

Since 2000, the College of Engineering at the University of Maine began what has become one of our most enjoyable traditions where we celebrate the career of a distinguished emeriti faculty member at the James and Maureen Gorman Emeriti Faculty Brunch - thanks to the generous support from James and Maureen Gorman.

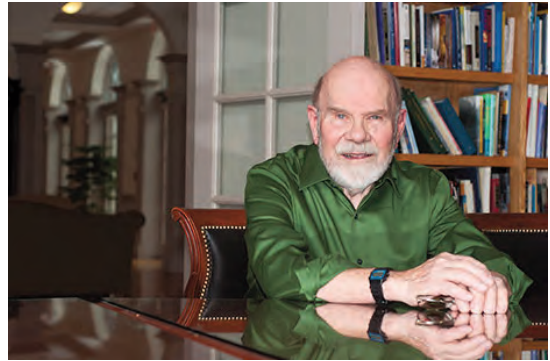


College of Engineering

James and Maureen Gorman
Emeriti Faculty Brunch
honoring

John Alexander

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Emeritus and Dean Emeritus and
Professor Emeritus of
Civil Engineering



Canoe Rules

A tribute to the remarkable and dedicated career of a true master educator extraordinaire.

Saturday, October 18, 2014

2000	Dick Hill (Pajama Party)	Mechanical Engineering
2001	Waldo Mac Libbey (Showtime)	Electrical Engineering
2002	George Greenwood (Cowboy Roadshow)	Civil Engineering
2003	Bill Ceckler (Confessions of an Outdoorsman)	Chemical Engineering
2004	Jerry Harmon (Physics of Subjective Reality)	Engineering Physics
2005	John Lyman (No Jokes Required)	Mechanical Engineering
2006	Carleton Brown (Three Ringed Circus)	Electrical Engineering
2007	Karl Webster (Super Engineer)	Engineering Technology
2008	Wayne Hamilton (First Associate Dean)	College of Engineering
2009	Kim Mumme (The Renaissance Man)	Chemical Engineering
2010	Paul Camp (World of Ice & Snow)	Engineering Physics
2011	Claude Westfall (Professor Fisherman)	Engineering Technology
2012	Donald Grant (The Cal Ripken of Academia)	Mechanical Engineering
2013	Fred Irons (The Mystery Hour)	Electrical Engineering
2014	John Alexander (Canoe Rules)	Civil Engineering



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Welcome to the 2014 James and Maureen Gorman
Emeriti Faculty Brunch
in honor of
John Alexander - *Canoe Rules*

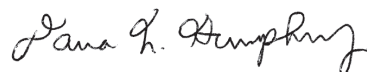
The College of Engineering is delighted to have this opportunity to honor John Alexander, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Emeritus and Dean Emeritus of Engineering, and Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering.

John's illustrious career at the University of Maine spans from 1970 to 1999 where he has been an outspoken advocate of retaining and strengthening the University of Maine's student-centered focus and has worked consistently to improve the educational experience of undergraduates throughout his career.

John practiced highway engineering from 1958 to 1967 in St. Louis, Indianapolis and Alaska. He earned the Professional Engineering License and joined the Department of Civil Engineering in 1970 and was chair of the department from 1978 to 1992. In 1994, he became Dean of the College of Engineering and in 1997 he was appointed Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

Canoe trips and cook outs were often favorite activities outside of departmental affairs for John, his colleagues and students. Even newly interviewed faculty were invited to join a canoe trip and knew they had the job after a day with congenial colleagues out on the river. A tradition for newest faculty members involved sweeping behind students racing concrete canoes. What a fun initiation!

We thank you for joining with us today to recognize and celebrate John for his service and dedication to the University of Maine and to the students of the College of Engineering.



Dana N. Humphrey, Ph.D., P.E.
Dean, College of Engineering
University of Maine



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MAINE

College of Engineering

James and Maureen Gorman
Emeriti Faculty Brunch
in honor of
John Alexander
Canoe Rules

Agenda

Brunch

Welcome

Dana Humphrey
Dean, College of Engineering

Bill Davids, BS 1989, MS 1991
Professor and Chair of
Civil and Environmental Engineering

John Alexander
Vice President for Academic Affairs and
Provost Emeritus and
Dean Emeritus of Engineering, and
Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering

*Others are welcome to say
a few words at this time.*

I am probably one of the few people old enough to remember John Alexander's spectacular arrival on campus. Your "chariot" was an old VW Bug with holes in the floorboards and no working reverse gear, but you did have Janet and three young kids!



The thirty-plus years working with you in the Civil Engineering Department were the most enjoyable but, frankly, the best of memories are likely to be of the activities outside of departmental affairs. I refer to such things as the canoe trips, the bear and moose hunts --- especially the one where the rope broke as we were trying to get the moose into the truck and his head snapped around and up-ended you into the bushes! Spectacular!! --- the concrete canoe races on the Kenduskeag Stream, and the cook-outs at your place afterwards.

All and all, the years have been good not only to you but to those of us who have enjoyed your friendship, to the many fortunate students you have taught and to the University as a whole as demonstrated by your advancement from Professor to Vice President for Academic Affairs. Wow!

Congratulations John -- You've earned it!

Sincerely,
George Greenwood
Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering

For almost a month I have been trying to recall any humorous anecdote about John's career in the College of Engineering. I have known of him for some 24 years and have had the privilege of his being a bowling partner for several years here in retirement. It's hard to believe that I can not come up with something interesting, like a good skunk story, but that may be more an attribute of my diminishing age-related abilities than it is to John's career at UMaine.

I do recall that when he inherited the Deanship, following Norm Smith [I think], he had complaints about how the farm had been given away before he ever had a chance at it. It was postulated that Norm had actually trusted President Hutchinson, at budget cutting time, but then the other colleges did not. Budget cutting is a game of Chicken', so says John. Then there was the time he put out a plea to all departments to make book nominations for the First Class Project. I responded to

his passionate plea with Swift's interesting views [to me] about the state of science and universities in the early 1700's. I thought it would make interesting class conversation to learn that university research had not changed much in the near three centuries since Swift wrote about Gulliver's Travels to Laputa. John took a dim view of the book but passed it on to the committee when no other nominations appeared. He was right. The committee also took a dim view of that book so the university never had to debate Swift's opinions about the state and value of university research and writing.

John also used to attend all the WIC meetings, especially the brown bag lunches, and I never quite knew what that was all about. Possibly it was a form of security maintenance.



College of Engineering annual yuletide celebration. Faculty washtub band L-R: George Greenwood, Earl Beard, John Alexander, Norm Smith and John McDonough.

Lately, ever since he and Janet bought the farm up in Argyle, John has had a long standing war against the Beavers that were living there long before he and Janet bought that farm. Since you can not just outright, legally, shoot them, he hired a specialist to come and reduce their population and institute preventive measures. The specialist finally managed to trap a couple of the pests but only took them a few miles away and they soon returned with a vengeance. Because their previous dam and lodgings had been destroyed, they built a new dam by plugging up one of John's culverts in a field across the road. When the field became flooded is when John became aware that the previous culprits had returned. So he had to clean out the culvert.

And so it goes as an unending war, much like Israel and Palestine, with John and the Beavers duking it out. This continuing relationship is a puzzle to me because John is a loyal graduate of the MIT Graduate School. That makes the Beaver his Mascot. He should be nice to them and admire their engineering prowess but so far he has not been able to come to that level of acceptance of the Beaver.

This is as close as I could get to a skunk story.

Fred Irons
Professor Emeritus of Electrical Engineering

Even though I haven't seen him in person recently, I get constant reminders of him every time my car drifts on the highway and a rumble strip gets my attention - and wakes up my dogs!

It was a pleasure to work with John, first as a fellow chair and then when he was Dean of the College. During his time as Dean of the College, John made it almost tolerable to be a Chair even though he had to cut our budgets almost every year. He has a quirky sense of humor which I enjoyed. He also was fair, honest, and of course ethical. In fact, he made presentations on engineering ethics for high school students attending our Young Scholars Program in the summer. I still remember the discussions that followed his presentation on car seat design and how they could fail in a rear end collision. The students received an understanding of costs, how they relate to engineering design and, of course, ethics.

When he left the Dean's office to become Provost it was a sad day, not in the least because he had convinced me to become interim Dean. Not sure if I ever will forgive him for that! His leaving was eased somewhat when he gifted me his "A Clean Desk is a Sign of a Sick Mind" sign which I proudly displayed! Neither of us had a fetish for orderly desks - or offices.

John made many contributions and accomplished much at UMaine. His achievements were recognized with many awards. UMaine, and especially the College of Engineering is much the better for his service.

I am happy to have been able to work with and for him.
John Field
Professor Emeritus of Electrical and Computer Engineering



When I came to work at Maine the Dept Head that hired me was fired and I was lucky enough to arrive in Orono with John Alexander as Department Head. Although, I was not too sure at the time.

I came to UM in September 1978 and shortly thereafter John had a party for the faculty. There was food, a wood fire, and "target practice" -- I knew "right then and there" that I was in the right place. John was selfless and "smart" in supporting the faculty and working with the department. He built a "happy" and very productive department in some tough times. I always enjoyed working for John and am grateful that he there when I came to Maine. Other departments were not so lucky.

I am sorry to miss the festivities but will be away.
Regards,

Bryan Pearce
Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering



When I interviewed for a Civil Engineering faculty position in April 1981, the department chair John Alexander said, " Why don't you stay for Saturday and join us in a canoe trip." Early Saturday morning, I walked from the University Motor Inn to Pat's for breakfast and then walked over to Forest Avenue where the canoes were being lifted and tied to vehicles. The Dean of Engineering Jim Clapp was lifting one end of a canoe while John Alexander was tying another canoe. Although I had hardly paddled in a canoe, John Alexander deftly guided our canoe from Great Pond through the swift reaches of the Union River to the destination near Amherst on Route 9. With congenial colleagues and a day on the river, I was convinced that if I received an offer, then I was coming to UMaine. I am still here, Thanks John.

Next spring John informed me that it was a tradition that the newest member of the faculty would help to sweep behind the whitewater concrete canoe student racers. John Alexander was the guiding force behind what may have been the only whitewater college concrete canoe race in the country. Teams from New England colleges arrived on the day of the Kenduskeag canoe race and started downstream and earlier than the regular race. With canoe names like The Gaussian Eliminator and CC on the Rocks, each college contended for first place and best design. I was looking forward to see the sleek entry from the college built around boats, the Merchant Marine Academy (MMA) of Connecticut. Where the most competitive canoes had concrete thicknesses of the order of 1/8 to 1/4 inch with thin wire mesh reinforcing, the MMA had built with 1/2 inch thick steel reinforcing bars (#4 bars) and 6 inch thick concrete walls. Whereas the well-built canoes were of the order of 170 lbs, the MMA canoe was of the order of 800 lbs. When the MMA put their canoe into the water, there was approximately 1/2 inch of freeboard. Not only did the paddler in the bow have to do constant bailing when little waves poured water into the canoe, but the front paddler was constantly jumping out to redirect the canoe. The MMA canoe only went straight ahead and rammed into the bank on each turn. When the MMA canoe reached Six Mile Falls, then eight hefty MMA students jumped into action with special lifting bars and swiftly portaged around the Falls. It was clear that MMA turned out resourceful marine operators, but naval design was not in their curriculum. All participants, from the first to the last, left from the finish line and headed for the post race party at John Alexander's farm in Alton.

Thank you John for the great times.

Thomas Sandford
Associate Professor, Civil Engineering

In the fall of 1985, I was an 18-year-old, first year Civil Engineering student in Orono. UMaine's student population was five times that of the small Maine town I grew up in, and I was not at all sure what I had gotten myself into. Of all the classes I took my first semester, which included Physics and Calculus, John Alexander's Civil Engineering Materials course was the one I struggled with the most. I remember getting a poor grade on John's first exam, and realizing that I had to do something different. I went to the department office and met with John during his office hour. As he had done in the past and continued to do throughout his career for many students, John helped me figure out what I needed to do to succeed in the Civil Engineering program. I left his office knowing that things would work out, and that I was in the right place. For a first-semester student, that message is invaluable. Throughout my time as an undergraduate and graduate student, I saw John unfailingly support students. Further, the respect he received from the faculty was clearly evident.

At the time I was hired at UMaine in 1998 as an Assistant Professor, John was Provost. (Actually, now that I think about it, he probably had to approve my hire as the offer went up the chain of command from the department. All those years as an administrator clearly did get to him towards the end, because he let me in.) At some point, there was a program for new assistant professors to assess how they were getting started in their new positions, and it involved a conversation with John. I recall him starting off our talk with the statement: "Well, I'm sure you are doing fine – you're in the Civil Engineering department." He was right. Of course, John's many years of service, leadership, and upholding standards in Civil Engineering are a central reason why the department continues to be as successful as it is today. John has had a tremendous, positive influence on generations of students and faculty here at UMaine. I am particularly pleased that he is receiving this recognition while I am in the Department he led for so long, and am able to be here for this event.

Bill Davids, BS 1989, MS 1991
Professor and Chair of Civil and Environmental Engineering

In the late 1970's I worked for the University's Bureau of Public Administration and was responsible for creating and implementing a series of training events for local officials. John and George Greenwood agreed to develop a workshop about road maintenance. The workshop was always well attended and was presented on multiple years. I remember fondly the fun I had working with them in developing the training materials for a lay audience. The program always began with "There are three things you need to know about road maintenance: water, water, and water." Their efforts taught me a great deal about the meaning and value of public service.

Charlie Morris

I had the pleasure of being an interim administrator in Alumni Hall for a year while John Alexander was Provost. Those days in the "Big House" reinforced something that I had always believed to be true about John. Everything John did was for the good of UMaine and its students. In my over thirty years at UMaine, I can think of no one who was more dedicated to doing the right thing, whether or not that was the popular thing or in his own self interest. When you added that ethical foundation to his deep wisdom, invariably the John Alexander decision was the right thing to do for UMaine. And to top it all off, he was just darned fun to work with.

Mark W. Anderson
Senior Instructor in Resource Economics and Policy
School of Economics &
Sustainability Solutions Initiative





The photo was taken in Zurich in September 1997. Robert Woodbury is with John; I took the photo. The three of us were on our way to the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG). We were flying to Sofia, Bulgaria and had a layover in Zurich.

Marisue Pickering, Ed.D.,
Professor Emerita
Communication Sciences & Disorders

In fall 1971 I came into the University as a sophomore student at the civil Engineering Department under a LASPAU Program Scholarship. In 1973 I graduated with a BSc and in 1975 I got my Masters Degree in Civil Engineering.

My arrival to U Maine had a special feeling, as my Academic Advisor during this time was Dr. John Alexander. He also was my thesis Director. He taught me several things and guided me extraordinarily during the career. I never taught to be a transportation Engineer, but a Highway Engineer. He showed me the future problems of urban transport worldwide. I can say today that thanks to his advice, I have been able to support the Latin American Cities development in transportation, which derived in what is known today as BRT (BUS RAPID TRANSIT) Systems, allowing me to work in Asia, Africa and Australia and to teach at the Ecuadorian University. Dr. Alexander and his lovely wife Jane showed me the taste of Maine Bears meet hunted by him and Dr George Greenwood and also his homemade ice cream. I also had the privilege in riding in his “many” years old red Volkswagen.

THANKS A LOT Dr Alexander for all you have meant in my life.
César Arias
Quito Ecuador
BSCE73

In 1971, I was returning to Orono in the 4 year BSCE program after graduating from Orono’s 2 year Associate CE program. At that time, the soils lab portion of the course for both the two year and four year programs was identical. Since I had taken the lab portion of the soils course in the two year program and was familiar with the assigned soils test, Dr. Alexander suggested I do an unconfined tri-axial test instead. The test requires an undisturbed clay sample shaped like a round flat disk with the circumference of the clay sample protected and supported by a thin metal ring. After what seemed like a five minute instruction about the test procedure and the importance of not disturbing the sample, a sample was retrieved from the storage cabinet for use. He carefully unwrapped it and explained how the weight/forces were applied, the timed measurements to be taken during the test, and, again, the importance of not disturbing the sample. In order to ensure the sample wasn’t disturbed, he carefully held it by the metal ring. During the discussion and examination, the clay sample slipped out of the metal ring and fell +5’ to the concrete floor. As we stared at the clay blob on the floor, the look of horror spreading over Dr. Alexander’s face was impossible to describe. After regaining our senses, we molded/squeezed the clay blob back into the metal ring and ran the test. I don’t remember any of the results – only the look on his face standing over the blob of clay for my undisturbed tri-axial soil sample.

John Lolley
BSCE 1973

I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. John Alexander. I was not the best student during my years of pursuing an ASCET degree from UMaine in the mid 1980’s. When it was time to request a transfer into the BSCE program, I met with Dr. Alexander and he flatly said “Tom, no, I cannot admit you into this program with your grades”. But what he did for me next changed my life forever. He simply told me that if I left school for one year he would take me back ‘no questions asked’ and allow me to enroll into the BSCE program. I have never jumped at a deal quicker. True to his word when I called him one year later he just said “welcome back and don’t make me regret my decision”. I worked extra hard to be sure not to disappoint him and actually managed a few A’s along the way! Although my career path has veered away from the engineering world I will never forget what Dr. John Alexander did for me and hope he never regretted his decision!

Best regards,
Tom Coleman
BSCE 1990

Please let John know that two of his engineering students (Brent Jones and Kim Hemmerle Jones) had him in Engineering Economics when we had our first child. We brought Maggie to class and sometimes and other times we had another student watch her while we were in class – it was the only engineering class Kim and I had together. Maggie went on (many years later) to the University of Virginia and just graduated from Michigan State Law and took the bar exam. Perhaps some of the educational vibes emitted by John were absorbed by her. Kim and I have extremely fond memories of the engineering department and our time at U. Maine. After raising our family, living and working in Maine for 25 years, we set out on new adventures and lived and worked in Southern California and are now in Reston Virginia.

Give John all of our best,
Brent A. Jones
BSCE87

Regretfully, I cannot make it but would like to send my best wishes to Dr. Alexander on his long distinguished career. While I never took Dr Alexander’s class or worked for him as a TA/RA, I will share a cherished memory of mine involving Dr. Alexander.

I came to Maine as a Graduate student in Fall 1991, Dr. Alexander had just moved to the Dean’s office but would come religiously to all of the graduate seminars in the Civil Engineering department. The seminars were in Boardman hall and he would come and sit in the second row by the wall and quickly doze off a few minutes into the talk (I am sure he was burning the midnight oil in the Dean’s office and also teaching a large freshman materials class and keeping up with his research). However, at the end of the seminar (the clapping was his alarm to wake up) and he would raise his hand and ask two most astute questions that would stump the speaker, regardless of what the topic was. That profound understanding of civil engineering and the humility with which he conducted with everyone was simply exemplary and something I have sought to emulate in my life.

Please convey my regards to Dr. Alexander as well as other CE professors if they are around (Dana Humphrey, Willem Brutsaert, Aria Amirbahman, Bryan Pearce, Tom Sandford, Chet Rock to name a few who have had a great influence on my life).

With regards,
Venki Uddameri, Ph.D., P.E.
BSCE93 G98