Elizabeth Comeau, dubbed the first “test-tube baby” with her dog, Chase, at her Chelsea, Maine home.

They’re behind us in the checkout line, they’re sitting beside us in PTA meetings, they’re changing the way we live.

“I don’t have wings or special powers. I’m just like all of my friends in that I am who I am. Reporters always asked me growing up if I felt special. I always said no. The only reason I have to feel special is, my parents went through so much to have me. I don’t wake up every morning and say, ‘Wow, I’m the first in vitro fertilization baby in the U.S.’ It’s just a part of who I am. I’m not ashamed and wouldn’t trade who I am for anything. But then again, I didn’t do much. I was just born. My parents and doctors did all the work.”

Now Elizabeth Comeau, 25, of Chelsea, is a reporter herself, at the Kennebec Journal. She paid her dues “as photo editor of the Simmons Voice, the campus newspaper at Simmons College, and at internships at the Boston Globe and the Virginian-Pilot. I also served as online editor at the Organization of News Ombudsmen and Naughton Fellow/online reporter for PoynterOnline.

“When I interview people, they often don’t know I have my own story,” Comeau says. In fact, they can get a bit miffed once they find out...
“Yes,” she says, “but not anytime soon. I’ve said they live exactly the way someone’s door neighbor’s life—but then again, who treats them the way I’d like to be treated. The one that really gets pleys weren’t true.” The one that really gets me is cocked at an angle, blue eyes large and shining, red hair longish and slightly messy, as if she’s just woken from a nap. Actually, the whole world was awakenimg. What was a boom in 1981 is excepionally today. According to IVF.net, three million IVF children have been born worldwide. The miracle is how common it’s become. IVF children have been born worldwide.

The miracle is how common it’s become. IVF children have been born worldwide.

“Parents know couples [like themselves] were following their pregnancy.” After it worked over and over again, “couples would come up to my parents and me and say, ‘We remember watching the news and seeing you born,’” Comeau says. “Their kids of grow up with me. “I never felt like I was ‘under a micro- scope...’ but sure, there were moments when I wanted to just be left alone...”

Still the reporters kept coming to check in on her as she reached each milestone. Talking about them, her words pick up quickly.

Growing up, I encountered reporters who really wanted to get to know me, and better understand how to explain who I am to their readers. For others, it was just another assignment, and they didn’t seem to care if they offended me by asking a certain question or assuming things about me that sim- ply weren’t true. “I learned not to let that really get me. “Do you feel normal?”

Instead of turning and running, Comeau has trumped some adversity by learning to ask the questions herself. “As a reporter, I care about people’s sto- ries, and I want them to know I’ll always trust them with the truth. I’d like to treat them like a peer.”

“Sure, my life wasn’t like my next-door neighbor’s life—but then again, who can say they live exactly the way someone else does?”

Which begs the question: Are you and your husband planning to have children? “Yes,” she says, “but not anytime soon. I’ve only been married a year.” In the conventional way? “As far as I know,” –James Bérenger

Carol Sipperly

The Tiger is a Lady

The prosecutor in the Strawberry and Gottie cases now wants to help you stop and smell the roses...
Jenny Bicks may be a Los Angeles sophisticate who wrote and produced Sex and the City and now Men in Trees for television, but Maine runs deep in her blood. She never loses touch with family, friends, and childhood memories on the Blue Hill Peninsula. She built her own retreat in Castine three years ago and visits as often as she can. Her production company is named after the street her family’s house is on up here, and a photo of Bicks at her fifth birthday party in Castine runs at the end of each Men in Trees program.

So what’s the deal with you and Maine? I first set foot in Maine before I could walk! My family rented a house in Somerford for the summer. We landed in Castine when I was around two. My aunt’s mother had a house on the harbor, and we’ve been there ever since. I got to spend every summer there, which was magical. I was this city kid–grew up in Manhattan–who got a chance spend three months out of the year in this magic town. I had all my formative experiences there. I learned to ride a bike, to drive a car (my first driver’s license was from Maine–I carried it with me for years).

My uncle and his family came to Castine as well, and we were this big clan of kids–eight cousins altogether–riding our bikes all over town and playing flash tag at night. People still ask me, “Which Bicks are you?” I love everything about Castine. The smell when it rains, the lobster rolls at Big Street her family’s house is on up here, and a photo of Bicks at her fifth birthday party in Castine.

Maine in Trees
This Castine habitue is never at a loss for big ideas on the small screen.

My birthday is in July, so I always had a fun birthday party in Castine. In fact, the photo that runs at the end of my show is me at my fifth birthday party on Latour Street in Castine. My production company is named after the street my family’s house is on–Perkins Street Productions. So, Maine runs deep in my blood!

Does your family have any traditions you all pursue in Castine? And who is the tallest Caroline I named after? Caroline is my sister. My Dad did name his biggest racing boat after me, but it has been in dry dock the last two years (what does that say about me?). So many traditions. We always have a family Fourth of July cookout on the beach to watch the fireworks. We love to take the boat up the Bagaduce at high tide to eat at Bagaduce Lunch in [Brooksville]. We love to take day trips with all the kids to Butter and Pond Islands.

My favorite swimming hole is the one I learned to swim in on the back shore in Castine. It can get a little muddy, but that’s part of the fun. I also love a swim in Lake Alamosook. And a plunge off a boat into the harbor is brisk and refreshing and must be done once a year, whether by mistake or on purpose.

Jenny Bicks
Writer/Producer Jenny Bicks gave us Sex and the City. Now, she brings a taste of single life in Maine with Men in Trees.

If you’re a Bangor boy, can’t grow up like it hot—baseball cities of the major league or Florida. Maybe that’s why you become our man in Caracas?

The midcentury vibe, you must be the hardest working guy in the diplomatic corps. Talk about a hot spot—Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is a stinging critic of U.S. foreign policy. Should Mainers feel as though we’re endorsing President’s arrival.

The last few winters, Mainers have been enticed with a natural link to Venezuela that one of the few countries to supply us with. And in the group was the daughter of a Colby classmate of mine. Maine doesn’t have many people who know me the best remain the people I grew up with in Maine. And putting Elmo on the water helped me to channel Castine as well. I wanted to capture the idea of humanity—that even if people don’t like you, when the chips are down, people will rally and take care of one another. And that you really can’t pretend you are someone else in a small community—people will call you on your BS. The people who know me the best remain the people I grew up with in Maine.

What has Maine surfaced in your work, intentionally or not?

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Writer/Producer Jenny Bicks gave us Sex and the City. Now, she brings a taste of single life in Maine with Men in Trees.

What was your earliest romantic interlude in Maine?

Not touching that one! My parents are going to read this. I will say that my family has a rule—you can’t have a significant other who doesn’t love Castine. Good news is my boyfriend Adam is a huge fan. So, he can stay.

The people who know me the best remain the people I grew up with in Maine.

To what extent is Maine in Trees actually Maine in Trees?

I very much wanted to bring my experience of Castine into my show. I have been to Alaska, but knew that I wanted to write about the small-town experience of Castine. And putting Elmo on the water helped me to channel Castine as well. I wanted to capture the idea of humanity—that even if people don’t like you, when the chips are down, people will rally and take care of one another. And that you really can’t pretend you are someone else in a small community—people will call you on your BS. The people who know me the best remain the people I grew up with in Maine.

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Point Guard
The former WNBA star brings luster to UMaine's slightly tarnished hoop dreams.

"I'm back," to the delight of Black Bear fans, five-foot-nine-inch powerhouse All-American basketball legend Cindy Blodgett has returned to UMaine as head coach of the women's basketball team with a four-year contract.

But can she back it up?

"There are pressures with any job," says Blodgett, who's signed on at $105,000 per season. "I'm not coming in anticipating failure. I'm just coming in with the expectation of winning..." to the delight of Black Bear fans. "There are pressures with any job," says Blodgett. "But can she hack it?"

As a UMaine icon, Blodgett broke 21 school records, led the nation in scoring for two consecutive years (only the second woman to accomplish such a feat), and ultimately inspired her team to qualify for three straight national tournaments.

"I still hear the fans screaming during the last 30 seconds of the last game that got us into the NCAAs. "Jamie Cassidy hit a shot against Vermont that put us ahead with four or five seconds to go, and Vermont inbounded the ball and brought it down the court. We were all hanging on to the last seconds, and then we blocked the shot at the end."

No slam dunks or spotlighted free throws. Just plain teamwork. It seems her players have a lot to live up to.

"I wouldn't put that on any of them. If we can just maximize our talent, we'll be better off."

Building this talent may prove her biggest challenge, with the program hitting an all-time low after two sub-.500 seasons, but the diminutive Blodgett is used to having the odds stacked against her.

Dwarfed by her fellow players in the WNBA, her time on the court took a nosedive after she left UMaine and went professional in 1998.

"The WNBA is much more individualistic," she says. "Being drafted was a special moment, not only for me, but in terms of what it meant for Maine."

Will her experience in the WNBA affect her coaching? Will she have a soft spot for her former teammates? Will she be heavy on defense?

"If anything, I'm more critical of guard play [traditionally the province of shorter players]. Being one myself, I have a certain standard. Our guards may actually be watched more closely."

Blodgett’s also no Joanne Palombo-McCallie clone. While recognizing her former coach's standards were very effective, Blodgett says, "I found her to be very...honest," and predicts "our styles will definitely be different in terms of dealing with players."

While that honesty may not have always been appreciated, Blodgett's positive reaction to it spiked her success.

"I never ignored anything my coaches said and I hope what I have to say won't be ignored."

Blodgett is currently 32, single, and living in Orono. Her first game as head coach is November 9.

"No pressure. "Alright Parsons"
Continental Divide
They got along fine for the first 10,000 miles or so. But the final 300 miles proved to be too much for their friendship.

It sounds like a movie starring one of the Wilson brothers and Vince Vaughn. Two BFFs teamed up to set a world record for the fastest, longest snowmobile crossing of North America last winter. But since you can’t win for losing, they haven’t spoken a word to each other since the record was set.

“The existing mark in the Guinness Book of World Records for a transcontinental North American crossing by snowmobile was 7,200 miles and 60 riding days,” says Steve McNulty of Shapleigh.

“We thought, we can do this. We were ‘best friends forever’ and fellow business owners. I’m a general contractor [McKenna Brothers], and Tony [Wolfinger, of Waterboro] runs Sanford Radiator. For years, we’d gone on winter and fall fishing and camping trips in the Allagash, mostly the two of us, not really with our families,” because of their shared appreciation for rough adventure. “He and I met through a mutual snowmobiling friend six or seven years ago. I liked him right away, and he drove snowmobiles like I did,” way out of the comfort zone.

Lindbergh had already gobbled up the New-York-to-Paris route. Peary and Amundsen had sewn up the North and South poles. But for these guys, the glimmering route from Tok, Alaska, to Jackman, Maine, just lay there for the taking. “We authorized our record attempt with Guinness, froze a bunch of sandwiches,” and took a deep breath.

“We talked about a bit,” says McNulty. But he and Wolfinger are action guys. Leaving their businesses to chance, without a brass band playing, guzzling up their savings (“in the $20,000 range”), they found themselves in Alaska during other lonely spots across the glassy vastness, “I wondered, ‘Are we ever going to get out of here?’ I missed my family.”

For Wolfinger, “There was this funny, bazy, flat light. I just couldn’t see anything—I didn’t know if I was coming down on my tracks or on my side. It was like that first hill on a roller coaster, falling steeper and steeper. I remember cresting at 70 miles, you’re gonna get eaten by a polar bear, you don’t know what it’s like at 40 below, you’re not from up here—just all sorts of emotions mixed up.”

“The first 2,000-3,000 miles there was no trail, so we traveled absolutely alone,” McNulty says. “There was an unreality to these dark stretches, especially because the sky was painted by the Northern Lights. We were just screaming across the ice when we hit a place we called The End of the World. The ice dropped from under us,” and during other lonely spots across the glassy vastness, “I wondered, ‘Are we ever going to get out of here?’ I missed my family.”

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It proved to be a dark and stormy night on the Dempster Highway. It goes right up to the Arctic Circle. By that, because there was a good chance Yves’s trip wouldn’t count because he’d been trailered four or five times when we hadn’t,” but in spite of that, “when friends posted it online, saying, ‘heya, how are you doing, best of luck,’ and so forth” before heading out of town. Then there was another stop in their Odyssey on ice, as strange as any distraction Ulysses ever faced. “On the Alaska Highway, just as you cross into the Yukon, when you feel like you’ll never be warm again,” the earth suddenly cracks open to lure the astonished with a hot spring. “Yeah, we swam in it! It was 26 degrees outside, and 104 degrees inside the spring!”

Then, with the cold freezing their beards, they zoomed across more miles of lonely ice, until “we pulled into a little town called Chicken. Chicken consists of a saloon, a restaurant, and a gift shop, with a gas pump on the side. We saw smoke from a shed out back and met a guy named Gary Adkins, who showed us the sights and offered to let us stay the night. He served us roast caribou and hard-tack biscuits. We were loving the food but it was only the beginning.”

The next thing they hit was Inuvik, a town called Eagle Plains–it’s like nothing. The source of power is an inverter that runs off car batteries, with only the stars and the unearthy greens and blues of the Aurora Borealis twinkling above. “For a while we were on the Dempster Highway. It goes right up to the Arctic Circle. There’s a town called Eagle Plains–it’s like nothing. The next thing we hit was Inuvik, about the size of Sanford.”

“We were having dinner when a local came up to us and said, ‘Hey, we just had a guy who went through here, and he’s breaking the world record.'” McKenna and Wolfinger had a double-take, but McKenna remembered that “when I submitted our trip to Guinness to get a claim, they said, ‘The existing record still stands to be broken, but we are aware of another attempt…’”

So here this shadowy competitor was, playing Amundsen to their Peary! They didn’t meet in Inuvik, but McKenna and Wolfinger were told, “He’s a big guy, a Canadian named Yves Leblanc.” He had a web page, just like us,” McKenna says, “so I logged on and we introduced ourselves with an e-mail, saying, ‘hey, how are you doing, best of luck,’ and so forth’ before heading out of town.

Fancy meeting you here...”

“‘When we hit Dawson City,’ McKenna says–straight out of a Jack London story–“we stayed in the Downtown Hotel, as if we were in an old black-and-white movie–14-foot ceilings, just a beautiful building, family-owned. The swinging double doors really gave us a kick as we went in.”

And once again, word came to them; “‘This guy’s here in town, looking for you.’” Finally Yves Leblanc filled up the doorway; Rough handshakes were exchanged. “He spoke great English.” To fill up the silence, “we talked about our gear.” Leblanc, from outside of Montreal, was clearly taking the express route. “He had just a small tent. He hadn’t any intentions of touring the icy wasteland for its beauty. The race was on!”

“We dropped down into Minnesota to sneak around Lake Superior,” McKenna says, “and then went back into Ontario. I had a massive exhaust leak since Minnesota,” and the irony that the new parts he needed “were only available at Fort Kent,” fostered in McKenna’s mind.

More troubling, “Tony had a lot of problems with his sled, no doubt about it.” The pair began to travel more slowly, and possibly things got very quiet between them. Undaunted, “Tony and I made the decision that we’re just going to beat his mileage,” McKenna says. “We were having dinner when a local came up to us and said, ‘Hey, we just had a guy who went through here, and he’s breaking the world record.’” McKenna and Wolfinger did a double-take, but McKenna remembered that “when I submitted our trip to Guinness to get a claim, they said, ‘The existing record still stands to be broken, but we are aware of another attempt...’”

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ADHD/ADD assessment can be frustrating and expensive, taking hours, yet yielding inconclusive results. Researchers have proven that the brainwave patterns of those with ADHD/ADD are distinct and can be measured with QEEG (quantitative EEG). The QEEG is non-invasive in-office procedure that takes about one hour. Brainwaves are collected and then analyzed by a psychologist and a neurologist. A detailed report is generated which notes specific areas of concern. The process is 90% accurate in determining the likelihood a ADHD/ADD, and, just as important, about 90% accurate in determining that other issues (such as mood or sleep disorders) appear more potent.

That information can then be used to corroborate other testing that may have been done as well as help elucidate treatment and medication options.

The QEEG is currently deemed to be the best possible evaluation for ADHD/ADD.

For free consultation call (207) 773-7993, ext. 14.

Dr. David A. Bradley, Licensed Maine Psychologist 205 Ocean Avenue, Portland, Maine

For more information see my website: www.FocusOnAttention.com

PEOPLE

Donna Loring

Farewell to Arms

After a trip to Saigon, a former Vietnam Veteran proves the pen is mightier than the sword by writing legislation that aims to correct misunderstandings about Maine’s Wabanaki legacy.

Once upon a time not so long ago, Maine schoolchildren were heard to recite, “Where we walk to school each day, Indian children used to play, all over our native land, where the shops and houses stand...” Thanks in large part to State Representative Donna Loring, the Penobscot Nation’s sole legislative voice in Augusta, a deeper understanding of Maine’s true native Wabanaki heritage is sweeping across the K-12 public school curriculum to improve upon the “token Indian projects” of the past, as Old Town Elementary School librarian Lyn Mayer has described them in the Portland Press Herald. The first wave of L.D. 291 that she wrote the legislation that created the 15-member Maine Native American Culture Commission, eight selected by the tribal chiefs, six by the commissioner of education, and one by the chancellor of the University of Maine. It also awarded a 2005 grant to the Penobscots to generate “We Teach”-programming and educational resources designed to institute, if not revolutionize, Wabanaki instruction by school teachers statewide.

Last month, a second grant for work shops, two of which attracted crowds in greater Portland, added perspective and momentum to the effort. “I specifically wrote the law not to mandate the teachers to teach every part of the curriculum at a certain time, leaving them flexibility to choose some of these things in the way they thought appropriate at their grade level. You wouldn’t ask for grade 2 to teach about the Native American economic system, for example. A UMaine-Orono grad with a degree in political science, Loring served as “police

Dr. Rachel Talbot-Ross

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People

Chief of the Penobscot Nation from 1984-1990 after graduating from the Maine Criminal Justice Academy,” making her “the first female police academy grad to become a police chief in Maine. From 1992-1997, I was director of security at Bowdoin College—the first female to hold that position, as well.

But before all that, she fought in the Vietnam War, with a tour of duty in the communications center at Long Binh Army Base northeast of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, from November 1967 to November 1968, during the Tet Offensive.


“Landing at the airport, I didn’t know how I’d feel. I stayed five days in Ho Chi Minh City. I looked around and didn’t see any real old people. I saw people maimed by the war. Kids followed us for money. Then Rachel and I stopped in the War Memorial Museum. They’d changed the name from the War Crimes Museum to the War Memorial Museum. They had more American military paraphernalia than you could think of—insignia, lighters with squadron insignia, old tanks—evidence of the war, as I saw it. We had a replica of a prison, and it looked real…Rachel nearly jumped out of her skin when she saw them! What got me, I guess, was that these people whose country we’d invaded were treating us very well, even though they couldn’t have had a favorable memory from that period. It was instructive for me; it helped me close that door.”

The difference of perspective was so acute, Loring found, that her museum guides refused even to acknowledge the place where she’d been stationed, verbally or otherwise.

“Long Binh was the biggest Army base in the world. I couldn’t find it on the maps. ‘Where’s Long Binh?’ I asked. ‘Long Binh doesn’t exist anymore,’ they told her.

“Cultures silkscreened upon one another. ‘We stayed at the old Continental Hotel, where Graham Greene had stayed’ in the 1950s. ‘Here we were in Ho Chi Minh City, but there were Greek pillars, marble all over the place. I turned on CNN and saw the LBJ Tapes, with his deep coverage of his views of Vietnam. How ironic that was!”

“Being a Native American person who’d had my country invaded, I thought, ‘Here I am an invader as well. We used to call the Vietnamese ‘gooks.’ We were the foreigners; they weren’t the foreigners. It took me all this time to get it. It promised myself I’d put this in the back of my mind and hope to do something about it someday.”

“As in right now? ‘Yeah!’

As for murmurs that the law is lip service if there’s no clear funding base to support it, she says, “When someone wants to get rid of this thing, they bring up the idea of a money barrier. I think I’m being bated on this. It’s a Maine law. The Department of Education was supposed to help with some money, and the university system, and the tribes would kick in when they could.

“The burden should not be on one entity to make this happen. This project transends money. Grants have come in from the tribes, from the Maine Humanities Council for these workshops, and in the past, the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) provided funding for the Abenaki Cultural Center at the University of Maine in Orono. The Passamaquoddy have developed an award-winning [educational] kit. The Penobscot kit is wonderful. The Department of Education has kicked in some money, the University is providing space, there’s all kinds of movement.”


As for her legacy, Loring’s online bio notes that she “was appointed Aide de Camp to former Governor Angus King on March 17, 1999, and was commissioned with the rank of colonel by the Governor. She was a Maine law. The Department of Education was supposed to help with some money, the university system, and the tribes would kick in when they could.

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