



GABOR DEGRE | BDN

Metal sculptor Stephen Fitz-Gerald examines parts of “The Flames of Inspiration,” made by his father, Clark Fitz-Gerald. The sculpture was taken down from the Collins Center for the Arts at the University of Maine in Orono when the building was renovated. Stephen refinished and slightly modified his father’s work to fit the new space. It will be reinstalled later this month.

A sculpture rekindled

Son restores Fitz-Gerald’s ‘Flames of Inspiration’ for Collins Center

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

Thirty years ago this month, a capacity crowd filled the brand new Maine Center for the Arts on the campus of the University of Maine for the center’s opening gala. The program featured a warm, congratulatory address by Frank Hodsoll, then chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, and performances by cellist Yo-Yo Ma and violinist Isaac Stern.

As they passed through the lofty central lobby, audience members that night gazed upward to admire “The Flames of Inspiration,” a bold, 21-foot-high bronze sculpture created by respected Castine sculptor and former UMaine art professor Clark Fitz-Gerald. A \$50,000 gift from the UMaine Class of 1942, the piece was commissioned specifically to enhance the entry to the posh new arts cen-

ter. Rendered in swirling, undulant strips of polished bronze and lit brightly from within, the 1,800-pound sculpture hung high above the open lobby like a giant burning bush.

Clark Fitz-Gerald died in 2004 at the age of 87.

“He hoped the performances here at the arts center would inspire university students and that like flames the inspiration would spread,” the late artist’s 62-year-old son, Stephen Fitz-Gerald, also a metal sculptor, said in an interview earlier this week.

Some people admired the piece and others didn’t, Fitz-Gerald said, but there was no ignoring it. Even as the bronze flames tarnished over time and took on a rich, brown patina, the bold sculpture was as integral to the experience of the Maine Center for the Arts as the spiraling, open ramp to the upper-floor galleries of the Hudson Museum or the plush, red-

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KAREN COLE

Workers practice assembling sections of Clark Fitz-Gerald’s 1986 sculpture “The Flames of Inspiration” in preparation for reinstallation at the Collins Center for the Arts at the University of Maine in Orono.

Directory gives seniors freedom to age in place

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

It’s a conundrum for many seniors, especially those in the upper reaches of their golden years. The internet promises virtually unlimited information and connection to services, but many seniors either don’t have access to a computer or are distrustful of the medium, cautious of becoming vulnerable to scammers and fraud. Others find the deluge of information overwhelming and lack the ability to sort and filter search results to find what they’re looking for.

“Many, many seniors are not savvy about using computers, even for email,” said Ann Davidoff, 74, of the Orono-based nonprofit organization Gateway Seniors Without Walls. “Many don’t even own a computer. They’re much more comfortable on the phone.”

So while there’s a fast-growing business and nonprofit sector aimed at helping aging Mainers stay healthy and active in their



MEG HASKELL | BDN

homes, the population they seek to serve is often unaware of what’s available, she said.

“We held a series of focus groups to find out what services and activities older people needed most,” she said. “The No. 1 issue we heard was that people were confused about what services were available in the area.”

In-home health care, legal assistance, meal delivery, transportation, affordable housing, financial services and much more are what the participants were looking for, she said. It was clear that many people were not comfortable using computer technology to track down the information they needed.

So Gateway Seniors, a nonprofit organization established in 2013, set to work, compiling a more familiar resource: the Senior Yellow Pages, a 220-page resource in large type with more than 30 headings, alphabetically arranged from “Abuse and Neglect” to “Work, see Employment Opportunities.”

Hot off the presses on Sept. 12, “Senior Yellow Pages: Local and State Services for Seniors in Greater Bangor” is available free of charge to Bangor-area individuals and families, community groups and public facilities like libraries and town offices. Funded in part

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Ann Davidoff (right) opens a box containing copies of “Senior Yellow Pages: Local and State Services for Seniors in Greater Bangor” at PrintBangor on Central Street.

Celebrating marriage at midlife and beyond

A lot of couples are celebrating impressive wedding anniversaries these days. Thirty years or more is pretty common among my circle of friends and acquaintances. But Douglas and I know people who have been married 40, 45, 50 years and longer. That’s a lot of accumulated wisdom, presumably, about the nature of intimacy, the importance of companionship, and the mysterious and seemingly imperiled institution of marriage.

By contrast, he and I have just marked the tender first year of our marriage. It’s my second marriage and his third, for a cumulative total of 55 years of matrimony so far. To celebrate, we visited a new restaurant just upriver in Winterport — a tiny, hole-in-the-wall place called Amigo’s West Coast Taqueria. It’s on the west coast of the Penobscot River, you might say, but it really channels a Southern California barrio vibe.



MEG HASKELL

Amigo’s wouldn’t be everyone’s idea of a romantic spot for an anniversary dinner, but it suited us just fine. With just three vinyl-benched booths and a few bar stools, the place can seat about 20 people comfortably. The service was fast and friendly, the food fresh, authentic and fabulous.

We toasted our marriage with bottled brews — mine a local brown beer and Douglas’ a light, tequila-infused lager — and the good fortune of having found each other. After enjoying our supper and the company of a handful of obvious “regulars,” we took a short stroll through the darkening streets of Winterport, a once-prosperous little river town that feels perennially hopeful and poised for recovery. It was a perfect, low-key way to celebrate this first, hopeful anniversary.

Many people our age are managing life without partners, by choice or by fortune. I get that and understand it’s no tragedy. Douglas and I acknowledged early in our relationship that we were both the marryin’ kind, but we didn’t rush into anything. We met online and spent a year cultivating an easy friendship before things heated up. Another year passed before I moved in with him, and then 18 months of care-free cohabitation before we agreed to tie the knot.

Our wedding took place about nine months later, at Douglas’ mother’s gracious home in South Portland. We kept it small. Just about 30 of us gathered there, including our minister and his wife — who are also our good friends and neighbors here in Sandy Point — a few old friends and our closest family members. The September day was glorious, the house was filled with flowers and we felt celebrated and upheld in making this deep commitment to each other.

Although Douglas and I have both experienced the pain of divorce and the untimely death of a loved one, we feel calm and confident moving forward into the future together. Maybe it’s because we’re older and know what we do about ourselves as individuals, about cultivating joy and navigating adversity. We know love is not some abstract, romantic notion, but rather an active choice we make every day.

This weekend, we’re headed to New Hampshire to witness and celebrate the marriage of my nephew to the outstanding young woman who has been his partner

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