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Photo by:



Glenn Connell '79, in his barn-turned-laboratory in Sabattus, Maine. Connell started his own business after being laid off from the semiconductor industry.

When Glenn Connell '79 lost his research position with a biotechnology laboratory in October 2008, the Mainer headed straight to North Carolina with his wife to lie on the beach. There, the then-59-year-old reexamined his career path and decided that one thing was certain. Next time he'd be his own boss.

After 30 years in the semiconductor and software-development industries, Connell has traded the corporate world for the home front. Now he works on his own schedule, out of a barn on his property in Sabattus, Maine, building his business, [Connell Research Laboratories](#).

"If the economy hadn't changed, I would probably still be droning away at that job I wasn't thrilled about for a mediocre salary," said Connell, who graduated from Colby at age 29. "Now I'm doing something I'm passionate about, something I probably should have been doing ten years ago."

Economic downturns often prompt tales of woe and hardship. But amongst the wreckage of the unemployed and financially strained are survivors who say the recession has unexpectedly resulted in positive change. Whether

faced with a job loss or simply a renewed sense of fiscal responsibility, some Colby alumni have turned recession-induced disappointments into opportunity.

Back on Mayflower Hill, this comes as no surprise. “A liberal arts experience gives you a sense of the possible,” said Michael Donihue ’79, associate vice president for academic affairs.

Donihue, a professor of economics, said new graduates leave Colby with a broad range of options. Their ability to adapt to new situations, and to turn them into opportunities for growth, is sustained over time, he said.

Carolyn Berry Copp ’82 had worked since 2001 as a fundraiser for the arts when she lost her job in January. Initially, after going through what she called the “seven stages of grief,” she thought she might continue that type of work as a freelancer, though not necessarily for the arts. But then she realized this was a chance to seek more meaningful employment, perhaps to help people who were harder hit by the recession than she was. “Even though I think the arts are very important, and music in particular is really important, it wasn’t focusing on putting food on someone’s table or taking care of children,” Copp said. “I really wanted to focus more on those basic needs, dealing with children and families.”

Now she works as vice president of development for the Newton Community Service Center in Massachusetts, raising money for early- education and child-care programs. Her advice for other alumni trying to turn a job loss into a new opportunity? “I think that the most important thing is to have a positive attitude, even if it hurts,” Copp said. “What are the skills that you have, and how can you repackage them?”

Repackaging has become a job-worthy skill itself as more Americans find themselves looking for work. The Federal Reserve estimates the unemployment rate will hit 10.5 percent by the end of the year.

Under normal economic conditions, people who are comfortable in their jobs often put off their dreams and ideas because there’s no reason to take a leap, said executive coach Kay Cannon, who helps clients find personal and professional success. Now, with the recession serving as a catalyst, people across the country, most often those who have lost their jobs, are moving into new positions or following through on dreams that have long taken a back seat. “You see a lot of people who are able to use this involuntary, unexpected change as a real positive springboard,” Cannon said. “When the economic situation is such that all of a sudden you find yourself without a job, you have a lot of motivation to go ahead and turn that dream into a reality.”

Take Aaron Bond ’02. During his five and a half years as an internal consultant for a large retailer, he had thought about starting his own consulting company—someday. He didn’t think he was ready to go out on his own. But when he was laid off in December 2008, with plans to enroll in a master’s degree program this fall, Bond was forced to find clients. Turned out he was good—really good—at being his own boss. Now he is in a graduate program at Boston University, and he is consulting on the side. “I never would have left my job to start my own consulting business at this point in my career,” said Bond, who lives in Newton, Mass. “It has worked out to be really positive, and now I’m strongly considering this as my more near-term career rather than long-term.”

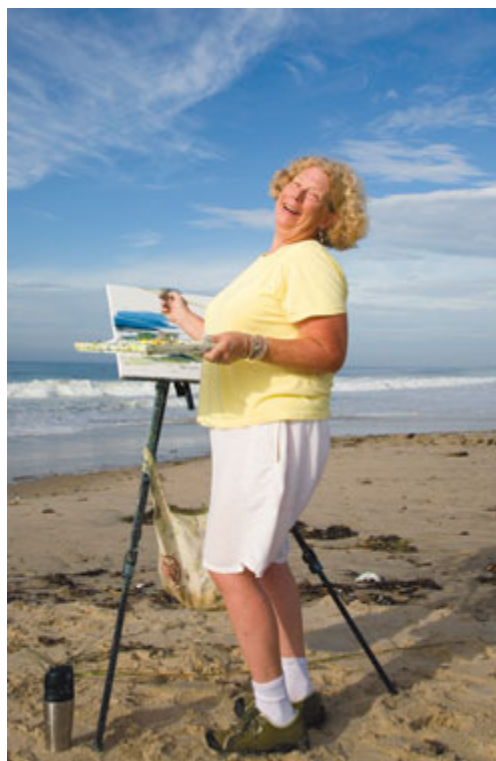
Even if your job is safe or your bank account is in good shape, Cannon suggests asking yourself: If anything were possible, what would I be doing? What needs to be different about what I’m doing right now so I can enjoy it even more?

That was Carrie Cooper Jacobson’s mindset when she left her _____

newspaper job in June 2008 to become a painter. After 22 years in the industry, she worried that her job as editor of the Kent County Daily Times in Rhode Island—a position she took after her previous job was cut—wouldn't be around much longer. Perhaps more importantly, she felt pulled to try something new. "It seemed like if there was a time to take a chance, this was the time," said Jacobson '78, who lives in Gales Ferry, Conn., with her husband.

Until then, painting was only a hobby, and a new one at that. It wasn't until age 50 that Jacobson, grieving over her mother's death, had an urge to paint, though she had never before touched brush to canvas. It quickly became obvious she had talent. "[It was] as though this ability had been inside of me for fifty years and I just hadn't turned on the tap yet," said Jacobson. "It was sort of freakish."

Now Jacobson paints daily, often setting her easel outdoors before beautiful landscapes. She shows her work at galleries and sells it online at her blog, [The Accidental Artist: Paintings from a New-Found Life](#). It's a change, she said, that has made her happy. "In newspapers, I expressed what a lot of people felt for an awfully long time," she said. "Now I'm expressing what I feel."



Leaving the beleaguered newspaper industry allowed Carrie Cooper Jacobson '78 to turn a hobby into a profession. Jacobson paints full time and sells her work through shows and her Web site.

Unleashing your creativity doesn't necessarily require discovering a new skill set. This summer Joanne Karlin Giudicelli '77, who spent 20 years in corporate consulting and recruiting, used her background in business to start a new venture she believes is recession-proof: [self-serve frozen-yogurt shops](#).



The recession prompted Joanne Karlin Giudicelli '77 to move from full-time consulting to owning and operating

She and her husband had planned to retire in the near future. But the state of the economy left them without that option, so even as she continued her self-employed work as a consultant, she brainstormed ways to earn additional income. She settled on the yogurt shop, where customers help themselves to sometimes adventurous flavors and toppings, then pay according to the weight of their creation. "I'm a frozen-yogurt freak," Giudicelli said. "It's a cult food. People who are not part of the cult think of it as an ice-cream substitute. It is so not an ice cream substitute to those of us who are yogurt-cult people."

Her first shop opened in northern California's Grass Valley in July, and already she plans to open two more. "Never in a million years did I ever think I'd do retail," said Giudicelli. "It's something I never would have done had the recession not

frozen-yogurt shops in California. happened.”

Other self-employed couples are also being creative in response to thinning wallets. Daryl Angney McCool '87 and her husband, who live in Superior, Colo., built a chicken coop and large garden this summer to hedge against potential income loss. The project also helps meet their goal of becoming more environmentally responsible. “We’ll be able to can [what we grow] and sustain ourselves throughout the winter without having to spend money at the grocery store,” said McCool, a graphic designer. The vegetables and eggs are tasty and healthy for their 5-year-old son, too.

The silver lining of the recession doesn’t have to be a new career or a chicken coop. Time away from work, particularly extended periods, can serve as an opportunity to strengthen ties with family or the community. After 15 years working for Fidelity Investments’ technology division, Tim Crowley '84 was laid off in December along with 1,300 of his colleagues. Since then he has gone skiing and golfing with his 10- and 13-year-old sons, helped his brother sail a boat from the Bahamas to Florida, and gotten involved in local theater, acting alongside his wife. The Milton, Mass., resident is still looking for work but said he already sees this time off as a “good thing.”

“At forty-six years old, it’s a great opportunity for me to be able to take advantage of certain things that I kind of left behind,” he said. “I really do think that this is a positive.”

Not everyone can afford to take their time looking for a new job or following a long-deferred dream. Some alumni depended on unemployment checks and savings to stay afloat financially while out of work. Others relied on family and friends. Monika Thiele '97 stayed with friends for a month so she could sublet her apartment and reduce her expenses while starting an environmental consulting business in Washington, D.C.

She came up with the idea after losing her job in the nation’s capital, where for five years she had worked in oceans and coastal management. She thought about moving to the West Coast, to be closer to the ocean for her career and to live in a more eco-conscious area. But in the post-presidential-election buzz Washington felt alive with opportunity—and ripe for greening. “What started happening was ... a heart-change,” Thiele said. “There’s a lot I can do here locally if I start to shift gears, look at my career through a different lens.”

That lens turned out to be the DC Green Connection, Thiele’s new business, which helps consumers find and learn about green products and services. “I wanted to be part of the awakening of human consciousness toward more sustainable living practices,” she said. “I’m taking this leap of faith because it seems like what I’m supposed to do for now.”

Rumbi Sundire '04 follows that same line of thinking. She had hoped to move home to Zimbabwe in the next few years, but with a stable investment banking job just outside Washington, D.C., there was no telling when it would happen.

Since she was laid off in May, Sundire finally made plans to leave the United States at the end of August and bring some of her business expertise to the rural village where she grew up. She plans to teach villagers the skills and give them the tools to make cooking oil out of sunflower seeds and to find markets to sell their products. A maize-grinding project already is operational, she said.

“I’m able to explore my goal of bettering my community without regretting ever leaving my job,” Sundire said.

“Getting laid off gave me the clean slate to explore what I have always wanted.”

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