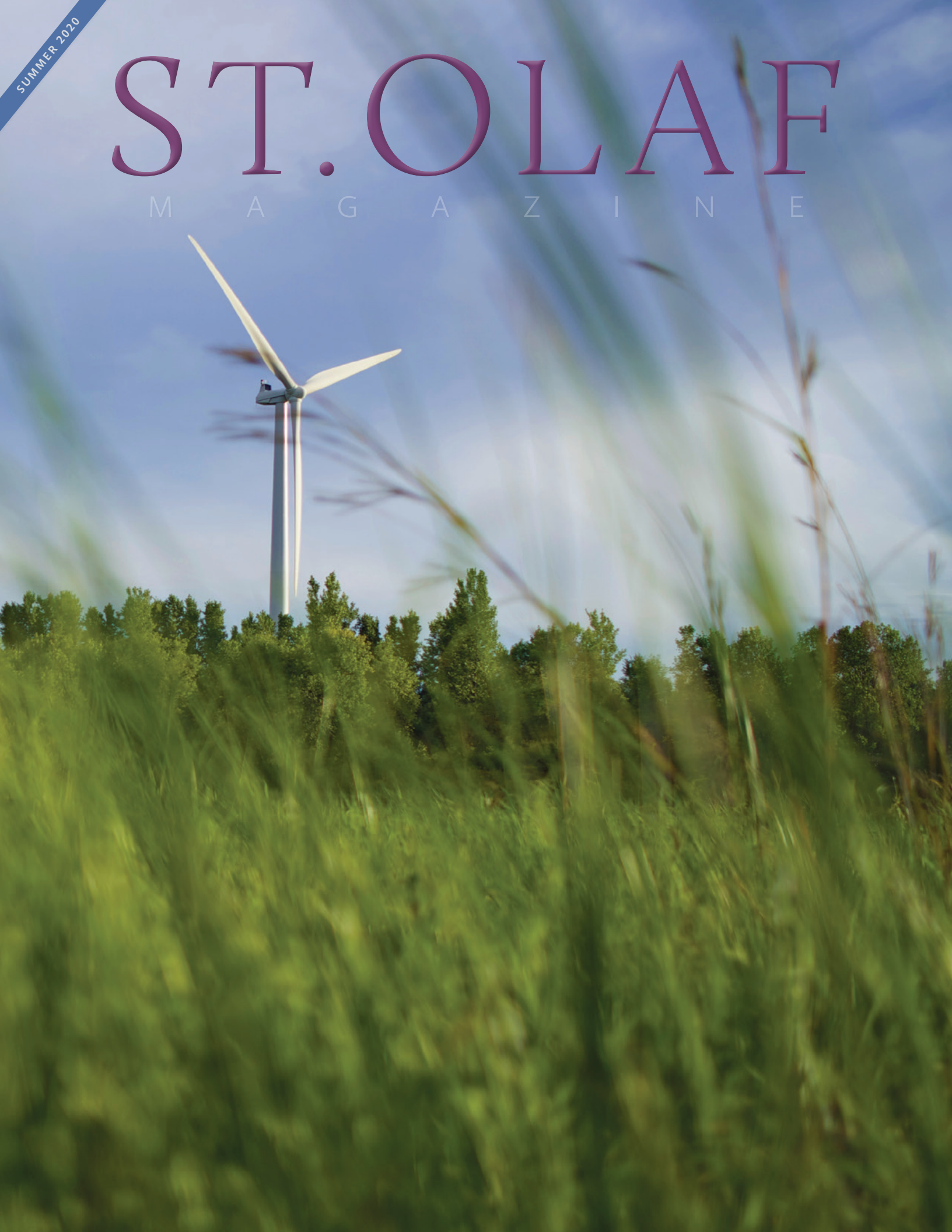


SUMMER 2020

ST. OLAF

M A G A Z I N E



ON THE COVER

Restored native prairie grasses in the St. Olaf Natural Lands.

PHOTO BY TOM ROSTER



ST. OLAF MAGAZINE

Summer 2020
Volume 67 · No. 2

EDITOR
Carole Leigh Engblom

ART DIRECTOR
Don Bratland '87

COPY EDITOR
Laura Hamilton Waxman

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Anna Barnard '21, Greg Breining,
Sarah Morean, Jeff Sauve,
Andy Steiner, Molly Work

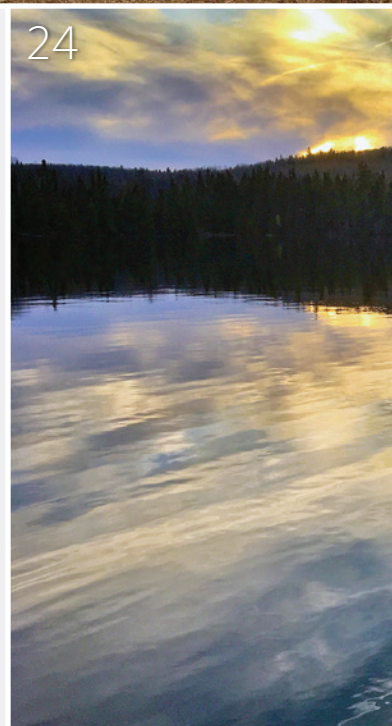
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS
Gene Bakko, Don Bratland '87,
Will Cipos '19, James Daly '13,
Marcel Hones '21, Kierra Lopac '19,
Evan Pak '19, Tom Roster, and
students from the Class of 2020

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS
Molly Murakami '14, Elissa Temme '19

Readers may send name/address changes and corrections to:
Advancement Services, St. Olaf College,
1520 St. Olaf Ave., Northfield, MN
55057; email: update@stolaf.edu
or call 507-786-3330

Class Notes and Milestones:
Contact the Office of Alumni & Parent Relations, 507-786-3028 or 888-865-6537; email: alum-office@stolaf.edu; update online at stolaf.edu/alumni/share-your-news

St. Olaf Magazine is published three times annually by St. Olaf College, with editorial offices at the Office of Marketing and Communications; email: magazine@stolaf.edu



ST. OLAF

M A G A Z I N E

S U M M E R 2 0 2 0

2 Letter to Oles

From President David R. Anderson '74

3 The George Floyd Fellowship

St. Olaf College has established the George Floyd Fellowship for Social Change, which allows two students annually to work toward improving the collective experience of marginalized communities.

4 Cheers to the Class of 2020

While more than 700 seniors missed out on the rites and traditions of graduation, this class carries with them countless special memories. BY SARAH MOREAN

10 A Natural Investment

This year is the 30th anniversary of the St. Olaf Natural Lands, 350 acres of restored forests, wetlands, and prairie that represent the natural legacy of the campus landscape. BY GREG BREINING

20 Restoring the Forest

The natural lands surrounding the St. Olaf campus have benefited from 30 years of restoration efforts.

BY ANNA BARNARD '21

24 It's Only Natural

Spending time outdoors doing something we love is not only good for us, it's also good for nature. BY GREG BREINING

34 Uncharted Waters

Art reflects life for graphic novelist and illustrator Molly Murakami '14. BY ANDY STEINER

39 Spotlight: Essa Mohamed '09

Meet Mayo Clinic researcher and 2020 Bush Fellow Essa Mohamed. BY ANNA BARNARD '21

40 Oles on the Front Lines

Oles across the nation have stepped up to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, providing leadership and service that exemplify the ideals and mission of St. Olaf College.

BY MOLLY WORK

44 Ole Connect

Ole Connect fosters connections within the St. Olaf alumni community and facilitates strategic career networking opportunities. BY MOLLY WORK

48 STORIES: The Unstoppable Yosh

BY JEFF SAUVE



FROM THE DESK OF
PRESIDENT DAVID R. ANDERSON '74



Greetings, Oles

My letter to you at the beginning of the magazine is normally an upbeat reflection on its contents, concluding with cheerleading for the College. But these are not normal times. We are living in a challenging moment for our country, for St. Olaf, and for each of us as individuals. The coronavirus has upended our lives, sowing fear and anxiety and socially, culturally, and emotionally distancing us from one another. The appalling murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the other recent killings of black men and women around the country, the outpouring of peaceful protests against the structural racism in America that led to those events, and the destructive rioting that ensued have all made us starkly aware of the bias and inequity that continue to taint our society.

St. Olaf College may be a beautiful place on a hill outside a lovely small town in Midwest America, but we are not immune either to the virus or from the effects of systemic racism. My pledge to you is that we will be better, we will do better, and we will never rest from that important work.

We will open this fall for in-person classes on the Hill, taking the full measure of precautions to keep everyone as safe as we can. The education we offer is predicated on the belief that students learn best in a residential setting, where their intellectual growth is matched by their growth as members of a community, having examined faith and values and learned to contribute to and support the common good. We will continue to offer that experience amidst the challenges posed by COVID-19.

As we welcome Oles back home, we will continue to do the hard work of making the Hill equitable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all. I know that this won't happen overnight, but we will pursue the work with a greater sense of urgency and determination. We will make mistakes along the way, and we will hear expressions of anger, of opposition, and of pain when we do. We will listen and learn from them, evolving as we do.

The College has many strengths, some of them displayed in this issue of the magazine. We will draw upon them in this challenging time, looking to readers of this issue for your encouragement and support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David R. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.



UM! YAH! YAH!

“As our communities stand together asking for justice, we must ask ourselves what we are doing to be part of the change. We need a social awakening. We need to stop passively apologizing and feeling sorry, and instead take action.”

— María Pabón, Director of the Taylor Center for Equity and Inclusion

St. Olaf Establishes the George Floyd Fellowship for Social Change

St. Olaf College has committed \$100,000 to establish the George Floyd Fellowship for Social Change, named in honor of George Floyd, whose murder in Minneapolis set off national and international waves of protests, education, self-reflection, calls for action, and systemic change.

Managed by the Taylor Center for Equity and Inclusion, the George Floyd Fellowship directly supports the advancement of Black American students. Students participating in the fellowship will work toward improving the collective experience of marginalized communities, with a focus on the advancement of social justice and equity. The program provides fellows with leadership development opportunities, mentoring, and stipends supporting internships or research projects, costs associated with travel to conferences, and educational materials.

“We are part of one of the strongest movements this country has seen. We owe it to our students and communities not only to acknowledge the racism that infects our schools, neighborhoods, and other institutions but also actively to work to be part of the movement and change. We know Oles can and Oles will!” says María Pabón, director of the Taylor Center.



Since the George Floyd Fellowship endowment was announced, St. Olaf alumni and parents have added their gifts and support to the college's initial investment, including an additional \$100,000 gift that has been added since the endowment was announced. These additional funds will ensure that there will be at least two student recipients of the inaugural George Floyd Fellowship.

Meanwhile, members of the St. Olaf community have come together to advocate for change and social justice, protest, donate, serve, pray, and answer calls to action. Noting that “to be socially distanced doesn't mean our hearts are apart and our prayers are masked,” a Community Reflections web page was created where Oles can share their voices during this time of introspection and action. These messages are the start of a chorus intended for all Oles — students, alumni, faculty, and staff — who are invited to join in the refrain by sharing their reflections at wp.stolaf.edu/equity-inclusion/community-reflections.

“As people who believe in justice and in love, we are called to do whatever we can from wherever we are — to advocate for change, and to care for ourselves and each other. ... Change must happen not just outside ourselves, but also within.”

— Katie Fick, Associate College Pastor

“I have hope in the belief that young people hold the key to creating the change that we need in the world. We have to do better. We must do better. But you have to try. Don't give up. Don't ever give up. Stand up for justice. Stand up for equality. Stand up for fair treatment. Stand up for what is right.”

— Hassel Morrison, Vice President for Student Life

“We live in a time of great conflict, confusion, and contradiction, and I believe that the story of this historic moment must be told. And it must be told by you: the artist, the scientist, the humanitarian, the poet, but more important, you as an Ole. It's what we do at St. Olaf.”

— Bruce King, Assistant to the President for Institutional Diversity

“To hope is to believe that where we are today is not where we're stuck forever. There are protesters demanding change, and there are neighbors helping neighbors. We have hope that with a lot of hard work and deep listening, we can heed the words of President Obama, that we can — and must — be better.”

— Matthew Marohl, College Pastor

“To the folks who have been doing the work of protesting, donating, volunteering, or any of the other myriad ways that are necessary to effect change, please keep going.”

— Iman Jafri, Associate Chaplain for Muslim Life

CHEERS To THE



The Class of 2020 at a Glance

722 graduates (682 bachelor of arts; 41 bachelor of music)

979 majors (475 single majors; 237 double majors; 10 triple majors)

332 concentrations (220 single concentrations; 53 double concentrations; 2 triple concentrations)

39.4% graduated with honors

Top majors: biology, economics, music, mathematics, psychology, political science, art history and studio art, English, chemistry, exercise science

Top concentrations: statistics/statistics & data science, management studies, educational studies, women's and gender studies, race and ethnic studies, environmental studies, neuroscience, linguistic studies, media studies, family studies

73.1% participated in at least one off-campus domestic or international program

7 Fulbright Fellowships

1 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship


1 East-West Center Graduate Degree Fellowship



CLASS OF 2020



The Class of 2020, photographed as first-year students in 2016



The Class of 2020 is unlike any other in the history of St. Olaf College.

By Sarah Morean

IN MARCH 2020, THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC caused Oles to vacate their dorms with no certainty about when they'd be back on the Hill. Classes quickly pivoted to online instruction, following an extended spring break. Finding peace with our "new normal" was all anyone could do, and it wasn't easy.

The Hill is home for all Oles, so change was difficult, but for the Class of 2020 it was devastating. This class missed out on the rites and traditions that many others have enjoyed: the 50 Days March (formerly 100 Days March) to downtown Northfield, Senior Week, signing Old Main Tower, and commencement among them.

Though commencement has been rescheduled for next spring, and other rites along with it, the fact remains that the Class of 2020 is unlike any other in St. Olaf's history. The closure and camaraderie that comes with finishing your last exam and relaxing with dear friends on campus before your loved ones come to celebrate your walk across the stage is a milestone they didn't get to experience.

Instead, during that time, the college found "socially distanced" ways to celebrate the Class of 2020, including a multi-week Instagram feature where seniors shared photos and memories of their time on the Hill. On the following pages, we share a small sample of the memories they carried with them as they left their college years behind them — far sooner than anyone ever expected — amid a global pandemic.

SARAH MOREAN is the assistant director of digital communications at St. Olaf College.

FAVORITE ST. OLAF MEMORIES *from the* CLASS OF 2020



"Many of my favorite memories from St. Olaf were simply warm spring afternoons on campus — something we didn't get this year. Friday afternoons were particularly special: when classes finished and you just went out and laid in the grass, sat on the stone benches outside Buntrock, threw around a Frisbee, or strung up some hammocks. There was a certain feeling of relief mixed with relaxation that spread all across campus on those Friday afternoons in the spring. I've had plenty of those days in the last four years, but right now it doesn't quite feel like I had enough of them. Still, I'm thankful for all the blissful Friday afternoons that I did have, and I will hold onto those warm memories forever." — **Johnny Goodson**, political science and American Studies major with a concentration in media studies



"Finding a ragtag group of misfits in Ellingson to learn, laugh, and walk to downtown Northfield with." — **Jacob Gillingham**, chemistry major with a concentration in biomolecular science



"My favorite memories have a lot to do with the cross country team. I am really going to miss running with my teammates and always being surrounded by such strong people." — **Bryony Hawgood**, biology major



"My favorite memory is being a part of African and Caribbean Nights, where we come together to share our story and celebrate our cultures. 'Unity is strength, division is weakness.' (*Swahili Proverb*)" — **Angela Mrema**, French and race and ethnic studies major with concentrations in management studies and Africa and the African diaspora



"One of my favorite memories on the Hill was when I gave my chapel talk my senior year on Tuesday, October 8, 2019. It was the most vulnerable I had been on a public level. However, the outpouring of love and support I received from various students, faculty, and staff will always be remembered." — **Andrew A. Gonzalez**, vocal music education major



"My favorite memory from my time at St. Olaf is swimming with my friends and peers at the Great Barrier Reef while we identified sting ray species. However, if I were to choose an on-campus memory, I would say one of my favorites was spending late evenings with friends in the Larson parlor." — **Henry Henson**, biology and environmental studies major with a concentration in statistics and data science



“One of the reasons I attended St. Olaf was because of the study abroad opportunities. I was fortunate enough to participate in three Interims abroad: *Intermediate Spanish II in Costa Rica*, *Classical Studies in Italy*, and the Theater in London program in England. Studying abroad provided me with the opportunity to learn about different cultures and different languages, make new friends, and expand my view of the world around me. Because of these experiences, I have memories that will last a lifetime.” — **Katie Braman**
psychology and women’s and gender studies major with concentrations in family studies and media studies



“One of my favorite memories with my Ole [baseball] teammates was when four of us made the last-minute decision to road trip to Milwaukee for game 7 of the National League Championship Series. We didn’t get back to our dorms until 5 a.m. the next day, but we had a blast and it made for quite a memorable experience.”

— **Luke Feigal**
economics major



“My favorite memory of St. Olaf is undeniably going to St. Olaf Band rehearsals every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, playing the music of composers like David Maslanka, Jodie Blackshaw, and Alfred Reed. I’m forever grateful for every moment I got to make music with the ensemble and meeting the people who became my closest friends and, ultimately, my family.”

— **Nahal Javan**, instrumental music education major



“Many of my favorite memories of St. Olaf are through my time as an EMT on campus. I made so many amazing friends for life, and I even got to travel to Machu Picchu on the Peruvian Medical Experience with them! Our skill set gives us such an amazing opportunity to give back to the St. Olaf community and the Northfield community through volunteering at HealthFinders, the Northfield EMS station, and providing medical care on campus. We also had so many fun community events, like our AED scavenger hunt and mock medical scenarios, complete with makeup and fake blood!”

— **Sara Spanjers**, biology major

“I was able to get my dream internship, and my best friends from St. Olaf flew out for a week to hang out and support me! I am so lucky to have met these wonderful people.”

— **Cory Kieras**, psychology and computer science major



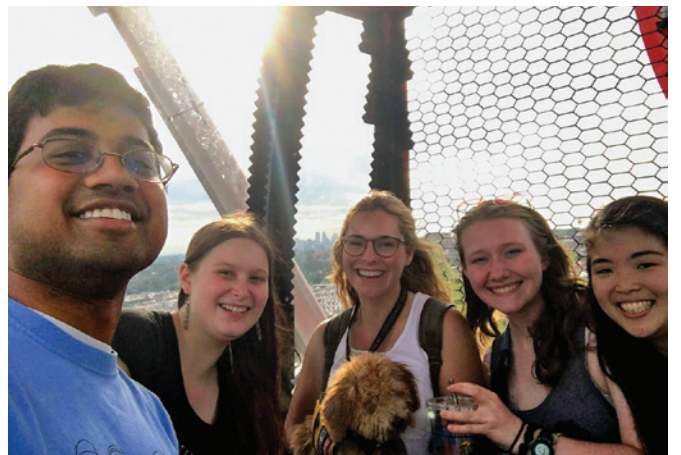


"President's Ball 2018. I got ready with all my girl friends in Rand, and they did my makeup and helped me with my hair so I would look gorgeous, and we were all chatting and laughing together. We all went to Chapati with our dates for dinner and then to the ball to dance. I dragged my date onto the dance floor and, although he was super nervous and neither of us knew how to dance, we had a ton of fun dancing together and chatting. I realized I had a crush on him, and a few months later we became a couple, but that was the night that started it all."

— **Sofia Reed**, Chinese major with a concentration in women's and gender studies



"Planning and performing at KARIBU's African and Caribbean Nights, because I got to embrace my inner artist while surrounded by my favorite people on campus." — **Gugu Mkhulisi**, independent major in entrepreneurial development for African women, with concentrations in women's and gender studies and Africa and the African diaspora



"Even among the 'big' experiences I've been lucky to have at St. Olaf, it's the little moments that have mattered the most. Playing cards in Peru, gazing at the stars outside Hilleboe, befriending the cats in Israel, and taking walks around Northfield with my friends. My favorite memory is of visiting the Minnesota State Fair with five of my friends. It was a wonderful chance to share part of my identity as a Minnesotan with other Oles, and this sharing of identities and experiences is what I love about St. Olaf." — **Neetij Krishnan**, biology major with a concentration in biomolecular science



"My time at St. Olaf is hard to summarize. There were many ups and downs, but I can truly say that it was the best four years of my life. I met so many amazing people on the Hill, from professors I still stay in contact with to friends whom I'll be linked to for the rest of my life. I also have to shout out the 11 other senior hockey players from the class of 2020. I was given 11 automatic brothers in them when I arrived on the Hill, and the memories we made on and (especially) off the ice will stay with me forever. Thank you, St. Olaf, for everything. I am so proud to be an alum of this amazing institution."

— **Roshen Jaswal**, exercise science major with a concentration in management studies

"Although we were all on different teams, I absolutely loved playing with these girls (and all of the other girls on the MIAC teams for that matter). We were always cheering each other on, which made my collegiate golf experience so memorable."

— **Solveig Christenson**, exercise science major



"My favorite St. Olaf memory is being able to study the life of Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico over Interim and learn about how much that landscape influenced her life and art. I learned a lot and made many new friends during my stay."

— **Autumn Perron**, art history major with a concentration in Asian studies





"My best memories from St. Olaf came from the times I spent with my best friends on and off the football field. Being able to spend four years with these guys made the grind worth it in all aspects, from in the classroom to on the field. Sharing in common accomplishments we all worked so hard for gave me a bond with my teammates that made us family. These relationships and memories are things I'll cherish forever." — **Max Dowdy**, economics major with an emphasis in business management



"My favorite memories are finding community and growing in my abilities by working in the Pause. Feeling the energy of the room as we produce a large rock show or feeling the sincerity of an *In Black* monologue — no matter what the event was, being part of the team that put it on was challenging and exhilarating, and helped prepare me for a career after graduation." — **Ross Grant**, religion major with a concentration in media studies

"How do I pick just one favorite memory from St. Olaf!?! There are so many to choose from ... I could talk about playing in Norseman Band or studying abroad in Ecuador and Palestine or participating in shenanigans at the Nursing Department. I would say that all of my favorite moments at St. Olaf (or abroad with my Ole peers) involved my friends and our community. I won't remember the assignments I stressed over, or the papers and projects I spent hours on; I will remember the people. My fellow oles-canoles. That being said, if I had to choose ONE singular memory to capture the essence of my St. Olaf experience, I would say the late-night finals caf meals where our staff/faculty served us. We came together after spending hours or days of studying and ate some scrambled eggs, sausage, hash browns, and of course JonnyPops. You could look around the caf and see people laughing so hard their bellies ached, smiling so wide it hurt, and enjoying their time with their cherished friends. A chorus of *Um Yah Yah!* would break out, and we would all sing together to celebrate another great semester and all of our hard work and accomplishments. That's what St. Olaf is about: dedication to our academic achievements, determination to be the best versions of ourselves, and loyalty to one another as we make our way through our undergrad experience and move into the real world. Oles can. Oles will." — **Anna Janning**, nursing and religion major



View more Class of 2020 memories at wp.stolaf.edu/2020/class-of-2020-memories



Enjoy a Virtual Celebration for the Class of 2020

A virtual celebration for the senior class was held on Sunday, May 24, 2020. Speakers included President David R. Anderson '74, Professor of Music and Conductor of the St. Olaf Orchestra Steven Amundson, Associate Professor of Political Science Chris Chapp, Athletic Director Ryan Bowles, Dean of Students Rosalyn Eaton '87, U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, Neetij Krishnan '20, Alexis Valeriano '20, Isabel Istephanous '20, and Ulises Jovel '20.

The online event also included socially-distanced video compilations of the St. Olaf Orchestra performing *The Turtle Dove*, by G. Winston Cassler (mixed and edited by Steven Garcia '20), and the St. Olaf Choir performing *Beautiful Savior*, arranged by F. Melius Christiansen (mixed and edited by St. Olaf Broadcast/Media Services).

View the virtual celebration at stolaf.edu/2020

A Natural



An aerial photograph of a landscape during autumn. A tall, white wind turbine stands prominently in the middle ground, situated on a grassy hill. To the left, a small blue building and a water tower are visible. The foreground is dominated by a dense field of tall, golden-brown grasses. A winding road or path cuts through the grass. In the background, a river flows through a forest of trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and red. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

INVESTMENT

RESTORATION OF PRAIRIE, WETLANDS,
AND FORESTS AROUND THE ST. OLAF CAMPUS
HAS BEEN A BOON FOR EDUCATION,
CAMPUS LIFE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

BY GREG BREINING

AS A COLLEGIATE CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER, Britt Gangeness '04 trained on the more than five miles of trails winding over the prairie and wooded Natural Lands that encircle the St. Olaf campus. As autumn progressed, the yellow goldenrod and purple asters dried up and gave way to the red and tawny stalks of big and little bluestem. Gangeness ran through it all. "From August through November you see the evolution of the prairie," she says.

This evolving beauty of the college's Natural Lands stayed with Gangeness long after graduation and informed her career choice. Today she's an environmental outreach specialist for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, introducing families to natural resource issues and activities through a program called We Are Water MN. She's one of many Oles who have been inspired by the Natural Lands of St. Olaf.

This year is the 30th anniversary of the Natural Lands, which have become a campus trademark. The 350 acres of restored forests, wetlands, and prairie, representing the natural legacy of the landscape before the college was founded, have become part of the St. Olaf brand, a refreshing refuge for students, a selling point for recruitment, an outdoor laboratory for student learning and research, and a valuable natural legacy for the surrounding community.

"The whole picture that it shows to students is something that's attractive," says Paul Egeland '65, who established the Morton and Thelma Egeland Endowment, named for his parents, to support the St. Olaf Natural Lands, education in ecology and conservation biology, and sustainable agricultural practices on college lands. He did so because of his lifelong love of the outdoors and of birds and bird watching [see sidebar].

The intersection of student life with the Natural Lands surrounding campus helps to achieve one of the educational goals of the college, says Curator of the St. Olaf Natural Lands Kathy Shea, a professor of biology and environmental studies. "We hope that every student graduates from St. Olaf with an understanding of the importance of nature. Whether they do it professionally or not, they can be part of encouraging the preservation of nature in the rest of their lives."





Yellow Prairie Coneflower
PHOTO BY GENE BAKKO



Sunset on Big Pond
PHOTO BY EVAN PAK '19

Gene Bakko, professor emeritus of biology and St. Olaf's first curator of the Natural Lands until his retirement in 2009, was recently driving around campus, pointing out restored forests along Minnesota Highway 19.

Nearly all of this land had been farmland at one time, purchased by the college years ago to control the kind of development that occurred at the perimeter of the 300-acre campus, Bakko pointed out.

Interest in turning these plowed lands back to nature began with an old storage cave on campus that had been used "since horse and buggy days" to preserve meat and dairy products. "Once we had refrigeration, [the college administration]

forgot about the cave. But kids will be kids, and they were always going in there and horsing around," says Bakko. "So the college destroyed the cave — caving it in, so to speak." But this left a barren hillside on campus.

Shortly after, in 1987, construction was set to begin on Ytterboe Hall, which as designed would have taken out a swath of existing forests, including mature maples and oaks. Many faculty were concerned about this plan and volunteered Bakko to speak with St. Olaf President Melvin D. George. George, a longtime member of The Nature Conservancy, was not just concerned by the news — he was alarmed. The architects were enlisted to re-site the building to save as many trees as possible. For the saplings that couldn't be spared, Bakko organized a tree-planting party to dig them up and use them to reforest the old cave site.

Thus followed several big tree plantings by staff and students to begin reforesting other sites around campus that had been cleared of their native forest. Bakko proposed to the college putting 23 acres into the new federal Conservation Reserve Program, which involved taking marginal farmland out of production and devoting it to conservation. As a result, the college collected a small income from the federal

Since 1989, more than 150 acres of farmland surrounding the St. Olaf campus have been restored to native tallgrass prairie. An additional 200 acres were seeded or planted with tree seedlings to restore a diverse and sustainable hardwood forest environment. PHOTOS BY GENE BAKKO



government, about the amount it would receive by renting the land to a farmer.

The ad hoc restoration effort became more deliberate as the college worked with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to develop a land stewardship plan that made recommendations for what were now becoming known as St. Olaf's Natural Lands.

Between 1989 and 2004, more than 150 acres of farmland were restored to native tallgrass prairie, an ecotype that once covered much of southern Minnesota. An additional 200 acres were forests — either remnants that survived over time or old farmland that had been seeded or started with seedlings. During these years, approximately 40,000 tree seedlings were planted on much of this farmland, with the remainder of the land put into trees by direct seeding at a rate of 2,000 seeds per acre. Leif Knecht '73, who owns Knecht's Nurseries & Landscaping near the campus, was very generous with his time and equipment in helping with some of the plantings, says Bakko. "The goal has been to recreate the hardwood forests that once were common to the area. We've been trying to stick with native species."



Natural Lands Benefactors

THE MORTON AND THELMA EGELAND ENDOWMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

A generous gift from Paul Egeland '65 established the Morton and Thelma Egeland Endowment for Environmental Science in honor of Paul's parents. The endowment supports:

- Restoration and maintenance of our natural lands
- Faculty and student research in ecology and conservation biology
- Sustainable agriculture practices on college-owned lands

Egeland has had a strong lifelong interest in wildlife and believes in the importance of natural habitats. He has been an avid bird watcher since childhood and did much birding as a student at St. Olaf in the 1960s. Egeland recently added to the historical list of vertebrate species documented on college-owned land by reporting several bird species he identified at St. Olaf when he was a student here. Egeland continues birding and contributing to many conservation organizations, including The Nature Conservancy. In addition, he has led birding trips around the world.

THE HENRY AND AGNES NELSON FAMILY ENDOWMENT

The Henry and Agnes Nelson Family Endowment for Natural Lands and Environmental Science was created by Donald H. Nelson '50, in honor of his parents, Henry and Agnes Suphammer Nelson, a member of St. Olaf Academy Class of 1912. The endowment provides resources for active environmental stewardship of college-owned land and related academic activities, including:

- The restoration and maintenance of natural habitats on St. Olaf College land
- Sustainable agricultural practices on St. Olaf-owned land
- Faculty and student research, curricular initiatives, course offerings, and faculty development in biology and environmental science, with an emphasis on ecology and conservation biology

Nelson's gift also supports student naturalists, students who work as natural lands technicians, research students, and students studying agricultural methods and running the business of STOGROW, the college's organic farm. Nelson, a retired orthodontist, tree farmer, and dedicated environmentalist, served on the staff of Mayo Clinic in Rochester for 26 years. His siblings are Joan Nelson Bell '50 and Richard Nelson '52.

GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has played a big role in enabling St. Olaf to develop its Natural Lands. In 1993, the college received a \$75,000 USFWS/Ducks Unlimited grant to restore 50 acres of land to prairie and wetland through the USFWS Wetland Restoration Permanent Easement Program. The grant gave the college its first and largest restored wetland on campus near Skoglund Athletic Center. In 2001, the college received an additional \$250,000 from USFWS/Ducks Unlimited to restore 100 acres into prairie and wetlands. Another \$20,000 grant from the private organization Pheasants Forever helped pay for prairie seed costs. The college also has received support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

THE NATURAL LANDS
HAVE EMERGED AS
AN IMPORTANT
EDUCATIONAL AMENITY
AT ST. OLAF. STUDENT
NATURALISTS PLAN
PROJECTS THAT ENGAGE
FELLOW STUDENTS
IN THE LANDS. AND
FACULTY USE THE LANDS
IN THEIR TEACHING.

The Natural Lands got a big boost when Don Nelson '50 gifted the college with the Henry and Agnes Nelson Family Endowment for the Natural Lands and Environmental Science, in honor of his parents [see sidebar]. This, along with Paul Egeland's endowment and a conservation easement through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provided income to the college's Land Stewardship Endowment to pay for land management. The easement offers permanent protection for lands that provide wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge, and soil and runoff control. An additional grant from the conservation group Pheasants Forever allowed the college to purchase prairie seed.

Restoration has continued to the present, with buckthorn removal, prescribed burning, and scheduled seeding of forests along Heath Creek, located south of Minnesota 19. Most lands with the potential to be restored now have been. The biggest challenge is ongoing management — cutting brush and burning in the prairies to knock back invasive species and encourage the growth of native grass and other herbaceous plants, known as forbs. Thinning forests, and identifying and removing exotic species such as buckthorn and reed canary grass require constant vigilance.

Last year, Nelson made an additional gift that allowed the college to increase the management of the Natural Lands to a full-time position. Nic Nelson (no relation to Don), manager of the Natural Lands, maintains the diverse ecology of the forests, wetlands, and prairies, acts as a field resource for student biologists, and is working on the restoration of oak forests in the Heath Creek Woods.

“Don's gift has been a terrific boost to enhancing the quality of the lands, in being able to devote the necessary time to care for it properly,” says Bakko. “And we are very fortunate to have hired Nic Nelson, who comes to us with excellent experience.”

Restoring old farmland to prairie and forests has been a boon for wildlife. The land has attracted the usual suspects — foxes, rabbits, turkey, and deer. A coyote den inspired the names for the nearby East and West Coyote Ponds by Eaves Avenue. Waterfowl of all kinds live around and migrate through such ponds and wetlands, including trumpeter swans, tundra swans, scaup, mergansers, mallards, teal, wood ducks, and ruddy ducks. There are also plenty of frogs, whose chorusing during the springtime Bakko describes as “almost deafening.” To preserve native birds, Bakko created a bluebird trail containing 64 birdhouses that fledge not only 50–80 bluebirds each nesting season but dozens of tree swallows, house wrens, and chickadees. The restored land is also home to nesting woodcock, whose male mating dance is a sight to see. And for the past two nesting seasons, sandhill cranes have hatched chicks in the grasslands.

There's one native species that Bakko would love to see return, though he admits the chances are small to nil. “What I'd like to have — just a pipe dream — is bison.”



In addition to the Natural Lands, the college also owns 440 acres that are leased out to farmers, but with the stipulation that it be farmed sustainably to reduce pesticide use, erosion, and runoff. The farmland has its own value, besides the modest rental income. “It showcases sustainable farming methods to the St. Olaf and surrounding communities,” says Shea.

The Natural Lands and agricultural lands have emerged as an important educational amenity. Shea works with St. Olaf student naturalists, who plan projects that engage fellow students in the lands, encourage faculty to use the lands in their classes, and invite townsfolk to participate in tours of the Natural Lands, photo contests, and other activities. Shea also works with students who demonstrate organic



Restoring old farmland
to prairie, forests, and
wetlands has been a boon
for wildlife on campus.

PHOTOS BY EVAN PAK '19,
WILL CIPOS '19, TOM ROSTER,
AND GENE BAKKO



2020 IS THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATURAL LANDS — 350 ACRES OF RESTORED FORESTS, WETLANDS, AND PRAIRIE THAT REPRESENT THE NATURAL LEGACY OF THE CAMPUS LANDSCAPE BEFORE THE COLLEGE WAS FOUNDED.



Gene Bakko (left), professor emeritus of biology, was a driving force behind the college's efforts to create the Natural Lands, and was its first curator — a position now held by Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies Kathy Shea (right). Nic Nelson (center) is the full-time manager of the Natural Lands and acts a field resource for student biologists.

farming through the student farm, STOGROW, located near the wind turbine. “The goal,” says Shea, “is to make sure the community is aware of the Natural Lands and the faculty can use the natural and agricultural lands in their teaching.”

Many students have conducted research on the Natural Lands over the years. Just recently, Izzy Istephanous '20 surveyed bumblebees. Katie Hoffman '21 and Margot Groskreutz '20 sampled ponds, including three on the Natural Lands, to study how land use affects pond ecology and biogeochemistry. Megan Kartheiser '22 and Allie Raduege '21 studied the growth and survival of northern species of conifers planted on the Natural Lands.

Dave Legvold, a farmer who leases farmland from St. Olaf, has worked with several students on ag-related projects. “Studies to maintain and improve soil health have been a big part of the student research that I’ve supervised over many years,” said Shea.

For example, scholarly research by Megan Gregory '04 on sustainable farming practices showed no-till farming could be as profitable as regular farming because of lower input costs for fertilizer, pesticides, and fuel. Her work served to change the way St. Olaf’s 400 acres of fertile farmland is sown and harvested each year.

Emma Cornwell '13 worked with Legvold to research optimal fertilizer application rates for both plant growth and profitability. Cornwell also checked bluebird houses, surveyed trees on restored plots, escorted preschool kids on learning excursions, and pulled buckthorn. Her passion for the St. Olaf Natural Lands led her to graduate work in environmental education at the University of Washington, and to IslandWood, an experiential learning center on Bainbridge Island, Washington, that teaches out-of-doors. “When you spend more time outside,” Cornwell says, “you want to take care of that place.”

The Natural Lands are an invaluable resource for student research projects, and much of their ongoing management — including prairie burns and farming at STOGROW — is carried out by St. Olaf students.

PHOTOS BY KIERRA LOPAC '19, JAMES DALY '13, AND WILL CIPOS '19

The Natural Lands are also a place where students can find peace and quiet or train for sports, running the trails or even tucking into the tall grass surrounding Big Pond to practice blowing a duck call.

Recreation benefits extend to people off campus, too. Northfield residents enjoy walking the trails and cross country skiing in winter. “The Natural Lands provide other benefits to the community as well,” says Bakko. After farmland near Big Pond was restored to prairie more than 20 years ago, recurrent flooding of the residential area to the east virtually stopped.

The Natural Lands continue to be a long-time project with a long-term payoff for the college, evolving from old farmland to a vital resource for the college, its educational mission, and its social life.

Says Bakko, “You don’t restore wetlands, seed the prairie, and plant trees for yourself. You do this for the future. You do this for the next generation of Oles.” 🍀

GREG BREINING is a frequent contributor to *St. Olaf Magazine* and has written about science and nature for more than 30 years.





THE ST. OLAF NATURAL LANDS HAVE BENEFITED FROM
30 YEARS OF RESTORATION EFFORTS.

Restarting =THE= FOREST



BY ANNA BARNARD '21

With access to the Natural Lands — a 350-acre network of trails, forests, and prairies adjacent to campus — the St. Olaf College community has an outdoor haven right in its backyard. But the Natural Lands haven't always been the network of trees and paths they are today. Behind the dense, ecologically diverse forest is 30 years of tree restoration work.

Part of the Big Woods habitat, the Natural Lands were a section of the maple-basswood forest that once covered a large portion of south central Minnesota. European settlers cut down much of the area's forest for agriculture, leading to the depletion of the landscape and depriving many native species of needed habitat. To bring back the habitat for local plants and animals, St. Olaf has invested in various tree restoration projects over the years.

Now spearheaded by Kathleen Shea, professor of biology and environmental studies and curator of the Natural Lands since 2009, the ongoing restoration efforts contribute to the health of the land and environment while providing enriching research opportunities for students

Shea was part of the first tree restoration effort in 1989 in an area just north of campus, as well as the first community planting on campus in 1990. "For Earth Day 1990, we had a tree planting in two fields just west of Ytterboe Hall. This was a community event, as many faculty and students participated in planting several thousand two-year-old seedlings," Shea explains.

Efforts continued in the 1990s with several conifer tree restoration projects. The goal of these projects was to learn more about tree species from northern Minnesota. Restoration projects from 2002 to 2017 have experimented with the different planting methods using seedlings and seeds.



Student naturalists Izzy Istephanous '20 and Henry Henson '20 planted oak seedlings last fall.

PHOTO BY MARCEL HONES '21





St. Olaf began its tree restoration program in 1989 in an area just north of campus, and for Earth Day 1990, many students and faculty helped to plant thousands of seedlings in the fields just west of Ytterboe Hall.

Forest restoration provides many benefits to the environment of the Natural Lands and the St. Olaf community as a whole. “Besides providing habitat for a variety of plant, animal, and soil organisms, forests provide other ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration and a reduction of nutrient runoff into waterways,” Shea says. “The forest restoration is also valuable for educational purposes, providing students and members of the Northfield community a place to learn about local species and the opportunity for students to do long- and short-term studies on restoration.”

While many of the restoration projects thus far have focused on planting trees, Shea and student researchers are now tasked with recording the effects of this long-term restoration and documenting the succession, or the change in the composition of species, over time in the Natural Lands.

Allie Raduege '21 is one of the student researchers who has been instrumental in documenting and furthering this forest restoration work. For the past two summers, she has conducted research with Shea on forest ecology in the Natural Lands as part of the college's Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (CURI) program. In 2018, her project focused on tracking the composition and succession of species in deciduous forest restoration areas in the Natural Lands. The goal of these ongoing restoration efforts is to restore the land to what a current maple-basswood forest would look like, rather than what it may have looked like before European settlement.

“You can only account for so much, and the world is changing,” Raduege says. “The goal of it isn't so much to say, ‘This is what the land looked like so many years ago,’ but to show that this is what it looks like now. We're trying to get more of it back from the agricultural land it was.”

Raduege was tasked with conducting research in the areas that had new plantings in 2002, 2003, 2005, and 2009. While earlier areas were planted with seedlings (essentially, baby trees), newer areas were planted by broadcasting (scattering) a mix of different seeds over a plot of land. By measuring the circumference and height of the trees and documenting species composition, Raduege was able to record growth patterns over time as well as the species diversity.

“Forest restoration never stops,” Raduege says. “Ecology isn't a science where you can say, ‘Oh look, we found an answer. That solves that problem.’ It keeps going. We're going to keep looking at how it changes.”

With her Ph.D. in forest ecology, Shea has been pursuing this kind of work in various ways throughout her career, and sees the research of ecological succession in the Natural Lands as a uniquely important endeavor. While interest in forest restoration has been gaining ground, there has been little research into the long-term ecological succession of restored areas. To fill this gap, Shea and Sonja Helgeson '15 wrote a paper, published last year in the journal *Restoration Ecology*, titled “Tree Growth Patterns, Mortality and Colonization in a Restored



A 1999 photo shows conifer plantings from 1993 to 1999. Below, Allie Raduege measures one of the trees in 2019.



Trees planted over the past 30 years on former agricultural lands provide a flourishing space for the St. Olaf community to interact with nature.



Maple-Basswood Forest.” The paper documents their studies of the tree restoration changes over 23 years.

“We have shown that certain tree species grow better in open fields and that it is better to plant other species, such as sugar maple, later in the restoration process,” says Shea. These findings on the long-term changes of plant species in restored areas allow for comparison between restored areas and inform future restoration and management efforts.

The forests in the Natural Lands have greatly changed throughout the restoration process. “Over the past 30 years, it has been exciting to see the forest developing,” Shea says. “In the 1990 restoration that my students and I have studied in detail, we finally see canopy closure in places. This means that the understory is more shaded, and plants that normally grow in the understory can now survive.”

And the restoration efforts continue. “The long-term goal is that the forest will be self-sustaining. Small areas and strips cannot hold as many species, but with over 200 acres of restored and existing forest on St. Olaf lands, the forests should be able to support a wide variety of species and reproduce,” Shea says.

The goal of the forest restoration is also to provide a flourishing space for St. Olaf students, faculty, and staff to interact with nature. “We want the St. Olaf community to know that we are working to restore native forest and we hope people will walk on the trails to enjoy and learn about our forests,” Shea says. “There are also opportunities to be involved in research or maintenance projects, such as removing invasive species. We are privileged to have these natural areas within walking distance and close to prairie and wetlands.” 🍄

ANNA BARNARD is majoring in English and religion at St. Olaf.



Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies Kathy Shea has focused on forest restoration throughout her career.

IT'S ONLY

NATU



REAL

Spending time outdoors doing something you love is not only good for you, it's good for nature.

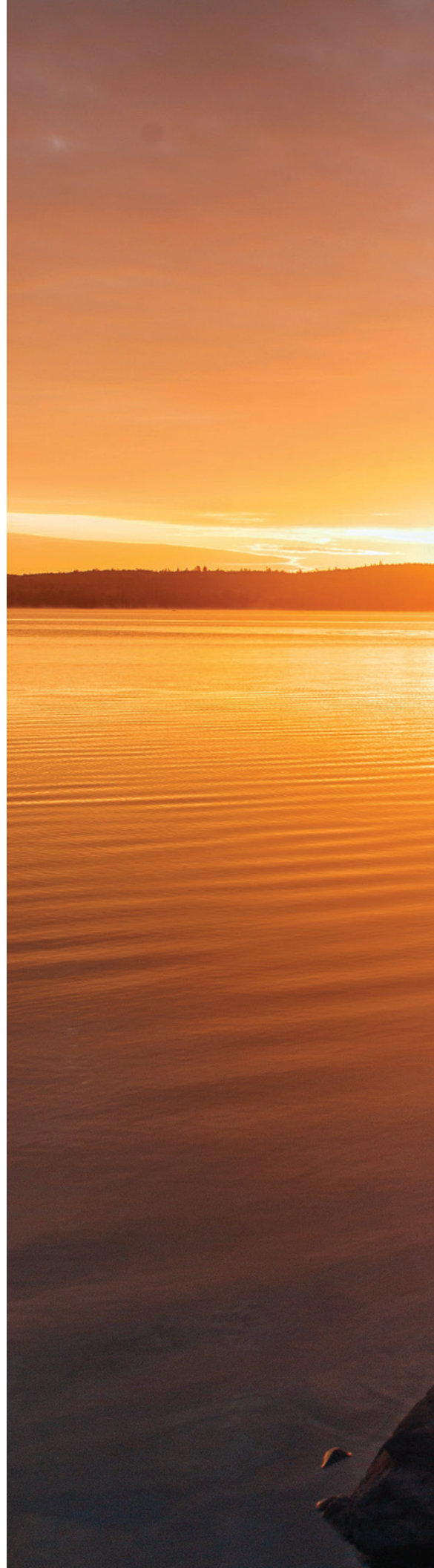
By GREG BREINING

Since the days of the 19th-century transcendentalists, when Henry David Thoreau lived “deliberately” in an isolated cabin on Walden Pond and wrote a series of essays about his life in the woods, Americans have held the belief that going outside is good for us. But the idea of communing with the outdoors served our sense of identity as a nation as early as the 18th century. Because we had more “nature” than most of Europe, celebrating wilderness was a way to distinguish ourselves from the mother countries. Moreover, nature provided an escape from the miasma of the few cities we had.

Today, in a time defined by the newly minted phrase “social distancing,” we are finding a new reason to be outside — as a relatively safe way to escape the confines of our homes during the coronavirus pandemic.

I hope that when this forced isolation eases, I can spend some days social distancing in the outdoors without putting my aging body too much at risk. Lord knows I need the distraction. Except for short walks with the dog, I have shut myself inside. I’ve begun to feel what life might be like in my old age — staring out the window, every day the same, with little accomplished except living a bit longer. I write this in an awkward in-between time of early spring, the snow just melted, the lakes opening up. In a few weeks, God and the epidemic willing, my wife, Susan, and I will be able to fish for trout in the streams and coulees of southeastern Minnesota — and keep one or two fresh fish for dinner.

I think of Thoreau social distancing on the outskirts of Concord, Massachusetts. Or, closer to our home and time, Sigurd Olson finding social distance on the lakes of Minnesota’s Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada. Both writers knew the salutary effect of distancing from other people for a while.





During my own trips into the wilds, I have measured the wildness of the country I was traveling by my degree of ignorance of daily news and events. A number of years ago, I made a project of paddling around Lake Superior in a series of trips that took Susan and me around the lake, curving a little more left than right, until we had traveled counterclockwise for roughly 1,000 miles. Except for our weather radio and the occasional conversation with someone we met on the water or along shore, we had no communication with the outside world for days on end. I always anticipated what unexpected news we might learn when we finally reached the end of the trip and rejoined society.

On another adventure late one summer, we paddled the lonely shore of the Pukaskwa Peninsula in Ontario, the most rugged and most remote shoreline of Superior. We camped on sand beaches and paddled in the shadow of towering cliffs and headlands. We socialized with otters and caught fiery-colored brook trout. After more than a week on the lake, we paddled into Hattie Cove and encountered a couple preparing to launch a red canoe.

“Did you hear the news?” asked the woman. She wore a sweatshirt that read, “Ontario Provincial Police.” When we said we hadn’t, she told us, “Princess Diana died.”

I was astonished. I hope this year that once I’m able to spend long stretches of time social distancing in nature, I’ll hear something just as surprising when I return to civilization — that people are no longer dying in a pandemic.



SOcial distancing aside, there are other reasons to get out of doors. Science supports the perception that spending time outdoors makes people happier and healthier. Several studies suggest that nature helps increase attention, reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and even aid creativity.

University of Michigan researchers found that strolling through a park improved attention and recall. Japanese researchers showed that, compared with city walks, forest walks are more likely to reduce blood pressure, heart rate, and the level of the stress hormone cortisol. (They didn’t factor in running headlong into a foraging bear.)

The author Richard Louv reports that time spent in a natural setting calms children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Move closer to a green space and your mental health improves immediately and sustains that improvement for at least three years, according to a 2014 study in the journal of *Environmental Science & Technology*. Psychology researchers at the Universities of Kansas and Utah found that adults improved their results on a creative problem-solving task by 50 percent after completing a four-day Outward Bound wilderness trip.

It’s not all in your head. Finnish researchers found that teenagers who live on farms or in the woods have stronger immune systems and fewer allergies than city kids. The “hygiene hypothesis” posits that a childhood spent outdoors with dirt and animals primes the developing immune system.

Research at the University of Exeter in England showed that “the more individuals visited nature for recreation and the more they appreciated the natural world, the more pro-environmental behaviour they reported.”

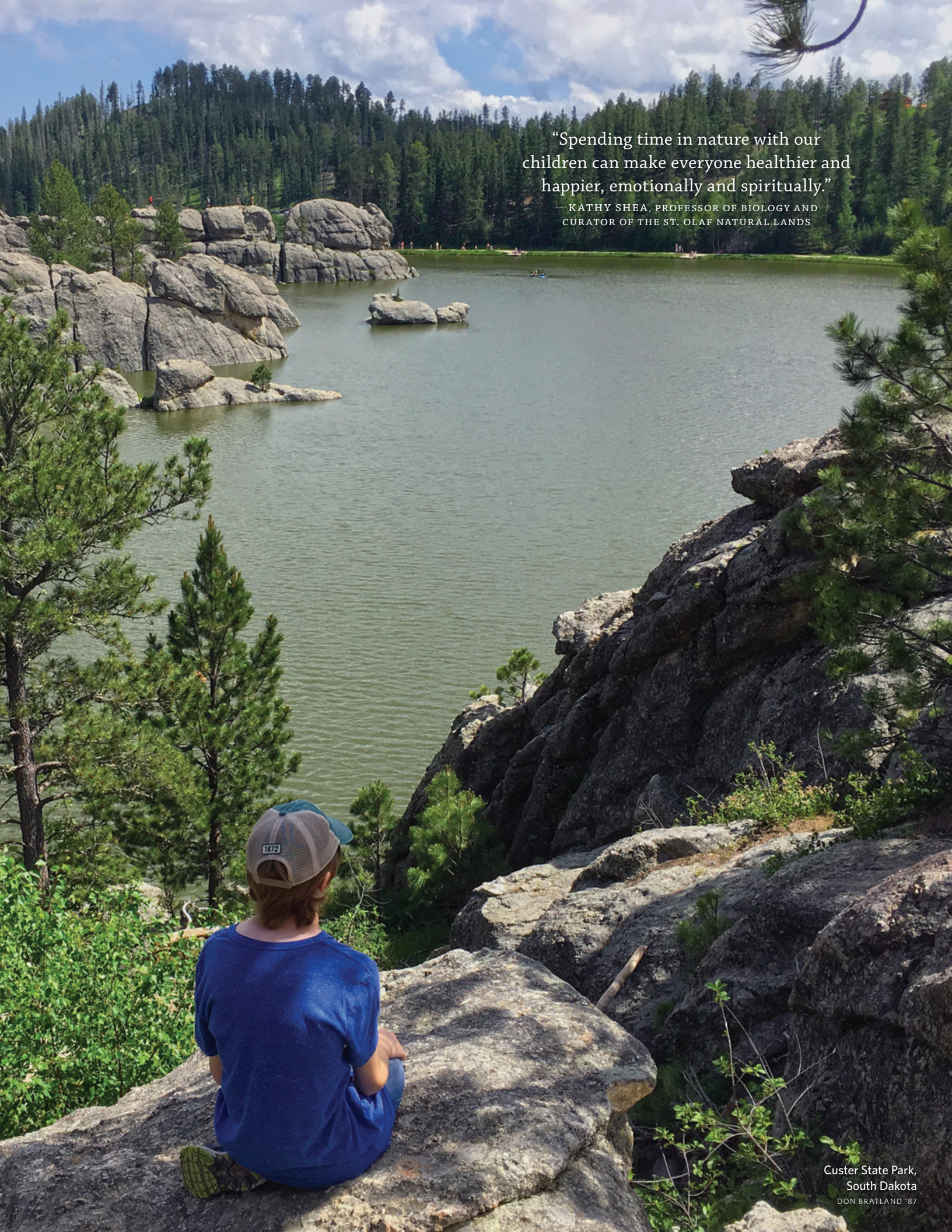
“Spending time in nature with our children can make everyone healthier and happier, emotionally and spiritually,” says Kathy Shea, professor of biology and curator of the St. Olaf Natural Lands. She recalls her own childhood, visiting her grandparents’ farm near Loveland, Colorado. She gardened with her grandmother. She explored irrigation ditches, pouncing on frogs and bugs. She grew up with a love of nature and mountains — and a desire to protect them. “If you spend time in nature and you appreciate it, then you will want to spend time helping to conserve nature. That conservation can take many forms,” she says.

The link between time spent in nature and effort spent on conservation is something Joe Pavelko ’04 sees all the time in his work as assistant director of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, a Minnesota government and citizen body that evaluates conservation spending and projects for the benefit of wildlife and natural lands.

Pavelko himself knows something of growing up with a love of nature. “I spent my whole life being outside,” he says. Pavelko grew up in Richfield, Minnesota — not wilderness, but with parks and woods enough to roam that he could catch minnows and frogs to populate ponds he dug in his own backyard. In high school, he fished and hunted with cousins and uncles at an uncle’s cabin near Akeley. At St. Olaf, Pavelko would hide near Big Pond on the Natural Lands and practice calling ducks.

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council comprises legislators and citizens, all of whom, despite political differences, share an abiding interest in the natural world. They work with representatives of public agencies and conservation groups that submit proposals to benefit wildlife and the environment. Nearly without exception, the council members found their love of conservation in the outdoors, if not as kids, then sometime early in their adult life. Says Pavelko, “They’re working there because they love the outdoors and the environment and think that what they’re doing is a good thing.”

It is the converse of what Norwegian Priest and Educator Christopher Arndt Bruun wrote: “That which a person did not burn for in his young days, he will not easily work for as a man.” We can’t really expect people to fight to protect nature and the environment if they never knew it growing up.



“Spending time in nature with our children can make everyone healthier and happier, emotionally and spiritually.”

— KATHY SHEA, PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY AND CURATOR OF THE ST. OLAF NATURAL LANDS

ON ELLESMERE ISLAND one June several years ago, wolf researcher L. David Mech and I sat on a hillside counting wolves, musk oxen, and other animals in the island's tundra habitat. We could see for miles all around. The largest trees were Arctic willow, mere inches tall, grasping the stony ground like gnarled hands. Arctic hares stood out like cotton balls. This census had become an annual ritual: Dave would sit for a long time, tallying wildlife, making a year-to-year index of their abundance.

As is so often true in the natural world, nothing seemed to happen. As though the land were the face of a giant clock, the sun traversed the sky, the shadows pivoted, the wolves shifted position; a musk ox in the distance descended the hill, crossed the river, and ascended the other side of the valley. And everything remained as it was hours ago — or a thousand years ago.

I thought of this as I talked to Nathan Mueller '07, an assistant professor of ecosystem science at Colorado State

University and a double major in biology and environmental studies at St. Olaf. I had asked him why it is important to have a personal connection to nature to understand it.

“Getting outside puts things in perspective. You realize that the world is a lot bigger than whatever problem you're thinking about at that moment in time,” he told me. “I think it helps connect you with the bigger systems and the context of everything happening on planet Earth.”

Mueller was a St. Olaf student when he took the late Professor Jim Farrell's *Campus Ecology* class. “One of our assignments was to pick some place on campus and monitor it for the semester and just get out there and describe what we saw,” recalls Mueller. “I remember thinking as a hard science major that this was kind of touchy-feely. But then I picked a spot out on the Natural Lands, next to a pond. It was spring semester, so we got to watch the season change, and it helped me appreciate the importance of getting out into nature for being able to slow down and reflect on the bigger picture and what's going on.”



Ellesmere Island's name in the Inuktitut language is *Umingmak Nuna*, "land of musk oxen."
ANDY ASTBURY | ISTOCKPHOTO



Humboldt Redwoods
State Park, California
EDDIE SUH | UNSPLASH

Aldo Leopold wrote in *A Sand County Almanac*, “There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace.” Nathan Mueller’s family didn’t own a farm, but growing up in Pella, Iowa, he was surrounded by farm country, which taught him not only where food comes from but also the ecological price paid to grow it.

“When you grow up in the Midwest, particularly in a more rural area, you become pretty quickly aware of the fact that nature isn’t all untouched and pristine. It’s really fascinating to think about human impacts, the ecology of agricultural landscapes, and the trade-offs with how we manage our land,” he says. “That probably inspired my choice of majors and certainly also the research I do now.”



THE THREADS THAT BIND US to nature and the outdoors are fraying one by one. Think of the family farm. We once were a nation of farmers.

According to the first U.S. census, in 1790, nearly 95 percent of the population lived on farms or otherwise in the “country.” Ever since, Americans have been moving to town. By 1920, half of Americans lived in cities and towns. By 2010, more than 80 percent did.

My mother grew up on a farm, milking cows, feeding chickens, trudging two miles up a dirt road to a rural school house each morning and back again in the afternoon for more outdoor chores. I visited the farm every summer and Thanksgiving, which is where I first began to love hunting. My daughter visited the farm once or twice.

And my granddaughter will never visit, because the family farm was sold off long ago.

Consider the impact today. The once common nature-related experiences of caring for animals and crops or hunting the back 40 are disappearing.

Likewise, jobs performed in the woods and fields are changing or disappearing. When we do go outside, we engage in a kind of make-believe. We hunt, fish, or camp in an atavistic simulacrum of our ancestors’ work and survival. We “recreate” on skis or in a kayak — a good way to know nature, certainly, but different from the experience of a farmer or lumberjack. And that might explain the difference in rural and urban attitudes toward the environment.

Think of how technology increasingly mediates our experience of nature. There are the obvious ways, such as watching wildlife through TV nature shows or YouTube videos (where of course you’ll see things in an hour you might not see in a lifetime in the woods).

There are more subtle things as well. It used to be, when I paddled my kayak on Lake Superior, I navigated by map and compass. The continual negotiation between the map and compass on my deck and the changing kaleidoscope of the shoreline has now been replaced by the certainty of a symbol on a lighted screen. With GPS, I could navigate from the campsite in the morning, travel all day, and pull into camp at night without ever having looked at the lake or shoreline at all. Of course, that would be fine with some people, whose noses are stuck in their tablets and smartphones. On a hike or run in a park, earbuds, not nature, provide the soundtrack.

Think of how our children play. Kids once enjoyed a feral existence, roaming fields and vacant lots, exploring the woods. Now kids are organized, scheduled, and supervised. For parents not ready to fully commit to unsupervised play, there is Gizmo, one of several GPS devices they can use to track their children — even as they encourage them to play on their own. But more and more kids seem to be spending their lives indoors. Louv coined the term “nature deficit disorder,” typified by the child who told him, “I like to play indoors better, ’cause that’s where all the electrical outlets are.”

“Today, children have much less unsupervised access to the countryside,” writes Children’s Book Author and Illustrator Cressida Cowell in *The New York Times*. “I worry that they may never know the magic of the wilderness, the power of trees and the thrilling excitement of exploring nature without an adult hovering behind them. And so I write books for children who will never know what the freedom of my childhood was like.”



HOW WILL THESE PEOPLE ever know the outdoors? And if they never do, who will speak up for nature? Fortunately, there are signs that people are still getting out in nature, notwithstanding the coronavirus pandemic, and who will in time become advocates.

According to the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, the most recent available, the number of anglers grew by nearly six percent during the previous five years. That’s nothing compared to the increase in the number of people who ventured out to watch wildlife — up nearly 20 percent in five years. (Notably, the number of hunters fell.)

Visitation to U.S. national parks generally continues to rise. Likewise, visits to Minnesota state parks have risen 25 percent in the 15 years between 2003 and 2018. To support and encourage these trends, Minnesota this year began awarding grants under its new No Child Left Indoors program to fund activities that get kids fishing, making maple syrup, snowshoeing, and otherwise going outside.

Growing up in Madison, Wisconsin, David Prange ’97 fished, hiked, and camped as a Boy Scout. At St. Olaf, he studied ecology in Australia and earned a degree in biology and environmental studies. He then earned a law degree and “fell” into patent law, where he could use his scientific background to learn about commercial products. But he came back to nature on his own time. When he got married, he became a hunter because his wife’s six brothers all hunted. He trained a hunting dog and joined the board of a local chapter of the conservation group Pheasants Forever.

With the understanding that hunting serves up valuable lessons about wildlife and the origin of food, while also providing a means to control burgeoning numbers of deer, turkeys, and geese, Pheasants Forever and groups like it sponsor workshops to reach potential hunters who were never exposed to outdoor pursuits growing up. What’s more, hunters like Prange have the opportunity to donate venison to food banks and food shelves with the help of state agencies such as the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, assisting people in need while helping reduce local deer populations.


Public agencies, too, are trying to recruit newcomers to outdoor activities and nurture natural resources knowledge. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) offers educational programs such as Becoming an Outdoors Woman and Becoming an Outdoors Family, recruits city kids to fishing through Fishing in the Neighborhood, and promotes hands-on angling and aquatic education through MinnAqua. (The Minnesota DNR has made adjustments to all of its activities and programs during the coronavirus pandemic.)

Without a sense of nature, gained by some sort of first-hand experience, we are bound to fall back on sterile textbook learning, stereotypes, and old-wives’ tales. Again, I think of the pristine landscape of the Arctic. With human footsteps so scarce, I might imagine a nature that is always peaceful, wildlife and resources that are abundant, a nature that is “in balance,” in equilibrium from year to year.

But what experience and observation teach are another matter. This is a land of extremes, generous of space, stingy of sustenance. Life here, like life throughout the Arctic, runs in cycles and fluctuations — boom and bust, plenitude and scarcity. Arctic hares dot the tundra like white flowers one year and vanish the next. Musk oxen die in mass. Wolves come and go. These variations define a land. And nature.

It’s an irony of our current predicament that one way of social distancing is to stay closer to nature. Ironic because the very evolution of life-forms that created the diversity of the natural world has also created a virus that threatens large numbers of our fellow citizens. Yet it’s also hopeful because the enormity and sheer perseverance of nature suggests that this too shall pass. 🍀

A frequent contributor to *St. Olaf Magazine*, GREG BREINING has written about science and nature for more than 30 years. His articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Audubon*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Islands*, *The Nature Conservancy*, and many other publications. His books include *Super Volcano* and *Paddle North: Canoeing the Boundary Waters-Quetico Wilderness*. Greg and his wife, Susan, split their time between their home in St. Paul, their cabin in northern Minnesota, and “traveling where the birds fly, the fish bite, and the rivers run free.”



It's an irony of our current predicament that one way of social distancing is to stay closer to nature. It's also hopeful because the enormity and sheer perseverance of nature suggests that this too shall pass.

**FOR MOLLY
MURAKAMI '14...**

**ART REFLECTS
REAL LIFE.**



UNCHARTED WATERS

BY **ANDY STEINER**

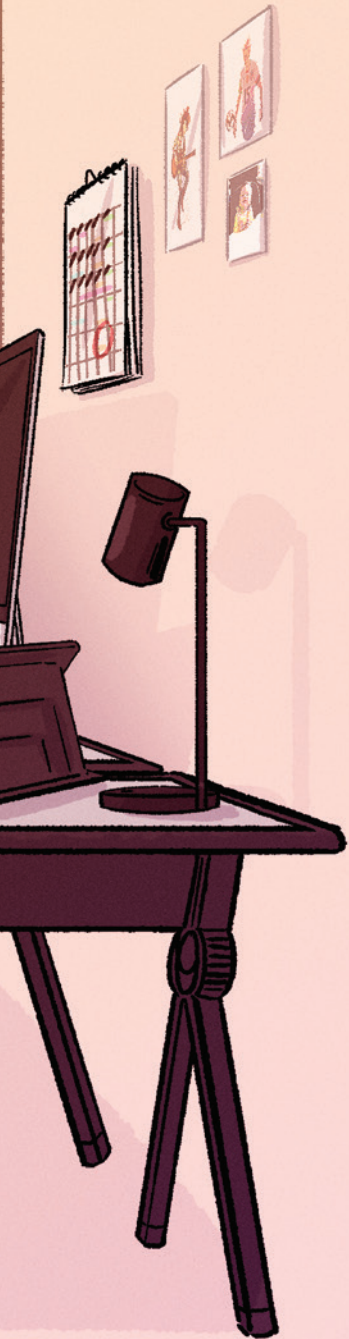
ART BY **MOLLY MURAKAMI**

EARLIER THIS SPRING, MOLLY MURAKAMI'S LIFE, AND HER ART, WAS A WORK IN PROGRESS. AN M.F.A. CANDIDATE AT THE MINNEAPOLIS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN (MCAD), SHE WAS LASER FOCUSED ON HER THESIS PROJECT — A GRAPHIC NOVEL ABOUT HER GRANDFATHER, YOSHITERU "YOSH" MURAKAMI '51 — WHILE ALSO TRYING TO FIGURE OUT THE NEXT STEP IN HER LIFE.

"I'm graduating in May," Murakami said at the time. "It's a little anxiety-inducing. People keep saying, 'Are you so excited?' But once you've been an adult in the real world for a few years like I have, graduation is less about being excited and more ..." she paused and sighed quietly. "I have to figure out what I'm doing now."

With an entire graphic novel still to complete, Murakami was, at the time, preparing to jump into the uncharted waters of the real world. Those waters became even more uncharted as the reality of COVID-19 took hold in Minnesota. Within a span of weeks, MCAD closed and Murakami's private graduate studio was shuttered. Needing more space to create art than was available in her small, shared Minneapolis apartment, she temporarily uprooted herself and moved back to her parents' roomier suburban home.

These days, one of the few things in Murakami's life that hasn't been upended is her thesis project, which will include stories of her grandfather's experience as a prisoner in a U.S. internment camp for American citizens of Japanese descent during WWII. Based on a suggestion from a member of her thesis committee, Murakami has also researched artists of the past to see what kind of work they created during difficult times like the one we're currently living through. In particular, Murakami has been learning about artists in the Japanese internment camps.



As she's delved into her grandfather's stories and the experiences of other artists, she's begun to feel that they have indirect parallels to her own strange new reality.

"I'm not comparing this time to life in internment," Murakami says. "I know it is far different than that. But even in the internment camps, people were still making art." That reality felt like an inspiration, she says: "I realized I need to work through this limbo period of uncertainty and anxiety. There is so much creative opportunity that goes along with this time."



A STRONG ARTISTIC STREAK runs through Murakami's family. Her grandfather, Yosh, was one of 10 interned Japanese Americans who were given special releases to study at St. Olaf. After a break to serve in the U.S. military, Yosh, one of the first two students of color to sing in the St. Olaf Choir, graduated from the college and went on to be the choral director at Northfield High School before leaving to join the Music Department at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. Murakami's father, Paul, who worked as a church choir conductor and was in a band, plays a number of different instruments. Growing up, Murakami and her brother, Michael, sang with the Minneapolis-based Angelica Cantanti Youth Choirs.

And for Murakami, making comics has always been another vital source of creativity. "In my life, a lot of things that I'm ruminating on or working on end up as comics," she says. "I think I do a lot of thinking through drawing. I was making comics as a kid without realizing that I was making comics. I was drawing things out in panels, very sequential art."

When it came time to look at colleges, Murakami knew she wanted to continue to pursue her interest in art. During a tour of Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, her father decided to check out the St. Olaf College website.

"There was an article about my grandpa on the homepage," Murakami says, still laughing at the coincidence. "We were like, 'Weird. That's so strange it would pop up there right now.'"

Though Murakami had grown up hearing stories about her grandfather, he'd died young — long before she was

born — and in many ways he remained a mystery. She knew about his connection to St. Olaf, she says, but only in a vague way. She devoured the story on the college's website: it was an opportunity for her to learn even more about the grandfather she never knew.

Later, Murakami visited St. Olaf and fell in love with the art department. "It seemed like they had all of this really good light," she recalls. "I remember being pretty wowed by that. Coming from a high school without those kinds of facilities, it is fun to see designated space for art."

WHILE MURAKAMI'S FATHER is Japanese American, her mother, Suzanne, comes from a family of Northern European descent. Growing up in the Minneapolis suburbs of Bloomington and Edina, Murakami says she was often one of the few students of color in her classes. She now believes that experience gave her a skewed racial identity. While today Murakami proudly uses the terms "mixed" or sometimes "biracial" to describe herself, her focus as a child was more on blending in.

Murakami witnessed moments of racism and racial discrimination, but she didn't always feel like they were directed at her. "I didn't actively think about it," she says. "I was aware, but when you are in a predominantly white space, people will make objectionable comments or jokes that they think are funny. When you're young, you might not pick up on it right away."

By the time she arrived at St. Olaf, Murakami began to realize that her racial identity really did have an impact on her life. "I was around more people of different ethnicities and different backgrounds who had lived different lives before they came to college," she says. "I became more aware. There's something about living on your own and being outside of where you grew up: it pushes you to figure out where you stand or where you fit."

That awareness infused *You Can't Say That*, Murakami's senior capstone exhibit at St. Olaf, in which she used Lichtenstein-inspired pop-art imagery, personal experience and memories, as well as social commentary to discuss issues of race, racism, white privilege, and history from the perspective of a young woman of mixed race.

Murakami says that at first she felt nervous that *You Can't Say That* would stir up negative reactions on campus.

"It's hard putting a lot of yourself on the wall or a lot of yourself in a book and giving it to someone," she says, adding that she received great support and feedback from her mentors, St. Olaf Art Professors Wendell Arneson and Peter Nelson '04. "I think it's hard to let people into that very personal space. People can disagree or criticize. And it's all about you."

To Murakami's relief and delight, the exhibit was met with positive response. But in the years since, she says she's grown a tougher skin: "I feel like not a lot of people

inherently want to rock the boat or try and make dialogue or start things. I think now I'm okay with rocking the boat, but when I was 22, I was a little anxious."

In the end, the experience bolstered Murakami's confidence and helped confirm that she was on the right track. Since *You Can't Say That*, her work has continued in a similar vein, with a focus on personally and politically aware comics, graphic novels, and illustration.

MURAKAMI'S M.F.A. THESIS, titled *In Your Path*, contains four chapters written as a series of letters to her grandfather.

"I've been circling around this topic of looking into my grandpa and writing something about him for some time now," Murakami says. "I feel like since I came to the [M.F.A.] program, a lot of my work has focused on family. I gravitated to this topic."

At first she thought she would use a documentary-like style to tell her grandfather's story, but she's since decided to take a more personal approach. "The letters are in my voice," she explains. "For some reason, that felt important."

Murakami's research for her graphic novel has involved long conversations with her father — and time spent digging through her now-deceased grandmother's family

photos. "It's so fun to see these little glimpses into their life when my dad was very little," she says, "and to see my grandpa as a person. We never had many pictures of him when I was growing up, so to see all those photos — it's like a piece of history that I never knew."

Despite the fact that her world has temporarily been turned upside down, Murakami has a feeling that she's beginning to hit her professional stride. While she was hard at work on her thesis, she landed her dream freelance gig: illustrating three books for middle grade readers for the children's book publisher Candlewick Press.

"In the future, my hope is I can either write my own stories or use my skill sets to illustrate stories that I'm equally passionate about," she says. "This [the Candlewick Press project] is definitely in line with what I want to do. The authors themselves are black and Native women, and the stories that we are writing and illustrating center around those narratives. I'm incredibly excited to do this work."

For the next few months at least, Murakami plans to take time to hunker down and focus on her art. With such exciting projects on the docket, it shouldn't be hard. As for further-out plans, she's taking a more day-by-day approach. "It feels silly to try and plan for stuff now when so much is unknown. We are all in uncharted waters. Everyone's life and work has been impacted."

No matter what, Murakami says she will find a way to make art out of the upheaval. "I'm moving forward," she says. "My plan is to play it by ear and find inspiration wherever it exists." 🐾

ANDY STEINER is Twin Cities freelance writer and a regular contributor to *St. Olaf Magazine*.

SEEDS OF INSPIRATION

MOLLY MURAKAMI'S ART HAS BEEN INSPIRED BY A NUMBER OF AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS. HERE ARE SOME OF HER FAVORITES:

MARIKO TAMAKI (*THIS ONE SUMMER, LAURA DEAN KEEPS BREAKING UP WITH ME*) "SHE IS A BIG INFLUENCE," MURAKAMI SAYS. "SHE'S REALLY GREAT. A TRUE LEADER."

MARINAOMI (*TURNING JAPANESE*)

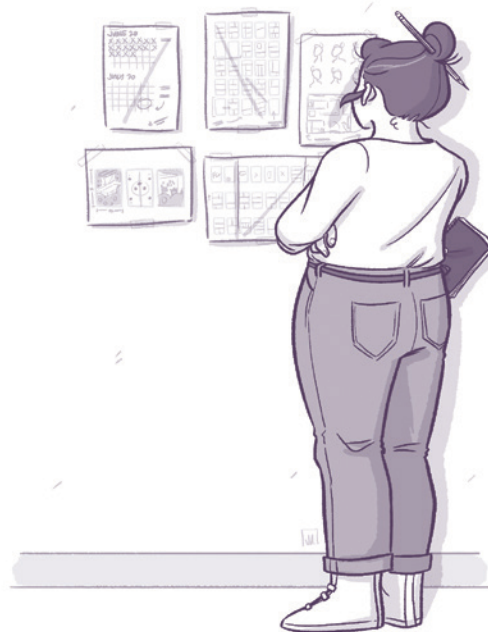
A.J. DUNGO (*IN WAVES*) "HE WROTE A HISTORY OF SURFING THAT ALSO RUNS IN TANDEM WITH DOCUMENTING HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND, WHO PASSED AWAY FROM CANCER," MURAKAMI SAYS. "I REALLY LOVE HOW HE HANDLED CONCURRENT NARRATIVES."

JEN WANG (*THE PRINCE AND THE DRESSMAKER, STARGAZING*)

ALISON BECHDEL (*FUN HOME, ARE YOU MY MOTHER?*) "IN *FUN HOME*, I WAS REALLY INTRIGUED BY THE WAY SHE WAS ABLE TO TAKE A REALLY COMPLEX CHARACTER IN HER FATHER AND MAKE HIM VERY EMPATHETIC," MURAKAMI SAYS.

COLLEEN AF VENABLE AND ELLEN T. CRENSHAW (*KISS NUMBER 8*)

OCEAN VUONG (*ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS*) "IN THIS NOVEL, THE NARRATOR IS WRITING A LETTER TO HIS ILLITERATE MOTHER," MURAKAMI EXPLAINS. "I THINK THAT WAS A BIG INFLUENCE ON THE DIRECTION MY THESIS HAS TAKEN: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WRITE A LETTER TO SOMEONE WHO CAN'T READ IT?"



LEARN MORE ABOUT MOLLY MURAKAMI'S GRANDFATHER, YOSH, IN *STORIES* (PAGE 48).

Essa Mohamed '09

Mayo Clinic researcher and 2020 Bush Fellow Essa Mohamed is a pioneer in the research of liver disease and its disparate effects on African and Asian communities.

By Anna Barnard '21

The Bush Foundation awards grants to individuals and organizations implementing innovative solutions and projects that shape a better future for their communities. This year, Essa Mohamed, a postdoctoral fellow and adjunct instructor at Mayo Clinic, was one of 24 grant recipients who were selected from Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography, and who demonstrate a strong capacity to lead change.

A pioneer in the research of liver disease and its effects on African and Asian communities, Mohamed is motivated by the loss of several of his own family members to liver disease, a complication of hepatitis. He wants to pursue a career not only as a scientist but also as an advocate for overcoming the ethnic disparity in liver disease cases.

"When I started my Ph.D. at Mayo, I decided to do something a bit different than many of my peers were doing," says Mohamed, who conducted a study on the prevalence of liver disease in African and Asian people for his degree. "Although I did have basic science-based studies, I wanted to go out to the community and conduct screening for hepatitis B and hepatitis C infections. Through a community screening program, I was able to build rapport and trust with the immigrant African and Asian communities in Rochester, Mankato, Faribault, and the Greater Twin Cities area to ensure this study was a success."

Mohamed's research, under the mentorship of Dr. Lewis Roberts, a gastroenterologist and hepatologist and the director of the Neoplasia Clinic, also helped contribute to the World Health Organization's decision to prioritize hepatitis at a global level and helped Mayo Clinic change its patient screening practices for viral hepatitis.

Working on his Ph.D. study also exposed Mohamed to the overall lack of population diversity in medical research, something he



"My research goal is to build a system in which the participation of women and racial and ethnic minorities in clinical trials and medical device development is increased." — ESSA MOHAMED '09

hopes to change. "My research goal is to build a system in which the participation of women and racial and ethnic minorities in clinical trials and medical device development is increased," Mohamed says. "In order to address the health disparities we see today, we need to start a systemic change into how we collect data that is representative of the patients we are treating and ensuring that treatment modalities are highly effective."

The Bush Fellowship enables Mohamed to further his goal of reducing disparities in medical research and health care. The grant and resources from the fellowship will allow him to study market evaluation and strategic decision making to better understand how to make changes within the health care system, as well as develop a network of medical industry mentors to support him in his work.

Currently, with the coronavirus pandemic continuing to infect high numbers of people, Mohamed has expanded his research to include several COVID-19 studies focused on sex and racial differences. The first study is looking at the actual prevalence of COVID-19 in the local population of Olmsted County in Southeastern Minnesota and the nine counties nearest to it. He also is involved in conducting several clinical trials to assess whether the medications being used to treat COVID-19 can reduce the length of hospitalization and the severity of the infection once individuals contract the virus.

"The goal is to ensure that adequate resources as well as deliberate and effective measures are taken," he says. "This requires state, county, and city officials and agencies to

work collectively in partnership with the communities they serve. Through this collaboration, we can have the best and most effective change and impact."

Mohamed credits two St. Olaf professors, Anne Walter and Douglas Beussman, for igniting his passion for biomedical sciences. In addition, his experience with the TRIO McNair Scholars Program, a graduate school preparatory program funded by the U.S. Department of Education and sponsored by St. Olaf, helped him discern the type of work he wanted to do in the biomedical field.

"I was able to see how the scientific process was established and ways we could continue to apply the skills we were taught in our biology and chemistry courses," Mohamed says of the research he conducted as a McNair Scholar. "This was an instrumental experience that led to my first manuscript publication." Director of the McNair Scholars Program Janis Johnson and Assistant Director Melissa Hinderscheit '04 provided him with additional support and even attended his Ph.D. defense. "I was humbled by their presence and support."

Mohamed continues to benefit from the rigorous education he received at St. Olaf. "Those experiences in difficult classes enabled me to adapt to a fast-paced environment and, regardless of the situation, continue to strive." 🦁

ANNA BARNARD is majoring in English and religion at St. Olaf College.

Oles on the Front Lines of a Global Pandemic



In the midst of a public health crisis, we are deeply proud of our graduates who have joined the front lines in the health care field and other essential fields.

By Molly C. Work

When COVID-19 swept the nation and the world, igniting a global pandemic, the St. Olaf community watched in awe as our alumni responded creatively and courageously, pivoting seamlessly to address an unforeseen challenge in their communities and leveraging the critical thinking skills they gained through their liberal arts education to seek solutions to the spread of a novel virus.

We interviewed 13 Oles who have taken the lead within the health care field, a small sample size, about how their roles have changed in the wake of COVID-19. Eleven alumni are working at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an organization that has been instrumental in mitigating the impact of the pandemic and providing safety guidelines for a novel virus when there were none. We spoke with three alumni at the CDC, who shed some light on what their work looks like these days.

Our conversations provided further proof — as if we needed more — that Oles are individuals who hold true to their values and give their best to make the world a better place.

Sudip Bhandari '14

Ph.D. Candidate, Health Systems Program
Dept. of International Health | Johns Hopkins
University, Bloomberg School of Public Health

While his wife, Claire Petchler, works with individual COVID-19 patients, Sudip Bhandari tackles the virus on a population level.

As a researcher in the Department of International Health at Johns Hopkins, Sudip works with scientists from low- and middle-income countries globally to identify immediate research needs that inform COVID-19 policy responses. These research agendas include understanding the transmission patterns of SARS-CoV-2 in resource-poor settings, the clinical characteristics of the disease the virus causes among vulnerable populations, and the impact of pandemic prevention and response measures in these countries. His team's research paper has been published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Global Health Research and Policy*.

"The virus has exposed deep-seated inequities in our society. Although we have made incredible scientific and technological innovations in the last decades, this pandemic demonstrates that we need to work toward more fundamental societal changes to ensure that all lives are treated with equal value."

In addition, Sudip is working on a Johns Hopkins project (funded through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) that is supporting the state government of Uttar Pradesh (UP). UP is the most populous state in Northern India, with over 230 million people. Sudip's project assists with the analysis of epidemiological data; the formulation of policy around surveillance, containment, and case management; and the writing of a case study on UP's response efforts.

Sudip is currently finishing his Ph.D. in international health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. His dissertation focuses on ways to improve core competencies of public health professionals in low-resource settings so that they can more effectively deliver essential health services like prevention, detection, and response to disease outbreaks.

Claire Petchler '14

Nurse Clinician II, Johns Hopkins Hospital

In response to the pandemic, Claire Petchler began volunteering to work on the COVID-19 biocontainment Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in mid-March. She describes COVID-19 ICU patients as critically ill and requiring maximum life support. To take care of these patients, Claire manages critical care intravenous (IV) medications, ventilators, dialysis machines, and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation machines (also known as ECMOs, machines that provide maximum heart and lung support, similar to "heart-lung-bypass machines").

Claire explains that the COVID-19 ICU differs from typical ICUs for several reasons: First, the whole unit is converted into negative pressure

airflow and is "locked" with a separate entrance and exit. The unit staff wear personal protective equipment, such as a positive air pressure respirator (PAPR) or an N-95 mask with a protective face shield. Additionally, the whole hospital has implemented a restricted visitor policy to keep visitors and staff safe, so Petchler coordinates Zoom meetings with patient family members so that they can virtually visit their loved ones.

"We want Oles to know that each individual can play a role to stop the pandemic. It can be as simple as staying indoors and following public health guidelines, actively engaging through joining contact tracing efforts in the local health department, making and donating masks to people or organizations who need them, or doing 'virtual visits' with neighbors and community members in isolation."

Prior to the pandemic, Claire trained new graduate nurses to work in the ICU over a three-month preceptorship. However, the volume of COVID-19 patients has accelerated that timeline. She now rapidly trains experienced mid-level nurses to manage ventilators, critical care IV drips, and dialysis machines. While there is a significant learning curve, Claire notes fantastic collaboration and "can-do" attitudes among the staff.

Kris Ehresmann '84

Director, Infectious Disease Epidemiology,
Prevention, and Control | Minnesota
Department of Health

In her role at the Minnesota Department of Health, Kris Ehresmann normally oversees a wide variety of infectious disease activities. These days, it is COVID-19 all the time. Her role in the pandemic response is to lead the operations branch. Her responsibilities include producing public health guidelines for various settings and directing "boots on the ground" work, such as contact tracing investigations of individual cases and cluster investigations into prisons, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, schools, places of higher education, and long-term care settings. She and her team are working closely with Minnesota's long-term care facilities to provide the technical assistance they need to address COVID-19, in particular the use of personal protective equipment, disinfection, and infection control issues.

"Public health is a 'team sport.' I am very fortunate to work with the most amazing, dedicated, hard working (and tired) team ever. Everyone's goal is to do our best to serve Minnesotans and ensure they have the opportunity to be safe and healthy."

In pivoting to her new role as part of the coronavirus response, Kris continues to rely on her ability to think on her feet, speak extemporaneously, digest a great deal of data quickly, and persevere — skills she was able to hone through her liberal arts education. Kris also regularly speaks to the media on behalf of the department's work. A passionate Ole, she often needs to remind herself to remove her St. Olaf lanyard before press events.

John Goeppinger '70

Retired Family Medicine Physician

John Goeppinger is a retired physician who specialized in family medicine for 36 years. Like many care providers, Goeppinger came out of retirement to help meet the needs of the COVID-19 pandemic. He volunteers for the CARE public clinic in Red Wing, Minnesota, where volunteer doctors provide telemedicine visits and medications for uninsured patients and help guide clinical care. Although his age places him in the "high risk" category, John wasn't deterred. He has increased his service hours and now pulls up his lime squeeze green Ford Escape to the entrance so as to work semi-remotely.

"As I walked through the mess line in basic training, a sign reminded the staff to 'Clean as you go, and garnish everything.' Those seem like good words to live by."

In addition to his work with the CARE public clinic, John also volunteers with Hadi Clinic in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, where he has the opportunity to serve patients who come from all over the world — as close as north Minneapolis and as far as Liberia, Ukraine, and South Sudan. John was recently recognized for his efforts in an article in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.

Laura Guzman '10

Minnesota Department of Health

Laura Guzman is a grants coordinator in the Division of Child and Family Health at the Minnesota Department of Health. Among her many responsibilities, her role typically includes managing a portfolio of nonprofit, tribal, and local county public health grantees who receive federal and state-funded family home visiting grants.

"COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on long-standing societal inequities, as communities of color disproportionately bear the economic and health burdens of the disease. Our work requires us to not only stop the spread of COVID-19 but also address the social, economic, and political systems that leave some communities more vulnerable to its effects."

Needless to say, her work has changed significantly over the past few months. After the outbreak of COVID-19, she was reassigned to conduct case investigations in Spanish with Latinx Minnesotans who tested positive for COVID-19. She conducts the initial interview, provides information about isolation and quarantine, and collects their contacts for the contact tracing team. This work requires Laura to flex her empathetic listening muscles as well as her other communication skills. The folks she meets with are often sick, scared, and confused about what their diagnosis means, so she also acts as a trusted resource — providing accurate, science-based information about COVID-19.

Timothy Holtz '86

Rear Admiral, Assistant Surgeon General, U.S. Public Health Service | Office of AIDS Research, National Institutes of Health (NIH)

As deputy director of the Office of AIDS Research (OAR) at NIH, Timothy Holtz leads a team that rapidly mobilizes and takes action to address emerging scientific and public health challenges. In the wake of the pandemic, his team has been focused on determining the impact of the disease on persons with HIV and on the overall NIH HIV research enterprise. Because information and data on the coronavirus is rapidly evolving, it's expressly important that his team assesses the impact of COVID-19 on immunosuppressed populations. Most recently, OAR has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop interim treatment guidelines for COVID-19 among persons with HIV.

"The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic presents an unexpected challenge, but it also provides opportunities for leveraging the NIH-supported HIV research platforms and the clinical trial networks in partnerships to tackle unanticipated research questions related to COVID-19."

In addition to his work as deputy director, Tim continues to serve as a medical officer in the U.S. Public Health Service, a position he's held for more than 20 years. He also is a founding member of Doctors for Global Health, a non-governmental health and human rights organization that provides health care for underserved populations in Central America and Africa. This spring, Tim was promoted to the rank of one star Rear Admiral, a status less than one percent of officers attain.

Ambele Judith Mwamelo '16

Global Health Governance Programme (GHGP) University of Edinburgh Medical School, Scotland

Ambele Mwamelo's experience on St. Olaf's Biology in South India study abroad program not only strengthened her interest in biology, but it also inspired her to kick-start her public health career and apply to graduate school. Ambele was first introduced to the GHGP, which researches how global institutions can better serve the health needs of people globally, while pursuing her master of public health at the University of Edinburgh.

"The past months have been challenging, as many of us have been affected both directly and indirectly. However, we need to remember to lead with kindness — keeping in mind that many people (including fellow Oles) are dealing with complex situations and ongoing outbreaks in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic. For those with the opportunities and capacity, this is a great time to contribute to our communities. Any action counts."

Now, as a researcher/affiliate with the GHGP, the work that she and her team are doing is contributing to the existing body of evidence about COVID-19. Ambele's work is currently focused on

examining the COVID-19 response in sub-Saharan Africa, looking at countries such as Senegal and Ghana that are performing well, and distilling best practices and lessons learned. She believes that sharing critical research and scientific evidence about COVID-19 is crucial when addressing pandemics and other public health challenges.

"This is a challenging time, and it's hard not to get discouraged. But there's an ethos, from Harry Truman, that has lined the halls of CDC, and I think it lined the halls of St. Olaf too: 'It's amazing how much you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit.'"

— MELISSA ROLFES '06

Jennifer Nelson '98

Medical Epidemiologist, CDC | Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Public Health Service

Jennifer Nelson has been deployed twice in support of the CDC's 2019 Novel Coronavirus Response. Her first deployment took her to the San Francisco International Airport quarantine station, where she served as a quarantine medical officer and tertiary passenger screener. In these roles, she worked with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers to identify arriving passengers who needed additional health screenings prior to entry into the country and provided one-on-one traveler's health communications to passengers returning from high-risk areas.

"Often you need to take a circuitous route to achieve your goals and dreams. Remain rigidly flexible and never give up."

Jennifer's second deployment was to CDC's Emergency Operations Center, where she served on the Maternal Child Health Unit within the Community Intervention and At Risk Task Force. Here, her team focused on populations facing disproportionately greater risk for negative health outcomes from the COVID-19 pandemic, including children under 18 years of age and women who are pregnant or postpartum. She was able to use her pediatrics training to provide subject matter expertise on issues related to infant feeding in the context of COVID-19 illness, as well as conduct research to better understand health outcomes of infants born during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Love Odetola '14

Ph.D. Student, UNC Greensboro Department of Community Health Education, School of Health and Human Sciences

As a Ph.D. student in community health education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Love Odetola teaches undergraduate students in global health and conducts research to explore how contaminated tap water impacts the health of pregnant women and young children. A few months before the COVID-19 outbreak, she was visiting homes in North Carolina to test tap water for 14 different contaminants. Although she had to pause these in-person visits in response to social distancing requirements, Love is now focused on collecting data virtually through phone calls and Zoom interviews and on maximizing existing water datasets.

"Social distancing is not synonymous with social isolation. Let us stick together, reaching out, encouraging one another, supporting each other. This pandemic shall pass. And, at the end of it all, if we support each other, we will realize that we have gone much further than we ever envisioned."

In the midst of her shifting work, Love has also taken the opportunity to support various university faculty members who are working on COVID-19-related projects, including a faculty member who is looking at how COVID-19 has impacted the lives of nursing professionals. While the pandemic has been an adjustment, it has also been a time of growth for Love and has inspired her to explore new research methods that might have been neglected in the past.

Ian Pray '09

Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Officer, CDC

Ian Pray is part of a two-year fellowship program in applied epidemiology, which sends officers to health departments around the country to help them investigate disease outbreaks. EIS officers are often referred to as "disease detectives" and have been an important part of the national and global public health workforce since 1951. Ian is currently assigned to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, where he's been working to investigate COVID-19 at meat processing plants, nursing homes, and other high-risk settings. It has been an incredibly challenging mission and a difficult time for everyone, but Ian feels grateful to be able to apply his training in such a meaningful way.

Melissa Rolfes '06

Epidemiologist, Influenza Division, CDC

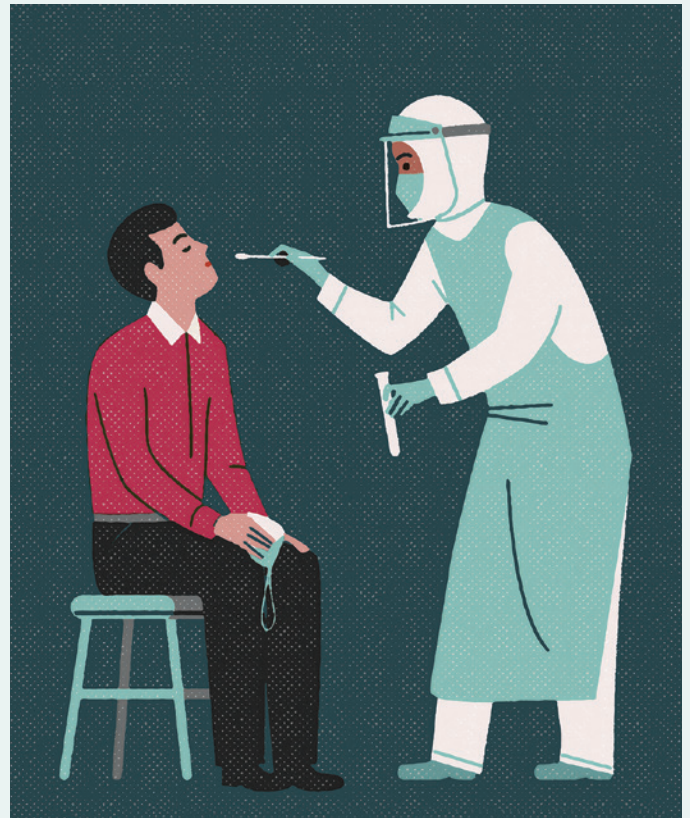
Melissa Rolfes supports analysis of surveillance data to estimate how much flu happens in the U.S. each season, designs and develops protocols to investigate flu outbreaks and pandemics, and leads a study looking at flu transmission in households. In the early weeks of the U.S. response, she

In a time of great need, our newest alumni are joining the health care field.

Nursing: From the Class of 2020, 24 students graduated from the college's nursing program, and many will be working in acute care, including at Mayo Clinic, the Veteran's Administration Medical Center, and Abbott Northwestern Medical Center.

Pre-Med (medical, dental, optometry): Six pre-med seniors have been accepted into medical schools that include Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine, Creighton University School of Medicine, University of Kansas School of Medicine, University of Nebraska College of Medicine, and Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine. One pre-dental student will attend University of Minnesota School of Dentistry. One pre-optometry student will attend Pacific University College of Optometry.

Exercise Science: Two Oles from the Class of 2020 are going into physical therapy, one at Mayo Clinic and the other at the University of Minnesota; two are going into exercise physiology — one is entering the master's program in applied physiology at Columbia University, and the other is entering the master's program in exercise physiology at St. Scholastica; and one senior is entering the master's program in orthotics and prosthetics at the University of Washington.



RUSSELL TATE | UNITED NATIONS COVID-19 RESPONSE

supported the initial outbreak investigations on the West Coast, deploying CDC staff to help state and county health departments conduct contact tracing to identify people who were exposed to the early COVID-19 cases. As the outbreak grew in the U.S. and community transmission became more widespread, Melissa helped redirect many existing studies of flu at the CDC's Influenza Division to focus on COVID-19 instead.

As a result, she now leads several studies looking at community and household transmission of COVID-19. These studies are critical for understanding how and when COVID-19 transmits from one person to another. The CDC is also using these studies to further understand what families can do to limit the spread of the disease and how families and communities are economically, socially, and mentally impacted by COVID-19.

Eric Schilling '99

Chief Engineer, Cardiac Resynchronization Therapy | Medtronic

More than 80 Oles work at Medtronic, a medical device company with operational headquarters in Minnesota. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the company has swiftly stepped up to the plate — open sourcing designs for ventilator products, using 3D printing facilities to produce face shields, shifting manufacturing priorities, and accelerating technologies that allow clinicians to serve their patients remotely. As

chief engineer with the Cardiac Resynchronization Therapy Division, Eric Schilling and teams throughout Medtronic have been working on mobile apps that can transmit data from implanted cardiac devices to a cloud network of servers, allowing clinicians to remotely view key device and health diagnostic information. In some cases, sophisticated algorithms process that data to provide predictions of worsening heart failure or help classify heart rhythms. In addition, teams have been working on technologies that would allow field specialists to remotely participate in surgical procedures and remotely program implanted devices. Eric is now working harder than ever to make these features available for the benefit of COVID-19 patients, while also developing even better therapies and solutions for the future.

Peter Weissmann '82

Primary Care Physician, Minneapolis Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care System | Professor of Medicine, University of Minnesota

As a primary care physician in the Minneapolis VA Health Care System, Peter Weissmann's daily routine was turned on its head in the wake of COVID-19. Instead of spending his days providing direct care and coordinating medical services for his regular patients, 600 veterans he has been following since he came to the VA in 2011, his clinical time is now mostly devoted to the Minneapolis VA's new Acute Respiratory Clinic

(ARC). Patients presenting to the medical center with any symptoms that suggest a COVID-19 infection are quickly sequestered in ARC, where they are evaluated by a team of nurses and physicians.

"I don't expect that my day-to-day practice will ever be the same as it was before COVID-19. Our challenge will be to use that disruption to develop systems of delivering care that are better. Although I would never have wished this new illness on anyone, we can't let this crisis go to waste."

By using personal protective equipment, prompt isolation, and video technology, Peter and his team hope to provide appropriate medical care for patients while also preventing the virus from spreading throughout the rest of the facility or to themselves. Because primary care physicians usually find the greatest joy in providing their patients with continuity of care, this shift in focus has been quite an adjustment. While nothing will ever replace a face-to-face encounter, Peter and his team are finding that virtual care allows them to do much more than they had previously assumed was possible. 🙌

MOLLY WORK is an assistant director of marketing at St. Olaf College.

ALUMNI & FAMILY TRAVEL

Although these days during the COVID-19 pandemic are uncertain, Alumni & Family Travel remains here for you. We continue to plan for the future, for the time when we can get back to actively exploring our world together, as so many Oles and honorary Oles have done before us. Before long, we'll once again carry on the tradition of learning, broadening our perspectives, and becoming more understanding and compassionate as we experience new places and other cultures. In the meantime, you can travel virtually and get ready for future post-pandemic travels by visiting stolaf.edu/travel.



Here's a sampling of what's coming up:

Patagonia in Depth: Hiking, Glaciers, Culture, and More | March 7-20, 2021

America's Struggle for Civil Rights: Religion, Race, and the Work of Justice | April 17-28, 2021

Ole Golf at Pebble Beach | June 8-13, 2021

Journey to the Holy Land | June 16-28, 2021

Ireland: Literature, History & Culture | July 8-20, 2021

Exploring Vietnam: History, Religions, Contemporary Culture, and More | October 9-19, 2021

Exotic Madagascar: Wildlife and Culture of the Red Island | November 5-21, 2021

OLECONNECT

By Molly Work

What is Ole Connect?

The Ole Connect platform is designed to help foster connections within the St. Olaf alumni community and facilitate strategic career networking opportunities. Within the platform, members can join career groups based on affinity or industry to start conversations, share resources, post discussion topics, and read exclusive content written by Oles about their field.

As we get further away from the Hill — either in years or distance — it is sometimes challenging to stay connected. The Ole Connect platform can help Oles expand their professional networks, create and learn about new opportunities, and stay engaged with the St. Olaf community. Ole Connect is also a way to offer networking support to the Class of 2020 and other Oles experiencing career disruptions because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What makes Ole Connect unique?

In addition to networking capabilities, Ole Connect also includes a new alumni-specific job board. When you register with the platform, you can post jobs for fellow Oles or apply to jobs referred by Oles for Oles. When you apply for one of these jobs, there will be an Ole in the organization who can provide you with more information.

How can Oles get involved in the platform?

In the career groups, we are looking for Ole volunteers to create and share original content about the lessons they have learned in their own careers — everything from blogs, to webinars to suggested reading lists. This content will be published within relevant career groups.

If you know of an awesome job posting or are looking to hire an Ole at your own place of work, you can further support your fellow alumni by posting a job on Ole Connect. If you have a position that would be more suitable for a current student, visit the Piper Center for Vocation and Career employer resources page.

Ole Connect helps us harness the vibrant community of Ole alumni who want to help others and share information. Grow your network and support fellow Oles as they find what's next. Join Ole Connect today!

How did this program come about?

Associate Director of Alumni Professional Networks and Affinity Groups Beth Anne Thompson '88 manages the new Ole Connect platform. "After a long career in consulting, I was excited to come back to St. Olaf to be part of creating this new alumni initiative. It has been amazing to learn about all of the diverse careers that Oles are pursuing," says Thompson. "I am excited to help Oles create new career opportunities or just share the lessons they have learned on their own career paths. I would have loved to have had this networking resource at different points in my own career."

Ole Connect is a joint partnership between Thompson and Associate Director of Alumni Career Services Jenele Grassle. Grassle works with alumni to provide one-on-one career coaching and/or career assistance, and deliver relevant career programming. She works with Oles through all stages of their career journey, from the years right after graduation through mid-career transitions to encore careers. She also manages the Ole Connect job board, a key feature and benefit of the Ole Connect platform.

Check out the Alumni Career Services program to learn more about one-on-one alumni coaching or to make a virtual coaching appointment with Jenele Grassle.

Join or learn more about Ole Connect

- connect.stolaf.edu
- stolaf.edu/pipercenter/alumni-career-services
- stolaf.edu/pipercenter/employer-resources-2

EDITOR'S NOTE: Class Notes will return in the next issue of *St. Olaf Magazine*.

Remembering Vern Faillettaz

Professor Emeritus of Religion Vernon Pierre Faillettaz died of natural causes on January 19, 2020 at age 91. Faillettaz was born on June 28, 1928, in Fresno, California, the only child of Pierre Henri Samuel Faillettaz and Lelah Josephine Larson. The family soon moved to San Francisco, and he often told the story of walking across the Golden Gate Bridge when it opened. Faillettaz graduated from Mission Dolores High School and, in 1950, the University of California–Berkeley, where he became involved in Lutheran student life.

Faillettaz earned his M.Div. from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. He married Beulah “Billi” Mae Stromseth, a graduate of the Fairview School of Nursing, on May 22, 1954. They were one of many Luther Seminary pastor and Fairview nurse couples. In 1954 he was called to serve Bethel Lutheran Church in Chicago, where he had done his yearlong internship. After four years at Bethel, Faillettaz entered the University of Chicago, where he earned a Ph.D. in divinity. While in Chicago, his and Billi’s three children, Pierre, Lise, and Marc, were born.

In 1962, Faillettaz joined the St. Olaf Religion Department, where he became known as an innovative thinker who was undogmatic and curious. Early on he spoke about the need for the identity of a college of the church to be open to questions, new perspectives, and change, urging that “theology is always in dialog with culture.” He advised students for the Fund for Theological Education and was a Paracollege tutor for eight years, shaping the Paracollege’s academic structure and serving as its second Senior Tutor.

Faillettaz’s interest in interfaith dialog and multiple points of view continued in the classes he taught, including *Liberation Theology* and *Comparative Monotheism*, and seminars in which he participated. He was an early supporter of gay rights and concerns. After a sabbatical at Harvard’s Center for World Religions in 1970, Faillettaz initiated St. Olaf’s first course on Islam. He continued to advocate for the development of courses in specific world religions, as well as the hiring of teachers within that religion. Together with Billi, Faillettaz led a semester abroad in Jerusalem, as well as Interims abroad. Once he retired from St. Olaf in 1996 after 33 years on the faculty, he and Billi established the Billi and Vern Faillettaz Endowed Scholarship Fund for students interested in service or international studies. They always enjoyed meeting the recipient of their scholarship, which had a significant impact on many students lives. After retirement, in addition to leading elder learning trips with Billi, Faillettaz taught for and directed the Northfield Elder Collegium for several years.

Faillettaz loved teaching, rewrote his class syllabi every summer, and often had to be called to come home for supper. He was a creative and challenging teacher. He had a gift for talking with and listening to students both in and outside the classroom and is remembered as a warm, gentle, wise, and patient counselor to countless students. A man

of strong faith, in his last months, when he didn’t go anywhere else, he always wanted to go to church. In addition, Faillettaz was happy to retreat to the secluded life of summers with the family on an island in Lake Vermilion for the past 64 years. He developed an interest in gardening and at one point had a yard full of hybrid daylilies. He was a wide reader beyond his field, enjoying mysteries, cultural histories, and novels.

He is survived by Billi; their children, Pierre ’77, Lise, and Marc ’89; and grandson, James Faillettaz ’19.



Remembering Doug Schuurman

Professor of Religion Douglas J. Schuurman passed away at home on February 15, 2020 at age 64. Schuurman was born on May 23, 1955, in Paterson, New Jersey, and lived the early part of his life in nearby Midland Park, where he attended Eastern Christian Schools from kindergarten through high school. Schuurman and his wife, Kathy, met in kindergarten and remained friends through the years. They married in 1975 in Wyckoff, New Jersey, and moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where Schuurman earned a B.A. in philosophy at Calvin College and an M.Div. at Calvin Seminary. He then went on to receive a Ph.D. in theology and ethics from the University of Chicago Divinity School.



After teaching at Calvin College for two years, Schuurman joined the St. Olaf Religion Department in 1986, where he was a distinguished teacher and scholar for 34 years. Schuurman’s courses were wide-ranging: biblical theology and history, Christian theology, and topics in Christian ethics, such as the ethics of Luther, love and justice, Christian hope, postmodernism, the ethics of vocation, and liberation theology.

Schuurman led the development of three distinctive programs at the college. With Professor Emeritus of Philosophy Edward Langerak, he developed the Ethical Issues and Normative Perspectives program. For the program, he led annual workshops to prepare professors in other disciplines to teach the required general education ethics course and taught a series of seminars on vocation and religion that produced a book, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life*, which continues to have an important impact on public discussions of vocation in churches and colleges around the country. Schuurman also co-directed St. Olaf’s Ethics Across the Curriculum program, and he helped create St. Olaf’s Science Conversation program, serving as its first director.

In addition to the Science Conversation, Schuurman was a mainstay of the interdisciplinary Great Conversation program. He was also a consultant to the Lilly grant that provided major funding to launch a new program on vocation and was the college’s Lilly Vocational Scholar in 2003–04. More generally, he lectured on the theme of vocation in a variety of settings, including several sets of lectures in South Africa. In recent years he expanded his work on vocation to consider contributions to the theme by other religious traditions and secular worldviews.

Schuurman was loved by countless students, who were impressed by his intellectual substance and breadth and enjoyed his friendly and compassionate manner. His colleagues found him to be a kind, caring, and humble man, an inspiring scholar with a keen intellect rooted in faith. “He was a dear colleague to so many of us, and we will sadly miss his gracious presence while we remain so grateful for his gifts and work,” says Langerak.

Schuurman is survived by his wife, Kathy; his daughters, Sarah Schuurman ’02, Krista (Paul ’05) Marino ’04, and Laura (Ed) Rasmussen; one grandson, Noah Clymer; two brothers, Henry and Don (Shelley); two sisters, Carol (Gary) Ferencheck and Diane (Al) Nyland; two sisters-in-law, Beverly (Bill) Jeczalik and Jane (Bob) Wieggers; and nieces, nephews, and a host of friends.



Future Ole **Blake Middleton**



Future Ole **Harrison Reily**



Future Ole **Soren Green**

Future Oles

Thomas Glasoe '97 and Rachael Glasoe, a son, Thomas Rae Paarlberg Sidlauskas '00 and Brian Sidlauskas, a daughter, Fiona Nellie Rainwater '02 and Justin Uhr, a daughter, Autumn Heather Bell Ackerson '04 and John Ackerson '04, a daughter, Hannah Sara Himmerich '04 and Ryan Shiek '04, a son, Emmett Meagan Crary '05 and Sam Alderman, a son, Simon Sheila Slowinski Skaff '05 and Curtis Skaff, a daughter, Adalena Gretchen Winder '05 and Rafael Ayvar, a son, Andreas Marit Sletten Green '06 and Matthew Green '05, a son, Soren Colin Reily '06 and Casi Reily, a son, Harrison Laura Koch Williams '06 and Tyler Williams '04, a daughter, Guinevere Annika Jones Gostomski '07 and Kevin Gostomski, a son, Bryson Ben Henry-Moreland '07 and Katherine Clanton, a son, Alexander Allison Helling Shabino '07 and Patrick Shabino '07, a son, Henry Mary Sotos '07 and Dave Wilkinson, a daughter, Jane Calli Benson Burgemeister '08 and Dustin Burgemeister '09, a daughter, Nora Grace Lara Burkhart Diorio '08 and C.J. Diorio, a son, Charlie Anna Legard '08 and Brendan Murday, a daughter, Élodie Rebecca Huncosky Lloyd '08 and Michael Lloyd, a daughter, Willa Liv Amend Steingart '08 and Elliot Steingart, a son, Luther Katherine Chatelaine-Samsen '09 and Christopher Samsen, a daughter, Junia Maren Gelle Henderson '10 and Paul Henderson '11, a son, August Brenna Robinson Koehler '10 and Joseph Koehler, a son, Ernest David Lindquist '10 and Katie Lindquist, a son, Lyle Sarah Tessien Middleton '10 and Andrew Middleton '10, a daughter, Blake Summer DeNaples Gaasedelen '11 and Owen Gaasedelen '11, a son, Lars Clara Kundin '12 and Kyle MacLeod, a daughter, Hazel Emily Cass Moore '12 and Jackson Moore '12, twin daughters, Molly and Gwendolyn Kerry Auer Fergus '13 and George Fergus '13, a son, Teddy

Weddings

John Adams '71 and Peg McDonell Adams, Oct. 12, 2019
 Bryan Cook '93 and Sarah Cook, Oct. 20, 2018
 Vanessa Trice Peter '93 and Jason Blais, April 26, 2019
 Karen Carr Rosell '95 and Robert Rosell '92, Oct. 20, 2018
 Siri Hansen Kabrick '97 and Christopher Kabrick, May 10, 2018
 Anne Rzepecki Connors '05 and Chris Connors, Sept. 14, 2019
 Janna Holm Lee '07 and Craig Lee, Nov. 2, 2019
 Sarah Ettesvold Campbell '08 and Andrew Campbell, Sept. 30, 2017
 Madeline Salmon Halvorson '10 and Paul Halvorson, July 13, 2019
 Stephanie Tanner Tanzar '10 and James Tanzar, Sept. 1, 2019
 Kelsey Thompson '10 and James Reuss '10, Oct. 5, 2019
 Laura Linder-Scholer Livalska '11 and Taylor Larson Livalska '09, Sept. 21, 2019
 Sarah Widder Luthey '11 and Justin Luthey '11, Nov. 2, 2019
 Anna Martin '12 and Joseph Fleming '10, May 11, 2019
 Eliza Snortland '12 and Isaac Lewis-O'Connor '11, July 27, 2019

Lucy Casale Clark '13 and Luke Clark, Aug. 16, 2019
 Elsie Nord McClelland '13 and Justin McClelland '13, Sept. 28, 2019
 Greta Hanson Aarsvold '14 and Andreas Aarsvold, Dec. 7, 2019
 Laura Willodson Marshall '14 and James Marshall '14, Sept. 14, 2019
 Sarah Elder Coughlin '15 and Ezra Coughlin '15, Oct. 5, 2019
 Maggie Prunty '15 and Samuel Braden '15, Oct. 19, 2019
 Christi Gratz Carlin '17 and Josh Carlin '17, June 15, 2019
 Emma Jeremiason Rosera '17 and Tyler Rosera '17, Dec. 27, 2019
 Harrison Lawrence '19 and Libby Lawrence, Nov. 2, 2019

Deaths

*Nell Erickson Kaiser '39, Brookfield, Wis., Jan. 29, 2020
 LaVaughn Larson Kunny '40, Beloit, Wis., Dec. 3, 2019
 Shirley Nord Svenson '42, Santa Monica, Calif., Dec. 11, 2019
 Esther "Marguerite" DeMann Collison '43, Minneapolis, April 3, 2020
 Margaret Olson Knutson '43, New Brighton, Minn., Jan. 15, 2020
 Philip Lehman '43, Slater, Iowa, Feb. 19, 2020
 Constance "Lorraine" Rude Thompson '44, Petersburg, Alaska, Jan. 6, 2020
 *Florence Larson Gibson '45, Toledo, Ohio, Nov. 13, 2019
 Solveig Rynning Clark '46, Astoria, Ore., Oct. 27, 2019
 Verda Yahr Grinde '46, Melrose, Wis., Dec. 16, 2019
 Doris Johnston Leslie '46, Iowa City, Iowa, Dec. 22, 2019
 Marjorie Asmus Matthiae '46, Gaylord, Minn., Nov. 3, 2019
 Lewis Paulson '46, Roseburg, Ore., Feb. 10, 2020
 Catherine Malecha Williams '46, Dallas, March 17, 2020
 Beatrice Peck Anderson '47, Spicer, Minn., March 17, 2020
 Elsie Nielsen Anderson '47, Valley Stream, N.Y., Feb. 3, 2020
 *Harvey Lundy '47, Estherville, Iowa, March 4, 2020
 Fern Anderson Miller '47, Lanesboro, Minn., March 22, 2020
 Sheryl Ruthenbeck Swanbeck '47, Enumclaw, Wash., Dec. 27, 2019
 Marlys Sandvig Averill '48, Plymouth, Minn., Oct. 27, 2019
 Louise Ekstam Lund '48, Moorhead, Minn., Dec. 10, 2019
 Jean Schafer Noel '48, Austin, Minn., Nov. 29, 2019
 Gunnar Pederson '48, Woodbury, Minn., Dec. 11, 2019
 Rozella Olson Hagen '49, Forest City, Iowa, Dec. 30, 2019
 *Carl Helgen '49, Minneapolis, April 7, 2020
 Lorraine Haapala Olson '49, Black Earth, Wis., Jan. 30, 2020
 *Jerold "Doc" Thoreson '49, Kasson, Minn., March 18, 2020
 Jeanette "Jean" Hegge Towne '49, Hopkins, Minn., Oct. 20, 2019
 Marguerite "Peggy" Lehmann Townsend '49, Amherst, Ma, Oct. 19, 2019
 Virginia "Virgie" Pederson Anderson '50, Rice Lake, Wis., Nov. 26, 2019
 *Harry "Sam" Babington '50, Woodinville, Wash., Nov. 21, 2019
 Shirley Brantley '50, Tucson, Ariz., Oct. 12, 2019
 Esther Gabrielson Hand '50, Missoula, Mont., Jan. 23, 2017
 *Gustav "Gus" Larsen '50, Rockford, Ill., Oct. 17, 2019
 Dorothea Norenberg Loehnis '50, Fairfield Glade, Tenn., March 3, 2020
 Jeanice Skogen Officer '50, Minot, N.D., Nov. 28, 2019
 Agnes Benson Schlichting '50, Eugene, Ore., Feb. 28, 2020

James "Jim" Urquhart '50, Tallahassee, Fla., Feb. 1, 2020
 Delores "Dee" Lee Wesen '50, Glasgow, Mont., March 7, 2020
 Beverly Dybvig Wold '50, Minneapolis, Jan. 15, 2020
 Charles "Chuck" Anders '51, Venice, Fla., April 1, 2020
 Delpha Halling Baken '51, Stillwater, Minn., Dec. 17, 2019
 *Harold "Hal" Bergeson '51, Eden Prairie, Minn., Jan. 21, 2020
 Ruth "Joan" Swenson Carlborn '51, Lincoln, Neb., Jan. 13, 2020
 Ann Holt Herder '51, Northfield, Minn., Sept. 25, 2019
 Phyllis Dyrud Branstetter '52, Laurel, Mont., Feb. 11, 2020
 *Veryl Henriksen '52, St. Paul, Minn., Dec. 21, 2019
 Roberta Dietz Ihnen '52, Burnsville, Minn., Feb. 26, 2020
 Patricia Anderson Kraft '52, Summit, N.J., Jan. 7, 2018
 *Curtis Stolee '52, Belle Plaine, Minn., Jan. 21, 2020
 John Trelstad '52, Minneapolis, March 19, 2020
 Joyce Knudson Voorhees '52, Fargo, N.D., Jan. 18, 2020
 Betty Arnold Anderson '53, Hendricks, Minn., Jan. 7, 2020
 Vernon Carlson '53, Shorewood, Minn., April 2, 2020
 *Arthur Huset '53, Chetek, Wis., Dec. 1, 2019
 Margaret Warwick Urquhart '53, Tallahassee, Fla., Sept. 30, 2018
 Dorothy Loew Cameron '54, Columbus, Ohio, March 2, 2020
 *Gunnar Reimers '54, Carmel, Calif., Sept. 7, 2019
 *Conrad Mikkelsen '55, Fountain Hills, Ariz., Jan. 22, 2020
 Robert Nelson '55, Maple Grove, Minn., May 13, 2017
 Norma Ritland Ness '55, Duluth, Minn., March 13, 2020
 *John Opem '55, Peoria, Ill., Feb. 1, 2020
 *Lynn Rudrud '55, Thousand Oaks, Calif., March 19, 2018
 *Howard Field '56, Solon, Iowa, Dec. 3, 2019
 *Paul Hoff '56, St. Paul, Minn., April 1, 2020
 Julene Killen Nelson '56, Roseville, Minn., Feb. 14, 2020
 *James "Jim" Landsverk '56, Eau Claire, Wis., Jan. 3, 2020
 *John Strom '56, Staples, Minn., March 11, 2019
 *Roger Vegdahl '56, Camas, Wash., Nov. 19, 2019
 Nona Volk '56, Alameda, Calif., Feb. 3, 2020
 *Norris Bjorngaard '57, Zumbrota, Minn., Jan. 4, 2020
 Lucy Rasmussen Randgaard '57, Detroit, Minn., Feb. 10, 2020
 June Hansen Rosvold '57, Rochester, Mich., April 15, 2020
 Eloyce Hugelen Tweeten '57, Northfield, Minn., April 2, 2020
 George "Jug" Aker '58, Reno, Nev., March 19, 2020
 Robert "Bob" Carlson '58, Moorhead, Minn., Dec. 7, 2019
 Allan Nelson '58, Northfield, Minn., Jan. 20, 2020
 Kathleen Tangjerd Wacker '58, Riverview, Fla., March 3, 2020
 Roger Willett '58, Spokane, Wash., Nov. 27, 2019
 Arlen Wilson '58, Apple Valley, Minn., Nov. 30, 2019
 Roger Albertson '59, Colfax, Wis., April 18, 2020
 Conrad "Connie" Freeman '59, Sarasota, Fla., Feb. 20, 2020
 Vivian "Viv" Ellefson Hanson '59, Princeton, Minn., April 2, 2020
 *Dean Lommen '59, Bonita Springs, Fla., March 7, 2020
 David Nasset '59, St. Paul, Minn., April 16, 2020
 Carolyn Hanson Devine '60, Baxter, Minn., March 16, 2020
 Patricia "Pat" Steffenson Feit '60, White Bear Lake, Minn., Aug. 22, 2019
 Hans Gunderson '60, Flagstaff, Ariz., April 16, 2020
 Ronald Holden '60, Holland, Mich., Sept. 5, 2012
 *John O'Shea '60, Nisswa, Minn., Nov. 21, 2019
 Allan "Al" Williamson '60, Banner Elk, N.C., Dec. 18, 2019
 Margaret "Peggy" Johnson Day '61, Eden Prairie, Minn., Feb. 19, 2018
 Dagmar "Liz" Nelson Melin '61, Maple Grove, Minn., Jan. 6, 2020
 Marilyn Danielson Merseith '61, Kenyon, Minn., March 13, 2020
 Linda Myhre Robinson '61, Boise, Idaho, Dec. 1, 2019
 Charles Steinke '61, Rockford, Ill., Nov. 19, 2019
 Phillip "Phil" Bachman '62, Mankato, Minn., March 17, 2020
 Judith Bergman Carrico '62, Longmont, Colo., Apr. 12, 2020
 Alan Havig '62, Columbia, Mo., Jan. 8, 2020
 David Hindermann '62, Middletown, N.J., Dec. 9, 2019
 *David Larson '62, Edina, Minn., Nov. 11, 2019
 Douglas Rustad '62, Santa Rosa, Calif., Sept. 14, 2019
 Lois Christensen Schoeneman '62, Edina, Minn., Dec. 10, 2019
 Walter "Lee" Baihly '63, Harpers Ferry, W. Va., Nov. 1, 2019
 James "Jim" Hammer '63, Cannon Falls, Minn., Feb. 15, 2020
 Nathan "Nate" Lindgren '63, Concord, Mass., Feb. 25, 2020
 Susan Fredrickson Mikkelsen '63, Stillwater, Minn., Feb. 6, 2020

Bruce Gawtry '64, Apple Valley, Minn., March 17, 2019
 Lila Groff Nettrour '64, Gibsonsia, Pa., June 10, 2019
 Robert Otterstad '64, Houston, Dec. 20, 2019
 Douglas Lind '65, Eden Prairie, Minn., Aug. 8, 2019
 *Mark Mahowald '65, Minneapolis, March 18, 2020
 Kristi Olson '65, Denver, Jan. 20, 2020
 *Sidney Olson '65, Burnsville, Minn., March 11, 2020
 Paul Pederson '65, Siren, Wis., Feb. 18, 2020
 Nedra Poe-Cook '65, Lutherville, Md., Feb. 17, 2020
 Charlene Repetny Reckase '65, Okemos Mich., Oct. 3, 2017
 David "Dave" Skarstad '65, Fenton, Mo., Feb. 19, 2020
 Kay Paddock Yuzna '66, Minneapolis, March 20, 2020
 Margaret "Margee" Frank Lien '68, Amery, Wis., Jan. 16, 2020
 John Lyons '69, El Cerrito, Calif., Oct. 30, 2019
 Mary Jane "Jari" Foster Pulford '69, Augusta, Mich., March 31, 2020
 James Urish '69, Green Mountain Falls, Colo., Dec. 7, 2019
 Ann "De" Friedrich '70, Lenexa, Kan., March 20, 2020
 Loring "Jackson" Hilstad '70, Buffalo, Wyo., July 31, 2015
 Barbara Moore '70, Park Falls, Wis., Dec. 4, 2019
 David Gaarder '71, St. Ansgar, Iowa, Feb. 9, 2020
 *Mark Thompson '71, Minneapolis, Dec. 17, 2019
 Ann Larson Bolinger '72, Pine Island, Minn., Dec. 14, 2019
 David King '73, Omaha, Neb., March 25, 2020
 Gene Stevens '73, Altura, Minn., Jan. 13, 2020
 *Karen Magnuson Hays '75, Helena, Mont., Feb. 16, 2020
 Margaret "Peggy" McCarthy '77, Rio Rancho, N.M., Jan. 1, 2020
 Peter Berge '80, St. Paul, Minn., Feb. 25, 2020
 Kevin Hjerpe '86, Hutchinson, Minn., Nov. 30, 2019
 Amy Gillespie '88, Washington, D.C., Nov. 24, 2019
 Steven Tuecke '89, Lombard, Ill., Nov. 2, 2019
 David "Dave" Johnson '95, Sioux City, Iowa, Feb. 23, 2020
 Treva Foss Thoms '95, Bronxville, N.Y., Jan. 9, 2020
 Peter Everson '03, Anoka, Minn., Dec. 24, 2019
 *VETERAN

Remembering George Aker '58

Former St. Olaf Vice President for College Relations George Edwin Aker '58 passed away peacefully on March 19, 2020, at the age of 82. He was born August 31, 1937, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, to Dora and Edwin Aker and graduated from Washington High School in 1954. After receiving his B.A. from St. Olaf, where he met and married Mary Kalfahs '58, he received an M.B.A. from the University of Chicago.

Aker spent two years in the Air Force, serving his ROTC obligation in Montana and Tripoli, Libya, before beginning his banking career, first at Marine National Bank in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and then as president and CEO of Nevada National Bank. He moved on from banking to become the first treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church when the four synods merged, and then joined St. Olaf College's administrative staff as vice president for College Relations. Aker later joined First Citizens Bank in Mason City, Iowa, to head Heritage Clubs International before retiring to Reno, Nevada, with Mary to be near their children. During his retirement, Aker served on the boards of Dunham Trust Company and Silver Sage Manor, Inc.

In addition to his wife of 62 years, Aker is survived by their four children, Fred Aker '83, Peder Aker '86 (Alison), Susie Aker Hobson (Chip Hobson), and Christy Aker Minetto '92 (Kevin Minetto); and seven grandchildren: Annie, Lindsey and Kristin, Annika and Luke, and Haakon and Lena.



The Unstoppable Yosh

BY JEFF SAUVE

UNTIL DECEMBER 7, 1941, I thought I was a normal boy, a normal American,” reflected Yoshiteru “Yosh” Murakami ’51. “All of a sudden, I was dirty. All of a sudden, I was sinister. All of a sudden, I couldn’t be trusted.” Following the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. The order forcibly removed from their homes approximately 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry living in the United States, among them the Murakami family of San Pedro, California. These 120,000 Japanese Americans were rounded up and incarcerated at 10 hastily built remote internment camps in California, Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Arkansas.

On April 4, 1942, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) assigned the Murakami family the number 04577 and herded them into a troop train, where they were transported to Manzanar Relocation Camp, located in the desolate Mojave Desert in southeastern California. For 15-year-old Yosh, the transition was startling. For two years, approximately 10,000 Japanese Americans were crowded into one square mile, surrounded by barbed wire fences and sentry towers. Their homes were tar paper barracks with loosely constructed floors, and their beds were straw-filled bags covered with blankets.

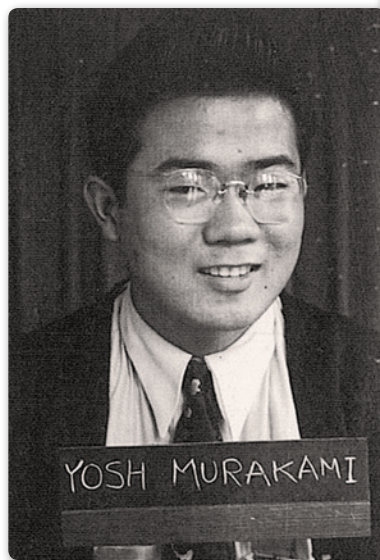
“[Manzanar] was hard to understand in a land where we say there is freedom and justice for all. We wondered why we were behind barbed wire and not the Germans or Italians.”

After graduating from the internment camp’s high school, Yosh sought the opportunity to attend college under the WRA, which permitted Japanese American citizens to complete their educational studies. Roughly 600 non-West Coast colleges accepted students from the camps, including St. Olaf College. At age 18, Yosh officially enrolled at St. Olaf on September 12, 1944.

Despite the fact that the United States was still at war with Japan, Yosh and two other first-year St. Olaf students of Japanese descent — Esther Nagao from the Granada Camp in Colorado and Paul Sugino from one of the Arizona camps — were welcomed on the Hill. Other second-generation Japanese Americans included returning St. Olaf students Helen Kinoshita, Yuki Takei, and Elaine Uyemura.

The 1945 student annual, the *Viking*, has a photograph that is emblematic of Yosh. Standing in the back row far right, dressed in a white shirt, coat, and tie, he wears a smile wide and welcoming. In his first year on the Hill, he had successfully adjusted to the cultural and climatic differences of Minnesota and made friends among the predominantly Norwegian American student body of 744. Yosh felt he had found a new home, where he was welcomed for who he was, and not mistreated or shamed because of his race.

It seems the jovial Yosh was everywhere on campus his first two years, playing his saxophone at student events, assisting in war loan drives, serving as class secretary his sophomore year, and performing in the St. Olaf Band, St. Olaf Orchestra, and Viking Chorus. In 1944–45 and 1945–46, he and Kinoshita were both



Not only did Yosh love St. Olaf (his daughter Jane is a 1980 graduate and his granddaughter Molly graduated in 2014), he also loved Norway — its customs, objects, and food. On occasion he expressed his gratitude by saying in Norwegian, “Mange Tusen Takk!” (many thousand thanks).

selected for the St. Olaf Choir, making them the first students of color in the ensemble’s history.

In the fall of 1946, Yosh interrupted his studies to enlist as a Japanese interpreter in the Counter Intelligence Corps of the U.S. Army. During his three-year service stationed as a U.S. sergeant in Japan, he met his future wife, Mikiko “Miki” Anzai, and was able to bring her to the U.S. through a special bill introduced to Congress by Senator Edward Thye (a Northfield native) and signed by President Truman. Returning to St. Olaf in the fall of 1949, the 23-year-old music major picked up right where he left off. In his final two years at St. Olaf, Yosh returned to the orchestra and choir and directed the Viking Chorus in his senior year.

After graduating from St. Olaf in 1951 and marrying Miki, the unstoppable Yosh studied at the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He then returned to Northfield, where he taught music and served as choir director for the high school until 1968. That year, he, Miki, and their four children (Paul, Stephen, Jane, and Jonathan) moved to Moorhead, Minnesota, where Yosh served as a professor of music at Concordia College before joining the Fargo Public Schools faculty.

Sadly, Yosh passed away at the age of 48 in 1975 after a short and severe illness. He was remembered by his colleagues, friends, and students as a generous, kind, and inspirational man with a self-deprecating sense of humor. And while he had good reason, he was never bitter nor resentful. Instead, Yosh contributed to the cause of racial tolerance throughout his life. 🍷

JEFF SAUVE is a local historian and a regular contributor to *St. Olaf Magazine*.

A photograph of the St. Olaf College building, a large, multi-story brick and stone structure with a prominent central tower and several smaller turrets. The building is set against a backdrop of a cloudy sky. An American flag flies from a tall pole in front of the central tower. The building's facade features numerous windows, some with arched tops. The overall scene is a classic representation of a historic college campus.

146 years of...

aspirations, accomplishments, and resilience.

The strength of St. Olaf has been secured by the wisdom, determination, and generosity of generations of Oles in challenging times.

Make an impact with a planned gift.
From wills to retirement plans, we can work with you to find the best approach to make a lasting difference.

Contact Eric Tvedt '08 in the St. Olaf Development Office at
800-776-6523 or plannedgiving@stolaf.edu.

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

PARTING SHOT



OLES CARE. TOGETHER. Karen Hersey Ellingboe '80, Brad Ellingboe '80, Wayne Thelander '76, and Kristin Pederson Thelander '76 celebrated Syttende Mai 2020 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with Norwegian *kranssekake* and cool St. Olaf face masks.