International Programs Dr. Josef Roggenbauer Tribute

University of Maine International Programs

Clement and Linda McGillicuddy Humanities Center

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The McGillicuddy Humanities Center (MHC) pays special tribute to Dr. Josef Roggenbauer, professor emeritus of German, Department of Modern Languages and Classics and founder of the New England Study Abroad in Salzburg Program, which spanned 30 years and provided more than 1,000 students the life-changing opportunity to live and study abroad.

Alumni, friends, and former colleagues were saddened to learn that Professor Roggenbauer, “Roggie” to most, passed away in his beloved hometown in Salzburg, Austria in September 2022 at the wise age of 94.

In its mission, the McGillicuddy Humanities Center (MHC) supports excellent teaching, research and public engagement in the humanities to deepen understanding of the human condition.

During his tenure at the University of Maine from 1961 to 1992, Dr. Roggenbauer embodied this mission in all he did. Through his hard work and tenacity and with the support of his wife, June, together they worked tirelessly with colleagues at the University of Maine, UNH and the Paris-Lodron-Universität in Salzburg to establish the New England Study Abroad in Salzburg Program. Roggie was passionate in his belief in the importance of offering a study abroad experience that was both affordable and accessible to as many students as possible. He believed in a full-immersion program, learning the language and living (for the full academic year) in a foreign country with the aim of gaining a greater understanding that is not found in a classroom or between the pages of a textbook.

June & Josef Roggenbauer, Salzburg, Austria

For nearly 40 years, both Dr. Roggenbauer and his wife, June, welcomed into their home in Salzburg and in Maine, numerous students, and faculty of the New England Study Abroad in Salzburg Program.
The success of the program speaks for itself; however, it was not a result of Roggie & June’s efforts solely; the program’s success depended greatly on the work of many others who gave their time and support including colleagues from the UMaine Language Department as well as those from numerous other participating universities in New England, including UNH, UVM, UConn and URI just to name a few.

In pouring over Roggie’s meticulous notes, there are over twenty individuals who participated as resident directors, many of whom supported for multiple semesters, living, teaching, and offering support to students during their semester abroad.

We would like to take this opportunity to name a few of these individuals and thank them and also the many others who helped make the program such a success: Thom Thibeault, Gudrun Keszösze, Anette Rodrigues, Gabriella Skwara, and Gisela Hoecherl-Alden.

A special thank you and important recognition needs to be given to Professor William Small, who was a resident director for two years, was also a staunch advocate for the program and worked tirelessly to expand the offering to as many students as possible throughout New England and helped ensure its success through identifying and supporting resident directors each year.
In an effort to capture the impact that Professor Roggenbauer and the Study Abroad experience had on so many lives, what better way to say it than in pictures and in their own words...

"Roggie was a mentor, a friend, a confidant. As an educator, he gave of himself beyond the classroom which, in turn, showed us that he was interested in our growth not only as German speakers. Seeing over the years how many people reached out to Roggie is testament to the fact that his attention to others was not the exception, but the rule."

Peter Chase, UMaine, BS ’90 MAT ’92 and Resident Director in years 2008-2009.
“It was truly an honor and privilege to learn under the guidance and tutelage of Dr. Josef Roggenbauer (our beloved Roggie) during the 1984-1985 academic year in Salzburg, Austria. Dr. Roggenbauer was a spectacular professor, but his impact went well beyond the classroom as he guided our cognitive and social development making us students of the world and .... Roggie was a patient listener who cared so deeply for us as learners and human beings. I have spent the past thirty years learning from some amazing university professors; however, Dr. Josef Roggenbauer was by far the most influential professor I experienced.”

Dr. Robert William O'Donnell, Salzburg Study Abroad Program, UConn, '84-85.

“As soon as Dr. Roggenbauer and June arrived, I knew I had made a great choice coming to Salzburg. Roggie was an amazing person, director, teacher, and friend/advisor!! Everyone in our group felt like Roggie was looking out for them! He had that magic ability to be our “father-figure” and make each gathering or trip special! Learning about the Hapsburg Empire was like learning about the theory of relativity from Einstein himself! He had lived history, having literally skied down a mountain at the end of WWII, with the Russians to the left, and the Americans to the right! Of course, he made the right call, and was soon after that a Fulbright Scholar in the US!” Kendall Smith, Salzburg Study Abroad Program, UMaine, ‘81
In honor of Professor Roggenbauer, in 2018, we were pleased to announce the Global Perspectives for Humanities Explorations Fund, which was launched by Tracey Graffam-Dickson ’93 and Jessica Canatsey ’92, two friends who met at UMaine and shared a “life changing experience” when they participated in the Salzburg Study Abroad Program. Following Roggie’s belief in the study abroad experience as a transformative opportunity for students, the women teamed up to initiate a fund providing scholarships for today’s undergraduates who are interested in studying and living abroad. Many other like-minded donors have since joined in this initiative. A portion of all the funds raised is invested which will generate awards and life-changing memories far into the future. Thanks to the many who have contributed, six scholarships have been awarded. It is our hope that all students who are interested to study abroad have both the opportunity and the financial means to do so.

“The Global Perspectives for Humanities Explorations Fund is very important for raising the study abroad aspirations of UMaine students and for providing funding to support students’ time abroad. The fund’s focus on language learning as a window into cultures and communities is an important framing for selecting a study abroad program. Many UMaine students are concerned about the costs associated with a study abroad program, and this fund helps to support them in their global learning. I hope that the example set by Tracey Graffam-Dickson ’93 and Jessica Canatsey ‘92 will inspire other UMaine alumni to support philanthropically the next generations of UMaine students who want to explore the world and bring this knowledge to their local communities.”  

Orlina Boteva, Director of the Office of International Programs

“This study abroad program not only gives me an opportunity to study the subject that I love but also submerge myself in a culture that is extremely different from where I grew up in the United States”.  

2022 Scholarship Recipient

“Through the generosity of individuals such as yourself I’m able to take a step towards my calling. By doing so will open countless doors for my future. A gift I do not hold lightly. It was UMaine that directed me towards a globalized calling. My educational journey so far has been everything I could hope for. Not merely through grades or degree progress; but rather in the realm of gaining worldly experience.”

2022 Scholarship Recipient
Jordan Gardner was the first recipient of an award from the McGillicuddy Humanities Center’s Global Perspective for Humanities Explorations Fund. Enrolled in the USAC (University Studies Abroad Consortium) in Costa Rica in Spanish Language, Ecological, and Latin American Studies program, he shared his experience, stating “I have always been interested in different cultures and their history. I would love to have a career that would allow me to travel and explore.”

To acknowledge the September 2022 passing of professor emeritus Josef Roggenbauer, the Global Perspectives for Humanities Explorations Fund, administered by the McGillicuddy Humanities Center and the UMaine Office of International Programs, is disbursing an additional award in 2023 to a UMaine student completing study abroad in the Fall semester. Roxana Lengyel, recipient of the award, will be studying in Mannheim, Germany. Lengyel is a second-year Honors College student from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, pursuing a major in history and a minor in Judaic Studies. Her academic interests include modern warfare and Slavic studies.

If you would like to support this important mission and offer a life-changing opportunity, scan the QR code and make a donation today.

To stay connected with fellow Alumni of the New England Study Abroad in Salzburg Program or learn more about the Global Perspectives for Humanities Explorations Fund, contact Jessica and Tracey via email: jessica.canatsey@gmail.com or tlgraffam@outlook.com.