

**Hot topic:** What to do with FitzPatrick plant.  
**Plus:** Campus smoking.  
**E-3**

# COMMENTARY



## Remembering our HOTEL SYRACUSE

The east alcove of the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Syracuse circa 1930. The view shows the ballroom in its earliest incarnation, with potted plants and an arched ceiling painted with a cloud effect to suggest the room was open to the sky. (Onondaga Historical Association)

**The historic building is where readers fell in love with grand spaces and life partners. It's where they laundered linens and waited on guests. Whatever the event, it became a special occasion there, with the movie-star stairs, fancy ballrooms and live music.**

Not quite two months ago, I wrote a column that made a request on behalf of Ed Riley and his staff. They are restoring a long-shuttered downtown landmark in Syracuse that many of us feared would crumble until it fell. Riley and Al Gough, chief financial officer for the restoration, had an open question for the community:

What are your most powerful memories of the Hotel Syracuse?

**SEAN KIRST**  
skirst@syracuse.com



affected by the hotel.

I wish I could mention them all here, but you can find them archived on my blog at [syracuse.com/skirst](http://syracuse.com/skirst). I'll also share those letters and photographs with Riley, Gough and Kay Frizzell, who intend to post the memories on a community website called [hotelsyracuserestoration.com](http://hotelsyracuserestoration.com).

Many readers wondered if I could stop by their home to look through scrapbooks and photographs. I'm thankful for all the requests, but there were too many for me to make those visits. A suggestion: Scan the photos and send them to Riley, c/o The Hotel Syracuse Restoration, South

"IT, PAGE E-4



Hotel Syracuse

**Above: In a 1949 booklet celebrating its 25th anniversary, the hotel boasted that "completely modernized and air-conditioned banquet rooms are always in demand."**

**Right: Rose Brown works in the 1950s on the curtain stretcher in the laundry room of the sprawling basement.**



Bernadine DeSantis photo

## FROM OUR READERS

**A few edited excerpts from the letters:**

■ *Ann Barnes arrived in Syracuse in 1972. She was hired to play piano at the hotel's Tack Room, the former Rainbow Lounge. Later, she moved upstairs to play in the main lobby:*

I remember when pilots and stewardesses would come walking up the steps. I would stop whatever I was playing and go into the song, "Fly Me to the Moon." If I saw anything going on that resembled a tune, I would play it, like the "Hill Street Blues" theme for the cops. ... But my favorite memory was a late-night gig. There were some rockers hanging out: One guy shoved the other and actually came to sing. His request was "My Funny Valentine." To my surprise he had a gorgeous tenor voice. ... The next day I happened to pick up a New York Times and there was a picture of the gentleman who sang with me. It was the lead singer for the Red Hot Chili Peppers!

■ *Bernadine DeSantis has powerful images of the hotel — but they involve diligence and pride in hard work, rather than glamour:*

My memories of the Hotel Syracuse go back to when my mother worked in the laundry. She worked there many years. I would go to the basement where she worked and her boss, Mr. Jackson, would always ask me when I was going to work (for) him. I never did, but ... my mother, Rose Brown, worked at the curtain stretcher and (people) always remarked on how nice they looked when she was done.

I know this isn't a memory of the Persian Terrace, but it's my memory. I am now 78 years old.

■ *In 1955, Nancy Bishop Brennan Billings won Miss New York State Fair queen at the hotel:*

All of the judging was in the beautiful grand ballroom. I was honored to represent our beautiful New

TALES, PAGE E-4

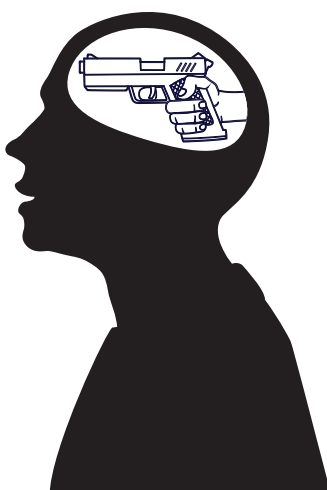
## OUR USUAL RESPONSE TO MASS SHOOTINGS ISN'T WORKING

**By Jaelyn Schildkraut**  
SUNY Oswego assistant professor

Last week, Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Ore., became the latest site of a tragic mass shooting. In the immediate aftermath, our national discourse filled with the usual suspects. Gun control advocates, including President Barack Obama in his remarks to the nation, lobbied for tighter regulations. Gun rights activists argued that the shooting was a result of a gun-free zone (despite that The Oregonian later clarified that the school was not, in fact,

a gun-free zone). Nearly as instantaneously, mental illness was named as a culprit. And given enough time, despite that the nation largely has moved on to the next news story, the culpability of violent media in the form of television shows, movies, music and/or video games also will surface as a causal factor for the attack.

Our responses to these tragedies, as the president noted, have become routine. We are stuck in a proverbial rocking chair that keeps us busy, but does not actually allow us to make any significant progress



toward addressing the problem. After Columbine and Sandy Hook, for example, countless pieces of legislation were rushed to the floor, and with only a slim margin, enacted into law. Similarly, after Virginia Tech, then-President George W. Bush allocated over \$1 billion in federal funding to improve mental health reporting to disqualify certain individuals from possessing a firearm. Just a small fraction of that was appropriated, and estimates suggest that millions of records are missing from the national instant background

check system.

Research shows us that outside of this routine discourse, there are ways in which these events can be prevented or, in the event a shooting does take place, the lethality can be reduced. Research on averted school rampages by Eric Madfis, of the University of Washington-Tacoma, indicates that most foiled plots are the result of someone reporting rumors or threats. Researchers at the Texas State University's Active Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center (A.L.E.R.R.T.) have shown that in a mass shoot-

ing or similar crisis, no one ever has been killed behind a locked door. Strategies, such as Run, Hide, Fight and the A.L.I.C.E. training model (alert, lockdown, inform, counter, evacuate), are being implemented in schools across the nation and active shooter drills are conducted today with similar frequency to those aimed at responding to fires or natural disasters.

Research also tells us, however, that to create effective policies and procedures, we must know what the problem

LEARN, PAGE E-4

# 'It was such a beautiful, beautiful place'

"IT, FROM PAGE E-1

Warren Street, Syracuse 13202 or email them to [kay.frizzell@hotel-syracuserestoration.com](mailto:kay.frizzell@hotel-syracuserestoration.com). The hotel is also assembling an archive of personal histories, and the staff is always interested in copies of family images.

Within all this correspondence, you feel a sense of passion, even elation: A beloved landmark that seemed on the brink of doom is instead being restored to appear as it did upon its opening, in 1924.

This is not always the way it's gone in Syracuse.

"It's just unbelievably fantastic," said Diane Bowes, a Baldwinsville woman whose 78th birthday is this month. Dick Bowes, her husband of 57 years, died in May from respiratory problems. The loss is fresh, and she finds a measure of comfort in the revival of the hotel, the place where she and Dick had their first date when Diane was 21.

They went to the Persian Terrace for dinner and dancing. "It was such a beautiful, beautiful place," she recalled, and that splendor is always there when she thinks of the beginning of their courtship — the kind of role the hotel played in many Central New York romances over the years.

My mailbox filled up with so many letters, snapshots and clippings that I needed an extra box to hold them all. There was a detailed narrative, for instance, from Mary Jane Connell Slone and Peggie Connell Foster, sisters who described childhood visits to O'Malley's, a fine hotel dress shop whose owners included their grandmother.

There was the tale of Geoffrey Vickers, who — as a 17-year-old in 1980 — won a chance to meet baseball great Carl Yastrzemski at a sports banquet. Accompanied by his mother, he made a hurried trip to Sears. He needed a three-piece suit to look presentable.

In 1962, Anne Green — as a student at Le Moyne — got an unexpected treat: Because their dormitory wasn't finished, she and some friends spent an entire semester in the hotel.

As a young woman on a date, Kay Keller, of Jamesville, thought the hotel was similar to many buildings she'd seen in other cities, at least until she walked into the Grand Ballroom. She wrote that she fell in love twice that night — with a man and a hotel.

In an especially poignant reflection, the words and snapshots of Bernadine DeSantis offered another perspective on the building: When she thinks of the Hotel Syracuse, she thinks with pride of how her mother showed up to work each day in the cavernous basement laundry room, and "how nice (the curtains) looked when she was done."

All told, the letters form a portrait of a beloved institution that influenced families from every walk of life in Syracuse, a landmark whose gleaming wood and shining brass provided a place of glorious escape for generations of Central New Yorkers.

"Kudos to Ed Riley and those who are resurrecting a grand hotel," wrote Francis McNabb, 76, of Hastings, a longtime bus driver who once found himself — in the middle of the night — drinking hot chocolate with performers from the Ice Follies. "May it serve for generations to come."



The Rainbow Lounge, with its large half-circle bar, was a popular night club. (Hotel Syracuse)

## Tales from our readers

TALES, FROM PAGE E-1

York. During all 10 days of (state fair) parades and activities, all 20 princesses and I stayed at the hotel. I even officially welcomed Gov. Harriman and his wife. ...

■ *Kay Keller, of Jamesville, has vivid memories of her first visit to the hotel, on a date that changed her life:*

After crossing to a bank of elevators we ascended to the 10th floor, heading to the grand ballroom. After leaving our coats with the check girl, we entered ... oh my! The first sight of this magnificent huge room was breathtaking to a small-town girl — sparkling chandeliers, mirrors reflecting the light, windows (along one wall) with expensive draperies pulled back and golden tassels, large round tables beautifully set for dinner, a shining dance floor in the center, a dance band stage and balconies along another side of the large room. I had never seen a room like this before and fell in love with the Hotel Syracuse and particularly its grand ballroom at that very moment. ... I also fell in love with my date that night, Richard Keller, and we were married for 49 years.

■ *Shirley Dowding Miller is the granddaughter of Walter Dowding, a tailor at the hotel in the 1920s. Among the memories she submitted was this recipe for the hotel's famed angel pie, from the 1959 Diner's Club Cookbook:*

Ingredients: 22 graham crackers, ¼ pound melted butter, 5 egg whites, pinch of salt, pinch of cream of tartar, 1 cup sugar, sliced canned peaches, ¾ cup whipped heavy cream, ½ cup toasted flaked coconut.

Preheat oven to 325. Crush graham crackers into crumbs; stir in butter. Press mixture into 9-inch pie plate. Beat egg whites, salt and cream of tartar until peaks form. Gradually add sugar, beating until stiff but not dry. Heap into pie plate. Bake 1 hour and 10 minutes. Cool completely. Arrange peaches on top. Cover with whipped cream and sprinkle with toasted coconut. Makes 8 servings.

■ *Sisters Mary Jane Connell Slone, of Georgia, and Peggie Connell Foster, of East Syracuse, wrote a magnificently detailed letter about O'Malley's, a women's clothing shop at the hotel that was operated by their grandmother and their great-aunts. As children, Slone and Foster would often visit:*

(We would enter) O'Malley's via the beautiful brass and glass revolving door ... always taking an extra spin .... (As we grew older) we were granted a bit more freedom and so it was out to the lower lobby and up the beautiful stairway with shiny brass handrails and to the magnificent upper lobby and reception area, where we would be welcomed by Mr. Gilday the hotel manager, tour

the little gift counter, peer into the Persian Terrace with the beautiful murals and sparking chandeliers. To us, this room seemed like a fairyland.

Next was a ride on the elevators with a stop on the mezzanine, then all the way to the top floor and back down to the lower lobby, where there was a narrow alley behind the Warren Street shops. We'd walk the alley to the women's exchange and purchase delicious molasses or sugar cookies, each with a huge plump raisin in the center. Lunch was always at the hotel drug store and haircuts, as needed, at Bicknel's Beauty Shop. Sometimes we would walk from Warren to Harrison to Salina and rest on the steps of the old church before heading for Onondaga Street (and) the hotel. Once inside we would stop at the shoeshine stand and the friendly man would let us climb into the chairs and he would pretend to shine our shoes. He, the doorman, bellhops and elevator boys were outstanding in their maroon and gold uniforms and caps. When World War II ended, we were allowed to watch the V-E and V-J Day parades from one of the upper floors. It was amazing to see so many people.

■ *There were many tales about meeting celebrities — including this one from Irene Pearson, who recalled how a film star famed for his role in horror movies had an entirely different personality, face to face:*

I am a retired employee of the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council of New York. One of my jobs was to make arrangements for meetings and banquets. The one that is outstanding was the 25th anniversary of ADA & DC (at the Hotel Syracuse). As you can see from the photo, I am placing a boutonniere on Vincent Price, who was the guest speaker on Feb. 18, 1985. Not only was he an actor in Hollywood, but he enjoyed being a chef in his own home with his wife, Mary. ... As a result, they authored a magnificent cookbook using the recipes they acquired. You can be sure most of the recipes required a dairy product.

■ *Clare Doerle, who worked at the hotel for years, can close her eyes — and she's walking in the main entrance:*

At the top of the stairs, from the Warren Street entrance and to the right was the assistant manager's desk (Joe Kelly and Paul Wright). Around the back of that was Mrs. Liberman's jewelry counter. Down that corridor was the banquet office where I worked (Frank Chermak, manager.) After that was Judge Searle's office and general manager James Gilday's office. That led to the back of the main lobby. Tucked under the mezzanine, way in the back, was the credit office (Eleanor Hill, manager).

A public stenographer's desk was just outside of the credit office. The sales manager's office (Jim Healy, manager) was on the mezzanine over

the credit department. At the top of stairs from the Onondaga Street entrance and to the right was the men's only Cavalier Room (head waiter, Joe Ehn). Past that was the newsstand.

I can't forget the Persian Terrace where I sold tickets to the weekly Fashions at Luncheon, with Ron Curtis from Channel 5 and Eleanor Baldwin from the Addis Co. This was a popular series, usually to a sold-out crowd. I also remember Martino, the head waiter.

■ *Like many Central New Yorkers, Patricia Murphy Pitts, of Skaneateles, thanks the old hotel for bringing together two especially important people:*

My mother and father met in the lobby of the Hotel Syracuse shortly after World War II ended. My dad had returned from his service in Italy, my mother from her job with Western Union in Washington, D.C. After a brief courtship, they married and spent their honeymoon night in Room 615 for the tidy sum of \$7. My mom recalled this romantic story many times during her life, and we all enjoyed hearing the tale of the dashing man in uniform and the young lady he swept off her feet!

■ *Marilyn Westlake had a very personal take on a Hotel Syracuse legend:*

My grandfather was "Tillie the barber" at the hotel. Attilio Mengarelli was born in Ancona, Italy. I have many memories from childhood when my dad, Edgar T. Mengarelli, would take me to see my grandpa at the shop. We would all go to lunch in the Rainbow Room (and) I remember the shoeshine stand just outside the barber shop.

My grandfather cut the hair of many celebrities, including Charles Lindbergh. To this day, I have preserved the lock of Lindbergh's hair left to me by my grandpa. His shop, and specifically his chair, was the place to be for local politicians and businessmen.

Grandpa smoked cigars and lived to age 83. He ran the shop from 1924 to 1962. He never took a tip, saying that an owner should never be tipped. He enjoyed good health and died suddenly from a heart attack. He worked right up until his death. His wife, my grandmother, was Rose Mengarelli. She made aprons for the barber shop.

For myself, the hotel is where I had my wedding reception (and) the Nottingham High School senior prom. I attended many Onondaga County Bar Association lunches at the Persian Terrace. Every time I walked into the hotel and up those stairs, I couldn't help glancing to the right, looking for the barber shop I knew was long gone.

Sean Kirst is a columnist with The Post-Standard. Email him at [skirst@syracuse.com](mailto:skirst@syracuse.com) or write to him in care of The Post-Standard, 220 S. Warren St., Syracuse 13202.

## Learn about tools to keep us safe

LEARN, FROM PAGE E-1

is, and by extension, its magnitude. In the context of mass shootings, however, this has been a difficult task. Depending on the agency or organization, definitions of mass shootings have varied from too specific to overly broad. The result is statistics that often are inflated, overestimating the number of events that are taking place. This is not to suggest that these events are not important. I cannot stress enough that the loss of even one life is one too many. Policy that is crafted based on disproportional information, emotion, or a knee-jerk reaction to these tragedies, however, is doomed to fail.

Instead, policy and prevention strategies must transcend partisan lines and ground themselves in empirical and academic research. As my colleagues, Glenn Muschert, of Miami University, and H. Jaymi Elsass, of Texas State University, and I have noted, this research also benefits when it transcends disciplines. Arguably, the most successful solutions will be those that incorporate researchers from a host of academic disciplines (such as criminal justice, sociology, psychology, human development, education and so forth). Further, including politicians, the media, experts beyond academia and the public in the discussion, creation and implementation of such strategies also will lead to a greater likelihood of their success.

If we look beyond the usual suspects of causal factors, we already can see such discussions taking place and making an impact. One organization that I am proud to work with is Safe and Sound: A Sandy Hook Initiative. Founded by Michele Gay, whose daughter Josephine was killed in the attack, the organization emphasizes smart preventative measures, such as door locks and training. It offers a layered approach to school safety and makes tool kits available on its website ([safeandsoundschools.org](http://safeandsoundschools.org)). Yet perhaps the most important message it offers is the requirement that we take ownership of our safety.

To make a difference moving forward, our discourse about mass shootings must shift from reactivity to proactivity. We must understand the problem in its context and craft strategies, techniques and legislation accordingly. Only then can our nation get out of the routine response to mass shootings that we are in and take positive and necessary steps forward to prevent future tragedies. Only then can the legacies of the victims of these senseless acts truly be honored.

Jaclyn Schildkraut is an assistant professor in the Department of Public Justice at the State University of New York College at Oswego. Schildkraut is the co-author, with H. Jaymi Elsass, of the upcoming book "Mass Shootings: Media, Myths, and Realities," due out in February 2016 under the Praeger imprint.

## THE DRAWING BOARD

