



Chester, Vermont

To the editor:

Jack Coleman was
committed to lifelong
learning

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To the impressive account of **John R. Colman's** legacy, one additional aspect of his rich life should be added: his commitment to lifelong learning programs. ([Jack Coleman, force behind Chester's Players Guild, Overture to Christmas, dies at 95](#), Chester Telegraph, Sept. 9).



Jack taught in the I.L.E.A.D. program at Dartmouth College for some years to share his love and knowledge of the short stories of Irish writer, Frank O'Connor of Cork, Ireland with over one hundred stories published in The New Yorker magazine. He believed these narratives of the lives of ordinary people provided a bountiful harvest of understanding of the human condition. He conducted annual Executive Retreat Seminars for CEOs based exclusively on the writings of Frank O'Connor with great success.

I took Jack's course at the I.L.E.A.D. and then he took my Irish course. His passion for the topic inspired me to 20 years of teaching in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute program. His love of Irish literature led him to produce a still remembered dramatization of Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* with the Chester Players Guild.

Jack was fond of telling how Frank O'Connor, in his *An Only Child*, recounted the long walks he would take with his friends and how, when they came to a wall too high to climb over, they would throw their caps over the wall so that they would be forced to scale the wall after them. He then added how President John F. Kennedy referenced that story in announcing the U.S. commitment to the space program: "This nation has tossed its cap over the wall of space and we have no choice to follow it." That story encapsulated Jack's philosophy of life.

Those of us who knew Jack Coleman would agree that, when it comes to a commitment to human equality and justice and continual learning, we would have no choice but to follow him. In the words of another favored Irish writer from the Blasket Islands, “the likes of him will never be again.” (Tomás O’Crohan in *The Islandman*). In the Irish vernacular, Jack was one grand old man.

Over the past 20 years, Bob Lyons has led Osher Lifelong Learning Institute courses (Irish Short Stories, Irish Film Classics, Irish Readers Theater) at University of Southern Maine and Tufts University, as well as the I.L.E.A.D at Dartmouth, and while living in Ireland, at University College Cork and the Briery Gap Arts.