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Rhode Island College

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RIC alum Al Butler is a—Sea-going piano tuner

By George LaTour

Rhode Island College alumnus Al Butler is one of those lucky individuals you hear about from time to time, one who has managed to combine his vocation with his avocation.

In his case, it’s piano tuning/repairs and sailing.

Yes, that’s right. As unlikely a match as ever there was, but this sea-going piano tuner and his wife, Karin, have managed to link the two. They're enjoying the thrill of sailing on the ocean blue between jobs.

Al, in his adopted “down east” dialect, enthusiastically explains that he and his wife and Springer Spaniel, Bonzo (who has to be watched on board all the time lest he jump into the ocean or a swim, which he tends to do at every opportunity), regularly sail in the warmer weather to Block Island (some 12 miles off the coast of Rhode Island) and various points along the New England coast up to northern Maine which they do primarily for pleasure.

However, once at these various ports of call, he and Karin, also a piano technician, spend part of their time tuning and/or repairing pianos.

Their regular route of travel takes them from Martha’s Vineyard off Cape Cod north to Jonesport, Maine, with stops-off at oftentimes small islands off the coast such as Isle Shoals outside of Portsmouth, N.H.

“If there’s a house on these islands, there’s likely to be a piano,” assures Al, who completed his bachelor’s degree at RIC in 1980. He was a music major.

He points out that many of the pianos in these old Victorian homes “are a century or more old” acquired when the piano was in its heyday as the chief source of home entertainment, and oftentimes they need more than a tuning.

Tuning, says Al, is just a small part of his work. He specializes in rebuilding old pianos. The average tuning takes an hour. Rebuilding or refurbishing them can take months, and this he does back in his shop in East Greenwich, R.I.

“We try to provide these outlying islands with a service not readily available,” says Al, who points out that he can provide a service to people “who would have a tough time getting it” otherwise. No doubt.

“Alfred always wanted to sail to work,” explains his wife, the former Karin Andersen, who is employed at the college as an administrative secretary to Dr. John J. Salvesen, assistant vice president and dean of academic affairs.

“I always thought it would be terrific to row or to sail to work,” confirms Al, who rightly believes it belongs to another era— the Age of Sail.

The Butlers’ first love is the sea and sailing. They don’t primarily take to their two-masted schooner, “Victory,” to tune pianos, but to sail. Secondly, while they are making stops at rather isolated islands they had wanted to visit, they avail the islanders of their talents, usually for a rather standard fee.

How they work it is this: prior to a cruise to certain islands, they mail a notice and/or baked cookies to people “who would have a tough time getting it” otherwise.

“The Butler”’s first love is the sea and sailing. They don’t primarily take to their two-masted schooner, “Victory,” to tune pianos, but to sail.
WASHINGTON, D.C. (CP)—The U.S. Department of Education may relieve many colleges of the need to document that they have registered for the draft in order to get federal financial aid.

At a congressional hearing last week, Undersecretary of Education Gary Jones said the department plans to hand the controversial proposed regulation, and change its effective date from July 1, 1983 to February 1st, 1984.

Under the new regulation, many would still have to declare whether or not they'd registered, but they wouldn't have to "verify" their registration in order to get aid.

"What's News at Rhode Island
College

Focus on the Faculty and Staff

Dr. Anne Savage Carty, assistant professor in nursing, recently presented her research study entitled "The Relationship Between Locus of Control, Endorsed Bed-Confinement and Adoption of a Role by Hospitalized Indi­viduals" at the research conference sponsored by the Delta Epsilon Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, the national honor socie­ty of nursing, held at the University of Rhode Island.
Salesses to be 2-star general

Dr. John J. Salesses, assistant vice president for academic affairs and dean of graduate studies at Rhode Island College and a brigadier general in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, will soon receive a promotion to major general.

Salesses, the only Marine general in Rhode Island and one of only five Marine reserve generals in the United States, will receive his second star in four to six weeks at ceremonies which will probably be held in Newport.

A 1954 graduate of Providence College, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marines upon graduation and served in an active status until June of 1958 when he transferred to the reserve in order to pursue an academic life.

He earned his master's in 1960 and Ph.D. in 1969, both in English, from the University of Rhode Island. In 1962 he had joined the faculty of RIC as an instructor in English.

He became the first reserve Marine general in New England in 1980.

Salesses is currently commanding general of the 4th Force Service Support Group in Atlanta, Ga. Among other assignments, he has served at Camp Pendleton, Calif.; Camp Lejeune, N.C.; in the Mojave Desert at 29 Palms, Calif., and in Alaska. He also attended the National War College at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C.

Two of General Salesses' sons, Robert, a 1980 RIC graduate, and Gregory, are second lieutenants in the Marine Corps.

VIEWING ART ON EXHIBITION at the Adams Library prior to a raffle to raise money for the Chernick Memorial Fund to benefit handicapped students are Chris Fournier (left) and Rita Cambal, both sophomores. Some 25 pieces of art will be raffled off on April 26.

Donated art to bring funds for handicapped

ABLE, the handicapped student organization and the Student Life Office in conjunction with the director and staff of the Adams Library are sponsoring a raffle of 25 pieces of donated art to raise money for the Stuart and Russell Chernick Memorial Fund.

All proceeds of the raffle, scheduled for Tuesday, April 26, at noon in Craig Lee 104, will go to the Rhode Island College Foundation wherein the fund has been established.

Fund monies are designated for the needs and concerns of the handicapped student population, according to Michael S. Norstrom, peer counselor with handicapped students.

The art work has been donated by members of the college community. Most of it is on display in the main foyer of the library. The remainder is displayed in the Student Life Office in Craig Lee 127.

Tickets for the raffle are available in Craig Lee 127. A donation of $1 per ticket is asked or a book of six for $5.

Contributing artists include Linda Arnold, Loren Blanchette, Harriet Brann, Antonio Dartoro, Lisa Davis, John Day, Mark Goldman, Giselle Haber, Beth Hogan, Susan Howe, Enrico Pinardi, Gary Porfeld, Angelo Rosati, Paul Schillace, Arlene Swett, Debra Zaidman, Joseph Zompa and Berge Ara Zobian.

The Chernick Memorial Fund was established in 1981 within the RIC Foundation in memory of Stuart Chernick who died in 1974 of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. The young Chernick had planned to attend RIC as did his brother, Russell, and later sister, Cynthia. Russell, after his graduation in 1981, also died of the disease, resulting in the name change in the fund to the Stuart and Russell Chernick Memorial Fund.
Arts move to center stage at RIC

Haven Brown, assistant director of arts and sciences, is calling next week at Rhode Island College, "more of the festival." She has good reason. In addition to the ambitious production of Fiddler on the Roof being presented by the theater company at Rhode Island College, there are several small arts events of national and international significance taking place. It will all begin on April 13.

TRAVIS RICHARDS

RIC Theatre to present 'Fiddler'

Fiddler on the Roof. It has been called "the most musical musical on the American stage." It is known as a show for all seasons. Beginning April 15 and running through April 26, the Rhode Island College Theatre Company will present a version of this widely acclaimed classic.

The cast which Dr. Raymond Faustini, professor of theater, has assembled, numbered exactly 33. The set will include actual trees. An orchestra made up of 18 musicians, conducted by Dr. Faustini himself, will provide the music.

The familiar story which poignantly evokes the conflict inherent in child-parent relationships, and which hinges on whether or not parents should be in compliance with their family's need for survival, will be presented.

Based on Sholom Aleichem's stories, the show's book, the Hebrew legacy, Hebrew folklore, the Yiddish adaptation of Israel Kaminski, will be translated by Jules Feiffer. It is based on the novel of the same title.

The production's proceeds from ticket sales will go to benefit the Providence Journal Children's Satirical Fund and the Marjorie Eubank Scholarship Fund of the RIC Foundation. Proceeds are scheduled to help the cost of the production. Any surplus will be used to help defray the cost of the production.

JUNE L. GARDEN,

RIC's spring festival

On April 22 and 23, there will be a festival of visual arts events of national and international significance. It will all begin on April 18.

Two of the events will be related to the arts and sciences is calling next week at Rhode Island College, "more of the festival." She has good reason. In addition to the ambitious production of Fiddler on the Roof being presented by the theater company at Rhode Island College, there are several small arts events of national and international significance taking place. It will all begin on April 13.

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RIC junior wins $1,000

Lynda McCray, a junior nursing major at Rhode Island College, has won a $1,000 prize for her essay on the history of the Slater Park Boathouse.

The essay contest was sponsored by the Save-the-Boathouse Committee, a group that opposed a city hall plan to convert the boathouse to a restaurant. That plan has been scrapped and the building has been leased to the Rhode Island Watercolor Society for use as a public art gallery.

McCray, of Pawtucket, submitted a 52-page essay on the history of the boathouse. She would reportedly use the prize money for her college tuition.

Sexual harassment orientation set

In accordance with Governor Garry's Executive Order 49/89, the State Equal Opportunity Office has been mandated to provide all State-funded departments and institutions orientation dealing with sexual harassment.

A team of facilitators will be on campus Friday, April 15, and Monday, April 18, to provide the sessions. The orientation will be provided on both dates. It will be presented in the Student Union Ballroom, from 12 noon to approximately 2 p.m. on both days.

The presentation will consist of the following: a definition of sexual harassment, a historical overview, a film (Preventing Sexual Harrassment), a discussion of management and non-management responsibilities. Members of the College Community are invited to attend part or all of the orientation session.

Pamphlets available

Rhode Island College Women's Center has a wide selection of pamphlets available to members of the community on topics such as birth control, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, alcoholism and domestic abuse.

Anyone is welcome to stop by the center, located below the Donovan Dining Center (Donovan on the Mall) to pick up any pamphlets of interest.

To speak on 'Escaping Symbolism'

Dr. Geoffrey Ribbons, chairman of the department of Hispanic and Italian studies at Brown University, will speak on "Escaping Symbolism: A Case Study: Antonio Machado" on Tuesday, April 19, at noon in Craig Lee 102.

The talk will be given in English and will apply to various other contemporaries of Machado.

Ribbons, who has written several articles and has done many studies in Spanish literature, is also leading the Women's Studies Program at the college.

Keeping Score

Spring sports are well underway. The baseball team returned from their trip down South with a 3-3 record. To date they have a 2-2 record for their northern part of the schedule. They won the home opener against Barrington 24-1. The anchormen had a in for RBIs which was called after six innings on a very cold and blustery day.

Mike Cantone hit two homeruns and had five RBIs. Paul Gavigan had one homerun and Karl Aihaire went 4-4 hitting out three doubles. Jeff Silvera was the winning pitcher with a two hitter.

The following day RIC lost to Brown 13-10. Paul Gavigan and Lee Podewlson went 3 for 4, each adding a homerun to their stats.

RIC split a doubleheader with the University of Lowell, by losing the first game 8-6 but then winning the second with a 4-0 shut-out.

In the first game, Cantone hit his third grand slam of the season giving him six homeruns to date. Mike is also leading the team in RBI's with 19.

John Wilkins was the pitcher in the second game and he has his record up to 3-0 by pitching the first shut-out of the season as well as the first complete game, giving up only four hits while striking out seven players.

The Anchormen now have a 5-5 record.

The women's softball team is now 3-4. They won their doubleheader home-opener against Salve Regina 12-4 and 26-5. They then suffered two defeats by University of New Haven 10-9 and 12-5. They split a doubleheader with SMU winning the first game 12-3 and losing the second 9-4.

In the game against Clark, RIC was up 2-0 after two innings, but they could not hold them and Clark went ahead in the fifth inning 3-2. Clark won 2-0 in the 9th inning.

Junior Karen Foss is the leading hitter with a .662 batting average. Paula Pistacchio, with a .348 batting average, is leading the team in RBIs with 10. Karen Foss is second with eight.

Two new assistant coaches have been added to the athletic department ranks. Jo-Ann Avinidi has been hired as the assistant softball coach. Ms. Avinidi is a 1980 cum laude graduate of RIC. She played varsity softball at RIC and captained the team three of her four years on the team. She was selected to the first team of the R.I.A.A.W. State Tournament team all four years at RIC.

Ms. Avinidi resides in Warwick and teaches Special Education in Coventry.

Mr. Lowery graduated from RIC in 1965 with a degree in English and French. He received his M.A.T. in English from RIC in 1966.

Mr. Lowery is a member of and has held various offices in many track and field organizations. He is the director of the men's indoor and outdoor track association for the R.I. Intercollegiate League. He is a nationally-certified track and field official and is presently the vice-president of the R.I. Track and Field Officials Guild.

Mr. Lowery resides in Riverside and teaches at East Providence Senior High School.
"We have no problems getting around (on an island)," relates Al. "Once we tune the first piano, that person takes us to the next place. After the last job, the last piano owner delivers us to the boat."

"Sometimes we do three days' work in one," he confirms. "It's exhausting at times."

Al's love of sailing came first when at age 1, his parents took him on board a boat at the shores of Mystic, Conn, where Al lived with his parents and six brothers and sisters. Later, the family moved to Westerly, R.I., and the youngster's love of the sea and sailing continued to grow over the years.

"I got my first boat--a 25-foot Friendship sloop--in 1969," he says, adding that he has "a lot of different boats since, including two Herreshoff sloops and some not so fannon."

The love of the piano came almost as early in his life, but grew more slowly.

As a child with access to the family piano, he "got involved" playing the instrument by ear.

"It was an old decrepit one which broke down constantly, I ended up fixing more than playing it," he laughs. "It doesn't work if I'm just right. I'd bang on the keys."

"To a child, it was an amazing contrivance," he notes.

"It's given me a lot to think about...", thought Al.

Al joined the Navy and was "learned (piano repairing) by doing" and attending conferences, seminars and doing a lot of reading about piano repairs. He joined the Piano Technicians Guild to which his wife now also belongs.

In 1972 he and Karin were married. In 1976 she was responsible for his entering RIC as a freshman. He studied piano and all the while worked tuning and fixing pianos on the side.

The last two years of college saw him working both for RIC and the University of Rhode Island "fixing their pianos, harpsicords and pipe organs." Between the two state colleges, there were some 120 pianos for Al to tend to, which he did under contract.

"We knew at this point that tuning and fixing pianos was a likely way to make a living," he says.

Al has been tuning and fixing pianos full-time ever since.

Up until now, he and Karin only combined their sailing and piano tuning in the summer months--except for Block Island, a trip they venture from time to time throughout most of the year--but they are dreaming of a time--"perhaps in a couple of years"--when they can combine the two and both work at it full-time.

In the meantime, they are writing an illustrated book on CRUISING DOWN EAST in a Pocket Schooner, which is the reflections and reactions of one seeing the east coast by boat for the first time.

This July they'll grab their bag of tools (and Bonzo) and set sail for Jonesport from whence they will leisurely sail down the Maine coast to Provincetown on the Cape, piano tuning as they go!
‘Darrow to discuss the right to dissent’

What right do you have to dissent?
That will be the topic on Monday evening, April 18 when Dr. William Hutchinson, professor of theater at Rhode Island College, appears as the famous lawyer Clarence Darrow in the Providence Public Library’s Close Encounter Series. Hutchinson will be speaking at 7:30 p.m.

The Close Encounter Series is a simulation of the 19th century lyceum, the institution which developed as the vehicle for presenting lectures, demonstrations, dramatic performances and debates to the community in an age when educational opportunity was much restricted.

Called a perspective on past concerns and present issues, the series is co-sponsored by Rhode Island College and the Providence Public Library. The evening with Clarence Darrow is the final presentation in the six part series. Hutchinson and RIC English Professor Dr. Anastasia C. Hoffman are co-directors of the project. Hoffman will introduce Hutchinson on April 18. Dr. William McLaughlin of the Brown University department of history will serve as humanist scholar for the presentation.

A prominent lawyer, “freethinker” and dissenter, Darrow was an outspoken advocate of “liberty and justice for all” and a staunch defender of American civil liberties. Over a 50 year career Darrow defended labor unions, blacks, murderers, and the concepts of academic freedom, free speech, free thought and free love. He did so at a time when it was most unpopular.

Hutchinson has been portraying Darrow in one-man performances since 1981. He has given shows at Trinity Square Repertory Theatre Company’s Lederer Theatre, at Yor College in Pennsylvania, Winthrop College in South Carolina, before the members of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, for clubs, organizations and civic groups.

Following his monologue, Hutchinson as Darrow will answer questions from the audience.

The library is located at 150 Empire Street in Providence. The event is free.