



# BEYOND THESE WALLS

*Auburn prisoners expand their boundaries through SU study.*

**T**he computer room is plastered with posters: SU football, basketball, and lacrosse, pictures of the Carrier Dome and the Quad. On the door is a painting of Ollie the Orange, complete with his own prison identification number.

One poster repeats the words of nineteenth-century author Thomas Carlyle: "A good book is the purest essence of the human soul," and the chalkboard in the classroom reads: "No school sucks."

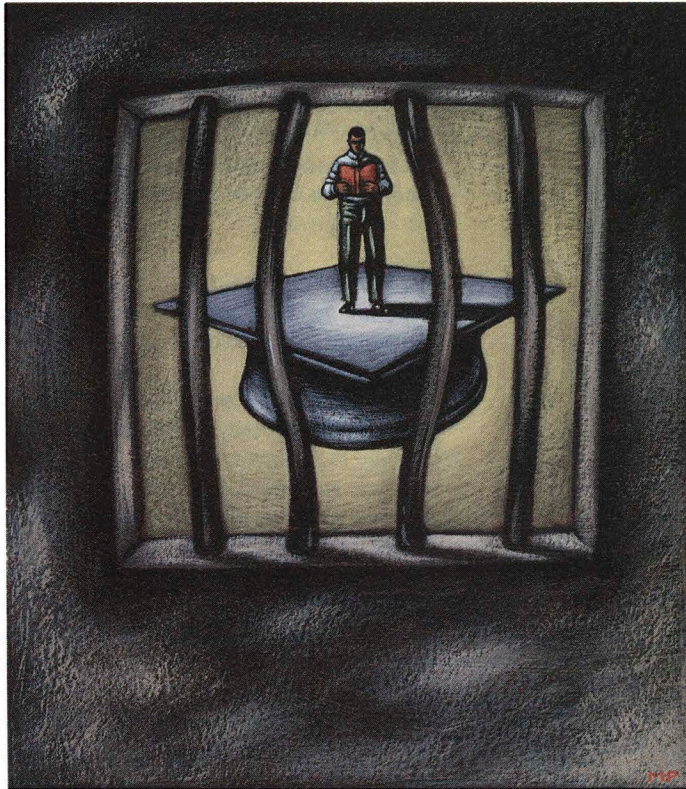
Not quite the sentiments you'd expect from convicted felons serving sentences behind the 40-foot-high concrete walls of Auburn Correctional Facility (ACF), New York State's oldest maximum-security prison.

But the 40 men who study here are Syracuse University undergraduates, working to complete their bachelor's degrees. When they finish, they'll be among more than 160 Auburn inmates who have received SU degrees since 1976, when the University established its Inmate Education Program at ACF at the request of the New York State Education Department and Department of Corrections.

The United States has the world's highest incarceration rate, and according to experts, there are only two proven factors that decrease the rate of repeat incarceration after release: age and education. According to nationwide studies, the recidivism rate for those with a college education drops by 50 percent.

The Auburn program is a division of

MICHAEL PRINZO



SU's continuing education program. It is designed to improve both the student inmates' own quality of life and that of the general prison population, simultaneously educating the men and preparing them to be responsible citizens upon their release.

"The medieval university believed the university was made of men, not of mortar," says Professor Richard Stempien, program director. "That's what we achieve here at Auburn—a group of students and faculty who learn from each other."

The program is entirely voluntary and students must apply for acceptance. The option is not the most lucrative—inmates can earn considerably more money pressing license plates or building furniture. Yet for many, education is a way to seek intel-

lectual solace in an otherwise extremely volatile and often violent setting.

For Victor, a 1992 graduate, taking SU courses was a way to channel his aggression and develop his intellect. "In here, you're your own worst enemy," he says. "But I learned how to listen to other people and look at things differently."

"I figured, I'm a great reader and I've got a lot of time," says Johnny, a 1988 graduate and administrative assistant to Stempien. "There was nothing better for me to do in prison than to get an education."

The bachelor's degree program in liberal studies includes a curriculum of 120 credits of coursework in the humanities, social sciences, natural

sciences, and mathematics. Teachers are made up of SU faculty members, teaching assistants, adjunct instructors, Stempien, and assistant program director Eric Patten. As one student says, "They've earned their guerrilla patches."

"Most students come to us without the cultural and educational backgrounds of traditional undergraduate students," says Stempien. "But what they lack in technique, they more than make up for in enthusiasm and motivation."

Psychology professor Steven Hurwitz, who has taught classes in Auburn off and on since 1981, says working with the inmates has been the best teaching experience of his life.

"You quickly lose sight of the fact that you're in a prison. Once you get into the classroom, it's just like any

other," Hurwitz adds, "except all your students are wearing green pants."

Hurwitz stresses that the program's teachers are not in the rehabilitation business. "We give the men a tool. We give them an opportunity to use their minds in ways they haven't used them before."

Inmates and their families must pay \$204 per credit for this opportunity, \$42 less than the cost for part-time students on the main campus, since many of the University's resources aren't available to the students. If they can't afford the cost, inmates must apply for financial aid, or hope to qualify for the Higher Education Opportunity Program, which is open to all educationally and economically disadvantaged state residents. Less than 1 percent of New York State's education budget assists inmate education programs.

In addition to the educational benefits and personal development inmates receive, the SU program in Auburn is also good for prison management, says corrections officer Terry Clifford. The more programs available for inmates, he says, the less free time they have on their hands.

"The majority of problems caused in here occur when people don't have anything to do," says Clifford, who's worked at Auburn for 19 years, the last 6 in the prison's school building. "We've got students here who used to be problematic, but once they get into the program and get interested, you see a change in them. The SU program is definitely a positive influence within the institution."

Among the SU-Auburn graduates already released from prison are a Ph.D. candidate, an editor on Madison Avenue, a janitorial service owner, an account representative for New York Telephone, and a nurse.

Patrick, who graduated in May, is hopeful about his future. He intends to pursue a master's degree in sociology (available via another prison's inmate-education program) and be a productive member of society once he's out on the "street."

"It's apparent we committed a mistake," he says. "Now we're conscious of the fact there's a viable means to improve. This is the best way to spend the time you're going to do in here."

—ANDREA C. MARSH

## FOOTNOTES

➤ **Priceless.** The Syracuse University Art Collection comprises approximately 35,000 works, including decorative arts, textiles, and print media. Three of the most treasured paintings in the collection are:

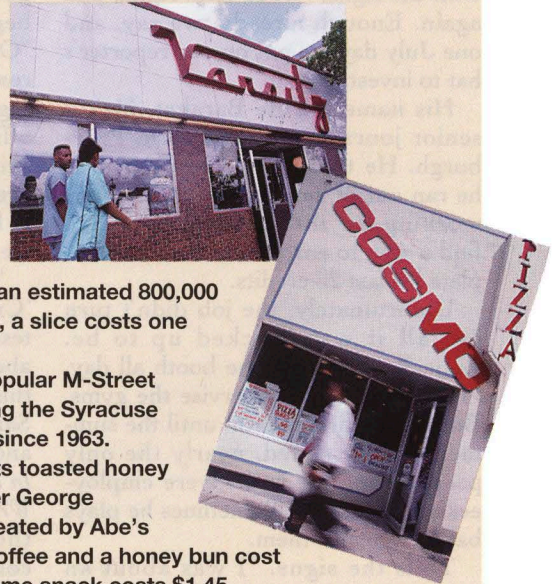
- ◆ *The Gospel Train* by John Steuart Curry
- ◆ *Forbidden Fruit* by Yosuo Kuniyoshi
- ◆ *Coney Island* by Reginald Marsh

➤ **Words of Wisdom.** Year after year, the University draws powerful and influential speakers for commencement addresses. Here are some of the more notable speakers in the past 30 years:

- ◆ 1965 Hubert H. Humphrey Jr., Vice President of the United States
- ◆ 1968 Walter Cronkite, Network Newscaster
- ◆ 1970 Julian Bond, Politician and Civil Rights Leader
- ◆ 1978 & 90 William Safire '50, *New York Times* Columnist
- ◆ 1981 The Honorable Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Secretary of State of the United States
- ◆ 1982 Ted Koppel '60, Anchorman, *ABC News Nightline*
- ◆ 1988 Malcolm S. Forbes, Publisher
- ◆ 1993 Oren Lyons, Chief of the Onondaga Nation

➤ **Orange 'ya Hungry?** The Varsity, a favorite Marshall Street hangout, opened in 1925 as a sit-down restaurant. Pizza was introduced in 1968 for 25 cents a slice. Twenty-five years and an estimated 800,000 to 1 million pizzas later, a slice costs one dollar.

Cosmo, another popular M-Street eatery, has been serving the Syracuse University community since 1963. Cosmo is known for its toasted honey buns, a treat that owner George Cannellos says was created by Abe's Donut Shop. In 1963, coffee and a honey bun cost 45 cents. Today, the same snack costs \$1.45.



COMPILED BY ROBERT MOLL

## SIGN LANGUAGE

The first one we noticed was innocuous enough. Scrawled with a black marker on a bright yellow piece of paper hanging underneath the security guard's window in the Women's Building.

*The Doctor is in. 5¢ please.*

But then the next day, another one. How long has this been going on, we wonder?

*For your safety, Please do not feed help.*

We pass the booth numerous times daily: in and out of the building to and from work, anytime we descend from the third floor to visit our colleagues in development, alumni relations, or the photo center. We pass the student sitting in the booth, securing exactly what we don't know, since we never speak to him, but he's always there. And now those signs, every day without fail, a new message. One day there are two:

*Objects in the booth may be closer than they appear.*

*Special Report: I got mail.*

We are stopped in the hallways. "You should do a story about that guy with the signs," we're told. Again and again. Enough already, we say, and one July day we put on our reporter's hat to investigate.

His name is Pete Barakat. He's a senior journalism major from Pittsburgh. He took last year off because he ran out of money. He's on campus working for the summer, trying to find a way to enroll in the fall to complete his last 26 credits.

Unfortunately, the job didn't turn out all it was cracked up to be. Basically, he sits in the booth all day. He's supposed to supervise the gyms. But for the first month, until the summer camps started, nearly the only people using the gyms were employees at lunch hour. Sometimes he plays basketball with them.

Thus the signs. "I was about an hour and a half into the job and I realized I wasn't going to make it all summer," says Barakat. "I figured, I gotta have a little bit of an outlet here."

No one responded to the first one

except Kate, a secretary in the physical education department. She gave Barakat his black marker and supplies him with the trademark yellow paper.

"Black and gold are Pittsburgh Pirates' colors," he explains. "I'm from Pittsburgh and she's a big Pirates fan."

He also has a Scotch tape sponsor now, someone who enjoys the signs but wishes to remain anonymous.

*Security within 30 minutes or it's free.*

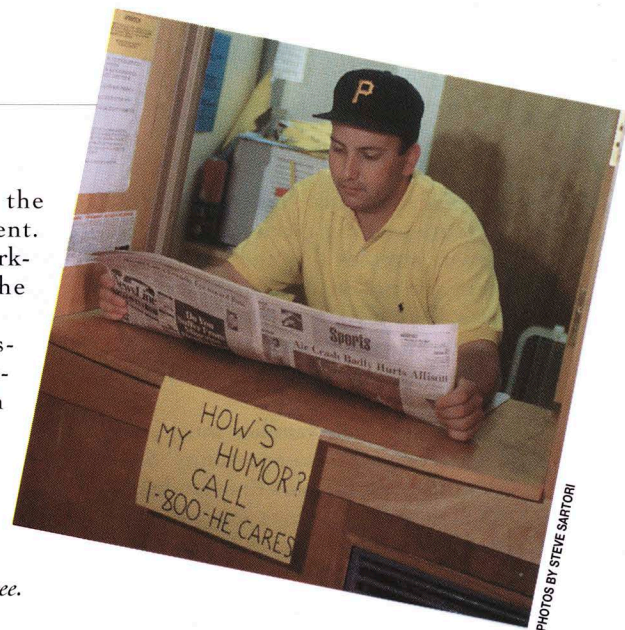
*I think, therefore I'm tired.*

After a week or two, people began responding. "If 20 people look at my sign, I get 20 different reactions and I'm gonna have 20 different conversations," he says. "I kind of consider it a desperate plea for attention." The best, he says, are the visitors to the building, who often take the signs seriously at first glance. "They walk four or five steps, then turn around and look at me," Barakat says.

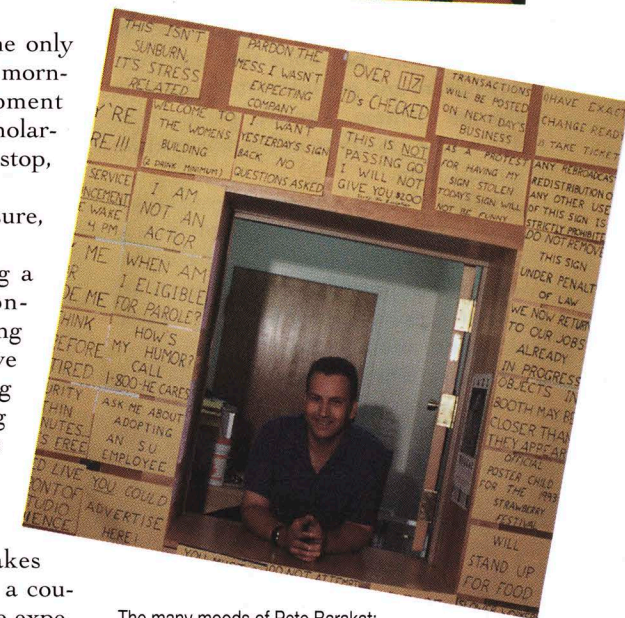
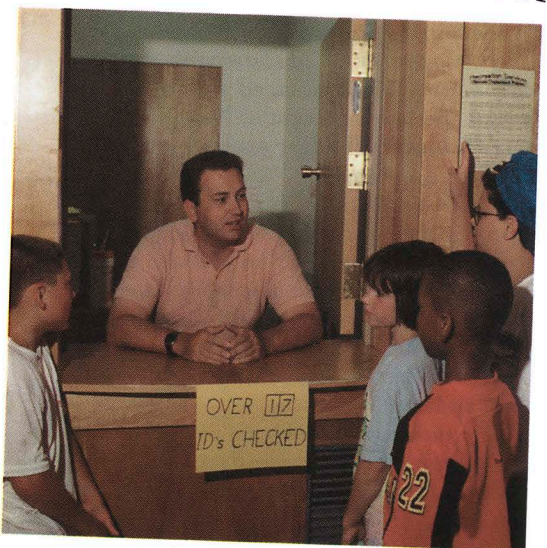
But something else began to happen. Not only did people in the Women's Building get to know Barakat, they began expecting his signs. "One woman told me I was the only reason she came to work in the morning," says Barakat. A development officer wants to find him a scholarship to return to school. Don't stop, everyone tells him.

How is he handling the pressure, we ask?

"I'm thinking about having a 'Create Your Own Sign' Contest," he says. "I'm also thinking about bringing in props. I have this one weird idea of stretching Saran Wrap across the opening and putting up a sign that says *In case of emergency, break Saran Wrap*. That isn't a definite one, though." Mostly, he just comes in the morning and makes something up, although he has a couple of signs in reserve in case he experiences writer's block. "Hopefully one day I'll have a newspaper column and this will be good practice, except that



PHOTOS BY STEVE SARTORI



The many moods of Pete Barakat: an average day; assisting campers with questions; and displaying his entire collection to date.

I'll have to stretch this little nothing into 15 or 20 paragraphs," says Barakat.

He keeps the old signs in his booth, filed in order and dated. "A little historical perspective if necessary," he says. "I figure this way they'd know exactly what day it was that I actually snapped."

*They're Here.*

Although the childrens' camps in the building keep Barakat busier these days, he still spends a lot of time just sitting in the booth. He's abandoned crossword puzzles ("They got too easy") for Shakespeare. "I always told myself, if I had the time, I was going to read a lot of Shakespeare," he says, adding that he's finished four tragedies in the last couple of weeks.

So has the sign making improved the quality of his Syracuse University work experience, we ask?

"Well, I've gotten to know people and that probably wouldn't have happened," Barakat says. "But if you want a concrete answer," he holds up a sign reading *Will Stand Up For Food*, "someone gave me a bag of potato chips. I also got cake from upstairs."

—RENÉE GEARHART LEVY

## POLITICAL EXERCISES

**M**artial law is imposed in Newhouse I A-2. A weatherman sings that he doesn't know what the weather will be like tomorrow because he isn't a forecaster.

"Chief Justice" Jane Overslaugh jokes at a comment about impeachment: "Give me hell, I love it."

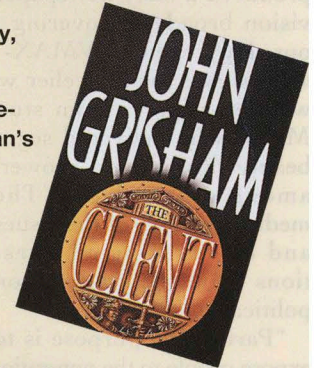
Welcome to Maxwellvania, a fictitious nation where the flip of a coin may decide an election. Transformed into politicians, voters, and lobbyists, 43 students from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs are participating in the Executive Leadership Policy Exercise, the last class required for the master of public administration (MPA) degree. With a somewhat ambiguous syllabus and a little role playing, these students are recreating the policy-making process with help from the SU community.

For 10 days in June, the University community was invited to attend brief-

## ARMCHAIR READING

### *What faculty and staff were reading this summer:*

- ◆ Clive Davis, associate professor of psychology, *The King of the Nightcap*, by William Murray
- ◆ William Hoyer, professor of psychology, *The Client*, by John Grisham
- ◆ Marcia Wisehoon, administrative secretary, College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office, *This Boy's Life*, by Tobias Wolff
- ◆ Mark John Bowick, assistant professor of physics, *The War Between the Tates*, by Alison Lurie
- ◆ Mary Cunningham, head teacher, SU Day Care, *The Play's the Thing*, by Elias Jones
- ◆ Charles Wentzel, assistant complex director, residence life, *Bastard Out of Carolina*, by Dorothy Allison
- ◆ Joel Kidder, assistant professor of philosophy, *Eternal Truths and the Cartesian Circle*, by Willis Doney
- ◆ Jean Fallis, program assistant, Division of International Programs Abroad, *The Bean Trees*, by Barbara Kingsolver
- ◆ Jerry Moyer, assistant soccer coach, *Paterno by the Book*, by Joe Paterno
- ◆ Richard L. Phillips, dean, Hendricks Memorial Chapel, *Care of the Soul*, by Thomas Moore



ings at the students' Newhouse headquarters and to vote on which student legislative proposals would be passed by an elected Senate and signed by an elected president.

Maxwellvania consists of five states, each with one Senate seat. Policy groups back candidates who, once elected by the more than 100 guest voters from the community, push bills through a mock Congress. Begun as a Congressional simulation in 1964, the exercise places students somewhere between the classroom and the sticky world of politics.

"This is a worst-case scenario of a real-life situation," says student participant Susan Burch, who compared

the course to William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. "I think the question is, 'Can we put aside a grade for what we believe in?'"

The policy groups prepared timely legislation on homosexuality in the armed forces and immigration restrictions. In addition, students debated issues of their own choice: giving peace officer status to campus police and revising the Equal Rights Amendment. Students introduced expert witnesses to support their platforms, including former Secretary of the Navy and 1979 MPA graduate Sean O'Keefe.

"It is always difficult to get MPA students to move into politics, which is one reason they've chosen to be

MPAs," says Professor Ed Bock of the Maxwell School. "We hope they'll get some practice seeing what it's like to be a senator on the legislative side."

In the policy groups, students converted their positions into both legislative and media terms that were descriptive, terse, persuasive, and at least partly honest. The students also produced a daily newspaper and television broadcast covering the previous day's events. WMAX-TV's *News at Noon* was made livelier with wacky weather reports from student Brad Miller, who delivered segments (and beauty tips) from a shower, among other places. The media exposure of the issues and events spurred questions from the students on political coverage.

"Part of the purpose is to expose people to the non-rational aspects of political life," says Bock, who was asked by students why some issues were being ignored by the press. "[The media] just add another unpredictable factor."

Competition between the policy groups threatened friendships built over the previous 12 months of the program. "This is a game of strategy," says "Senator" Gary Haas. "Unfortunately, because of the way politics is, it becomes personal."

By the final day, relieved students were mending bruised relationships and focusing on job searches and final papers. Newly elected president Mark MacPherson attempted to veto the final paper, to no avail.

"For the last six months we have learned about conflict resolution and agreeing," says student Alvar Mattei. "For all this learning, we are disagreeing a lot."

—KERRY L. RYAN

## IN THE FLESH

Toby Wolff's confession might have shocked some people, but not the students in this audience. "I was more interested in living the life of a writer than in writing,"

said Wolff of his early days at his craft. The students absorbed the comment and pelleted the author with more questions.

The exchange was like many that took place in this English and textual studies course, titled *Living Writers and their Dead Pals*. Stephen Dobyns, a colleague of Wolff's in the Creative Writing Program, had dispelled the image of romance often associated with writing when he remarked that writing was "just another job in the community." That confession made more of an impact.

Mezey.

The questions asked of Wolff focused on Hollywood's recent adaptation of his memoir, *This Boy's Life*. "I wanted him to tell how it is to be a writer in America in the late twentieth century," says Michael Martone, one of three writers and faculty members who teamed up to teach the course.

The initial plan for the class, the brainchild of Martone and colleague Mary Karr, was to have the visiting writer speak about a "dead pal," a deceased writer who had been an influence. The context of the course changed, however, after the first visitor.

"All of the stuff poet Hayden Carruth talked about in terms of his own writing and his approach to writing was so much more fascinating to us as teachers and students," says Chris Kennedy, a 1988 graduate of the Creative Writing Program and a teaching assistant for *Living Writers*. "We decided there was no point in doing the other aspect of the course."

When they weren't breaking down the myths of writing, the class discussed literature. With three professors in the classroom, lectures could be described as tag-team stream-of-consciousness dialogue. "The professors fed off each other all the time. One would tell a story and make the other one think of another anecdote," says Teresa Canonico, a sophomore magazine student. "They were always throwing different views at us."

Students were encouraged to challenge the professors and voice their opinions. "They were helping us learn what it is to be a writer and what making literature is about," says Karr. "Their opinions were as valid as ours in the class. We're all learning this together, that's what made it great."

Since the course was designed to expose students to the Creative Writing Program, writing was a requirement. Each student contributed poems



"I had put writers on a pedestal," says Christine Woodhouse, a sophomore television/radio/film student. "But when we got to talk with all of these well-established writers, I found out they're just like everyone else."

In its inaugural semester, the course enabled students to meet nine notable writers and to discuss their work and lives. Visitors included fiction writers Mark Leyner and Robert Stone and poets Sonia Sanchez and Robert

TIM O'SHEA



At 85 years old, Elvira Alderman may well be Syracuse University's oldest student. She's been taking art classes on the Hill for more than 25 years. Ceramics, taught by Associate Professor David MacDonald, is one of her favorites.

and/or a short story to a class magazine. Students were also required to write a letter to a contemporary writer, though few of the writers made good pen pals.

Toward the end of the semester the professors announced a student contest. Martone, who will be joined in the classroom by Safiya Henderson-Holmes this fall, wanted a slogan and pamphlet to promote the course to prospective students. Canonico split the prize with classmate Justin Lallo, a sophomore in the College of Visual and Performing Arts. "We went with a no-frills approach," Canonico explains. "Just take this course because there's nothing else like it!" As for the course's title, Martone says it's now Living Writers-Live! —ROBERT MOLL

## LATE BLOOMER

**W**e enter the painting studio on the second floor of Smith Hall, and Elvira Alderman announces, "Oh good, you're here and I'm struggling." There's a beautiful watercolor of a scene in Provence, France, on her canvas. She hardly seems to be having a tough go of it.

Alderman is perhaps the oldest student at SU. At 85 she has taken more

than 500 credits during the 25 years she's been attending art classes at SU.

She pauses from her work to talk to us, lights up a cigarette—one of four she'll smoke in the next hour-and-a-half—and starts telling her life story.

Alderman moved to Syracuse from New York City with her husband Saul, a 1922 SU law school graduate. In high school she'd been interested in art, which prompted her to take an occasional evening art course at University College while raising her family.

After her children were grown, she was encouraged by a professor to take classes "on the Hill." And although the idea of competing with the "kids" made her nervous, she did it anyway. Ever since, Alderman has been hanging out on campus.

Up at 6:30 every morning, Alderman hits SU in her 1982 royal blue Corvette in time for her 8 a.m. classes, Monday through Friday, and often doesn't leave until mid-afternoon.

One of her favorite mediums is sculpture. She's been studying for some time with Associate Professor David MacDonald.

"He's a hard taskmaster," says Alderman with a grimace. "He beats my brains out."

"Elvira's a very good example of the

old adage that you never stop learning," says MacDonald. "She's most certainly a contradiction to the idea that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. She's a hard worker and brings a wealth of life experience to the class. She never seems at a loss for something to do."

Although she has other interests, such as history, Alderman only takes art classes. "It's easier this way," she says. "I don't have to do homework."

A student pops in the studio to pull some art supplies out of her locker. Alderman turns and nods. After she leaves, Alderman explains she doesn't try to become too friendly with the other students.

"I say hello, tell them I like what they're doing," says Alderman. "And if I don't like it, I tell them too. But I don't get buddy-buddy because it's stupid. I'm of an entirely different generation."

Still, she occasionally helps students with projects and has been the subject and star of student articles and films.

In addition to her art, Alderman likes to cook, garden, and travel. All her watercolor paintings are of snapshots she's taken on her around-the-world escapades. She says it's cheating to paint someone else's photographs.

She also plays golf regularly—Alderman's the oldest member at her club to still play 18 holes. "When my handicap reaches my age, I'll quit," she quips.

Most of Alderman's friends (or fuddy-duddies, as she refers to them) aren't nearly as active. But, she says, they get a kick out of hearing what the kids on campus are wearing these days.

"My friends are accustomed to me now. I've built up a legend of being a bit weird, because I do things they wouldn't dream of doing and I say things they wouldn't dream of saying," says Alderman. "It's a great excuse, because after awhile they say, 'Oh, she's always been like that.'"

Alderman has no plans to end her sculpting and painting anytime soon, despite what her "fuddy-duddy" friends might think.

"This is my enjoyment," says Alderman. "I'm having a great time. I do what I want to do and that's it. I don't care what people say. Let them. It's me." —ANDREA C. MARSH