and has conducted research in the areas of Psycholinguistics, Attention, Social Neuroscience, and Clinical Neuroscience while integrating both electrophysiological and eye-tracking methods. His current projects involve multivariate studies of word recognition and facial recognition. The latter study is being conducted jointly with Dartmouth Medical School using samples of patient images for cleft-repair and other surgical repairs for craniofacial anomalies. Dr. Fleming also supports undergraduate research and has organized the VAAS Symposium at Norwich University on several occasions, including the upcoming event on April 21, 2018.

## CALL FOR DUES AND DONATIONS, AND A THANK YOU!

Please find a tear-off reminder for Dues and Donation below. If you have already submitted dues or donations for 2018, thank you so much! You may receive notifications in the mail periodically and we would appreciate any donations that you wish to give, but we are not asking for multiple donations. All donations are tax-deductible and Thank You letters will be given for each donation showing the amount of the donation and the taxable year. If you are not currently a member but would like to become a member or submit a donation, please visit our website at [vaas.us](http://vaas.us). We really do rely on your support!

*We also wish to thank an anonymous donor for their generous donation well over our benefactor level. Whoever you are, we greatly appreciate it!*

Dear Friends,

The mission of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences (VAAS) is to provide free-to-the-public educational activities in support of arts, humanities, and sciences in Vermont. We hope you will decide to renew your commitment to us this year. If you are willing to help us accomplish our goals, please fill out the section at the bottom of this page and mail it back in the envelope provided. You can now use PayPal to pay your dues! Simply go to <http://vaas.us/membership/> and enter your information.

Thank you for your generosity. We hope to see you at some of our events this year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kevin Fleming, VAAS President

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### ANNUAL DUES AND DONATIONS

Student (\$15)    
  Individual (\$25)    
  Family (\$35)    
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  Benefactor (\$100 or more)

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## 2017 FELLOWS LUNCHEON

by Connell Gallagher

VAAS President James Conley welcomed the thirty persons who attended the 43rd Annual Fellows Luncheon at the Windjammer Restaurant in South Burlington on Saturday, October 21, 2017 to welcome five new Fellows to the Academy. Connell Gallagher, Chair of the Fellows Committee, served as the Master of Ceremonies for the afternoon. The five new Fellows who were inducted included:

**Geraldine Pittman de Batlle**, Professor of English Emerita at Marlboro College, for great teaching over a 50-year career.



Award-winning graphic novelist **Alison Bechdel**, Vermont Cartoonist Laureate of Bolton, for her writing and long-running syndicated cartoon strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For*.



UVM Distinguished Professor of English **Major Jackson**, for teaching, poetry readings throughout the state and the publication of four award winning volumes of poetry.

UVM Distinguished Professor of Pathology **Brooke Mossman**, for her ground-breaking and award-winning research on mesothelioma and other asbestos-induced diseases.



Middlebury Distinguished Professor of English and Creative Writing **Jay Parini**, for his dedication to teaching and the printed word, more particularly for publishing over fifty books, including five well-regarded biographies, and for his innovation in writing such fictional biographies as *The Last Station: A Novel of Tolstoy's Last Year*.

## 2017 CONFERENCE ON THE FRENCH IN VERMONT

by Connell Gallagher

In 2012, the VAAS Board of Trustees decided to change the frequency of our conferences from annual to biennial, and to seek to co-sponsor events in the intervening years with academic institutions and/or cultural organizations. In 2017, we co-sponsored the conference **“French Connections/Franconnexions”** with the UVM Center for Research on Vermont. This was a topic we had long planned to tackle, and it was fortuitous that the Center was interested at this time. Over 100 educators, students, policy-makers and business leaders from both sides of the border attended the conference on March 20, 2017.

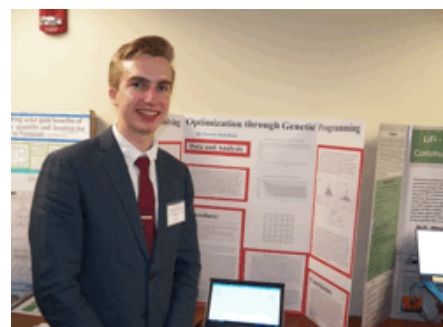
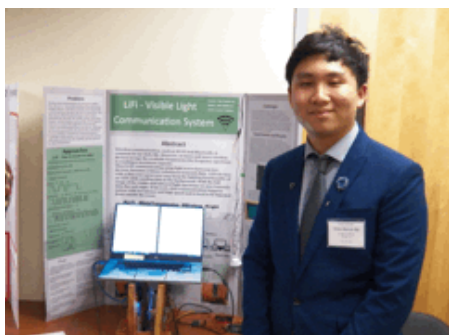
The Champlain valley has been a fluid zone of trade and emigration since settlement. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century French-Canadians flocked to the textile mills in Burlington and Winooski, and many settled on the farms of Franklin, Orleans, Essex, Lamoille and Caledonia Counties. French is still the second most common language spoken in Vermont, and Vermont remains as Quebec’s most significant trading partner in New England. The conference highlighted the historical, cultural and economic contributions of French Canadians to Vermont and the region, examining the past, present and future of these cross-border migrations and relationships.

### VERMONT STATE SCIENCE FAIR HAS 2 VAAS WINNERS IN 2017! By Lauren Howard

The 58th annual Vermont State Science Fair was held at Norwich University in Northfield Vermont on April 1, 2017. The Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences normally gives one \$200 prize to a student for the best senior project. After reviewing over a dozen projects, our judges this year, Lauren and Judy Howard, decided to present two awards.

The first was given to Trevor Houchens from South Burlington High School. His project was entitled “Maze solving optimization through genetic programming”. He had designed a computer program using evolutionary principles. He ran a series of simulations, with over 100 trials each, for the computer to progress through random mazes, each time updating and improving the program. He was able to statistically determine the point at which the computer would be able to optimize the program.

The second winner was Yiren Ramon Qu from Lyndon Institute. His project was entitled, “LiFi – Visible light communication”. He designed equipment and a program that allowed him to send images, written data, and music from a server to a receiver using light waves, instead of normal wires or sound communication. He did this by converting all the information into binary language (8 bit characters made of zeros and ones) and then back again. Transmission was slow but this may well be the wave of the future.



## VAAS 2017 STUDENT SYMPOSIUM A SUCCESS

by James Conley

Impressive student intellectual endeavors were on prominent display at Marlboro College, Saturday, April 22, as more than two dozen undergraduates displayed the abundant fruits of their labors in a series of topically related panels. Organization of this event was under the aegis of Professor Kate Ratcliff, Professor of American Studies at Marlboro in conjunction with five of her colleagues from Marlboro and Professor Kevin Fleming of Norwich University, also a fellow Trustee of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences. It was altogether a wondrous and memorable occasion.



### VAAS PUBLICATIONS—ADDENDA

When we published *The Arts in Vermont* (2017) we included a list of VAAS publications at the end of the volume. We have since discovered that we failed to include a number of them, and we do so here.

*Fellows of the Vermont Academy of Arts & Sciences* (1989)

*Literature: Vermont as a Setting* (1989)

*VAAS Intercollegiate Symposia: Selected Student Papers, 1988-89* (1990)

*Nurturing the Child as Artist* (1992)

*Vermont Contributions toward World Peace* (1992)

*Autobiography of Irving Adler* (1993)

*Biodiversity in the Context of Science and Society* (1994)

*Vermont and a Changing World: Cultural Perspectives* (1994)

*A Short History of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences* (2000)

*The G.I. Bill and Marlboro College* (2010)

Review of *Radio Free Vermont: A Fable of Resistance*, authored by **Bill McKibben**

New York: Blue Rider Press, 225 pp, 2017, ISBN 9780735219861, \$22

*Submitted by Arthur H. Westing*

It would not surprise this reviewer if some would classify the book at hand as an extended commercial for Vermont-brewed beer disguised as a blueprint for how the State might once again work toward becoming an independent republic. This "fable of resistance" thus follows in the footsteps of several prior books having had the same aim. In 1987 Frank Bryan and Bill Mares published *Out! the Vermont Secession Book*, a wonderfully clever tongue-in-cheek imagined description of the early days of a successful bloodless secession. Then in 2003 Thomas H. Naylor published *The Vermont Manifesto: the Second Vermont Republic*, a serious *raison-d'etre* and guideline to independence for the State, well-meaning although seriously flawed by an endless number of factual errors. Naylor then followed this in 2008 with *Secession: How Vermonters and all other States can Save Themselves from the Empire*, an only marginally improved revision of the former.

McKibben, a well-known and widely respected environmentalist, is a relatively recent immigrant to Vermont — and now, in admiration of his adopted State, more Catholic than the Pope. The tale revolves around a cabal of three fictitious individuals, an elderly radio commentator, a middle-aged former biathlon champion, and a country-music obsessed computer nerd. Via clandestine "Radio Free Vermont" broadcasts (a notion apparently borrowed from the Bryan/Mares book) they ultimately achieve over a period of some months their aim of having most of the Towns include a warning to advise the State legislature to consider secession.

As might be expected of the author, the text is sprinkled with more or less subtle hints of the adverse effects of global warming. And here and there in passing he is properly supportive of Bernie Sanders, dissatisfied with Donald Trump, and favorably disposed to same-sex unions. As a minor shortcoming, McKibben refers to a Supreme Court case that held secession to be illegal, but fails to note that the United States is solemnly bound by at least three major multilateral treaties to recognize a people's right to self-determination. All in all, the book progresses rather sedately and predictably (and reads well despite some punctuational oddities and occasional quirks of spelling), finally culminating in a hair-raising final episode.

Early on, Vermont was, indeed, an independent republic for 14 years (1777-1791) for all of the right reasons (including its constitutional abolition of slavery, establishment of universal adult suffrage, and creation of a complete system of education). I share with the author not only my status as a "convinced" rather than "birthright" Vermonter, but as well the pipe dream of a second Vermont Republic, that is to say, a nation of manageable size and coherence enjoying a truly democratic governance. I am thus in complete sympathy with the comparable messages that have been offered by McKibben and the other noted dreamers.

*Arthur H. Westing*, VAAS Trustee 1967-1971 and 1991-1998  
[westing@sover.net](mailto:westing@sover.net)

## SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR VAAS FELLOWS

The Fellows Committee is looking for more nominees to round out our list of potential VAAS Fellows. As the new chair of the committee I look forward to finalizing our selection later this spring and organizing the annual Fellows lunch in the fall. If there is someone you have been thinking of nominating, we welcome the suggestion!

These are the criteria for Fellows:

“The candidate must be living and of mature experience; must be exemplary in repute; would respect being a Fellow of the Academy; would bring prestige to the Academy; must have made an extraordinary contribution in or to the arts, humanities, sciences, social sciences, or teaching; contributions must have made a substantial impact on the life and conditions in Vermont, or if such impact be elsewhere, credit therefore rebound to Vermont, its institutions, people, or influence....”

Please send names and supporting material to:

Jeffrey D. Marshall  
2016 Plains Road  
Milton, VT 05468  
[jeffrey.marshall@uvm.edu](mailto:jeffrey.marshall@uvm.edu)

## 52<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL VAAS INTERCOLLEGIATE SYMPOSIUM A SUCCESS

by Kevin Fleming

The 52nd Annual VAAS Intercollegiate Symposium was a complete success! We counted over 80 visitors which included students and their mentors and guests from five colleges (Norwich, Middlebury, Marlboro, Castleton, and St. Michaels). There were 21 presenters who gave oral presentations of their work, on topics ranging from canine therapy for soldiers to moral philosophy. In the spirit of sharing undergraduate scholarship from a wide range of disciplines in the Arts and Sciences, the conference fulfilled its mission. I wanted to thank all who helped organize the conference, and especially Matt Thomas, who managed the submissions and organized the program. Matt, Carole, and John served as able moderators for the sessions. We also had many students visit from our Psychology and

Biology Programs thanks to our VAAS President Emeritus, Lauren Howard. A handful of parents, grandparents, siblings, and even an infant, showed up to support the presenters. Without being too proud, one of our Psychology presenters brought tears of joy to her mother when she described her ANOVA. Normally statistics do not evoke such emotions, but to a mother who understands statistics and then sees her daughter use them, there is a special connection.

Thanks again to all who made this a special day for both our students in Psychology and all the students from across the state.



**Julia Wagner '18**, a senior English major with French and religious studies minors, presents a paper which she wrote in the spring of 2017 for a class taught by **Laurence Clerfeuille** of the French faculty at St. Michael's College.



## FELLOWS IN THE NEWS

### BY CONNELL GALLAGHER

Our VAAS Fellows continue to be active long after they are inducted. Just recently I noticed a number of them appearing in various news outlets, including the following:

VAAS Fellow Katherine Paterson new book (*Bread and Roses, Too*) has been chosen by the Vermont Humanities Council as the Vermont Reads book for 2018. Paterson is the author of more than 30 books and she is a winner of the Newbury Medal and the National Book Award.

VAAS Fellow and printmaker Sabra Field's beautiful show at the Middlebury College Museum of Art in the summer of 2017 entitled "Sabra Field, Then and Now: A Retrospective" was reviewed by Kevin O'Connor for *Vermont Digger*. Field and VAAS Fellow and poet/author Julia Alvarez also collaborated on the book *Where Do They Go?* (2017) about death, for children of all ages, inspired by the passing of Alvarez's parents and then sister, and based on Field's suite of prints, *The Demeter Suite*.

VAAS Fellow Chris Bohjalian published his twentieth novel last month, a thriller called *The Flight Attendant*. It is a book about a flight attendant who wakes up in the Middle East in the wrong hotel, in the wrong bed, with a dead man—and no idea what happened.

VAAS Fellow Claire Van Vliet has produced over 100 books in her seven decades of running the Janus Press in Newark, Vermont. She is an artist, a printer, a bookbinder and a papermaker, and she uses all of these arts on her many books. In 2017, she published Ellen Dorn Levitt's *Gameboard/Symmetries* which includes twenty-five images, all variations of the same basic structure in a leporello binding.

VAAS Fellow Edward Hoagland author of two dozen books—literary natural histories, travel narratives, novels and memoirs-- and countless essays, published the novel *In the Country of the Blind* in 2017. This latest, reviewed in *The New York Times Book Review* is a compressed, sensuous work of fiction set in the Northeast Kingdom in the early 1970s. The novel is autobiographical, based on a period of blindness experienced by the author in the late 1980s.

VAAS Fellow Robert Buckeye's latest book is a collection of his reviews, articles, introductions, news columns, and catalog essays on literature, film, art, and current events. He has also edited the latest VAAS booklet on *The Arts in Vermont: Work, Word and the Land* Continuity and Change based on the VAAS 50th anniversary conference at Bennington College in 2015. Bob served as the Curator of the Abernathy Collection of American Literature at Middlebury College for many years.

VAAS Fellow and visual artist, Pat Adams had a show at the Bennington Museum last year entitled "Gatherum of Quiddities: Paintings by Pat Adams" with a published catalog with the same title by Jamie Franklin. Franklin notes that the artist "has been creating rich, lovingly wrought abstract paintings for well over six decades. ... she has taken an independent, measured trajectory in the face of the art world's fast-paced shifts in taste...."

VAAS Fellow Howard Frank Mosher who passed away in January 2017, was celebrated with the publication of his collection of stories, *Points North* (2018) at the Phoenix Book Shop in Burlington on January 25, 2018. He was the author of thirteen books, eleven of fiction and two of non-fiction. He was the dean of Vermont writers and at the top of his game when he died.

A new exhibit at the Fleming Museum highlights the work of Vermont cartoonist Alison Bechdel, the Cartoonist Laureate of Vermont. "Self-confessed! – The Inappropriately Intimate Comics of Alison Bechdel" runs through May 20 in the Museum's East Gallery. Bechdel is also featured in several Museum events.

Edited by Christina Chant, St. Michael's College  
Happy summer!



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## VERMONT ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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TO:

Come visit us at [www.vaas.us](http://www.vaas.us)!