The New York State College for Teachers was a true alma mater to me. I enrolled as a naive 16-year-old farm boy who used to practice French and Latin by shouting them to the cows I herded a few miles from Cobleskill, N.Y. My education was interrupted by World War II, when I was drafted into the U.S. Army Air Force, but I came back to State in Spring 1946 – and graduated with honors as a cultivated citizen.

On the day before graduation, I had secretly married Marion Buetow. The following September, we enrolled at the University of Minnesota, where Marion received her B.A. summa cum laude and I won a fellowship that offered $1,000 and remission of a year’s tuition. In 1950, we held English department assistantships, but budget cuts the next year left us with no prospects.

Fate dealt us a good hand, however, when I was invited to teach at State for a year. I readily agreed, and Marion and I returned to Albany. Received back warmly, I taught alongside my favorite professors. I shared an office with Paul Pettit, the new drama teacher, and acted in his summer theatre. Dean Oscar Lanford (who had saved me from failing Freshman Science by allowing me to research and make an oral report on something called “radio facsimile” – today known as the fax – about which he professed to know nothing) appointed me Scholarship Committee chair. I was faculty secretary to Signum Laudis and presided over the first Honors Convocations.

I enjoyed teaching. Despite my reputation as a tough grader, my courses were popular; I initially taught classes ranging from freshman writing and speech to short story and modern poetry. Once I had my Ph.D. from Minnesota, my range of courses was extended. Over the years I taught 17 different undergraduate courses and nine different graduate courses. I was invited to teach the first course when the English department developed the inaugural Honors Program, and I taught composition and language to our first exchange students from the Soviet Union. I served on numerous doctoral committees and supervised three Ph.D.
At the New York State College for Teachers, Arthur N. Collins found an extended family. Nearly 70 years later, State’s successor institution, the University at Albany, is still a part of his life.

Collins enrolled at State in 1941. Drafted into the military two years later, he returned to college after World War II. While earning a bachelor's in English, he acted in countless plays, did student teaching at Milne High School, worked summers at the New York State Library, and even “helped a little” in the Alumni Association office.

In 1951, Collins returned to State to teach for one year – and remained for 33 more as the college became the University at Albany. He fondly remembers many former colleagues, including Professor of Drama Paul Pettit. Upon learning that Collins’ firstborn daughter required a complete blood replacement to survive hemolytic anemia, “Paul asked his students to go to the hospital and donate blood for her. Edith pulled through and graduated in UAlbany’s Class of 1973,” recalls Collins.

Such memories have kept Collins “very close” to the University. As a volunteer, he maintains a strong connection with fellow alumni and onetime colleagues. He is also a donor whose generous support includes three charitable gift annuities (CGAs), which will endow the Arthur N. Collins and Marion B. Collins Fellowship. Named for the retired professor and his late wife, the endowment “will provide encouragement for a first-year graduate student in the humanities to pursue further study at UAlbany.”

For Collins, CGAs are “a great deal”: They afford him the opportunity to support future students’ academic endeavors – and provide “a modest quarterly supplement” to his income.

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Associate Vice President for University Development
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Albany, NY 12222
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E-mail: schesin@uamail.albany.edu