Volume 5

The LLI Review

Fall 2010

The Annual Journal of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

Explorations by and about older learners

In this issue:

- Research and Theory
- Life Stories
- Best Practices
- Poetry
- Learning Resources

a program of

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

Print ISSN 1932 – 7625
Online ISSN 1932 – 7633

The LLI Review is indexed in EBSCOHOST including Academic Search Premier and Education Research Complete.

For further information about how to obtain additional print copies of *The LLI Review*, please go to www.osher.net

Cover photographs by Anne Cardale, OLLI National Resource Center
Copy Editor: Julie Cameron

Welcome

Welcome to volume 5 of *The LLI Review*. Since we began the national OLLI journal in 2006, we've published dozens of essays, stories, poems, research articles, book reviews, and other manuscripts composed mostly by older persons participating in OLLI and other lifelong learning programs across the United States.

During my 30+ years as a university professor I have often looked at writing and publishing as a form of teaching, facilitating learning beyond the classroom, so to speak. An essayist in California has an opportunity to educate a reader in Maine by way of the printed word. A researcher in Texas communicates hard-won findings with a reader in Minnesota who may be able to put those findings to use. A poet in Mississippi sings her song of passion to any and all who turn to the page where her poem is printed.

Thanks to the wonders of electronic tracking we have learned that more people—many more in fact—are reading *The LLI Review* online than are reading the printed version. We print about 2,000 copies of the journal every year and mostly distribute these to the 120 OLLIs which, in turn, get the journal into the hands of program leaders, faculty, and other interested parties. However, tens of thousands of people are downloading all or parts of the journal from the Web site of the OLLI National Resource Center. I am pleased to know this. Writers need readers.

And readers need writers. The editorial board and I welcome manuscripts in a wide range of genres. You can see from spending just a few minutes with this volume the kinds of pieces that we publish. The genre in which we are receiving the least number of manuscripts these days is original research. We expressly designed *The LLI Review* not to be a research-only publication. There are others of those in existence in the areas of gerontology and education. However, publishing empirical research is part of our mission. We are especially interested in investigations that explore issues salient to the work of OLLI and other LLIs. As a researcher myself I understand the challenges of designing a study, seeking the necessary approvals (from Institutional Review Boards and elsewhere), collecting and analyzing data, and communicating findings in a clear and compelling manner. This is hard and complex work. It is good work, however, and

necessary if older adult learning programs are to continue to grow and thrive and be responsive to changing environments and new generations of learners. Some OLLIs are located in major universities with adult education and/or gerontology departments. Perhaps research collaborations may be developed.

I hope to hear more in the future from readers of this journal and other members of lifelong learning institutes about your research interests and activities. We shall willingly publish thoughtful, well-designed, and clearly written empirical studies focused on older learners.

If you have comments about *The LLI Review* or wish to discuss an idea for a manuscript I welcome an e-mail (mbrady@usm.maine.edu) or phone call (207-780-5312).

Thank you and be well.

E. Michael Brady, Ph.D.
Professor and Editor

The **LLI** *Review*

Vol. 5, Fall 2010

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Lifelong Learning in Later Life: The Universities of the Third Age

Marvin Formosa

Abstract

The University of the Third Age (UTA) has developed into a global success story. Whether holding a "top-down" administrative arrangement or embodying a culture of self-help, there can be no doubt as to the triumph of UTAs in meeting the educational, social, and psychological needs of older persons. However, a cautionary note is warranted since UTAs may at times function as yet another example of glorified occupational therapy that is both conservative and oppressive. Moreover, UTAs seem to be running the risk of becoming obsolete as societies embark on a "late-modern" model of the life course. This article calls for the UTA movement to go through a cultural revolution to remain relevant to current ageing lifestyles. Five key directions are forwarded: embracing a transformational rationale, making more use of e-Learning strategies, extending UTA activities to frail and physically dependent older people, organising activities that promote intergenerational learning, and ensuring that access overcomes class, gender, and ethnic biases.

One of the most successful providers of older adult learning is the University of the Third Age (UTA). UTAs can be loosely defined as socio-cultural centers where older persons acquire new knowledge of significant issues, or validate the knowledge which they already possess, in an agreeable milieu and in accordance with easy and acceptable methods. Since its inception in the early 1970s the UTA movement has developed into a global success story, spreading to all continents, and amounting to several thousand units with varying structures and programmes. UTAs are nowadays linked through an International Association which has succeeded in gaining accreditation to the United Nations. Despite the pervasiveness of the UTA movement, analytical writings on such a phe-

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nomenon are hard to come by in North American literature. This article attempts to meet a lacuna by presenting a critical exposition of the UTA movement, tracing its origins and developments, as well as its current arrangement and future aspirations. With thousands of centers and millions of members dispersed on five continents, it is a journey worth taking.

Initial Developments

The first University of the Third Age arose from the French 1968 Law on the Direction of Higher Education, which gave universities the obligation to provide for the organization of lifelong education. At that time, France did not have anything corresponding to the British "night school" tradition, but the *Université de Troisième Age* was to alter such a situation radically. The UTA phenomenon was born from the ideas of Pierre Vellas (1997) who recognised the combined vitality and longevity of older persons. Vellas held that the goal of the UTA was to investigate—without any preconceived notions—how higher education could improve the quality of life of retirees who, as demographic statistics at that time suggested, were becoming increasingly numerous and whose socio-economic conditions were often in a deplorable condition. In 1972, Vellas proposed the idea of the UTA to the Administrative Council of the Teaching and Research Unit in Toulouse, which included representatives of the professors, students, administrative personnel, as well as the World Health Organisation, International Labour Organisation, and of course, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation. The UTA proposal was unanimously adopted and without any specific budgetary means. Following much preparatory work, four major objectives were formulated for this new educational enterprise: (1) raise the level of physical, mental, social health, and the quality of life of older people, (2) realize a permanent educational programme for older people in close relation with other age groups, (3) co-ordinate gerontological research programmes, and (4) bring to fruition initial and permanent education programmes in gerontology.

The UTA in Toulouse eventually opened to anyone over retirement age who was willing to fill in a simple enrollment form and pay a nominal fee (Philibert, 1984). The learning activities were scheduled for daylight hours, five days a week, for some eight or nine months of the year. After the programme was marketed on a limited basis, 100 older persons attended the opening session in the summer of 1973. Teachers were highly enthusiastic about the motivation and sheer human warmth displayed by older students, and marveled at the way they learned with new techniques such as the available audio-visual language laboratories. One must underline that initially there was nothing exceptional about this programme, apart from the fact that a section of a large provincial university had taken an interest in ageing, and decided to enlist the resources of the university in pro-

grammes for senior citizens which would, at the same time, provide some returns in pursuing research in order to define the needs of older persons. However, successes were so swift that other third-age universities were created very quickly in other continental European countries such as Belgium and Switzerland. The Toulouse UTA model was eventually adopted by over a 100 campuses and by 1979 there were more than 2,000 enrolled students. Although there were some variations, almost all UTAs developed in the early and late seventies had university affiliation, relied on using university facilities, including the services of faculty members, and generally offered programmes of study tailored toward older persons, such as the medical and social problems of ageing. Moreover lectures were combined with debates, field trips, and recreational and physical opportunities.

In 1979, French and British adult educators interested in the potential of education in later life met at Keele University (UK). They produced an educational manifesto which was to be the heart of the British UTA movement, and stated that the concept of older persons as both teachers and learners needs to replace the image of elders as being necessarily dependent or burdensome (Midwinter, 2004). The first UTA in England was established in Cambridge and launched in July 1981. In contrast to the French experience, the Cambridge UTA rejected the idea of pre-packaged courses for more or less passive digestion, and demanded a kind of intellectual democracy in which there would be no distinction between the teachers and taught. British UTA coordinators appealed that all members would be expected to participate, and those who were reluctant to teach would contribute in some other way such as administration or counseling. Hence, UTAs in Britain did not develop into campus-based organisations but were more akin to Illich's (1973) visions in *Deschooling Society*. They sought a kind of intellectual democracy in which there would be no distinction between the teachers and those being taught, and consequently, a self-help rather than a government-supported model was adopted. Self-help groups are voluntary, small group structures for mutual aid and the accomplishment for a specific purpose. They were formed by peers who have come together for mutual assistance in satisfying a common need, and bringing about desired social and/or personal change. Indeed, the British UTA experience proved to be one of the most successful exercises in social cooperation, radical adult education, and older age citizenship since World War II.

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International Expansion

The UTA movement has gone a long way since its inception in the early 1970s and is currently present on five continents. It is surely not the scope of this article to present an international perspective of the UTA phenomenon. It suffices to state that at the turn of the millennium China alone included some 19,300 centers with about 1.81 million members (Thomp-

son, 2002). In the year 2009 Australian and New Zealand UTAs included 211 (64,535 members) and 60 (10,154 members) centers, respectively (U3A Online, 2009). The United Kingdom listed as many as 731 UTAs with a total of 228,873 members in the same period (The Third Age Trust, 2009). The United States represents one of the few countries where UTAs were and have not yet been established. One key reason is that in the 1960s America began its own version of older adult learner programmes with what at the time were called Institutes for Learning in Retirement (and are now referred to as Lifelong Learning Institutes). These institutes were and continue to be almost exclusively based in colleges and universities.

There is no one model of running a UTA. Financial matters, for instance, are highly varied. In the Czech Republic the Ministry of Education provides half a million euros for UTAs. Other UTAs are associated with "official" universities and simply benefit from the use of premises. In Switzerland, on the other hand, everything is in the hands of volunteers, with activities funded by members' subscriptions and extra payments. Since the late 1990s, a number of educational institutions began to investigate the suitability of cyberspace for older adult education. UTAs were not an exception, and much excellent work has been conducted in Australia under the auspices of U3A Online (U3A is the acronym for Universities of the Third Age based on the British model). U3A Online provides good quality educational programmes to older Australians who are relatively isolated and devoid of social networking activity, so that an overwhelming number of participants gave the thumps-up to this distance learning project and even calling for further expansion (Swindell, 2002).

An international survey carried out by the International Association of Universities of the Third Age (AIUTA, 2006) found that almost half the members are in the 60-69 age cohort (40 percent), followed by peers in the 70-79 age cohort (23 percent), and with half the members being either married or having significant partners (49 percent). A large segment of members joined the UTAs to learn new knowledge (41 percent), although the furthering of social contacts (38 percent) proves to be yet another significant motivation. On joining UTAs, members reported increasing friendships (15 percent), personal satisfaction (9 percent), self-awareness (4 percent), social involvement (5 percent), and success in learning new knowledge (17 percent). Reasons for not renewing one's membership in the UTAs included cost (10 percent), health (24 percent), transport issues (13 percent), family care (19 percent), and lack of interest (14 percent). Members also called for more courses in information and computer technology, astronomy, languages, memory work and natural sciences, as well as more intercultural and intergenerational activities which, unfortunately, most UTAs still lack despite the current international emphasis on intergenerational solidarity. Such data reflects past surveys (Swindell, 1990a, 1990b) as well as more recent assessments. For instance, Yenerall (2003) found that

the average age of Finnish members is 68, as much as 85 percent are female, and that the majority were married (52 percent) and had completed secondary education (70 percent). Similarly, reasons for joining the UTA consisted "to learn more and gain a general education," "take or complete practical courses," and "better understand problems faced."

The UTA experience is surely more than an educational one. When members are asked what they gain from involvement in UTA activities, the first thing that comes to mind is not usually related to learning but to the associated social outcomes, such as making new friends who share their interests and finding a support group which helps them through difficult periods in their personal life (Formosa, 2009). Indeed, UTAs are typified by a sense of vitality and dynamism that go beyond what is usually the case in a normal adult education center (Huang, 2006). They fulfill various positive social and individual functions such as aiding lonely older persons to re-socialize themselves by enabling them to form new groups and increase their interests. They also provide opportunities, stimulation, patterns, and content for the use and structure of the older persons' free time which would otherwise be characterised by inactivity. UTAs also develop in members a lofty and progressive delight of life, increase the social integration and harmony of older persons in society, inject a sense of creativity in older persons, and make older persons more visible in society. They improve members' abilities of understanding the objective world by aiding them to grasp better world development and social progress, and help them to ameliorate their abilities of self-health by enabling them to master medical care knowledge and prevention of disease. UTAs also address various intellectual, emotional, physical, leisure, and spiritual needs of older persons, as well as provide older persons with the opportunity to organise and coordinate social/cultural activities and thus make their lives more fruitful and energetic.

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Current Issues and Concerns

Despite the various successes of the UTA movement, a cautionary note must be warranted since the organization also faces a number of challenges. One key area of concern relates to the movement's rationale which is influenced by the theories of role change and activity theory (Formosa, 2007). Education is perceived as a means of helping older persons remain active and contributing to society, disseminating needed life skills information that ranges from consumer to health-related information. UTA providers believe that education adjusts older persons to decreasing physical strength and health, the retirement transition and reduced income, death of spouse, and changing social and civic obligations. UTAs are also advocated for their health and psychological benefits on the premise that learning experiences keep brains active so that learners are able to improve, or at least maintain,

their physical and cognitive health status. Although such rationales present various valid arguments they remain incomplete on their own. They operate within the "individual pathology" model which sees older persons as deficient following their loss of work and status, and too limited to capture the complexity of older people's engagement in pastimes and their participation in education, because their orientations and relationships to their activities are multi-dimensional. Unique backgrounds to later life (such as social class, gender, and ethnicity) have a diverse impact on the expectations, opportunities, and abilities, and thus, on educational motivation and aptitude. Moreover, ethical difficulties abound because it is not straightforward as to who should decide what constitutes older adults' needs so that it remains imperative to differentiates between "needs" and "wants."

A second issue concerns the movement's middle-class values and aspirations. As early as 1979, it was declared that the movement "pandered to the cultural pretentions of an aged *bourgeoisie* who had already learned to play the system" (Morris, 1984, p. 136). More recently, it was underlined that there continues to be a compounding class divide affecting chances to return to learn: "Older people who have experienced post-school education and training, and those who already have advanced qualifications and skills are already convinced of the joy of learning and return for more" (Carlton and Soulsby, 1999, p. 72). On the other hand, working-class older people often feel alienated by their previous experience of the educational system, and to be least confident about their ability or opportunity to return to learning. In sum, as far as class politics are concerned, field research found that UTAs serve as a reproductive and domesticating educational agent since they do not elaborate on all the various forms of learning but only on those that go hand-in-hand with a functional-liberal paradigm (Formosa, 2000). In doing so, they function as organizations which celebrate middle-classness at the expense of other class cultures on an inconspicuous public. Moreover, it was also noted that UTAs have not escaped the "pervasiveness of schooling," as they tend to operate through a top-down model of instruction which cultivates respect for authority, experts, and universal knowledge. Rather than taking the form of a corporation of persons devoted to a particular activity, as the medieval interpretation of the term 'university' presupposes, UTAs incorporate traits highly similar to those found in traditional education.

Gender biases occupy another lacuna as UTAs tend to be organised by women but planned in "masculine" ways (Formosa, 2005). Whilst the unique learning patterns of older women are overlooked, it is also worrying that the learning interests of men are generally neglected. UTAs fail to consider the existing experiences of the participants, and evaluate them in gender-specific ways so that the learning experience is fair to both genders. Indeed, older women learners differ from older men as they are more self-directed and appear to have greater life satisfaction, are more likely to study

personal or self-fulfillment type topics, and prefer learning activities that are expressive rather than instrumental in nature. Moreover, older women are more likely to experience situational barriers (arising from one's situation in life such as care-giving responsibilities) and dispositional barriers (self-perceptions such as believing the idiom, "an old dog cannot learn new tricks") to learning. Subject areas that are primarily of interest to men, such as vocational skills and sport issues, are rarely found in the course curriculum. Indeed, to my knowledge, a literature search of past and contemporary work in educational gerontology finds no entries dealing with the interests, learning preferences, and perceptions of older men. While some research papers and policy positions do focus on gender, such work focuses on women rather than gender differences as such, although Williamson's (2000) critical analysis of Sydney's UTA is a notable exception.

UTAs can also be indicted for celebrating a phase of life at the expense of more older and frail peers, namely those in the fourth age of the life course. Although the term "fourth-age" is a social construction, it refers to a phase that usually precedes death during which individuals are frail and physically and socially dependent. Late-life learning, as professed by UTAs, overlooks peers who are housebound due to physical disabilities and with residents of residential/nursing homes. UTAs seem to assume that only mobile and healthy elders are interested in educational classes. Indeed, programmes neglect how education opportunities can serve towards the personal development of frail and dependent older people since learning reduces dependency and the concomitant costs of health care. Whereas funding is the most commonly quoted barrier to making for the inclusion of frail older students, *The Fourth Age Learning Report* (Soulsby, 2000) argues that the need for attitudinal change is more pressing. In fact, where activities are beginning to happen it is often because there is a dawning realisation that such engagement reduces dependency and its related concomitant costs, rather than the realisation of an equal right to learning opportunities irrespective of physical frailty. Moreover, there is a lack of common understanding among UTA planners of the terms used to describe older people in care settings and of the nature of fourth-age learning. This confusion over terms actually prevents and delays the development of collaborative learning programmes with frail, housebound, and dependent older persons. Undoubtedly, further study is required into the impact of older adult learning on health and the wider social and community involvement of UTAs in fourth-age learning.

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Finally, the UTA movement is characterized by a tendency for its structure of roles and norms to change more slowly than contemporary social change. UTAs flourished in a time when older people were mainly poor and with similar outlooks. Now, post-work identities experience various deliberations, arising through increasing material consumption, and a wary position in relation to providing for "old age." On the premise that

late-life learning must run in parallel to the biographical experiences of learners, research uncovers four problems (Formosa, 2009). First, UTAs portray older adults as a homogeneous group when cohorts of older persons are so diverse. Indeed, no effort is made to address the diversity of the ageing population, such as on the basis of gender, health status, ethnic background, sexuality, educational skills, and social class. Second, UTAs provide an age-segregated form of learning. Although third-age segregated learning provides a greater degree of commonality, this choice makes UTA programmes lack the potential towards greater generational tolerance and dissolving of age-related stereotypes. Third, UTAs generally refrain from engaging in e-Learning strategies. The increasing rates of computer literacy and the Web 2.0 revolution provide us with an opportunity that can, very cheaply, increase the range of educational opportunities though a stimulating level of interactivity. Finally, UTA courses are too heavily based on the liberal arts, when nowadays retirees are embracing the philosophies of active and productive ageing by engaging in consumer lifestyles, and some, even seeking to re-enter the labour market. Hence, UTAs must expand its learning focus to include consumer education, financial literacy, and skill-development training.

Future Visions

It is against such research outcomes that I have constructed five praxeological codes for the UTA movement and older adult learning in general. The objective is to focus on "what could or ought to be" rather than "what is." The guidelines have the potential to improve both the quality and participation rates of late-life learning so that the UTA movement becomes more an actual example of transformative education rather than yet another euphemism for glorified occupation therapy.

A transformational rationale. The provision of older adult education, even within the UTA movement, should bridge a functionalist rationale with a transformational project, where learning initiatives are directed to aid older persons gain power over their lives. This is necessary because education or learning must not be viewed as simply a commodity which, via the medium of a lecture, anybody may acquire. Rather, both education and learning are to be viewed as a vehicle for retraining or adjusting to technological change, relating to self-fulfillment and the reinforcement of a sense of purpose, and above all, a catalyst for individual and social empowerment. UTAs must provide opportunities for older adults to become conscious of the cultural dimension of messages about aging, to assess their validity on the basis of individual experience and broader research, and to develop their own individual and social perspectives. Rather than simply offering high-brow learning, UTAs must offer the process of engaging older adults in dialogue to enable them to discover their own meaning, identity, and purpose

in the face of cultural messages about ageing. Moreover, emphasis must be put on the contemporary threats of elder abuse, age discrimination, as well as the dark side of excessive consumerism. In sum, UTAs must embrace a rationale for a transformative approach to education against the backdrop of an analysis of the current political scenario marked by neo-liberalism and the effect of this ideology on educational policy and practice.

Social inclusion. UTAs must dismantle those barriers which exclude older persons other than from privileged backgrounds from seeking membership and participating in its educational and learning activities. UTAs must work to counter psychosocial barriers such as the stereotypical and ageist belief in the adage, "I am too old to learn," and situational barriers such as disability which may prevent people's adequate mobility or the need to use public transport may limit access. As regards institutional barriers, UTA centers must not contain difficult enrollment procedures (such as high fees, inappropriate venues, or unexciting methods of teaching and learning), and communication hurdles such as brochures printed in too small type and crammed formatting or a failure to display brochures in places that older adults frequent. Moreover, UTAs must work hard and offer alternative learning to attract older men who currently show little interest for pursuing mental activity during their retirement years. Of course, the larger, more intractable issues that form the real barriers include educational and class status, and lack of power, which require more radical solutions. In the UTAs' effort to attract working-class men, more visibility is warranted to the fact that the term "university" is actually used in the medieval sense of the term '*universitas*' that is, referring to a corporation of persons devoted to a particular activity, and does not refer to awarding of degrees, diplomas, or any other kind of certification. It is important that UTAs rally against a passive stance that waits for older persons to knock on their door and engage in serious outreach that seeks to include subgroups which generally do not feel inclined to engage in learning activities.

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e-Learning. UTAs must put more effort to embed their learning strategies in the Web 2.0 revolution which now provides extremely user-friendly applications. Contrary to its predecessor, Web 2.0 uses interactive tools—ranging from blogs, wikis, podcasts, online journals, to virtual picture databases—which offer limitless possibilities for interactive, empowering, and participatory forms of older adult learning. Engaging the strategies of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is advantageous both for the learners as well as the institutions. Through the utilization of ICT strategies, UTAs have the potential to reach new learners interested in lifelong learning who may not be able to be physically present in the classroom at a specific date, and hence, who otherwise might not have been able to participate in educational programmes. On the other hand, seniors benefit by discovering new and further fields of education, widening their information sources, taking part in communication with other people with

common and specific interests, and being able to participate in learning activities even when they are suffering temporary or permanent ill health. Such implications are imperative in contemporary societies, considering that an increasing number of persons are turning to self-directed learning in their post-work years. Self-directed learning can be described as intentional and self-planned learning, where the individual is responsible for and in control of the learning. This learning manifests itself in a variety of ways or projects, ranging from formal, informal, to non-formal, but one can safely assert that it occurs most often at informal levels, and in recent years, through online strategies.

Fourth-age learning. The educational and learning needs of frail older people, especially the physically dependent and those living in residential and nursing homes, must be made central to the UTA movement. UTAs must recognize that different modes of mental activity should be recognized among the older cohorts. These may range from passive to the creative since older people have varying control over the learning activities in which they participate. Older people, irrespective of their cognitive abilities, should be fully involved in the maintenance of their past skills and interests, and in developing new ones of their choice. UTAs must therefore work hand-in-hand with residential units, care homes, and sheltered schemes, and encourage older people to maintain contact with the local community by facilitating residents to attend outside learning activities and inviting outsiders to participate in residential home activities. Lifelong learning should really be lifelong, so that policies even cater for those others suffering from Alzheimer's, confusion, and/or dementia. Although such individuals find it difficult to communicate they have not lost this skill, and carers and tutors need to learn how to receive their communication. The UTA movement would do well to take a leaf out of established fourth-age learning programmes and conduct learning initiatives with fourth-agers through reminiscence. Reminiscence learning processes focus on the personal way one experiences and remembers events, and hence, reliving the experiences that are personal in a way that is vivid and engaging. Of course, fourth-age learning must not be conducted haphazardly, and managers and care staff should be adequately trained in the field of older adult learning.

Intergenerational learning. UTAs must be restructured to be able to cater to learners from the whole of the life course, organizing educational activities that link third agers with children, teenagers, adults, and even older peers. For instance, relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are extremely constructive and gratifying for both sides. While the majority of grandchildren have a satisfactory relationship with their own grandparents, they also show a desire for increased contact with grandparents in terms of frequency and intensity that is especially constructed around an educational experience. Research also supports the traditional view that grandparents provide grandchildren with an educational input that is dif-

ferent to that which the parents can provide. This is because apart from being a source of unconditional love and a place where grandchildren can find refuge when seeking consolation, grandparents are crucial providers of knowledge and values. Indeed, the benefits of intergenerational education are well-known. While elders can mentor individuals from the younger generation, they can also learn much from the younger generation. Intergenerational contact creates an opportunity for reciprocal learning, as well as improving the everyday memory function of well older learners. Moreover, such interaction assists in dispelling stereotypes that each generation may hold about each other, whilst also encouraging respect for differences. UTAs must therefore think outside the box to develop intergenerational programmes along a civic dimension which, rather than providing simply sentimental and utilitarian standpoints, deal with the future of urban environment, racial and ethnic conflicts, and positive minority role models.

Conclusion

This article provides a critical exposition of the UTA movement that includes a focus on both current issues and possible directions. The future is bright for the UTA movement, especially now that more regions and countries are experiencing the third-age phenomenon, and that each incoming older cohort is more educated and open to engaging in empowering activities than preceding ones. The UTA represents an extremely commendable effort to enhance the quality of older persons' lives by dealing with the increasing longevity, and contesting the erroneous suppositions that associate ageing with predestined physical and mental decline. One hopes that the movement continues to reflect on its best and deficient practices, as well as brings up its current practices to date with ongoing socio-economic transformations so that UTAs continue to excel in the field of older adult learning.

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Empty Heart Vegetable

Dana Robbins

In the Chinese restaurant we were eating
delicate tasty leaves with stalks like
bloodless arteries. My husband said they call this
Empty Heart Vegetable. I looked down at the plate
and I ate the words.

First there was my milk with the sweet flower smell
that matched the smell in back of your ears;
later French toast with the crusts cut off, and chicken
soup always chicken soup. In the teen years,
it was lasagna and spaghetti, for a crowd.

Now it is partings and hasty dinners.

Empty Heart Vegetable—
Your children feed it to you at fifty,
in little bites sitting by the phone
or listening for the key in the lock,
then one really big portion as you are loading
up the car for college. It becomes a staple
of your diet. You eat it plain or sometimes
disguised by sweet and sour sauce
until you get used to it.

My kitchen is too clean
And my heart is too heavy
wth its hollowness.
Maybe I could use it in a stew.

Dana Robbins graduated from Wellesley College with a B.A. in history and received a J.D. from Columbia University School of Law. She retired after 28 years as a lawyer for the City of New York. Her poetry has appeared in *Shemom Magazine* and her short fiction in *The St. Ann's Review.* Dana has two young adult daughters. She lives in an old house in Portland, Maine, with her husband and cat.

Remembering the Dead

Peggy A. Stelpflug

When remembering the dead
We remember things
Now so real
So touching
So alive—
With a sharper focus
Than for the living—
With intensity
Not felt or known before.
The look
The presence
One moment
Caught
Forever
Painful and acute
Because of loss
And yet—again—
More real
More alive
More treasured
Than ever imaged.

Peggy A. Stelpflug fulfilled a wish to walk on all seven continents after a recent trip to East Africa. A former English teacher, Peggy lives with her husband William, a retired U.S.A.F. jet pilot, in Auburn, Alabama, where they moved with their five children after Bill's retirement from the military. She is author of *Home of the Infantry: A History of Fort Benning* (2007), a faithful member of OLLI, and a proud grandmother of nine.

To Talk or to Text—Is That the Question?

Anne Cardale and E. Michael Brady

Abstract

This article describes an online survey that was undertaken during the fall of 2009 to explore uses of technology both in OLLI classes and administratively. It is clear that a vast range of technologies already pay an important role in the OLLI network today and promises to play an even more important role in the future. There are strong concerns, however, about technology's potential to weaken the face-to-face communication that takes place in traditional classroom settings. The Baby Boom generation's fast-approaching entry into retirement in all likelihood will accelerate change.

Encouraging older learners to adapt to new technology can raise challenging dilemmas for lifelong learning institutes.

Higher education is rapidly changing due to technological advances and the adoption of online and other distance education modalities. Encouraging older learners to adapt to new technology can raise challenging dilemmas for lifelong learning institutes. This article describes a survey that was conducted by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute's National Resource Center during the fall of 2009. The goal of the survey was to learn in what ways innovations in computing and Internet technologies are being received and applied across the national OLLI network. We were interested in seeing how technology is being used both for delivering educational offerings to OLLI members and the management of the institutes themselves.

The educational use of technology by OLLIs is particularly interesting given their population. OLLIs have over 90,000 members aged 50 to late 90s (numerous individual programs including the University of Southern Maine, the location of the National Resource Center, have calculated the average age of members at 70). The membership tends to be comprised of well-educated retired professionals who attend the classes for the "joy of learning" as an end in itself. That is, students do not take examinations, receive grades, or earn degrees or formal certificates of study. OLLI classes are highly valued for their social aspects, allowing members to gather with

other like-minded people who share their love of learning. The positive outcomes gained from the experience of such social connectedness is explored by Ashida and Heaney who reported that perceived social connectedness may be relatively more important to the health and well-being of older adults than the perceived availability of social support (Ashida & Heaney, 2008).

There are two influential age cohorts within the OLLI membership in terms of attitudes toward technology. The first comprises many of the older OLLI members who have witnessed the growth in computer and Internet technology over the past three decades. Bearing witness to this growth does not automatically imply that these people participated in its use. Early hardware and software lacked the easy accessibility we see in today's personal computers; this meant that only a select few used computer technologies every day and computers were primarily associated with the workplace and not something one would have in the home. A recent study by Buse (2009) observed that one explanation for ambivalence toward technology among those who have retired is based upon their holding strong ideas about the boundaries that lie between work/leisure and retirement.

The second influential age cohort whose attitude toward technology is significant is made up of those who are often described as Baby Boomers. This generation of people born between 1946 and 1960 are fast moving into retirement and will probably view lifelong learning as an important activity for maintaining their "brain fitness" (Frasier, 2007). These OLLI members are far more willing to integrate technology into their daily lives. One demonstration of this ease with technology is in the area of online travel purchasing, where Baby Boomers exceed the younger cohort known as Generation X in the purchase of vacation packages (Srikanth, Khaldoon & Demico, 2009).

As previously mentioned, participants in OLLI classes are not interested in grades and exams. Unlike undergraduate and graduate students earning academic degrees, OLLI members are not forced to adapt to the technological requirements in their courses or risk failing grades. The younger student must adapt to these technological requirements despite any anxieties they might feel toward them (Davidson-Shivers, Adkinson, & Jackson, 2008).

LLI students do not have the same acceptance as younger generations that technology is always necessary for communicating what they need to learn, or for the demonstration of their knowledge. This is true despite the fact that given the time and sufficient motivation, older students are able to achieve equivalent learning outcomes to younger students. The question asked by many older learners is whether there is sufficient reason for using the technology (Boulton-Lewis, 2010).

Some OLLIs have made it possible for students to not only read their course catalogs online but to also pay their fees online as well. This move-

ment is slowly building and clearly revolves around the need to convince those who are over 65 of the benefits of the Internet and Web-based communications (Cohen, 2010).

As the reader will learn, this study shows that OLLIs may be moving gradually toward the use of online tools to help manage institutes and that there tends to be significant ambivalence toward online learning. OLLIs emphasize the importance of face-to-face classes and this feature is intrinsic to their identity. On the other hand, the selected Universities of the Third Age, an international movement of older adult learning programs, have demonstrated that geography is not a barrier when it comes to creating a community of older learners online (Swindell, 2007). In a recent study Hogeboom et al. (2010) observed that Internet use and social networking actually enhanced face-to-face groups.

This study glimpses into the future of the OLLI network while revealing its first tentative steps toward the integration of technology. It is an organization that truly emphasizes face-to-face contact yet it is cautiously exploring the integration of technology into its classes.

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Method

This study was conducted at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute's National Resource Center at the University of Southern Maine. The co-investigators were staff in the National Resource Center, one, the director of Communication and Operations and the other a senior research fellow. Open-ended survey questions addressing various issues related to uses of technology were designed by the co-investigators and then discussed and edited with the help of colleagues at OLLI and the university's Muskie School of Public Service. Because the study involved human subjects and the intent to publish findings, an application was made to the university's Institutional Review Board. When permission from the review board was granted, a notice was sent via e-mail to every OLLI program director in the United States (N = 119) informing them that an e-mail survey about technology would be forthcoming and asking for their participation. One week after this notice the survey, which consisted of six questions and instructions for completion and returning to the researchers, was sent by e-mail to each director. One reminder notice was sent a week after the survey was distributed. Sixty-six directors completed the survey, achieving a response rate of 55.5 percent.

Findings

The opening question in the online survey of OLLI directors was one which asked for a "yes" or "no" answer: "Are any of your OLLI courses being delivered in other than face-to-face formats?" Of the 66 directors who

responded 11 (16.6 percent) said "yes" and 55 (83.3 percent) "no." Respondents were then asked to explain their answer.

The 11 "yes" responses revealed a wide variety of alternatives to on-campus, face-to-face instruction. However, no clear pattern emerged for uses of technology. Videoconferencing to satellite campuses, providing video access to homebound learners, interactive video/polycom (which involves two-way audio and video communication), courses involving multiple campus sites, use of local access television, and fully online courses were noted as ways current programs are using technology as an alternative to traditional classes.

Almost everyone who responded "no" provided one or more reasons for preferring to remain with traditional on-campus pedagogy. These responses fell into six categories:

- Fear that going online or otherwise moving away from face-to-face instruction would weaken the social/community aspect of OLLI
- Making a change to online learning would require greater technology literacy on the part of students, faculty, and staff
- It would require investment in equipment and technical support and therefore would cost money
- There is a need for competent and interested faculty to take this kind of initiative and thus far programs have not identified such people
- Programs have experimented (usually with one or two online courses) and have not achieved positive results
- General lack of interest albeit with a reluctant recognition that such changes are coming

By far the most frequently expressed reason for not wanting to offer OLLI courses through alternative means was fear of weakening a sense of community among OLLI members. Since the first lifelong learning institute was created in New York City in the early 1960s the social aspect of these programs have been cherished. (Manheimer, 1995; Lamb & Brady, 2005; Lightfoot & Brady, 2005; Nordstrom & Merz, 2006). Respondents wrote about the isolation of online education and its negative impact on community. In the words of one OLLI director, "Our members tell us that they like to see and interact with each other. They express that technology chills the social interaction, which they say is so vital to them during this phase of their lives . . . .They want to come to campus. Coming to campus enlivens and invigorates them."

The barrier directors mentioned with the next greatest frequency had to do with technology literacy. In one case a director stated that "one-third of our members are not computer literate." Another respondent stated that "not everyone uses computers" and a third director told us ". . . several of our members are not computer literate. We are negotiating to teach an introduction to computers course."

Concern about technology literacy extends to faculty and staff. Developing online courses would require know-how in distance education instructional design and new kinds of administrative and academic support for faculty and students. This takes special training and few OLLI directors, especially when few, if any, members are knocking down their doors for online courses, are interested in allocating resources for such training.

As one would expect during difficult economic times directors expressed concern about how their OLLI programs would pay for the hardware, software, and training that would be required to move even a modest number of courses online. Even though the cost of technology continues to come down, the financial investment that would be required to adopt a vigorous online program appears daunting to many OLLI directors.

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The second question in the survey was stated as follows: "Are you currently doing anything with 'blended' courses, that is, OLLI classes that meet in part on campus and in part online or via other distance options?" The distribution of responses was similar to that of the first question with 12 (18.1 percent) answering "yes" and 54 (81.8 percent) responding "no."

Those who responded that they were undertaking blended courses (which are sometimes also called "hybrid") described a variety of mixes. In some cases advance-organizer materials (for example, course readings, writing assignments, or the viewing of films in preparation for discussion) were assigned via online communication prior to the initial on-campus meeting. E-mail communications sent between on-campus class meetings is another way faculty are choosing to blend formats at several OLLIs. Wikis, videotaping classes for homebound use, and Second Life were each mentioned as ways of blending traditional on-campus education with other formats.

One of the more interesting responses to this question about blended education came from several directors who mentioned field trips. "Yes, we have courses that meet on campus and then meet elsewhere for field trips in museums, at the beach, etc." wrote one respondent. Two other directors interpreted this question similarly. One wrote "we have a course that shows films in a local "old-fashioned theater and then the teacher discuses the movie in a different location." Then there was this well-detailed description of another course with a field component:

> We are working to mix scholarly courses with field trips. One great example of this is having a course titled "The Life of Bees: The Real Buzz" coupled with a day in the bee yard . . . .The class members were able to identify things about which they had learned in class (propolis, honey, queen bee, etc.). Field trips appear to be our sole option for "distance" learning currently.

While the authors were somewhat surprised by the positing of field trips as examples of distance education perhaps we should not have been,

considering a careful re-reading of the survey question itself. Visits to a theater, museums, and a bee farm are "other distance options." Indeed, the history of adult and continuing education is replete with examples of expeditionary learning.

The third survey question was stated as follows: "In your face-to-face courses what technologies are being used to especially good effect? Examples might include video streaming in support of an art course or the recording of classes for use at a later time by students who miss a class."

As one might expect there was a wide range of responses to this question. Many OLLI courses use PowerPoint to deliver in-class lectures. However, one director mentioned that their program was beginning to discourage its use simply to display words and outlines. Instead, the program was encouraging and supporting faculty for showing art, photography, and/or other visual displays. (*Note*: Several years ago, during a visit to the University of Southern Maine, the renowned educator and writer Parker J. Palmer expressed the wish that PowerPoint be outlawed in higher education. Palmer feels its ubiquitous and often uncritical use makes education too much like entertainment and allows students to become passive. However, perhaps even he would agree that PowerPoint, if used judiciously, can be effective for displaying art and photography).

Six OLLIs reported that courses were using YouTube as part of their respective curricula. However, it was not always clear whether YouTube videos were shown in class or were assigned as homework. Respondents also reported liberal uses of DVDs, overhead transparencies, and other technologies in face-to-face OLLI courses.

We were surprised by the number of classes that are being video-recorded for later use. Some programs air these on local access or public television. Others choose to keep the tapes in an archive so students who missed class can catch up if they choose. Still other video-recorded classes are posted to a Web site. A handful of respondents mentioned uses of blogs, smart boards, and/or Blackboard as curriculum-enhancing technologies.

The fourth survey question asked about ways OLLI programs were using the Internet outside of classes, for example for marketing, communications, social networking, extra-curricular activities, etc. The largest group of responses referred to the use of e-mail. Twenty people stated that they made use of regular e-mail; another 20 publish e-newsletters, while an additional 12 respondents used what they termed as "e-blasts." There is some ambiguity in use of the terms "e-newsletter" and "e-blasts." Some respondents may mean that they write using the regular e-mail format to send out messages carrying news and notices about events. Others have subscribed to a commercial service such as ConstantContact.com or VerticalResponse.com to broadcast their news. These commercial products are delivered directly to individual e-mail addresses but they look more like a Web page with their highly polished appearance, stylish graphics, and photographs.

E-mail is a cheap and effective way to contact members but it appears that no institute has all of its members using e-mail. Encouraging members to make use of e-mail appears to be an important activity for institutes and some directors were able to cite the number of members who used e-mail. No institute claimed that 100 percent of their members made use of e-mail. (Those members who do not use e-mail opt to receive a mailing carrying the same information.) Below are direct quotes from four different respondents:

> Currently, over 60 percent of our members have e-mail accounts, and e-mail notifications have provided a cost-effective means of keeping our members informed.

> 85 percent of our members have e-mail so we send out a weekly e-mail called "OLLI Update." It's our way to keep in touch with our membership and apprise them of events, upcoming classes, and the good things that are happening at our OLLI.

> Each week we blast our e-news to all members as a way of letting everyone (or those who use their computers) keep in constant step with what went on that week and will take place next week.

> We are identifying members who do not have e-mail so that we can encourage them to take our beginning computer class. We realized that with the rising cost of postage we will need to rely primarily on electronic communication in the near future.

Thirty-four of the 66 respondents mentioned the use of Web sites. Web sites are a simple but important marketing tool. They are used by OLLIs to explain what they do and to give information about classes, while also providing contact and location information. The network reflects a broad range of Web sites from the very simple site that may contain just a few pages to sophisticated sites that have features such as the ability to take class registration and online payments and managing course resources for students. These more developed sites often showcase members' creative work by publishing their poetry, stories, art and photography. One director reported: "We communicate program information and updates via our Web site. Our registration system is custom made for this OLLI and about two-thirds of our members use the Web registration for signing up for classes." Another respondent stated this about their program's Web site: "Our Web site contains weekly informational updates as well as handouts which are made available by the instructor."

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To Talk or to Text—Is That the Question?

OLLI Web sites use their host university's Web servers and many need the assistance of the university's Webmaster to maintain their site. Some institutes manage to gain access and administer their own updates, while others find they have little opportunity to interact with and update their own Web site. Overall, OLLI Web sites are highly diverse and reflect a broad range of approaches and solutions when communicating to members and/or marketing their OLLI to the broader community.

The third most frequently noted use of the Internet involved Facebook which is rapidly growing in popularity among the over-50 population (Lenhart, 2009; Smith, 2009). It is primarily a social networking tool where members can post news about themselves and their activities. The Facebook group pages can be used as another online conduit to announce events and activities and even gather opinions through simple polling tools embedded in the pages. The degree to which Facebook is used varies greatly. Some OLLI directors stated they were heavy users of the application while others made little use of the tool.

The fourth category of response to this question relates to online registration. Nine OLLIs responded that they use electronic registration and two programs allow members to pay for courses electronically. Online payment requires a complex database that is customized to the needs of an OLLI. Such databases can use one of three approaches: (1) They make use of an established database already in use by the host institution (e.g., PeopleSoft) (2) They have purchased an "off-the-shelf" system (e.g., Lucid Data or ACEware)(3) They have a custom built database designed specifically for their use. The trend toward online payment is slow to grow, perhaps because of the reluctance and caution that revolves around the use of technology plus anxiety about the safety of online financial transactions.

Question #5 of the online survey was stated as follows: "In addition to what you may have reported in question #4, are there other special or creative uses of technology in support of your OLLI program you'd like to share?" As one might imagine there was quite an amount of overlap in responses between this and the previous question. New or value-added responses were distributed across three categories: instruction, management, and marketing.

Several programs noted their desire to achieve statewide delivery of courses. One director mentioned their program was in the process of building partnerships with community colleges and establishing satellite sites that encourage the local development of courses and special events in addition to delivering courses via technology. Second Life was introduced as a new idea for ways technology is being used creatively to augment OLLI instruction. One director stated that, "We have offered two classes about using Second Life and are considering a study group using Second Life as a vehicle for discourse." Another idea not previously mentioned was Moodle.

This is a powerful open-source application that allows teachers to post information, facilitate online discussions, send messages, and post links. (*Note*: open source denotes the free sharing of technological information). One director noted that their OLLI program wants to test Moodle with two courses next fall and, depending on results, possibly expand its use in subsequent semesters.

Regarding management applications, three respondents specifically mentioned the use of online database tools for registration and payment for courses. These references to online databases reflect the trend toward streamlining administration by way of technology. Databases are becoming increasingly vital for internal communication. With the ever-growing numbers of members with e-mail addresses logged into a database it is possible to inform the membership of special events, trips, lecture series, and workshops and to remind them to sign up for classes. The movement toward online delivery of information through e-newletters and e-mail centralizes the flow of information to the Web and saves huge expenditure on printed products by sending out electronic messages and newsletters.

Marketing is a third application. The Internet is being seen as an increasingly important means to market OLLI. Two respondents mentioned that they had created videos that they then used to market their programs. In the words of one of these directors: "One of our community TV stations, to which we provide DVDs of our recorded classes, provides an Internet site archive, so that our members, or the public at large, can access our recorded OLLI classes via their personal computers. Some new members have told us that they became interested in joining OLLI after seeing the high quality of our class offerings on TV. "

Another respondent mentioned that they designed beautiful flyers online to be sent to prospective members. The Internet is increasingly becoming a resource through which people can upload, edit, save, and distribute text, photographs, and other images. Highly professional looking templates are available online which simply require the user to drop their information into the template.

The sixth and final survey question aimed toward the future. It read: "Please look ahead three years. Where do you envision your program's use of technology in the year 2012?" When the respondents were asked to project themselves into the future it is apparent that they expect technology to be playing an ever greater role in their work. None of the 66 respondents expressed a view that their uses of technology would decrease.

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We have arranged responses to this question by theme in descending order of frequency:

- The theme with the highest number of responses (14) related to the use of technology to bring together disparate OLLI sites. In particular, video conferencing via the Internet was mentioned as a means

to allow geographically scattered program sites on both a statewide and nationwide level to interact with each other in real time.

- Twelve respondents expressed their view that there will be an increase both in blended and online OLLI courses.
- Eleven directors mentioned that in three years they expected OLLI members to both register for courses and pay tuition online.
- Communication via social networking (e.g., Facebook) will increase substantially (N = 9).
- There will be an even greater adoption of e-mail as a communication tool by OLLI members because of increased computer literacy (N = 8).
- Recorded classes will be available for download as podcasts or videos (N = 5).
- Increased use of other technologies by the year 2012 that were mentioned by a small number of respondents included blogging, course management tools, and interactive Web sites.

One of the intriguing aspects about online conferencing was that while 14 directors mentioned it as a way of linking up with their own satellite sites and other Osher Institutes, several also envisioned online video conferencing as a tool that would help establish partnerships with other (non-OLLI) agencies. One director in the state of Florida wrote, " . . . there will be greatly improved partnering with the Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy than there has been in the past and folks becoming members because our OLLI is on the cutting edge of technology." Another director commented on this issue in substantial detail:

> There will be more locations served around the state and we will see the development of a true, statewide Osher network with course origination coming from multiple sites. More and different partnerships will be formed not only with community colleges, but also state Regents institutions, private colleges, libraries and senior centers or senior residences. Video streaming may also be used (along with full interactive video on the state network) to assist in the delivery of courses to senior centers or libraries. The need is huge and growing but as we grow we have to preserve the interactive nature and discussion that goes on in Osher classrooms.

Additional benefits to an increase in online conferencing that were mentioned included having the opportunity to stream interactive content directly into people's homes, offering single courses to two sites simultaneously, and having OLLI classes recorded easily from the video conferencing equipment itself which means not having to rely on a "camera man."

Twelve respondents suggested that the future will bring an increase in the use of blended and online courses. A convenience that will develop as a result of this change will be the ability to store class resources online. These may include course documents, class notes, Web links, etc. One director wrote about how instructors who use online Web sites and encourage students to visit these sites after class are creating a continuum of academic interest: "What I hope is that all the glitches get ironed out and that instructors can use their own Web sites to augment what they offer in class…. This will allow many students to obtain course materials online. We can also have ex-instructors update courses they have taught (e.g., a recent article on genetics, what's happening in Russia, how the environment is doing)."

Of the eleven respondents who commented that in three years their OLLI programs will handle registration and tuition payments online, a consensus view was that this change will be highly beneficial for administration especially as these sophisticated databases have the potential to become the electronic hubs facilitating online communication with each Institute's membership. One person put it this way: "All of our registration will be done online and 95 percent of the communication will be done via Web-based programs."

Nine respondents reported that they expect an increase in the use of social networking tools though nobody explained how they thought these tools might be employed in their respective OLLI programs. The application Facebook was specifically named by nearly all these nine directors but, again, without offering further explanation or details.

In general OLLI directors look out three years and see a greater adoption of e-mail by members accompanied by an increase in overall computer literacy. They also envision an increase in online course management tools such as Blackboard to support both online and face-to-face classes.

In general OLLI directors look out three years and see a greater adoption of e-mail by members accompanied by an increase in overall computer literacy. They also envision an increase in online course management tools such as Blackboard to support both online and face-to-face classes.

It is clear that most respondents expect they will be employing multiple technologies in the future. Five respondents foresee both video and audio recordings of OLLI courses made available to those who are absent from class. One respondent wrote: "I had a vision that the resource center could be like a Netflix, with copies of sessions recorded throughout the various OLLIs and available for checkout. This is especially desirable as our students start experiencing health challenges and may not be able to drive to the classes but still want to keep learning."

Discussion

Three important conclusions derive from this study. First, it is clear that a vast range of technologies already play an important role in the OLLI network today and promise to play an even more prominent role in the future. In almost every survey response directors noted the use of e-mail,

the Internet, electronic databases, and/or other technological applications in their day-to-day operation. Technology is enhancing the curriculum and is also helping to administer and market OLLI programs.

No dominant technology emerged in this survey. The range of applications noted by OLLI directors demonstrates the need to cherry-pick selected technologies to get specific jobs done. The judicious selection of applications may depend on directors, their program staff, and OLLI faculty developing a keen awareness of available technologies and their best use. Therefore, education of the educators will play an important role in the future.

A second important conclusion deriving from this study relates to the underlying concerns, sometimes directly expressed in directors' survey responses and other times more implicit, about technology's potential to weaken the face-to-face communication that takes place in traditional classroom settings. Since lifelong learning institutes began nearly 50 years ago the personal interactions between learners and the resulting communities that have developed have been cherished. Attending lifelong learning institute classes reduces isolation, expands social networks, and in some cases enriches mental and physical health. If online and blended courses are perceived as substitutes for face-to-face interaction they will be seen as threats.

Again education is in order. A different world view might not see this as an "either/or" dichotomy but as a "both/and" opportunity. Online and blended curricula may actually complement traditional classroom meetings in interesting and important ways (as a number of respondents in this study have pointed out). Additionally, because of the strength of the OLLI network, which now involves more than 90,000 older learners, Osher Foundation-sponsored and other LLIs will have a role in the creation and use of new education technologies as hardware and software innovations enter the market and applications that make sense to older learners and LLIs are experimented with. It is especially exciting to consider the possibilities for creating enriched learning communities (perhaps some online and others face-to-face) using Web 2.0 tools such as Facebook, reaching out to home-bound or institution-bound elders who want to learn and be part of LLI communities, linking together geographically scattered learning centers into fully functioning networks, and other potential uses of technology. The suggestion made by Hogeboom et al. that online social networking tools enrich group activities is of considerable significance for the OLLI network, as their study demonstrates that such tools can be used without fear of diminishing the social contact of face-to-face groups.

Third, the fast-approaching surge of the Baby Boom generation into retirement will accelerate change. Directors see this coming but also have concerns about it. It is intriguing to consider the effect that "Boomers" have

already had on society, so it is not surprising that this cohort is identified as the group that will have the greatest influence upon the OLLI network and its use of technology. Here are two observations related to this issue that were made by directors and communicated in this survey:

> Our OLLI organization takes members beginning at age 60. In 2012, those aged 60 would have been born in 1952. I would say that those born in 1952 and beyond have expectations of having technology enhancements in their learning, but perhaps those teaching the courses do not. Our organization is very much a social, meet-and-greet group, and the 'getting together and meeting as a group' aspect of the organization is every much as important as the delivery of instruction. I just don't see video streaming/taped classes in our 3-year (2012) future.

> I am dean of Continuing Education and we use technology extensively, as we have credit courses and programs online including many that are offered in a 'blended' format. I personally see that we could do an outstanding job develop ing special OLLI courses using this same format. I believe that, as the younger Boomers age, they will expect this kind of access, i.e., anytime, anywhere. As it stands now, much of our leader ship is in the 65-75 age range so I expect we will have to wait until this shifts to represent a younger demographic.

Change is coming. Nobody questions this. Every person has the choice of fearing and running from change or accepting and embracing it. Especially with rapidly advancing technology humans have a tendency to overreact. (One early example was the initial reaction to Stephenson's Rocket, a locomotive engine developed in 1829 that could travel at 10 miles an hour. It was thought to be too dangerous for women to use because the extreme speeds would cause them to faint). It is understandable to fear that new technological inventions will damage something vital to a culture. However, perhaps it is possible to conceive that in case of OLLI, with its rich diversity, resilience, and influence, both adopting and helping to create new uses of technology will further enrich and enhance a culture. If so, maybe the best answer to the question "To talk or to text?" is "Let's welcome both."

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Adaptation to Pressures of Changing Technology and Online Instruction

Kathleen King

Abstract

Originally researched and written as part of an online graduate course on managing adult education programs, this article explores issues related to regular college and university faculty as they encounter changing technology and the strange new world of online instruction. Editors of The LLI Review *saw this as an extension of and complement to the preceding article about uses of technology in Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes.*

Changes in technology are constant. This is evident in both the private and public sectors. A mere 20 years ago faculty were expected to be experts in their discipline. Now, faculty are also presumed to keep up with ever-changing technology and delivery methods while being constantly cognizant of learning styles. This article addresses technological changes that are taking place more generally and distance (online) education, specifically, and the adaptations using Bolman and Deal's framework to understand what is necessary in higher education to continue effective, high quality academic delivery in a timely way.

In *Reframing Organizations, Artistry, Choice, and Leadership,* authors Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal, using examples of organizations as case studies, outline typical frames of reference to organizational management and leadership styles. The book outlines specific models or frames and the applicability to outcomes to real situations. Additionally, using the same case study with different applicable frames the reader is encouraged to assign the proper frames with intended outcomes. Using Bolman and Deal's text, this paper examines the dichotomy in higher education between faculty and their struggle to learn, embrace, and stay abreast of changing technology and instructional delivery methods while maintaining the balance of research in their discipline and the variety of other obligations that comes with being an instructor.

A mere 20 years ago faculty were expected to be experts in their discipline. Now, faculty are also presumed to keep up with ever-changing technology and delivery methods while being constantly cognizant of learning styles.

Unlike educators who are specifically trained in the field of education, instructors in colleges and universities are considered researchers and experts in their fields. To expect that only minimal training or incentive is necessary to encourage faculty to expand their pedagogy to another delivery method such as online teaching is illusory (Kolowich, 2009).

At many universities, the frame that is currently and most universally used for adaptation to technology and online education appears to be under the "structural" assumption as described in Bolman and Deal. Teaching online is less a choice by faculty and more an imperative from administration where "communicating, realigning, and renegotiating formal patterns and policy" takes place (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 18). The "human resource frame" is probably the more appropriate way to encourage faculty adaptations to technology and online teaching. This frame allows for support through participation, training, and acceptance.

There are many hurdles to overcome in order to support the adaptations that should occur for faculty to embrace and learn what they must in order to keep up with the ever-changing pedagogical and technological requirements of this century. There are issues of pride, time, and ability, as well as acceptance in overcoming those hurdles. Faculty, historically heralded as influential and knowledgeable, are in a position of intellectual vulnerability when expected to learn outside their discipline and educate using (to them) a novel approach of delivery (Kosak et al., 2010).

According to McCord (2006) faculty are already burdened with full teaching schedules, committee work, and research. Added to this, keeping up with technological advances, let alone changing education delivery methods, demands even more time for learning and implementation. Especially when combined with limited staffing for support, faculty can be and often are reluctant to change.

Lack of training, according to Lee (2004), is not an insignificant issue. "Research suggests that educators need training, support, and faculty development to make the transition from teaching in conventional classrooms to teaching online" (p. 536). In addition, "… Faculty are generally positive and enthusiastic about professional development, but find it difficult to find the time in their overextended calendars to attend workshops or even to come to our office for individual consultations" (Essex, 2004, p. 149).

Examples of issues facing faculty are seemingly endless. College and university faculty have a tradition of lifelong learning through their continual research. However, this is by no means a guarantee of their ability to keep pace with developments in their own field, much less communicate these developments to their students (Moulton, 2008, p. 10).

University administrators globally are racing to stay ahead of technological developments, or at the minimum, keep up, with the expectation that faculty will do the same. The time it takes for faculty to become familiar with new ways of teaching online must be noted and addressed.

In a recent study by L. Hillstock of Clemson University, the time it takes to prepare for classes has increased and "… results revealed that 50 percent of the faculty surveyed reported having to spend more than 30 hours extra time preparing for the semester due to the technology" (Hillstock, 2005, p. 140).

Although this can be considered a generalization, the structural framework at many universities reveals little clarity about expectations to change except, perhaps, through offering release time and/or stipends for designing and teaching online. This creates an atmosphere of overt avoidance to change and little support for effective change. There is evidence of "communicating, realigning, and renegotiating" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 379) on numerous campuses. However, this is not always the most appropriate framework to bring desired progress during times of fast-paced technological change. The structural framework is from the top down and imposes a new model of instruction that is threatening, difficult to learn, and takes invested time to attain proficiency.

A potentially more effective approach would be through the human resource frame using the leadership practices of "training, realigning, negotiating, and grieving" as described in Bolman and Deal (2008). Changes that come from the top, even those that seem rational, will often fail, particularly in the university setting. This is the leadership most often seen in the structural frame. Changing technology is embraced by senior administration as a way of increasing income for the university. Students desire online courses and are ready for them. Management perceives online instruction as financially viable with a strong return on investment. However, in many situations, technology is imposed with minimal input from faculty. The acquisition of new software is managed by administrators with the expectation that faculty will pursue necessary training without financial or other extrinsic incentives. All of these common practices reflect the structural framework. "Planning without broad-based participation that gives voice to the opposition almost guarantees stiff resistance" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 378). This resistance plays out negatively, even defiantly, by instructors and may result in diminished quality of online teaching.

"Countless innovations falter and flop because managers neglect to spend the necessary time and money to develop needed knowledge and skills and to involve people throughout the process" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 378). Training and staff support is a necessity for universities to successfully adapt to the technological demands on faculty for online teaching.

There are a number of training options used by universities. Molnar and Armenatno describe a three-week online program being used at Bowling Green State University. Essex (2004) describes a video training program that may be viewed privately and at one's own pace.

There are many hurdles to overcome in order to support the adaptations that should occur for faculty to embrace and learn what they must in order to keep up with the ever-changing pedagogical and technological requirements of this century.

Adaptation to Pressures of Changing Technology and Online Instruction

Widespread involvement is necessary to successfully bring about effective change. The problem can often be faculty's resistance to expose a lack of understanding in a world that is intellectually and academically competitive. "Changes in routine practice and protocol undermine existing knowledge and skills and undercut people's ability to perform with confidence and success" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 381).

Training is important, as is ongoing support that is both personal and immediate without being reactive during course development and delivery (McCord, 2006).

Innovators must anticipate structural issues and work to redesign the existing architecture of roles and relationships. This understanding is key in order to make the acceptance and transition of technology and online instruction seamless and of high quality. McCord (2006) points out that less than one-third of full-time faculty embrace online education as effective. This conviction undoubtedly comes from the limited understanding of online delivery methods and best practices.

If the majority of faculty are to embrace online programs, they must believe, from experience, that online instruction is valuable and effective. In turn, faculty will likely have positive online experiences if institutions can provide adequate support that anticipates and addresses the needs of the faculty. In a 2009 Sloan survey the chief academic officers were asked whether their faculty accept "the value and legitimacy" of online education. The results suggested something short of a strong endorsement of virtual learning. Only 30.9 percent of the chief academic officers in this study agreed that faculty members in their institution had respect for online learning, while 51.8 percent were neutral and 17.3 percent disagreed (Jaschik, 2010). Two years prior to this survey there appeared to be wider acceptance from faculty (33 percent) for online education. This may be an indication of resistance to change and, thus, necessitates further exploration (Jaschik, 2010). Staff support is mandatory in facilitating change including, but not limited to, helping with writing, research, and course development (Hillstock, 2005).

The human resource frame of leadership recognizes that change will invariably create conflict. "Successful change requires an ability to frame issues politically, build coalitions, and establish arenas in which disagreements can be hammered into workable pacts" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 387). In following the recommendations of Bolman and Deal, faculty can be cajoled into training and supported in course development over time.

Following the leadership practices of "training, realigning, negotiating, and grieving" in the human resource frame, the next step is realigning. Bolman and Deal suggest that "transition rituals initiate a sequence of steps that help people let go of the past, deal with a painful present, and move into a meaningful future" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 391).

It is important to emphasize collaboration. In a traditional educational setting, teaching and learning have often been intensely individualistic. Many faculty, if given the choice, work alone. Collaboration as a prescribed form for learning and knowledge construction has had little time to develop deep roots in university life (Moulton, 2008). With collaboration can come a celebration of a developing community. Faculty who have mastered online teaching can be recommended as mentors for others. Faculty teaching faculty in a non-threatening, nonjudgmental atmosphere would help to advance the cause of teaching through technology.

Faculty who have mastered online teaching can be recommended as mentors for others. Faculty teaching faculty in a non-threatening, non-judgmental atmosphere would help to advance the cause of teaching through technology.

The work of college and university faculty may look very different in the future:

> It could well be that faculty members of the twenty-first century college or university will find it necessary to set aside their roles as teachers and instead become designers of learning experiences, processes, and environments. Tomorrow's faculty may have to discard the present style of solitary learning experiences, in which students tend to learn primarily on their own through reading, writing, and problem solving. Instead, they may be asked to develop collective learning experiences, in which students work together and learn together, with the faculty member becoming more of a consultant or a coach than a teacher. Faculty members will be less concerned with identifying and then transmitting intellectual content and more focused on inspiring, motivating, and managing an active learning process by students (Moulton, 2008, p. 11).

In the third step of Bolman and Deal's leadership strategy negotiation should be a key component of developing an understanding of technology and acceptance of online learning and teaching. Negotiations cannot be successful, however, if basic motivators, both intrinsic and extrinsic, are ignored. No less important are the institutional motivators of support including compensation, release time, and recognition (McCord, 2006). By highlighting Kotter's stages of successful change initiatives, Bolman and Deal (2008) point out that "change can be successful: by creating a sense of urgency, training, visioning, communicating, empowering, creating symbols, process, and nuturing" (2008, p. 34). All these examples support positive change. With change, as Bolman and Deal explain, acknowledging the valuable past and allowing for grieving are important steps to effective progress. Technological advances and online instruction can be threatening due to the unfamiliarity to the very instructors who are feeling pressured to change. The perceived unconventionality of online learning has not yet convinced the novice online educator that using technology for distance education is an effective teaching method (Kosak, et al., 2010).

Distance education, on the surface, can appear to be a bargain. Educating a large number of students whose needs do not necessarily include

facilities or other staff support can lure administrators into a false sense of ease and financial benefit when pressuring faculty to teach online. The expense of faculty development, course preparation, and technology must be considered and factored into the redesign of instruction (Hillstock, 2005). Faculty members need a solid structure of support on which to rely when implementing this curriculum change. It is vital that this support be continuous from the planning stage through implementation. At the same time, universities should not discount or abandon the effectiveness of a live classroom and the importance of "bricks and mortar."

By following the human resource frame that Bolman and Deal (2008) describe rather than the structural frame, adaptation to technology and expansion to online instruction can be efficient and effective. By utilizing the leadership practice Bolman and Deal describe as "training, realigning, negotiating, and grieving," change to advanced technological literacy and quality online instruction can be a positive and an effective transition for instructors, thus improving the quality and accessibility of education for students.

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advances herself, but recognizing the necessity of keeping up in order to get ahead, Kathleen has the perspective of "catching up" firsthand and, as a student and an employee, has witnessed the reluctance (and also the development) of faculty and staff to make the necessary adjustments to technology and online teaching and learning.

The Dance

M. E. Hansburg

The story "The Dance" is one of a collection. More stories may be found at www.classjump.com/threecreeksohio.

"Listen, the Great Spirit speaks. Dance the dance of life."

Black Elk

A thin man, a Vietnam veteran with long braids, stepped away from the dancing. He was remembering. The drummers kept the regular beat, the pulse of the nation, the movement of life, for those who remembered and for those being remembered.

Peter Bluefeather thought about his friends. The four buddies that he'd made and lost in the war. Now, 1970 seemed a long time ago. Peter and his cousin Marvin Littlebird had driven up from Three Creeks to Columbus, Ohio. They came every year to participate on Memorial Day. This ceremony marked the gathering of The People to honor fallen warriors.

Peter and Marvin drove up early on Monday morning, leaving Three Creeks by 5 a.m. Most of the good folks of Three Creeks would not stir for another two to three hours, getting up and making preparations for their own holiday remembering. The moon was setting in the western sky and a hazy sunrise marked the dawn breaking as Peter and Marvin travelled through Madison Courthouse all the way north of Columbus to Hilliard.

Hilliard, home to Rahal Racing, had welcomed the Ceremonial Powwow for the last five years. Peter knew the route and didn't need a map to find his way in the early morning.

When they arrived, Peter found a parking spot between the other cars and campers. He parked the truck. They would unload their gear, walk across the gravel road and join the circle in the open space between the Maingate and the Show Barn. There in the circle of family, friends, and members of The People, Peter and Marvin would join the honor circle.

The dancing, accompanied by the drummers, would last all day. People would fall in and fall out as time, energy, and movement directed the ceremony. But the sacred circle with dancers and drummers would open and close as the dawn and the dusk. Circle of light, circle of life, circle of memory, circle of honor…to the dead and to the living. Here in the midst of The People, life continued. Stories continued. Children continued. It was a homecoming and a family reunion. Peter heard the call to sacred circle. Putting down his gear, he motioned to Marvin that he was off to join the opening circle of the first dancers. Marvin nodded. He would wait. Setting up the chairs, Marvin would wait for now, sit, and watch the early dancers. Preparing himself for the ritual, Marvin would join the sacred circle later.

Dance, pray, honor, remember.

The pounding rhythm caught Peter's spirit. He joined the dancers. Around and around they moved, the dancers forming an inner and outer circle. Later the circles would move between the inside and the outside, this pattern directed by the drums. Peter would dance most of the morning, his heartbeat keeping time with the drums. Dance, pray, honor, remember.

Peter and Marvin would spend today in the act of sacred memory. The dancing marked the sacrifice of family and friends who had served and died while in the military. Dance, the sacred memory dance; honor, the fallen warriors; remember, those who have walked on. Now in the mid-morning light, Peter's braids moved in rhythm with his deer-tail ligatures tied in knots falling down around his shoulders. The beads, deep blue like a cloudless sky, which fringed the sides of Peter's chaps, bounced with the pounding of the drums. The circle moved effortlessly, round and round. Dance, pray, honor, remember.

Peter Bluefeather and Marvin Littlebird, Lakota People, would return to Three Creeks late that night leaving the sacred circle for the return home. They came back to Three Creeks, but not alone, for they brought with them the honored warriors they had remembered that day, warrior brothers. Dance, pray, honor, remember.

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Fostering Incisive, Topic-Building Class Discussions

Jack Lynch

Abstract

In this essay the author describes his idiosyncratic teaching style to engage older learners in class discussions of intellectually challenging material. He proactively leads discussions to facilitate students making incisive on-topic comments that build on the ideas expressed by other students. He compares himself to a botanist who prunes his tulips to select those that in a few generations will emerge with unusually beautiful colors.

What Happened in Class

A cool early October morning greets me as I nervously head to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Southern Maine to teach a course on relational psychology. (*Social Connections and Human Development*, offered fall 2009). I have rewritten a vignette from our text, *The Healing Connection* (Miller and Stiver, 1997), into a short play and am hoping that three students, whom I had e-mailed the previous day, will act the parts in the play. I thought that witnessing the action would be more engaging than merely reading about it. I was following the traditional "show them, don't tell them" approach.

I occasionally offer opportunities for students to do a small task in class. Sometimes I have students read a paragraph from the text or, with advance notice, ask them to give a short "lecture" on a relevant topic that they know a lot about. These activities help a student feel more integrated into the class and create a community feeling. The short exercises have always achieved my modest goals and are done without my previewing the piece or evaluating it afterward. Although I sometimes will ask a probing question to initiate a discussion, I often will read a paragraph from the text or ask a student to read a paragraph to establish a context and remind us of a few details.

I meet my three students before class to give them a ten-minute introduction to method acting. I whisk them next door to an empty classroom and explain that I do not want them to "act" their parts; for amateurs like us that often leads to ludicrous melodrama. Instead, I tell them the backgrounds of each of their characters and suggest that they should alter or embellish their character's history to make their reading more vivid for the class.

As class starts, I explain that we are going to perform a vignette from the chapter they read for today's class. In that vignette, a highly placed executive berates one of his two private secretaries who then retreats to her own desk where she has a conversation with the other private secretary. We arrange the seats for the 28 students in a circle, and I ask the actor who plays the boss to remain in his seat on the circumference. I set up two seats near him but inside the circle for the two women who play his private secretaries.

The entire dialogue is roughly 200 words. The scene starts in the boss's office, where he is criticizing Claudia, one of his two private secretaries. Claudia is standing inside the circle, facing the boss.

> Boss: "Nonsense, girl. I've trained you to do much more. You lost it on this project. I expect a lot more from you. Now stop acting stupid and get out of here and get to work."
>
> Claudia then retreats to the outer office (inside the circle) where she has a desk next to Lydia, the second private secretary, who is also a friend of Claudia's. They discuss why Claudia is upset and then Lydia comments.
>
> Lydia: "You know, I'm really surprised you let him talk to you that way, that you didn't stand up for yourself! I would never give him the satisfaction of seeing me cry!"

The idea in this mini-drama is to create a situation in which one person (Claudia) has a dreadful experience and would be grateful for empathy from her friend (Lydia) but is yet again criticized. Claudia needed reaffirming connection with her friend but she felt even more disconnected.

After the short performance, I asked the three actors to remain in character for the ensuing discussion (rather than participate in it) allowing the class to probe deeper the motivations and limitations of the characters.

My plan was to let the discussion run for five or ten minutes and then proceed with the other discussion items I had prepared for the class. To my amazement, the "actors," without any preparation, responded to questions as if they were the characters. The emotional energy in the class was so striking that I let the discussion continue until it was time for our break—about an hour after the "play" started.

I thought that witnessing the action would be more engaging than merely reading about it. I was following the traditional "show them, don't tell them" approach.

A few of my students have graduate degrees in psychology, while others have only finished high school. They are mostly between sixty-five and seventy-five years old, though the range is about fifty-five to eighty-five. I do my best to welcome off-the-wall, poorly-thought-out, or even insensitive comments. I ask my students eager to share a deeply perceptive comment to hold back while others grapple with an important point. Often the class responds to off-the-wall comments with respectful but sometimes equally off-the-wall comments. Although I do not feel the need to reach a consensus on controversial points, I am amazed how often the class converges on a reasonable point of view. My goal is engagement. It is acceptable for a student to question authority if she has some rationale for doing so and is not mindlessly repeating learned platitudes. Sometimes the students with extensive backgrounds in a subject do bring up deep points of view and we discuss these as well. I am not sure that everyone necessarily follows these deeper discussions but it is a growth opportunity for many in the class. No voice is silenced, which means that all voices need to be silent some of the time.

Although we did not cover the points I wanted to cover based on the chapter we read, the class got emotionally connected to the ideas in the book at a personal level and I believe that this should be an important aspect of senior education.

One of my students wrote me in an e-mail the next day, "I was just thinking about yesterday's Social Connections/Human Development class and wanted to give you feedback on the first hour. I thought the dramatization was a good idea but your strong intuition that led you to build on it and turn it into a classic "fishbowl" learning exercise (observing a dramatization and then discussing it) was masterful! You succeeded in getting everyone emotionally engaged and almost all shared thoughts. If you could have been in the women's room during the break, you would have heard everyone buzzing about what it brought up from the past."

Reflection

I am told that I have an unusual teaching style. As one of my students put it, "You don't do anything but when you walk into the room, people burst into fascinating discussions." That, of course, is an exaggeration, but there is something to it. Students do not just say they learned something in my class, but say they feel transformed and energized. Yet in a sense I do not actually "do" anything and the students learn from one another. How does that happen? I am not a scholar of education, so I will not be able to quote what scholars say or provide evidence that what I claim to do is what I actually do or that what I think works is what actually works. Instead, I will reflect on part of my experience.

I believe that the essential ingredient is that I proactively lead discussions to keep them on topic so students build upon the ideas expressed by other students. I facilitate the students making incisive comments. I am using the word incisive in the sense of penetration to the heart of a subject and clear, sharp, and vigorous expression. I never know what will excite the group, but I pounce on any topic the class stumbles upon and shape that by pruning student comments so the discussion develops an important point raised by the book we are reading. I am like a botanist who prunes his tulips to select those that in a few generations will emerge with unusually beautiful colors. I augment this artificial selection process with some grafting. That is, I sometimes will briefly introduce an idea to alter the course of the discussion. I believe this is perceived as part of the discussion rather than a lecture of some kind so that the flow of the class conversation is not interrupted.

I am not sure that everyone necessarily follows these deeper discussions but it is a growth opportunity for many in the class. No voice is silenced, which means that all voices need to be silent some of the time.

I teach courses on difficult topics. I select them because I find them fascinating. I had no idea when I started teaching at OLLI whether other seniors would have the slightest interest in them. Many students have signed up for these classes, about 30 to a class, not because they have harbored an interest in these subjects but because they are excited about learning something challenging and new. The subjects I have taught include the evolution of natural language, the cognitive aspects of high functioning autism, the cognitive aspects of metaphor, and relational psychology. Because these subjects are hard to teach, I have had to pay close attention to what works in class and what does not work.

I attempt to approximate in a group what Socrates described in *Meno and the Slave Boy*. In that essay, he gives an example of teaching plane geometry by asking only adroit questions. Socrates' con is that he claims the student is born with a knowledge of geometry when in fact the adroit questions impart crucial knowledge by framing the student's perceptions to reveal subtle truths. The students in my classes learn from one another because I frame and select ideas from the group that collectively reveal subtle aspects of the material we are learning. I filter out irrelevant information and we "hill-climb" to a more profound understanding of the material. Hill-climbing is a technique used in computer science to find an optimal solution to a quantitative problem. I use the term metaphorically.

Imagine a landscape with many hills of various sizes, where physical height is associated with the amount of knowledge one has on the topic. The topic is designated by the location on the map. Imagine a myopic robot (student) without a sense of altitude that wanders randomly throughout the landscape; this corresponds to a class discussion without a leader. The robot has autonomy but no sense of direction and misses most of the hills (knowledge). At the other extreme, a lecture can be thought of as a guided tour where the best path for each hill and the sequence of hills is selected by the guide. The robot here has a passive role. It samples all the available

knowledge but has only a narrow view of it. In the hill-climbing model, the robot is still myopic so it cannot see the hills, but it is equipped with an altitude sensor. The robot tentatively makes small random moves and only selects those that allow it to go up a hill. In a topic-building discussion, the instructor serves as the altitude sensor. She rejects moves (discussion items) that do not move uphill (increase the knowledge of the topic at that location). The hill-climbing robot has a better sense of the terrain that it has explored, but it has covered less terrain than a robot directed by an omniscient guide. In my classes we do not cover all the points that the text raises or that I would ideally like to cover, but we deeply examine enough important topics to allow most students to feel a deep sense of achievement.

Problems can arise when facilitating a topic-building discussion. I upset a student in the class I described above because I asked her not to discuss her childhood traumatic events that had sprung to her mind because the boss in the mini-drama said two words that inadvertently served as strong triggers for her. I used those words intentionally because I wanted the class to become emotionally involved, never dreaming that anyone would react so powerfully. Reconciling such strong feelings can take a long time, and I decided that it was not in the best interest of the other students to pursue one student's personal problems in class. I suspect that the desire never to frustrate or upset a student will prevent some teachers from adopting a topic-building discussion approach to teaching. However, if the teacher treats all students equally and respectfully, then there is a better chance that no one's feelings will be hurt; but there are, of course, no guarantees.

Sometimes I ask a student to hold off on an excellent class-related thought because it is not exactly what I want to build on right then. Because I make a big effort to come back to such thoughts that students raise, the class is quite tolerant of my deferring their comments. However, doing so does tax my memory and I often ask the class to help me remember whose comments I have deferred. Deferring topics is perhaps the most difficult part of my approach—cutting off an insightful comment simply because it is not going in the direction I am focused on. A random walk (think of the path of a staggering drunk) of insightful comments is an entirely acceptable way to organize a class discussion. In fact, it is the ideal of many teachers. In my approach, I am not just pruning off-track or ill-conceived ideas but I prune ideas that do not build on the subtle or complex concept that I am focusing on at the time. Note that I do not care what subtle or complex point from the text we focus on because we cannot cover them all anyway. I only care that we build up a more profound understanding of a few of them.

It is tricky to know when to cut off the discussion because it no longer serves to raise new subtle points. I find it hard to do this when the class gets excited and many students want to speak. I confess that, just for the fun of it, I sometimes let them go longer than I deem they should.

Controversy, Lunacy, and Consensus

Although I fearlessly prune cogent off-topic comments, I never prune sincere but harebrained on-topic comments because I want to encourage full class participation. I often ask the class to respond to harebrained comments and they always do so respectfully and soon we are on a new track. People should feel free to say what is on their mind. They are, after all, learning new material, so some of what they think is dictated by prejudices and mistaken or misunderstood common knowledge. It is instructive to explicitly distinguish one's old ideas from the new ideas. The same is true for controversial or even negative comments. Because I do not see the need for reaching a class consensus on any of the ideas, I welcome controversial on-topic ideas because they help others think through their beliefs. For example, if a student were to say that wearing car seatbelts was foolish, I would not ignore or naysay him but let the class produce the reasons for wearing seatbelts. Organizing that argument would be helpful to the class whether or not the controversial student was convinced by the argument.

Sometimes, a student will say she has a crazy off-the-wall idea. I always say, "Please, let's hear it." Often it is a deep idea or can be reformulated into a deep idea. For a student to see another student's sincere perplexity can be enormously helpful—it is okay to feel perplexed and these musings are helpful to other students. If kept on topic, students can learn much from one another. It is a more interactive intellectual process, yielding deeper roots in one's mind. Puzzling thoughts burn more neural calories. The goal of my class is to burn neural calories.

I am like a botanist who prunes his tulips to select those that in a few generations will emerge with unusually beautiful colors. I augment this artificial selection process with some grafting.

Class Size

I once got into a discussion with a knowledgeable teacher in charge of assigning classrooms to the next session's classes. I had requested a room to hold 30 to 40 people but I had also said that my class was run as a discussion. She said that you cannot run a discussion with that large a group and that she would assign me a classroom that held 20 people, the norm for our OLLI classes. At the time I had not figured out why I preferred the larger class size but she eventually let me have the larger room because I "had a following" and therefore could do as I pleased on this matter. Frankly, for open-ended discussion with peers, I prefer a group size of four or five people. I suspect that a class size of 20 is a compromise that affords those students who want to speak the opportunity to frequently do so. The focus is on students speaking.

In contrast, in my classes the focus is on students listening to one another. While I want every student to participate, they need not do so very often. I am utterly dependent on a few good ideas emerging from the class. The likelihood of this increases if more minds grapple with the problem.

Intellectual fecundity is crucial for selection processes to operate. Forty minds would be even better, but then it would be more difficult for us to know one another and feel we are all part of an intimate community.

Democracy in the Classroom

I have been told that students, especially adult or senior students, should be in charge of their own education. Although I fully support democracy, I do not run a democratic classroom. I suggest that for education to occur some form of outside influence should be present. Students need to be exposed to new ideas. Democracy is not simply about raising your hand in class or marking a ballot. Democracy is a complex social system. One essential feature of that system is that the voters need to be informed about the complex issues of their time, something much deeper than television sound-bites. Substantive education is crucial to a democracy and that is what topic-building discussions are about.

Final Remarks

Did I fail to mention that doing this is fun? I enjoy myself and, surprisingly, the students do, too. At a class break, my students were asked by the students in the adjacent class who were also on a short break, "What is going on in there? You are having too much fun!" Students have told me, much like the Scarecrow in the *Wizard of Oz*, that they had thoughts they never had before. Not just different thoughts but a deeper level of thought, thoughts that changed their image of themselves and the world.

References

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Jack Lynch earned a Ph.D. from Stanford University in electrical engineering and spent most of his career doing engineering research at MIT Lincoln Laboratory. He retired in 1996 and has spent the last 14 years independently studying cognitive science. He has self-published three books on that subject, all entitled, *I Am Not a Machine*. Besides teaching cognition-related courses at the University of Southern Maine's OLLI, he also taught swing dancing at a bar/music club in Somerville, Massachusetts, for six years and now teaches cross-cultural line dance at OLLI.

The Pond

Hope Briggs

Oh dark shadowy pond,
why so still?
Do you reflect sky,
to hide your depths?
We know life darts beneath your surface,
your sliddery mud bottom,
covered by worty skin of lakeweed,
sees the geese flung southward,
on black winds of wings,
following their truth.
Sees the risen tree corpse above,
dead twisted arms flung upward,
reaching for the moon,
sees the splendid eagle rise like blown smoke,
from perch on lifeless branch.
Oh dark shadowy pond,
we know your hidden life spirit.

Born in 1924 in Council Bluffs, Iowa, **Hope Briggs** was the only child of a migratory crop worker and a child-girl of sixteen. She graduated high school in a tiny town called Paisley. After marriage and three children, Hope began working in real estate and was successful in the business world. She says that "success was possible, I think, because of my love for the written word, both poetry and prose, letting me escape into other worlds."

The Tailor in Nevada 1874

J. Brown

Jacob had a shop
by the railroad in Reno.
Feeding his hunger
with the labor of his hands,
he picked up
the gleaming
copper rivets,
hammering them
into the corners of the pants
for strength.
Levi dyed
the twilled cloth
with indigo
from the sea and sky,
releasing patterns
of white light
for the miners and cowboys.
Double denim 501s
a standard bearer of
American ingenuity.
Our surviving relic of
a new civilization.
Still worn
in remembrance.

J. Brown is a native of Muskegan, Michigan, but has spent most of her life in California. After a career as a reading resource teacher she moved to the Dell Webb Retirement Community in Reno, Nevada, where she is the "village poet." She states that "nature in the Sierra Nevada Mountains has become part of my daily food."

Mildred

Jeremiah Conway

Abstract

An experienced professor describes his relationship with an older student who has decided to major in philosophy. "I'm over careers," states Mildred. "At my age, I'm into immediate gratification." This is an inspiring memoir written by a caring teacher as he reflects on the aspirations and challenges experienced by one of his favorite students.

"Why do it?"

I looked into the moist eyes of the old lady sitting opposite me.

"Why put yourself through it? "For what?"

Mildred sat with her hands folded in her lap and, after a minute or so, reached down into her pocketbook, pulled out a linen handkerchief and dabbed her eyes.

I felt as downcast as the weather: a somber, February afternoon, the sun already descending at 3:30 in the afternoon, my office seeming an overstuffed closet, and I was spending my time reducing an old lady to tears. Ever the lady, Mildred refused to blame her red eyes on me. "Sorry, Professor. It's hard to explain the need to continue. It's a long, complicated story, and at my age, you do what you have to do. I regret being the bearer of bad news and appreciate your listening. Thanks."

Mildred made a motion to stand up. She gathered her purse and leather briefcase. "Oh, before I forget: one piece of *good* news. Remember that creative writing assignment I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, the one I kept revising, well I finally got it back from my English professor. She loved it. Said it was the best piece of writing I've done all semester—a straight A."

"That's great, Mildred, I'd love to read it sometime."

"Really? I'd be honored," she replied, and without missing a beat, dove into her briefcase, surfacing with the paper. "I hope you enjoy it, Professor."

"She's dealing with cancer, not a cold," I murmured to myself. My ruminations finished, I gulped the last bit of cold coffee and started to close up shop. As I gathered my things, I glanced down at Mildred's paper on top of the desk. I picked it up and began to read.

Mildred

"Thanks, Mildred, maybe after I read it, we can get together and talk it over?" For the first time in our acquaintance, I leaned forward to give her a hug, rather than the standard handshake.

After Mildred left, I slumped in my chair, feeling the dim afternoon close in on me. Mildred, the oldest philosophy major I had ever taught, had just told me that she had been diagnosed with cancer and would be starting an elaborate battery of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. She was afraid that she wouldn't be able to keep up with classes during the regimen and wondered whether we could make some special arrangements. It was at this point that I had pressed her about why she felt the need to continue her courses. "Wouldn't it be better to take some time off and attend to your health? Why pile on the added pressures of classes, readings, and papers? Why not give yourself a break?"

It was here that Mildred started to fill up. In retrospect, while I was sorry that my questions had brought her to tears, I was convinced that I was right: she was taking on too much without needing to do so.

"She's dealing with cancer, not a cold," I murmured to myself. My ruminations finished, I gulped the last bit of cold coffee and started to close up shop. As I gathered my things, I glanced down at Mildred's paper on top of the desk. I picked it up and began to read.

Before sharing the content of Mildred's paper, let me provide a bit more of the context for her office visit. Mildred was a student in my introductory philosophy course. In a sea of fresh, eighteen- to twenty-five-year-old faces, she stood out with her silver coiffed hair, flower print dresses, and embroidered sweaters. But she stood out for more than seniority and appearance. Unlike many of her young classmates, who had a studied air of nonchalance about college, Mildred was unabashedly eager. She came to class like she was first violin in a symphony orchestra—meticulously prepared, always seated in the front, dressed for the occasion. Her proximity offered me a clear view of her obsessions, for example, that she highlighted texts with multiple colored markers and never sat in class without a dictionary under her chair. While serious about college, she wasn't dour. Her work ethic was balanced by a lightness of spirit. She laughed easily, with that no-holds-barred abandon that often graces elderly women. She was enthusiastic in her praise of younger classmates (a demographic that encompassed everyone in the room). She seemed, in short, relentlessly pleased to be in college.

I quickly grew to like Mildred. She reminded me in many ways of my mother—a slight, fragile-looking lady—but someone whose small frame concealed a dynamo of energy and determination. Mildred's fascination with her classmates was contagious. She wanted to know what they thought, where they were from, what their plans were. If they had pierced noses and colorful tattoos, she would gravitate to them even faster. From her seat in the front of the room, she would swivel around whenever

someone spoke behind her. She enjoyed their company, and they, in turn, appreciated her. They respected her work ethic and listened to what she had to say. But it was her gratitude for being able to learn that made the greatest impression. She would often say, right in the midst of some discussion, how grateful she was to be reading Plato or Aristotle, Tolstoy, or Thoreau at this point in her life. The same remark, coming from someone else, someone younger, would have seemed fawning, but from Mildred its genuineness was unassailable. The honesty of her gratitude, its unstudied expression, punctured the nonchalance of the young. It struck me that Mildred wielded a surprisingly powerful bobby pin—a simple thankfulness for learning—of which she was unaware, but that jabbed those who regarded college as a prison sentence from which they sought release.

But it was her gratitude for being able to learn that made the greatest impression.

Mildred was pleased to be in college and couldn't hide it. Instead of this being obnoxious, it was endearing and infectious. I enjoyed seeing how she was liked by her newfound "friends." She was also shameless about relying upon her classmates. She announced, more than once, that the one thing that could prevent her from attaining her degree was the infernal math department. She described a life and death struggle with some math proficiency course and lobbied for all the tutoring help she could get. I watched as chocolate chip cookies were passed down rows before class, and I knew these were algebra-assistance payments of some kind.

Two events marked my early experience of Mildred in the course. The first was the day she announced her decision to become a philosophy major. She said that she couldn't imagine doing anything more worthwhile with her time than conversing with the philosophers she was reading. She added that, in retirement, she didn't have to worry about putting food on the table or making a career. "I'm over careers," I remember her saying. "At my age, I'm into immediate gratification."

The second event was more disturbing. About a third of the way through the course, I scheduled an in-class essay exam. As usual, I sat reading at a table in the front. Occasionally, I'd look up from my book at the flying pens and cramping fingers. As I watched, I noticed that Mildred looked unwell. She held her forehead in one hand and had an anxious look on her face that I hadn't seen before. I went up to her, asking if anything was wrong. "I don't know, Professor, the old thoughts just aren't there." She smiled weakly but with a look of fear in the eye.

I had no idea what was going on. Nearly all the students in the class had handed in their exams, and Mildred remained in her chair. With time running out, she walked to the front of the room, handed in the exam booklet, saying she couldn't finish. I looked quickly at the work. "It's barely half-done, Mildred."

"I know," she said. "I can't explain it." She turned and walked to the door.

Mildred

I caught up to her in the hallway. "Are you sure you're all right, Mildred?"

A slight smile crossed her face. "Well, I felt better before the exam."

"Were you pressed for time? Any history of trouble with in-class exams?" I asked.

"No," she replied, "I just couldn't organize my answers."

The whole situation didn't seem right to me. Here was a student who was always prepared, who did the readings, worked hard, and she couldn't finish more than half the exam. "It wasn't *that* difficult," I thought to myself, and made a split decision. "Listen, Mildred, maybe you're not used to in-class essay exams, maybe time pressure affected you. Why don't you take your exam booklet, walk over to the library and finish it? Bring it back to my office when you're done."

Mildred greeted the proposal with little enthusiasm. She took the exam, but with the uncharacteristic attitude "Let's just get this thing over with."

"Alright," she said in a low voice, "I'll see what I can do."

As I walked down the hall away from her, a number of thoughts raced through my mind. "What did I just do? I gave Mildred an extension that I hadn't given to anyone else. How fair is that? I don't know whether other students in the class wrote under time pressure or had similar difficulties completing their exams." I had no good answers to my questions. If one of her classmates had asked me whether this was favoritism, whether it violated the notion of equal treatment, I wouldn't have known what to say. I just knew that Mildred wasn't right—which didn't seem much of a justification for bending the rules. "Nice little ethical dilemma," I thought to myself and pushed it aside.

About two hours later, Mildred knocked on the office door and turned in the exam. We talked for a bit about whether the additional time had made a difference.

"It helped some, I guess. I didn't have to watch the minutes pass. I worried less," she said. "But I'm afraid I still didn't do well. Everything seemed jumbled."

I tried to cheer her up. "Thankfully, it's over, Mildred. Maybe it isn't as bad as you think."

"Perhaps you're right," she said. "I'm just going to go home and take a long nap."

Mildred was right about her performance on the exam. Her grade was in complete contrast with the rest of her work. But we moved on. I felt lucky that none of her classmates had challenged me about the unequal treatment. Maybe no one had noticed. Mildred seemed more subdued in class than before the exam, but I still enjoyed her presence. She had good observations and questions. The semester went along.

This was the context for Mildred walking into my office that gloomy February afternoon. We got talking, I forget about what. I remember wondering in the midst of our chitchat why she had come. As if reading my thought, she turned suddenly serious. There's something I have to tell you. Remember when I took that exam, and you let me complete it in the library?"

"Yes, Mildred, I remember it very clearly," I replied.

"Well, for weeks before then I hadn't been feeling well—severe headaches and fatigue. I finally got myself to my doctor and underwent some tests, actually a lot of them. I got the results a couple of days ago. The report wasn't good. I have a brain tumor and it's malignant."

She could read my shock and immediately tried to soften the blow. "The tumor must have been stealing space from thoughts on Plato."

Her smile didn't help. The news jolted me, literally. I starting fumbling with expressions of sorrow, even foolishly asking how serious the cancer was.

"It's serious," she said.

I groped my way to the usual questions. Could I help? Was there anything I could do? Did she have family in the area?

She answered that she had good friends in her apartment complex, and there were nieces and nephews nearby. Her main concern was to let me know that she didn't know whether she'd be able to attend classes and, if not, could she complete the course some other way?

I was amazed that she was talking about finishing her courses. It seemed so insignificant in relation to what she was facing. I pushed my questions about why, at her age and in this situation, she felt the need to complete her courses. Mildred, however, would have nothing of my advice. Recognizing her resistance, I relented. "Don't worry," I told her, "we'll find a way for you to finish. If you can't come to class, we can do it online or meet at your apartment, especially if chocolate chip cookies are in the offing."

She seemed genuinely relieved. "I appreciate that, Professor. I've got my heart set on finishing."

It was then, as I mentioned earlier, that she moved to rise, told me of her English paper, and handed it to me.

I don't know why I couldn't leave the office that dismal afternoon without reading her paper. I wanted to get out, but, given the news of Mildred's cancer, there was a strong, contrary pull to stay with her words. I began reading begrudgingly but, as usual with Mildred, her charm and directness undid my resistance.

Her paper was entitled "An Incredible Woman" and was about her mother, Albertina. It opens on a snowy Sunday afternoon with Mildred listening to the tick tock of her grandmother's clock in the hallway. The

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Mildred

peaceful stillness of her apartment turns her thoughts to memories of the past, and she takes down a box on the top shelf of the hall closet, filled with photographs of family and friends.

The first photo that draws her attention is of Albertina's graduation from St. Patrick's Grammar School in 1919. Mildred writes:

> All thirty students with somber faces standing rigid in their high-buttoned shoes in front of the brick school building. The boys are dressed in knickers and jackets that look too small on them, and the girls in their prim and proper high collared blouses with long skirts. In the second row, third on the right, with sparkling eyes and a slight smile, is Albertina, my mother.

She was the oldest in a family of six children, two girls and four boys. Albertina's mother and father were immigrants from Lithuania. Her father came from a wealthy family and was well-educated. Her mother grew up as a peasant on a small farm. They met, fell in love, and decided to journey to the New World. Albertina's father sold his land inheritance to his brother to finance their voyage. They left everything behind, came to America, settling in a small mill town in New England.

Mildred focuses on the upbringing, in particular, the education that her mother received:

> During the early nineteen hundreds, men and women's roles were rigidly defined. Grammar school education, which was up through eighth grade, was considered sufficient for the young women of the working class. After graduation from grammar school, if a girl made it that far, she went to work in the mill or got married.
>
> Albertina, upon graduation, expressed her deep desire to go to high school. This announcement brought forth her mother's beliefs in a very firm proclamation: 'Education is wasted on women! A woman's place is in the home! To raise a family!'
>
> Albertina was devastated. She could not understand why her brothers had a choice while she didn't. She could not understand why education would be wasted on a woman. She could not understand why a woman's place was only in the home raising a family. Many times, when Albertina found her mother alone in the kitchen, she pleaded, 'Why, Mama, tell me why.'

Albertina was very close to her father. They used to spend hours together reading and talking. Her father recognized the brilliance of her mind

and believed in his daughter's dream of an education. At Albertina's urging, he promised to re-raise the possibility of high school with her mother and see if he could change her thinking.

The task proved very difficult. Mildred describes Albertina, lying in bed, anxiously listening to muffled voices in another room and knowing what the heated discussion was about. After a week of struggle, it was agreed that Albertina could go to high school, but only on condition that she would also work part-time in the mill. The terms were accepted with jubilation.

Mildred details the labor that made her mother's schooling possible—how she worked in the mill Monday through Friday from 3:00 to 8:00 in the evening, in addition to fulfilling considerable chores at home. She would rise once a week at four in the morning to scrub the laundry, and on two other days, she would wash the kitchen floor before running off to school. Mildred's commentary deserves attention:

> Sunday afternoon, the dishes cleared away, was a time of relaxing or visiting with guests. Sometimes Albertina studied in the afternoon and into the evening so as to make it easier for herself during the week. There were times when she found the going tough, especially during her menstrual period when she was more tired and energy drained. Those were the times Albertina cried into her pillow at night whispering prayers to give her courage and strength to reach her goal. Never a murmur or a word of discouragement was uttered by Albertina to her family, especially her mother, about how hard it was at times keeping up with everything and going to high school.

Mildred writes of her mother's dedication to her studies, and how she found power and enjoyment in the classroom. In 1923, upon graduation from high school, Albertina was awarded a scholarship to Bates College due to outstanding grades in Latin. Success, however, brought renewed trouble.

Albertina's announcement of the scholarship and her wish to accept it rekindled her mother's beliefs that education was wasted on women, whose place was in the home to raise a family. Her mother used the scholarship itself against her daughter: "You don't need Latin to run your home or raise your children, at least I didn't. I'm sure millions of other women around the world are doing fine without Latin." Once again, Albertina sought the help of her father. Mildred captures the ensuing struggle:

> It was a reenactment of the 1919 event, with a different conclusion. Far into the night the whole household again was disturbed with the muffled voices that carried argumentative tones. Joseph in

Albertina's announcement of the scholarship and her wish to accept it rekindled her mother's beliefs that education was wasted on women, whose place was in the home to raise a family. Her mother used the scholarship itself against her daughter: "You don't need Latin to run your home or raise your children, at least I didn't. I'm sure millions of other women around the world are doing fine without Latin."

Mildred

his heartfelt battle tried to make Anna realize that their daughter had special talents and it would be a shame to have them go to waste. But, this time, he lost the fight for Albertina in Anna's court of law. Her last word was a resounding "No" to the college education issue.

Thereafter, the nights were quiet except for the sound of soft weeping that could be heard now and then coming from Albertina's room. She wondered what her life was going to be like now. She loved the academic world and was going to miss it terribly.

Albertina's life was forever changed by this decision. Eventually in 1923, she met Anthony, a neighbor's nephew who was visiting from a nearby town. Anthony was six feet tall, dark haired, very handsome, and charming. He worked as a laborer in a paper mill and freelanced as an amateur wrestler. He challenged travelling wrestlers at state fairs for purse money. Anthony was known as "Bangor Bill" in the wrestling circuits. "Bangor Tony" just didn't sound right. Anthony's visits to his aunt became quite frequent after he met Albertina. But as with her college scholarship, their relationship was destined to meet with disapproval and resistance, particularly from her mother. A man carousing around state fairs, fighting for money wasn't right for her daughter.

Despite obstacles, Bangor Bill fell in love with Albertina and asked her to marry him. As she later told her younger sister, Albertina liked Anthony a lot, but she didn't believe she loved him. Anthony persisted, however, and Albertina eventually agreed to become his bride. Her decision only heightened her mother's reservations. Albertina ignored her mother's warnings and made plans for the wedding. Here is Mildred's description of her mother's wedding day:

The day arrived. Albertina was in her bedroom getting dressed for the wedding. Her mother entered as the veil was being placed on Albertina by her sister. Albertina was an angelic vision in her high-collared white gown with lace over satin that fitted tightly at the waist and fell into soft folds throughout the skirt. Albertina turned and faced her mother. They stood for a moment in silence. The sunlight was shining through her window on her lovely auburn-colored hair that framed her face under the veil. There was a misty aura about the beautiful bride-to-be.

Mother and daughter stared at each other. Anna broke the quiet and said with a quiver in her voice, "Please, Albertina, it's not too late to change your mind. Anthony is going to give you a hard life. I just know it. Please reconsider. Don't marry him."

Albertina for the first time in her life stood up to her mother. She crossed the room to face her. "Let me go to Bates College and I'll remove my veil."

Anna's face grew grim as she replied weakly, "Albertina, I'd rather see you get married to Anthony than waste your life going to school."

Albertina, with tears in her eyes, turned to her sister and said, "It's time to go." She moved out of the sunlight, passed her mother, and walked into the arms of her father who was waiting at the bedroom door.

Anthony and Albertina were married that morning at St. Patrick's church.

Mildred's mother never got a degree. Later in life, after her marriage had broken up, she found a position in a university library, which kept her close in some ways to a world of books, ideas, and Latin. The essay ends with Mildred speaking of the hat box she had taken down:

With a heavy heart I return the grammar school photo to the box, wondering what might have been, if my mother's dream had come true. A few glimpses flash through my imagination: Albertina in her cap and gown, ascending the stage to receive her degree at the Bates College graduation ceremonies, then going on for her master's and doctorate in the field of Latin studies.

As I place the cover on the hat box, I'm thinking there is a spark of ambition in each of us to accomplish dreams, which can be fanned into flame by encouragement, or just remain a flicker in oneself where dreams are never brought to light.

The rose tapestry-covered box filled with memories of extraordinary people is back on the shelf for another time.

Reading Mildred's story of her mother was one of those experiences where, almost instinctively, one raises one's hand to cover one's mouth, holding the breath, knowing that one has witnessed something powerful, deep, and good. Even the dismal afternoon, now turned to evening could not dispel the sense of wonder and clarity engendered by the story. I now understood Mildred's refusal to drop her courses. It was an act of familial love. Mildred was fighting to get the degree, denied to her mother so many years before. She was fighting for what no woman in the history of her family had been given the chance.

I now understood Mildred's refusal to drop her courses. It was an act of familial love. Mildred was fighting to get the degree, denied to her mother so many years before. She was fighting for what no woman in the history of her family had been given the chance.

Over the next month or so, Mildred found it increasingly hard to attend class. We decided to meet occasionally in her apartment to discuss the

readings. Our get-togethers, however, were more about tea, cookies, and free-ranging conversation than Aristotle's *Ethics*. She was too weak. Eventually, she proposed taking an incomplete grade for the course and completing it the following semester. Instead of visits, we would speak on the phone every few weeks. But with end-of-semester busyness, the arrival of summer, and travel overseas, our contact became less frequent.

That fall, I received a call from a retired colleague with whom I hadn't spoken in years. He said that Mildred was a member of his church and had mentioned that I was one of her professors."I haven't spoken with her in nearly a month. How's she doing?" I asked.

"She's dying" was his blunt reply. "The reason I'm calling," he continued, "is that I'd like your help in trying to get the University to grant her a bachelor's degree. She doesn't have the required number of credits, but she isn't going to make it. Something has to be done, and now. Are you willing to help?"

"Sure," I said, "I'll do anything I can."

Our first step was a letter of appeal to the president of the university, explaining the situation. We waited. And waited. Frustrated with the lack of action, we agreed to pester the president's office tag-team style with requests for information. Our pestering got results. We received a letter from the president, informing us that our request was extremely delicate, requiring careful consultation with the chancellor and board of trustees. Awarding an honorary bachelor's degree without the specified number of credits was a complicated matter. It could not be done haphazardly, and time was needed to do it right.

The irony, of course, was that time was the one thing that Mildred lacked. My colleague and I decided that in order to move things along (and increase pressure), we would invite Mildred to a gathering at the university for family and friends. Mildred was all for it. We asked her to compile a short list of people whom she'd like to invite. In less than three days, Mildred mailed back a list with 176 names. I gulped at the sight of it: who was going to pay for a luncheon of this size? My retired colleague told me not to worry, assuring me that, as soon as people knew the event was for Mildred, money would not be an object. To his credit, he was completely right. Respondents to "Mildred's University Party" (we couldn't call it a degree ceremony because we didn't know whether the University's bureaucratic wheels would churn fast enough) were extremely generous.

Shortly before the party was to occur, we received official notice that, yes, the University would award an honorary bachelor's degree at the luncheon. I reread the letter of announcement several times, realizing as others could not, that Mildred was the first woman in the history of her family to obtain a college degree.

To be honest, I have no memory of what Mildred said at that luncheon. I know she looked immensely happy. When that bachelor's hood was placed

over her head and draped across her shoulders, she beamed from head to toe. At the same time, of course, she was very weak. She gave no speech. Just attending the event, dressed to the hilt, was statement enough. For the most part, she sat at the head table, surrounded by nephews and nieces, and looked fulfilled. I remember her individually thanking each of her professors, even the instructor of the dreaded math proficiency course.

At the end of the ceremony, a greeting line formed to congratulate Mildred personally. I took my place at the back of the line. As I moved forward, I was remembering the end of the paper she had written about her mother. Earlier I quoted the first line of the final paragraph. Here it is in full:

> The rose tapestry-covered box filled with memories of extraordinary people is back on the shelf for another time. Another time when another photo of a graduation will be added to the box of memories: Albertina's daughter in a cap and gown with a degree from the University. Her gray hair is tucked under the cap and under the gown she feels her mother's locket, close to her heart. Mother and daughter are entwined. The mother's spark from long ago, combined with the spark of her daughter, is being mysteriously fanned into flame, a flame bringing forth light to honor Albertina's dream.

I knew as I approached Mildred that I had better keep my words short. I didn't want to end a lovely ceremony in a puddle of tears. When I reached her, my arms hugged her thin body, and we exchanged quick kisses on the cheek. She grabbed my hand in both of hers, and said she was very grateful. I put my hands on her shoulders, looking her in the eye: "Congratulations, Mildred. You've made your mom very proud."

Jeremiah Conway teaches philosophy at the University of Southern Maine. He received his Ph.D. from Yale University and his B.A. from Fordham. "Mildred" is part of a collection of stories about teaching that he is seeking to publish. The work is entitled *Two Sticks of Bare Leg: Teaching and Human Transformation.*

In a Class by Itself: Memoirs

Loretta Petralis and Carol Samuel

Abstract

This article tells the 22-year success story of a class on memoir writing at a location which was once called the Athenaeum at RIT, but is now known as Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Rochester Institute of Technology (OLLI@RIT). The purpose of the course is to write life stories for future generations, but it has evolved as a vehicle for interpreting the past, establishing friendships, writing novels, sorting out emotionally charged experiences, and getting acquainted with the people in one's family. This article explains the history and evolution of the course. It also attempts to express the value of the course as seen through the eyes of the participants.

The preservation of written communication seems lost in this age of twitters, tweets, and texting. However, the 22-year-old Memoirs class at Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Rochester Institute of Technology is reasoned proof that in 1,000 words, or about five minutes worth of oral reading, all kinds of folks, from doctors to dog lovers, homemakers to historians, instructors to inventors, can provide written memories of life experiences which future generations might be interested in reading.

In 1987, the founding mothers and fathers of the Athenaeum at RIT gathered to agree on courses for a fledgling organization. The Memoirs class provided the opportunity for people seeking intellectual stimulation to begin or to continue writing life stories. Many times, enrollees had a specific audience in mind: a granddaughter, a son, a baby soon to be born.

The first course leader was retired high school English teacher Barbara Murphy. She initiated an annual publication entitled: *You Can Go Home Again*, which was a compilation of members' best pieces. As introduction to this collection, Barbara wrote, "This is why we write. We write what should not be forgotten. We write to illuminate the dark corners … to reveal and decipher our own lives … not to publish, but to explain to those not yet here. We are the living witness of all that we have seen, heard, and felt."

Barbara listened and offered to critique. She distributed a handout with

ideas for writing memoirs to encourage new participants (see Notes for Memoir Class at the end of this article). Barbara established the practice of passing around a velvet pouch with laminated numbers to assign the order in which participants would read their memoir, and this fair practice continues as a class methodology to this day. Barbara's tenure as course leader ended December 3, 2001, six days before esophageal cancer snuffed her life.

A one-term, interim course leader, himself a regular class member, stepped forward to perpetuate Barbara's endeavor. Daan Zwick hoped someone would "… feel motivated and strong enough to assume the pleasurable role of class facilitator … [because this class] allows us to examine our lives more closely and to share with others … the stories we wish to preserve."

In April 2002, Carol Samuel assumed the permanent position of course leader. Carol is successful with the class because she's empathic and eager to have new partners in the writing of memoirs, a habit she considers, "… one of the most important things we'll ever do." In the spirit first developed, Carol continually encourages "… new, continuing, and resuming class members to complete yet another term of memoir writing." The concept of writing a memoir is very simple. It's a piece of biographical or autobiographical writing. "Listening to the oral memoirs of others is abundantly instructive," notes Carol. In addition, each neophyte receives a handout which is basically an edited version of the original guidelines composed by Barbara Murphy. "There is no need for stylistic perfection," emphasizes Carol. Memoirs should be told in the voice of the author. (This fact spurred a colleague to create a sister class called Memoir Writing Techniques for those who want more formal writing instruction.)

Almost everyone reads each week, but some choose to sit and listen. The number of class participants hovers around 20, and each class lasts 90 minutes. So, at the end of an allotted five minutes, Carol reminds the individual that time is up by gently ringing a bell. Other than a few short comments in response to the content, Carol tactfully redirects lengthier discussion. Classmates frequently continue to exchange information outside of class over coffee or lunch.

During an annual Memoirs class presentation at the weekly Pfaudler noontime lecture series, select memoir writers share one of their written works to an audience of up to 50 or more OLLI members and their guests. Only eight or nine class members can participate in the culminating presentation each year. Many more slave away, writing weekly interpretations of their lives. "This class is a lot of work!" remarked one class member on a periodic evaluation form. So, what makes the Memoirs class so appealing that people are willing to do the work, sometimes even scheduling extra sessions during summer vacation periods? The answer may lie in another evaluator's comment, "This class keeps me writing; makes me want to write; gives me the ideas for topics to write."

Many times, enrollees had a specific audience in mind: a granddaughter, a son, a baby soon to be born.

Another key ingredient is the magic that happens once a week, when people who would otherwise not know each other, sit around a table and share five minutes of their past life experiences. Some of the narrations have themes common to everyone's experience regardless of an individual's generational, educational, socioeconomic, or cultural background. Love, for example. The emotions of an octogenarian's first romance some 70 years earlier were not so different from those of the author of a story entitled, "Looking for a New Wife After 51 Years."

The class discovers many facets of love. They listen to a war bride detail her shotgun wedding. They react with wonder when an immigrant tells how the Maharajah in his childhood village chose his wives by pointing through the crowd. They get teary-eyed as a mother describes the final night of packing with her college-bound daughter to whom she read, for the first time, a letter she had written soon after the daughter's birth 18 years earlier. The personal writing that's done for the Memoirs class is as important for the listener as it is for the writer. "The stories of others remind me of events in my own life which I've forgotten," writes one Memoirs class participant.

Another person shares the following insight: "This class provides a first-hand look at things history book writers don't think is important."In 1936, the U.S. government instituted the Federal Writers Project which attempted to get personal interviews with ex-slaves while they were still alive. The *Slave Narrative Collection* provides us with enthralling histories of 2,000 people, told in the vernacular, stories which only those people living at that time could tell. The same thing is happening at the OLLI@RIT Memoirs class every week. People are telling stories which span two centuries, and they're telling them with first-person commentary, a feature no history textbook could possibly duplicate.

Consider the impact of the Vietnam War on our country. A collision of ideals led to youth protestations which resulted in harm to many. A chaotic America ensued. Eventually, the draft was eliminated, but not before respect for authority was forever fractured. Indeed, the story isn't finished yet. OLLI@RIT Memoirs class has a doctor who served in Vietnam. Perry Eck is using letters he wrote home at the time to compile chapters, maybe for a future book. He prefaces his installments each week with a comment similar to this, "It's about Vietnam again. I was only there for 10 months but it seemed like forever. I have 10 years' worth of stories to tell."

In Memoirs class, the human element breathes soul into history. Judy Cole, class member of many years, always listed a few concurrent events from the news on the date her story took place. One of her stories was ironically entitled, "Murder and Mayhem," and was preceded by a listing of the events of 1946: the establishment of the CIA, the loss of the World Series by the Boston Red Sox, the trial of Japanese war criminals, and the movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*. By juxtaposing a personal story about her mother's

mishap of getting run over by a car (which, incidentally, her daughter encouraged her to write), she conveyed how a single individual's travail can overshadow what we sometimes consider to be more important historical events.

Occasionally, members write about sensitive personal topics. Confessed one class respondent, "I've learned to listen to uncomfortable stories." The class listens respectfully as one woman tries to understand her abusive father; another shares the tribulation of an illegal abortion that almost killed her; a third woman tells the gruesome account of a neighbor's fatal accident.

As we age, many of us deal with serious health concerns. Individuals in this class have recounted experiences with terminal illnesses, widowhood, and many other seminal events. "Not everyone can publish, but everyone can write," remarks Liz Kowalski, daughter of cancer victim, Grace Keagy, who participated in the Memoirs class before her death. Liz is grateful for the opportunity to learn about her mother through her memoirs. "It recreates the family," says Liz. "It brings photos to life … Mom and I had some wonderful conversations while she was writing the memoirs."

Lois "Inky" Watts, wife of former sports writer Harry Watts, who died after completing several years in the class, revealed that she knew everyone in the class by the stories Harry shared with her each week. The class knew Lois's nickname, Inky, in the same way. Says Inky, "The surviving family members read Harry's stories over and over again with joy and laughter. We plan to publish them in a book for the grandchildren."

Through narrative exchanges, the people in this class achieve an understanding of the impact of life-altering events. But, the class is not a group therapy session. Class member Laura Magin affirms what it is: "This class provides a safe place to write."

Safe, and healthy too. It's hard to miss the many references these days to the inferences that social connections make happy people; and happy people are indeed healthy people. "This class is a good way to connect with people. We laugh … we all need this type of connecting," another class member writes. The class is blessed each and every week by laughter which the writers make possible through their whimsical stories. A mother of five amused the class with a story about how she smashed an uncooperative toaster one day during the family breakfast. Another told of the first job she held in this country when she was "fresh off the boat." She made plenty of mistakes taking orders for ice cream, but she never got upset. She simply ate the mistake! A third person witnessed an incredibly funny episode when she and her husband, who liked to track turkeys, went hunting with all kinds of sound props (which she brought in to demonstrate). Imagine her husband's surprise when his well-refined turkey call worked! He found a fair-feathered mate that was so smitten by him, the turkey chased him all the way to the safety of their car.

Another key ingredient is the magic that happens once a week, when people who would otherwise not know each other, sit around a table and share five minutes of their past life experiences.

This story shows the relevance of "show-and-tells," which frequently accompany stories. Presenters find an enthusiastic audience with which to share family photos, hobby collections, and old newspaper clippings. An artist displayed a collection of shoes from her museum show, and provided an explanation of how she achieved inspiration for the pieces. A book, published by his grandfather, portrayed the class member as a two-year-old. He recognized the picture, but couldn't read the text because it was in Yiddish. As he bemoaned the fact that his grandfather's thoughts about him would be forever lost, a moment of synchronicity happened. Another member of the class offered to read it to him over lunch!

Coincidences like this happen often when people voluntarily share their memories with each other. A never-to-be-duplicated event occurred during one session when several participants staged unplanned narratives of their World War II experiences. One person was a bombardier, another, a little girl in Germany at the time, yet another lived in a city which was being bombed. Perhaps these narratives jogged some memories, because during the following weeks, many World War II stories emerged. One woman went to live with her grandparents in the mountainous Italian countryside away from the combat; a fifth person reported fighting against the Japanese on Iwo Jima; and yet a sixth story recounted the death of a fiancé who was killed in action. Imagine being privy to these astounding personal histories. No need to read a single paragraph in a history textbook!

"Without this class, moments in my life would have been lost," says Marilyn Gillespie, veteran memoirist. Marilyn's not the only one to feel this way. Even as alarmists complain about the loss of written communication to cyberspace proclivities, memoir writing has emerged as a popular genre. The heart-rending memoir of Frank McCourt about his mother, *Angela's Ashes*, made the best seller list. As did Jimmy Carter's, *Memories of a Rural Boyhood*, Bill Clinton's, *My Life*, and Laura Bush's *Spoken from the Heart*. The celebrated Studs Terkel emerged into the literary world by revealing the stories of common working people in a book entitled, simply, *Working*.

Dan Murphy, son of original class leader, Barbara Murphy, shared his thoughts about the value of the class for his mother. Her role framed the structure and purpose of the class, and Dan greatly appreciates the perpetuation of the Memoirs class because he considers it to be a compliment to his mom. In fact, he invited the class to conduct a memoir sharing session over dinner at his restaurant, Murph's Irondequoit Pub, located in a suburb of Rochester.

This class will continue to be offered at OLLI@RIT. Those who have taken it share a special bond. They have opted to confide installments of their life experiences to others who have become part of that experience. Says long-term RIT memoirist Erwin Loewen, "I can't imagine life without it!"

Suggestions for Further Reading: Contemporary Memoirs

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References for Getting Started

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Notes for Memoirs Class

A. Why should you write memoirs? Why shouldn't you?

1. Preserving your family history is a gift you give yourself and your loved ones. Memories may fade with time, but once committed to paper, they'll be preserved for future generations. You may feel that you are not very important, but everyone's life is somehow unique, even extraordinary. In writing memoirs, you can describe a slice of life occurrence, events, and moments that happened to you personally, the way you recall it.
2. There has never been a greater need for this kind of family history writing. Our society has become verbal. The art of letter writing has virtually been lost. Few people keep a diary, and grandparents who once lived with and shared family stories around the dinner table now live far away.

3. Memoir writing is a way to protect the passing of treasured family stories, and to reconnect generations of families, often separated by time and distance. What would you do if you came upon a manuscript written by a great grandparent in the late 1800s? Wouldn't you be thrilled beyond words to learn what life was like then? Someone may similarly thank you in the future for your present efforts.
4. Added value with this class. Previous class members can attest to the friendships that have begun and have been nurtured through the sharing of our stories. This is a bonus!

B. To make your memoirs more interesting for others, here are some suggestions:
1. Do not wait for inspiration. Just start writing.
2. Make a mental picture. You may find it helpful to form a mental image of what you want to say and where you want to go before you begin writing. Sometimes as you are writing more ideas will come into mind.

C. Topics
1. Write what you know.
2. Portrait of a favorite or not-so favorite relative
3. Education: early schooling, high school, college experience, etc.
4. Where you lived
5. Your parents
6. Profiles: family members; your children's childhood; one aspect of your life
7. Your childhood
8. Friends, enemies, neighbors, relationships
9. Leisure activities
10. Toys, games, hobbies
11. Virtues you value—thrift, courtesy, hard work, e.g.
12. Siblings
13. Your first date, or dating
14. High school reunions
15. Painful events
16. Scary times or places
17. Death
16. A journey or your travels
17. Your first job
18. Listen to memoirs of classmates, take notes
19. Weddings
20. Unforgettable buildings
21. Historical events during your life
22. Pets

23. Fashion: Shoes, hats, favorite clothes
24. Cooking, kitchen disasters, recipes
25. Holidays, holiday traditions
26. Old photos
27. Newspapers, conversations, TV, movies, and other everyday coincidences can stimulate memories

D. Final Advice

1. Our class will serve as an impetus for getting started or continuing the project so many desire to undertake, and yet feel overwhelmed at the enormity of the task. Each week you may read what you have written if you so desire. There are no grades, and if you cannot be here on a certain class, you don't to have to bring an excuse. You should not feel the least bit self-conscious, hesitant, or intimidated. We are all coming from different backgrounds, with different reasons for writing, and with different writing skills.
2. Aim for a piece of writing each week, type it if you can, write legibly if you can't, be ready to read aloud if possible. You will begin to sense the quality of your life stories with the reaction of the class members.
3. Class members need to be friendly and informal, comfortably engrossed, and encouraging to one another.
4. These notes are to be used as a suggestion to help begin the process of memoir writing. I hope they will be useful. To a considerable part, they include notes that Barbara Murphy, the original course leader, handed out to new participants in the Memoirs class. I hope you will enjoy the work you do as much as I have.

Loretta Petralis has been a member of the Memoirs class at Osher@RIT since 2007. Writing is one of her favorite activities along with reading, gardening, birding, and mothering. Loretta is retired from 34 years of teaching yet continues to be both a teacher and lifelong learner. She enrolls in classes at Writers and Books and Oasis, two other adult education centers near her home, and tutors African refugees and inner city students. Loretta lives in Rochester, N.Y., with her husband and son.

Carol Samuel considers leading the Memoirs Class at Osher@RIT a pleasure. She also contributes to the Osher Speakers Bureau as a presenter in the area of her special interest, "The Art of Antique Carousels." Carol is a retired obstetric nurse who remains active as a childbirth educator and medical museum board member. She lives in Rochester, N.Y., with her husband and their two Jack Russell terriers. She regrets that her daughters' families, especially the grandchildren, live far away from her.

Life Stories, Autobiography, and Personal Narratives

Robert Atkinson

Life stories can change the world! We have much to learn from each other through our life stories, much that will help us understand and relate to others more compassionately. "Our lives are journeys toward a certain kind of wisdom, which is a love and appreciation for all living creatures," says Mary Pipher in *Writing to Change the World*. As we tell and share the stories of our journey toward this understanding, this love and appreciation cannot help but bring us closer together; it cannot help but change our world.

The times in which we live can have a great deal to do with how much our life and life story can actually change the world we live in. In this issue, we have the wonderful and engaging life stories of two fascinating OLLI members whose stories vividly illustrate how the times during which we come into our formative years can change our lives and how our actions—and the life stories we tell about these times—can, in turn, change the world.

A true Renaissance woman, Bette Felton is the embodiment of what lifelong learning really looks like. With a challenging but heartwarming birth story, Bette grew up having "a wonderful childhood" with parents who traveled and valued education, the arts in particular. She was steered toward a career in the health sciences with a commitment to social justice activities early on through coming into contact with the right mentors along the way. Entering the University of California, Berkeley in the mid-60s, in the beginning of the Free Speech Movement, she got right into the middle of what her father tried to steer her away from. After receiving her nursing degree from UCSF, she and her husband Jim spent a few years on the east coast, in Buffalo, and Washington, D.C., and then returned to the Bay area where she has had a rewarding career as professor and dean at Cal State Hayward while also being a winemaker, co-owner of Pascal French

Oven bakery, a philanthropist, a board member for Contra Costs Regional Health Foundation, and an OLLI at CSU East Bay board member. I'm sure you will enjoy reading Bette's life story and all about her passion for life as much as I enjoyed hearing it the first time.

Bette may have crossed paths with Les Adler at Berkeley in the 1960s, as they were both there at the same time and were involved in similar social justice-related activities. Les Adler's parents also greatly valued education. As immigrants, they chose to settle in a university town, and Les grew up surrounded by the best educational and cultural stimulation anyone could ask for. He became a history professor with a strong leaning toward a liberal studies, interdisciplinary, seminar-discussion model of teaching and learning. Having taught Elderhostel courses in the 1970s he was positioned, as dean of Extended Education at Sonoma State University, to become a co-founder of the OLLI at SSU. From his lifetime experience in higher education, most satisfying to him has been the learning community and the friendships that develop in the OLLI programs.

Les and Bette are two lifelong learners with similar life paths and life themes whose personal experience has clearly borne out the OLLI philosophy and mission in a variety of rewarding ways. For many more intriguing life stories to browse through, or for the interactive protocol to help you or anyone you know or work with tell their life story, be sure to take a look at the Life Story Center Web site at:
www.usm.maine.edu/olli/national/lifestorycenter

Life stories can change the world! We have much to learn from each other through our life stories, much that will help us understand and relate to others more compassionately.

Life is a Banquet:
I Don't Want to Miss Anything

Bette Felton

I never knew any of my grandparents. My dad, Granville Spaulding Borden, was 55 when I was born. My mom, Kathryn Faith Blosser Borden, was 45. When I came into their world they were far along–my dad in his career and my mom already as parent to my sisters Beverly and Bonnie who were 12 and 10 years older than me. I was termed their "little surprise" when I arrived in 1946.

A story that I learned later in life was that Kay and Rippy, as they called themselves, thought they were finished having children, and this pregnancy was unexpected. Mom really did not want to parent again. She had done the PTA, all the music lessons and everything that she felt was important with my two sisters. This was in 1946, just after the war. Kay and Rippy were both loving post-war life, their kids were great, everybody was fine, and here all of a sudden she's pregnant. When she found herself pregnant again, she seriously considered having an abortion.

During this time of decision making, Mom had some wonderful friends. Among them was a woman named Charlotte Kolb. Charlotte was her very good friend and the wife of her ob-gyn who had told her that Mom was pregnant. Charlotte could not have children and she and other women friends convinced Mom to maintain the pregnancy Charlotte and Mom's other friends rallied around, meeting her every week, with a different gift for her each week. They said, "Kay, this is going to be a blessing for you. You're going to love having a baby at this time in your life." My mom kept thinking, "I don't know. My life is full, I've got everything I need." And then I arrived. They called me their "little surprise" but many times throughout my childhood I was told how happy they were to have me. And I always felt totally welcomed.

My dad was really at the peak of his career in 1946. He worked at Standard Oil Company in California, which is now Chevron. He was in

a semi-independent position in the tax department, called Tax Counsel. Originally a mining engineer from Lehigh University, Dad had a number of jobs in Nevada (miner), California (mucker) and Nicaragua (mine manager) as well as going to France in WWI. In the 1930s, he enrolled in law school in Washington, D.C., at George Washington University. He was in law school with a man named Clark Clifford, who was destined to start the Internal Revenue Service. My dad went with Clifford to become the mine and natural resource evaluator for the Internal Revenue Service. He had this combination of mining and natural resource experience with the understanding of the new tax code. Later he worked for many mining companies and finally for Chevron, combining the two knowledge bases for company benefit.

In the early 1950s Dad would bring me into Chevron at 225 Bush Street in San Francisco. He would introduce me around saying, "Here's my daughter and this is the best thing that ever happened to me." The secretaries would take care of me while he worked, and I grew up going into work with him, usually every couple of weeks. Again, I felt entirely welcomed, from my parents and their friends.

The other thing I remember about my childhood was that my parents used to travel a lot. They lived in Washington, D.C., for months at a time working with tax matters. Sometimes my sisters would go with them but if we were all in school we would stay home. We were cared for by an African American woman, Carrie MacDonald. Her job title was cook, but she was really our surrogate mom. This woman was as close to me as my mom all through my childhood. Her influence on me was tremendous. I felt entirely connected to her and she taught me all kinds of things, like how to cook and how to listen to baseball on the radio. We would sit in her room or in the kitchen and listen to baseball games or just talk. I learned, of course, so many things about human relations, and about her family and where she came from. Carrie's great, great grandmother was alive when she was caring for us. I didn't know any of my extended family. My grandparents were all gone because my parents had had me so late in life. Carrie remained my friend all through my life, until she died at age 98, about two years ago.

Important traditions in my family were singing and playing the piano. My sisters were both very good musicians, piano mostly. They would play and practice and I would sit under the piano and listen to them. At the end of their classical practice, they would have me play and sing with them. I remember that so very, very well, especially my sister Bonnie learning Chopin's "Polonaise."

Both for my parents' many parties and then later for my sisters' friends and family we all sang and played music. We did a lot of Broadway show tunes and Dad's favorites from the 1920s and 1930s. My Dad used to call it "choir practice" and he would have everybody come in and sing with my

My mom kept thinking, "I don't know. My life is full, I've got everything I need." And then I arrived. They called me their "little surprise" but many times throughout my childhood I was told how happy they were to have me. And I always felt totally welcomed.

sisters who would play the piano. That tradition still goes on at holidays, when the family gets together. We sing and dance and have a great time.

The other tradition was political discussion. My dad had a very complicated political stand. The older he got, the more and more rabidly conservative he became. He once claimed that during the Red Scare he became so frightened of "the Commies," that he believed McCarthy and J. Edgar Hoover and their absurd accusations. This belief increasingly limited his political analysis as he got older, and he became a member of the John Birch Society. He was a person who had an exceptional, open mind in many areas, like race and religion. And he had wonderful world experiences, with many different kinds of people. It is still a mystery to me why he grew to have a narrower view of what was going on in our country at the time. I did not realize it then, but later I saw great dissonance in his behavior and wondered how strong early influences must have created such intolerance as he got older.

He got to a point where he refused to let me think about going to the University of California, Berkeley, even though he had taught there with his good friend, Don McLaughlin. He had many good friends in the mining school, but during the loyalty oath situation of the 1950s, something happened, and he perceived the University of California Berkeley, in particular, as the "den of iniquity where people were just selling out to the communists."

When I was an adolescent, my dad encouraged me to pursue anything I was interested in. But he had another intolerance, and I think it was because he was older at the time (62) and he was starting to get sick with emphysema. He required that before I went to college, I needed to know what I was going pursue as a career. I remember these ringing arguments when I told him I thought I'd be interested in being an archeologist or perhaps a psychologist. He would get really irate about having some particular skill, never clearly defined, and at one point said, "Oh, it doesn't matter what you do, just as long as you don't go to Berkeley."

He had me apply to the Ivy League-type schools, and Stanford, but I could not even think about Berkeley. It turned out that I was accepted at Barnard College. Then in my junior year in high school, just after I'd been accepted, my dad died and my mom and I found out that there was no money. His exploration colleagues at Standard Oil had persuaded him that he was immortal and he didn't need any survivor benefits or life insurance. There was really nothing for living expenses, except for military benefits from his service in WWI. There was no way that I was going to end up going to Barnard College, and my one remaining place where I got some scholarship money was Berkeley. I ended up going to Berkeley for an undergraduate degree, and, of course, I started in September 1964, which was the beginning of the Free Speech movement on campus. Many times in the midst of the turmoil, I thought to myself, "I just hope dad doesn't know

that I'm at Berkeley and that I am trying to make sense of many sides of the issues." Every day during that first year there was questioning of traditions and status quo. The roles of students, faculty, and the community were all challenged and redefined.

The community I grew up in was very small—a suburb, actually, surrounded by the city of Oakland. It was an upper middle class community with its own school system, and my senior class had about 100-150 students. In those days, you went from one of three grammar schools into the junior high school and then the high school. With the exception of the Leonard Waxdeck Birdcalling Contest, that originated at my school in 1964, Piedmont High School was a small and insulated place. For years I never told anyone where I had gone to school because Piedmont, California, had a reputation of being insulated and privileged. Now I have grown to have a different view about that. It was a very safe environment, and in that safety, we were able to think broadly about many different aspects of learning and life. One could say my community was privileged, but also open to creativity and new ideas.

We had exceptional high school faculty who prompted us to study topics in depth. I value that liberal arts education and rich foreign language experience. High school was a safe and encouraging environment for excellence in learning. Plus, I had friends whose parents valued education and found it to be a place where they could put their energy. I also had benefit, because my parents participated in the affluence by providing all kinds of lessons. I had the music, and remember taking ice-skating. I was in Camp Fire Girls and got to go to summer camp. I also got to travel with my folks. They took me to Washington, D.C., twice a year growing up, and I learned early comfort in the capital. I went to Mexico and Canada with my mom, and Europe with my French teacher. Besides student government, I got involved with an organization in high school that I really wanted to be part of. It was started by a physician who had a modified barge in the middle of Hong Kong Harbor. It was like a Doctor's Without Borders kind of clinic and I had my sights set on this experience, until my dad died and I couldn't go. I also got interested because I was engaged in my church youth group and was involved in social justice activities through the American Friends Service Committee. We did service projects where I saw doctors and nurses in action. When I got to Berkeley I did more social justice work and decided that I was going to take pre-med courses and go to medical school. I started taking the pre-med prerequisites and was successful in biology and the first year of chemistry. Then I took organic chemistry and found myself asking, "what is this about?" I was just memorizing science, not doing well, and was praying for a C. So I hunted up a counselor at Berkeley, and made an appointment. I'll never forget that day. It was another of those critical moments. I went to this research scientist who was supposed to be an academic counselor. Why he was ever assigned to do undergraduate academic

I remember these ringing arguments when I told him I thought I'd be interested in being an archeologist or perhaps a psychologist. He would get really irate about having some particular skill, never clearly defined, and at one point said, "Oh, it doesn't matter what you do, just as long as you don't go to Berkeley."

counseling, I do not know. I walked into his office and it was like I was an annoyance. He had many more important things to do. I sat down and said, "I'm interested in medicine and I'm taking pre-medical courses but I'm getting a C in organic chemistry, what should I do?"

He said, "Don't even think about medicine."

It was near the end of the Free Speech upheaval and the beginning of lots of interest in feminism. What I should have known was that he was not interested in a woman going into anything. He said, "The most you can hope for is nursing." I believed him and went ahead and took an anatomy course for nursing. I applied to UC San Francisco in nursing, and transferred from Berkeley after three years to complete my baccalaureate in nursing. As it turned out, these were beneficial decisions. With the nursing career, I had many more options to pursue than I would have had if I'd pursued a medical career. Medicine would have been more confining to me than nursing. More important I learned what not to do as an academic counselor. I have never discouraged an advisee, and will never do so, because I remember the disinterest and disdain that I felt from that "counseling" experience.

I met my husband, Jim, at Berkeley. I was attracted to him because he had a motorcycle. And he knew all the birds in the bay. We met at a party in the mud flats in Berkeley. Everybody else was drunk and rolling around in the mud. Jim was just cool and showed me all the birds. He then took me home on his motorcycle and it was a great time from the start. That was 40 years ago.

We got married when I was still at UCSF. Jim began a doctoral program in biology at State University of New York at Buffalo, while I accelerated my program and finished in December of '69. Then I went to Buffalo. My first job was as a charge nurse on a pediatric unit at the Buffalo Children's Hospital. It was the 3-11 swing shift and I was the only RN and only new graduate. I had two nurse's aides with me. One, who was fairly incompetent, put Maalox in a child's IV line, when it should have gone in his mouth. These kids were really sick, and I was in a situation that caused me to use everything I knew, and much of what I didn't, to get through the night. I did, and after six or seven months, was able to manage pretty well. Those first six months on the job were frightening, with life and death responsibility. Luckily, Jim could work on his graduate work all day, every day. So he would often work 3-11, too, and we'd end up having dinner at midnight in our little downstairs apartment in Buffalo, barbecuing or eating meatball subs from the corner store.

It was a good time and we loved being in Buffalo, maybe because we knew it wasn't forever. People couldn't believe that we'd come from San Francisco to Buffalo. They said, "Why would you ever come here?" Jim had both coursework and lab mentorships from people at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, which was part of the State University of New York. His field

was biology, biochemistry, and genetics. Now the major in most universities is molecular biology, but then it was really just emerging. One anecdote is that I typed his dissertation on a portable typewriter using carbon paper. He had this special mouse that he used in his research work called a C-^{57} Black $_{6}$. In writing the name of the mouse in the dissertation, the numbers 57 were elevated and Black was in caps and then the 6 was a subscript. I had to type that mouse name more than 500 times in the dissertation. I'll never forget how my hands worked on the typewriter to create C-^{57} Black $_{6}$.

I had professional experiences both at Buffalo Children's and then in the Erie County Public Health Department. That was my first introduction to public health, what it meant and how valuable it was. I was a school nurse, and ran immunization clinics and did home visiting. I've pursued that passion of public health ever since I got my first credentials in Buffalo.

After Jim got his Ph.D., he went for postdoctoral work at the National Institutes of Health in Washington, D.C. We were there for four years, which was another wonderful time for us, away from both of our families and having to establish ourselves both professionally and personally in a new community. That was the time in D.C. of Watergate and related investigations. The National Institutes of Health is like Eden for scientists. Jim's experiences and his skills were supported and enhanced through that time at the NIH. My first job there was at the Children's Hospital National Medical Center, where I was a staff nurse in adolescent medicine and public health coordinator. One of the women I worked with was an instructor at Catholic University, and she would bring her nursing students through our units for clinical instruction. She needed somebody to fill in for her while she was on maternity leave, and asked if I would come on at Catholic University for a quarter to teach nursing students. I jumped at this first opportunity to do teaching, and continued to teach for 25 years.

My first daughter, Alisa Kathryn, was born in 1974 in Bethesda, Maryland. We were supposed to have gone to this family birthing center at Georgetown. We had done our research and found the right ob-gyn so that we could have a natural birthing experience that was relatively new in the 1970s. When I went into labor my physician was at Suburban Hospital across the street from the NIH where Jim was working. The doctor asked if I wanted to deliver today, and if so then we would do it at Suburban. At that hospital, in those days, Jim was not allowed in the delivery room and they wouldn't even let him come into the postpartum unit. He ended up finally putting on a lab coat that said "Dr. Felton" and pretended to be a physician so that he could come see me at the hospital.

It was also at that time when I had my first evidence of how health professionals can treat people differently for a number of reasons. I was in a two-bed unit at Suburban, and I was having a lot of bleeding. I thought I was okay. The woman in the next bed, an African American woman, was very vocal. She was having lots of pain and for the first time in my life I saw

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nurses treating two patients differently. The nurses were extremely nice to me. They would do anything they could for me. They were cruel, mean, and inappropriate with this African American woman who was overweight, unmarried, and had probably a difficult delivery without any kind of support or coaching. That's another one of those events I'll never forget, the difference in the way those nurses behaved. That experience set a basis for my understanding of health disparities and how health professionals can make a difference for each patient.

The theme of social justice probably continued into my work and teaching both at Catholic University and at Cal State. I spent most of my career at Cal State East Bay, where our OLLI is. When we came back west in 1976, I worked in a free clinic for a long time when my kids were little. Then I got the position at Cal State East Bay, which at the time was called Cal State Hayward. I just applied because I had that experience at Catholic University and thought I might teach in California.

The health disparities experience that I had as a patient, and saw with patients when I was doing clinical nursing, was repeated, and I had the opportunity to show those disparities to my students. We saw it all the time. One week in 1985, I assigned a student to a mom on the postpartum unit of a local hospital. My student was African American and the mother was white. She said to the student after five minutes of interviewing, "You're not taking care of me." She explained to me that she didn't want "those people" as her nurse. I saw it with almost every clinical group, both racism and religious intolerance, and sometimes in student groups, but mostly in patients. How we worked it through so the students could take care of people was probably one of my most important contributions. Trying to understand what cultural competence and cultural understanding is, and then translating that into care for people, to me was one of the best things I did in my teaching. It was great to be at Cal State because we aren't the research institution that Berkeley is. What we do have is an incredibly diverse population of students with endless curiosity about medicine and patient care.

I will never forget this one experience when I was teaching maternity nursing with a primarily Hispanic clientele at a community hospital. Now it's a predominantly Afghan and East Indian population that frequent that hospital. But then the particular patient I was worried about was a Hispanic woman who did not speak English. It was just as a group of us, students and me, were coming in early one morning at the hospital. We could hear this woman screaming as we came into the delivery suite. I said to my 12 students, "Okay, guys, who out there speaks Spanish?" Only one student raised her hand, and her name was Vilma Wong. I said, "Well Vilma, that's great, do you feel comfortable in Spanish?"

And she said, "Yeah."

"Well, how is it that you know Spanish?" She appeared Chinese in origin as she replied, "Well, my family's from Nicaragua." She went on to calm the laboring mom and help her to deliver.

That was the kind of experience that I had time and time again. Students at Cal State East Bay brought these incredible cultural experiences and abilities to work with all kinds of people. It was a privilege to be able to connect people—both students and patients—in a myriad of ways. Another contribution was imparting the same values of openness and tolerance and curiosity to my children and my husband. I think my family has always come first. As much as I love my work, if somebody was sick or needed me to be home with them I would be. My husband still contributes at the UC Davis Cancer Center as associate director. He's brought to OLLI three new courses in science topics. That teaching is enriching his understanding of how you have your own professional accomplishments, but passing knowledge around is cool as well.

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In regards to my transition into retirement, the only difference is that I decide how I'm going to spend my time. As my mother used to say, "I don't want to miss anything." I kind of threw myself into three or four projects I had been doing on the side, but I took much more responsibility for them in retirement, like being chair of the local workforce board, and founder of a new public health foundation. Now I'm seeing that that was probably too much all at once. I didn't know my limits in retirement, and I do have a lot of energy. It was just hard for me to say no. I overextended in my retirement where I could have held back a little bit.

I have a county appointment with the Workforce Development Board that I started when I was still dean at the University. I've been chair of the board now for three years and I'm going to be past president this next year and then I'll be gone. That has been a really interesting thing too, and therein lies the dilemma. I keep learning so much in all of these different roles, meeting incredible people and finding so many connections. It's really hard for me to step out.

The Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation is another interesting one. Most health system nonprofits have foundations that are fundraisers and supporters. The money goes to those foundations from grateful clients, grateful patients who often want to thank the health system that "saved my life" or "they helped my dad when he died so I'm going to give a good piece in gifting to the hospital system." Well, public health systems and our Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and its primary care clinics are for people who are uninsured, which, of course now, is huge. So many people have lost benefits and our clinics and the county hospital are brimming. At the same time, there are enormous decreases in resources for public systems even though our systems are trying to provide everything from emergency

care to the only psychiatric services for people who don't have insurance. We've had to start a foundation and there are only nine of these that support public health systems in the country. The Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation is five years old now and the goal is to increase awareness about public health and Contra Costa, and also to raise money. We realize we cannot raise money from the traditional sources, so we have started helping our physicians and nurses write grants, particularly around cultural and racial disparities. They are the ones who have the patients experiencing health disparities and know firsthand exactly what happens.

Our house was built in 1953 and is an old ranch style. We had this two-acre property and we didn't even realize what we had when we bought the house in 1979. We had to plow the field—it's more than a field, it's a hillside—every year because of fire, which in California is a constant fear. In 2003, when our daughter was going to get married at our house, we said, "This is crazy, we should do something with this property." It turned out that a friend of ours had wanted to build a vineyard but he didn't have any resources. He said, "I'll design your vineyard, lay it out, get the water and all that kind of stuff for just the cost of the materials and labor of the materials." We agreed and didn't know that this decision would shape both of our retirements. We have now an acre of grapes which are six years old. I'm the vineyard manger and my husband is the wine maker. We do the whole vertical process—grow the grapes, harvest, ferment, and make the wine. It's all right here, and is this cool little family vineyard and winery. As you can imagine, it takes a ton of time, and has become what we do on the side.

The bakery we got into because it was the bakery we would go to downtown. We've been going there for almost 20 years now. We never liked the guy who owned it, and one day a friend of mine called me and said, "Bette, there's a bakery for sale in Danville. And I think it's Pascal French Oven." She'd always wanted to run a bakery and I'd had all kinds of complaints about the coffee making part of it. We realized that we couldn't do this just the two of us so we got two more friends and five years ago we bought this cafe. Again, there's that same old theme in my life of not wanting to miss anything. I was curious to see if we could do it and now I'm curious to see if we can make it a little less life-impacting and time-impacting. It's just been a wonderful enrichment to my life where we meet all kinds of people. I've just sent up a barter last week with a woman who grows olives and makes her own olive oil. I'll trade her wine for olive oil, all because we met at the café. It serves as a community center as much as anything else. Just another thing I wouldn't want to miss.

I have a couple of roles at OLLI at CSU East Bay. Dr. Jim Kelly and I responded to a grant opportunity from the Bernard Osher Foundation. Jim Kelly, now provost at Menlo College, and I wrote this little proposal in the midst of other things when I was the dean of the Concord campus.

The Concord campus is ideal for our OLLI. It's accessible, it's where the growth of older people is focused. It's easy parking and we have room. My faculty colleagues came on board right away when Herb Eder signed on. The parent of our geography and environmental studies program, Herb had been trying to get some emeritus faculty together but hadn't had any funding. So together with Scholar, which was their old program, and our OLLI grant we started our OLLI. That was in 2003. It has just blossomed and bloomed.

I do a little of everything with OLLI at CSU East Bay. I go to the committee meetings, help with marketing and different field courses. Now these are my friends and family, these wonderful faculty and community members who have grown as a community of love and support as well as curiosity and learning. I function like a facilitator, like in our recent conversations in green architecture and engineering. I line up the faculty for the lecture series. Then I'm partnering with the science center, the Exploratorium, because of our NSF planning grant for Senior Education for the Third Age (SECTA). I'm blessed with being very healthy. I have really good health and I'm strong. I'm trying to stay that way, although I know that's going to diminish as I get older. I also think that my energy comes from continuing curiosity and this belief that I'm only here for a moment and I don't want to miss anything.

Now I'm seeing that that was probably too much all at once. I didn't know my limits in retirement, and I do have a lot of energy. It was just hard for me to say no. I overextended in my retirement where I could have held back a little bit.

My mom and I used to joke all the time because we both loved the play and the movie "Auntie Mame." Patrick Dennis has a comment from Mame when they were in the midst of the depression, "Life is a banquet but most poor suckers are starving." That's much of what I feel, and I know my mom felt the same way; she just didn't want to miss anything. Because we have the physical ability and the energy to do a lot of things, we just keep doing it because we don't want to miss anything.

There are other critical things that influenced me as a youth. My dad died on my 16th birthday. As a result, I never really knew my dad as an adult. I have also felt that I needed to achieve in his honor. I've talked to several friends of mine who are very accomplished women who have had the same experience of having lost that male role figure for whatever reason when they were young. They say that prompted them onto greater achievement. I keep thinking it would be a really interesting research study of particularly accomplished women to investigate their role models and their absence or presence in their development.

My sister died when she was 30 in 1967, just a few years after my dad died. She had never been sick a day in her life. She lived in Bangkok, had tea with the queen every week or couple of weeks, and had these three young kids 6, 4, and 2. And when she died so suddenly from a weird aplastic anemia, I went to take care of her kids until they could find a nanny. This experience indicated to me that nothing is permanent and that you

just never know when things are going to change. Those were two things that, in my youth, framed how I went about my life.

When I went to Asia I was sort of this social justice, anti-war, Christian kind of activist. But I was also shaped considerably by Buddhist thought and practice. The idea that nothing is permanent and people are here just for a moment, and that I will never know what time or place will carry my soul, these have shaped my spiritual beliefs and activities, too. In the meantime, I live in gratitude for even the short time that I have had in this world, the many loving relationships, and the beauty and peace that I found.

This Life That We Share

Les Adler

My parents were both Jewish immigrants from Russia and Poland whose families brought them here as young children right before World War I. Thus, my life as a young child was surrounded with memories of the immigrant experience. By the time I was born in 1942, they were also products of the Great Depression and the Second World War which America had just entered.

They themselves had grown up in the immigrant world around Maxwell Street in Chicago, but when they married in 1934 they set out for California. As luck would have it, their car broke down on Highway 66 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and without money, they had to find jobs. It was there that they fell in love with the Southwest, and particularly with Santa Fe where they first settled.

So, by accident, I was born in New Mexico and had the opportunity to grow up in a very different cultural environment than my parents' world had been. There were hardly any Jews around, and in all my schools I was usually the only Jewish child. I had the experience of being outside the melting pot looking in for a good portion of my early life.

Another important influence in my early years, when I think back on it, is that at the end of WWII, when refugees were coming out of the concentration camps, some of them were being resettled in the United States. Because they spoke Yiddish and understood the background of these European survivors, my parents volunteered to participate in this resettlement process.

Thus, among my strongest childhood memories are the English classes my parents would hold in our Albuquerque home for people from all over Europe speaking strange languages to me, with my own parents speaking in tongues I didn't understand. Somehow, the painful memories these people carried with them from the experiences they had just survived unconsciously fed into the feeling tone around my house. Probably this helped

Perhaps the central value taught by my parents was an emphasis on education. They carried within them a great respect and desire for the education which they themselves had never been able to complete because they had to go to work and then married young and started their own family.

spark my later interest in discovering what had actually happened during the War while I was peacefully growing up in New Mexico, very far from the terrible realities they had endured.

Perhaps the central value taught by my parents was an emphasis on education. They carried within them a great respect and desire for the education which they themselves had never been able to complete because they had to go to work and then married young and started their own family. One reason they settled in Albuquerque, ultimately, was because it was a university town.

I grew up around the University of New Mexico. Many of my own early cultural experiences were on the campus. We would go to concerts, where I remember hearing Artur Rubenstein in recital and the New York Philharmonic on tour. We attended summer lectures under the stars in the late in the 1940s and early 1950s listening to faculty and other experts in many fields. And my father went to work at the university in various divisions of physical plant operations.

New Mexico was also the place where the first atomic bombs had been built and tested. The great physicists who had worked at Los Alamos were still around, some on the campus. As a child, I rarely understood what they were talking about, but I listened to lectures by people whose names later became very famous for what they had done. It enriched my growing up years in all kinds of ways, including just instilling the love of learning.

As I look back at patterns in my life, they almost all center around education. It was a natural step for me to go to college and then to go into higher education. My home was filled with books in multiple languages. I think the highest value was learning. If I wasn't going to become a concert pianist, which became fairly clear at an early age, at least I would become a scholar of some kind and go in that direction.

One more influence that I know feeds into my background was the situation of growing up in the Cold War, and in a place that was very central to that evolving conflict. It took me years to figure this out, but when I went to college I was immediately drawn to the fields of history having to do with both the Cold War and my own family's past.

The area of history that always fascinated me from the beginning was Russian history, and, naturally, living in New Mexico, the Cold War intruded on my life in many ways. Albuquerque was a highly militarized city. The Air Force base at Kirtland Field was a place where the bombs were ferried from one point to another, and they were stored nearby at super-secret Sandia Base. We all knew this was going on; it was part of the culture of the time, even for the kids. I have strong memories of regularly practicing air raid drills in school: duck and cover kinds of exercises.

As I later traced the paths I had followed in my own learning and teaching, I saw that a good deal of it was trying to understand my personal

roots, my family's roots and the history of immigration—Jewish immigration, in particular, from Russia and Poland—along with the experience of growing up in the Cold War era.

One of my earliest and strongest political memories was of the Rosenberg execution, which frightened my parents terribly because they were aware that there was a great deal of anti-Semitism involved in the case, along with the charge of stealing the secret of the atomic bomb. I also absorbed their fear as the McCarthy hearings we watched unfolded on TV. Those are some of the early influences that I can identify.

When I went through public schools in Albuquerque, the two dominant community groups were traditional Hispanic-Catholics and the Protestant Anglos who had moved there more recently. I really felt like an outsider as the only Jewish kid. To this day I recall the early grades where the first three months of the school term were spent largely learning the Christmas carols in four or five different languages.

By third grade I was able to sing them all in Latin, Spanish, German, and French. It was certainly a strange kind of thing for me to be doing. I felt peculiar about it, knowing that this wasn't my holiday, and these weren't my songs. But that was what was done in public schools in those days. That was what happened outside the home.

Ultimately, I went on to the University of New Mexico where I gravitated rather early toward a history major, but the real feature that made the university experience distinctive for me was that I was invited into the newly developed University Honors Program.

The Honors Program was all taught in discussion-based seminars completely unlike the large lecture hall format in which all my other classes were taught. I was with people who wanted to talk about ideas and books. We weren't just passively listening to experts and only taking notes and tests to earn grades; we were participating in our own learning.

It turned out to be the experience that shaped my entire future career in higher education. It was, in fact, a precursor to the Hutchins School at Sonoma State University, a program founded on the same seminar discussion model, where I would later teach for more than three decades. Thus it was a very formative influence for me.

The approach had another important quality: its interdisciplinary nature. We studied the classics, we studied art and politics, we studied literature and even science, all in the same classes. Courses were thematic, not neatly divided up by traditional disciplinary lines, which was the way most previous education had always been, but designed around questions or issues.

Very early on, it became evident to me that the connections and relationships between fields of knowledge, not just the fields themselves, were highly significant; there was overlap. You learned to ask questions of books

Very early on, it became evident to me that the connections and relationships between fields of knowledge, not just the fields themselves, were highly significant; there was overlap. You learned to ask questions of books and ideas, not just go to them for answers. And the better questions often came from other perspectives and other disciplines.

and ideas, not just go to them for answers. And the better questions often came from other perspectives and other disciplines. These were eye-opening discoveries which greatly shaped the way I learned to look at the world.

Let me return to one other thread: what was going on in the outside world. When I left the University of New Mexico and went on to graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley, it happened to be just at the moment when the world around me was undergoing revolutionary change.

During my first semester at Berkeley, President Kennedy was assassinated. This was followed the next year by the upheavals of the Free Speech movement. And from then on, the anti-war movement, and the Civil Rights movement, the Black student and Ethnic studies movements, the Women's movement, the Peace movement all swept across the campus and country. I arrived as a relatively liberal kid from New Mexico, but within a few years the world had turned upside down and many of us had been radicalized by vast struggles for social justice on campus and on the streets.

I date my real learning as an adult from that point on, from being at Berkeley, and from studying history at the same time. My focus shifted from Russian to American history because the great questions of the day to me were, "What and why were we doing what we were doing?"—both in this country and abroad, and particularly in Vietnam.

I participated in anti-war activities. I was tear-gassed during peace marches and other protests and was regularly forced to teach classes off campus because we were on strike for one cause or another. I participated in sit-ins in Sproul Hall and the other major actions that occurred at the university during the Free Speech movement. As I completed work for my degree, the world looked very different to me.

The key question that I began asking was, "How had we come to see Communism and Soviet Russia as we had?" "How had the image of the 'Red' enemy evolved?" From my Russian history background, I knew a great deal about that country, both the pre-Soviet and the Soviet periods. It was apparent to me that American perception of the Soviet "enemy" and communists everywhere had been distorted by our own fears, leading us to misperceive motives and respond blindly in many cases.

This is when the whole of the Cold War began to fall into place for me: the experiences I had growing up in New Mexico, all the hostility toward communists, both internal (the Rosenbergs) and external (the perceived Soviet threat), the SAC bombers flying all the time with atomic weaponry ready to go to war, the constant fear, American actions abroad, all those experiences came into focus as the core of my research and writing and what I ultimately became as a historian.

This wasn't all clear to me at the time, but in reflection, I think those were the formative influences of that period for me. There was no way to go through the 1960s without encountering everything that was questionable.

Why were the people in power making the decisions that they made? Why were we in the streets trying to stop them? It really became a central focus of my life.

I was a graduate student at Berkeley from 1963-1970. I finished my Ph.D. in 1970. By that time, the War had peaked. Nixon was in power. Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and students at Kent State University had all been killed in our own country, actions which vividly shaped my own attitudes. In addition, the educational system itself had been transformed during the time I was at Berkeley.

When I arrived, it was still the Berkeley of the 1950s where professors wore ties and jackets and students addressed them as "Professor such and such." You would never think of using a first name as an undergraduate, or even graduate student, with one of these distinguished faculty members. By the end of the 1960s that was no longer the case. Roles, clothing, and behavior had been radically revised. New programs had been launched, some experimental, along with new fields of study such as ethnic studies and women's studies which had been invented.

When I started looking for teaching jobs, I was offered and took a position in a brand new program called the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies at Sonoma State University. Hutchins was one of many experimental outgrowths of the educational transformation going on across the country during this whole period. In the brave new world just emerging, we thought we were going to transform higher education.

Our ideal was to get rid of big, impersonal lectures, doing all teaching in small groups and seminars, where courses would be team-taught and interdisciplinary. We would remove the artificial distinctions that stood between faculty members and students. No more "sir" or "doctor" or any of those kinds of things. First names, let's sit down and talk about books and ideas together, we're both learners at the same time, even though I may have been doing it a little longer than the student.

This was a pretty radical view, thinking we were going to remake higher education, but there was a brief period when such thinking was possible. Experiments like ours were popping up at campuses all over the country, most of which eventually failed, for a variety of predictable reasons. Many went too far in abandoning intellectual standards; others fell apart over internal personal, curricular, or ideological disputes, lost political battles on campuses, or simply faded as faculty members and students changed their priorities over time.

Our experiment at SSU succeeded; we created a very strong program which has existed to this day and is still a major feature at the university. It was one of the lasting products of the wave of educational reform that the 1960s swept in. So the period did affect not only my personal and political attitudes, but my professional life. I didn't go into a traditional university

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department, and thus didn't go through the normal kinds of narrowing professional processes experienced by many of my contemporaries.

I was allowed and encouraged to teach what I wanted to and what interested me from the very beginning. Over the more than 30 years that I taught in the Hutchins School, I collaborated with faculty from a variety of fields in exploring an incredible range of material in history, literature, philosophy, art, and history of science. I could expand my own knowledge as I chose to and as student interests changed. That's been a key, continuing feature of my intellectual life.

But there were enormous setbacks, too. The vision we had was that undergraduate education would naturally follow our lead, since we knew how it needed to be reformed. Well, it turns out universities are not as reformable as we thought. It has taken a lot longer to convince traditional universities and faculties that the kind of learning that undergraduates need is not so much disciplinary specialization at an early stage, but liberal learning, the chance to explore, to think broadly, to look for connections between fields, to ask questions, to learn how to refine and ask their own questions, and to find out who they are intellectually and personally.

But as we gradually learned, such teaching is not cost-effective in the normal university pattern; nor does it necessarily suit all students or all faculty. Universities have budgets, practical requirements, established departments and systems, all of which are equally real. Certain FTE and SFR standards and institutional mandates have to be met. And as times changed and budgets declined by the later 1970s, which programs did the university look to get rid of? Those that were more expensive and nontraditional, of course.

So there was a growing pressure to prove that what we were doing was as valid, if not more valid, than the education that other students were getting in the traditional model. Justifying what we are doing is less of an issue these days, at least on our campus. Also, higher education has come around a bit to recognizing the value of interdisciplinarity and the changing role of teachers toward becoming facilitators of student learning rather than just remote experts or "sages on the stage." I think there has been lasting change. I can't claim responsibility for it, but it has occurred.

Let me go back into the learning process. What I discovered in teaching was that the closer to a real experience that I could get, and create for students, the better the learning. I think some of the best learning experiences I had, and the students had, was when we could recreate, as closely as possible in a classroom, a way for them to emotionally encounter something of the past.

Since I was often teaching historically based material, how could I best help students understand and encounter the past dimension of human experience? I found that literature was a wonderful way of doing that because a novel goes to the heart. It reaches you in emotional as well as intellectual

ways. You can read the history book and get data, but to get the feeling of an event or a time you go to a novel. So I looked for ways to enhance both intellectual and emotional engagement.

I began teaching some courses in a new area that was evolving at the time which we called, "Experiencing History," where we would create historical simulations. Students would participate in, and sometimes help research and design, historical moments and encounters. Many of the most effective were decision-making scenarios that would place students in real situations people in the past faced. Students loved it and it became the best experience they had in their whole undergraduate years.

Thirty years later I still have people telling me, "That was the best learning I ever had." For example, we would do simulations of the decision to drop the bomb, where you take students and place them back in the framework of 1945, in a decision-making capacity, advising the President about whether we should drop the bombs on Japan and what kind of bombs and how many of them.

We put them in a pressured situation where they're being forced to make a decision in a short period of time. To do so they have to get out of their current mindset about atomic weaponry and understand the mindset of people at the end of World War II and the coming of this new weapon. After such a simulation, of course, you stop the process and ask people how they've done with it and what they felt. We'd talk about the choices they made, why they made them, and how they compared to what people actually did at the time.

They had no problem in understanding, deeply, why the decisions were made the way they were. While they still might not like those decisions, they understood them for the first time. It was a way for students to understand the experience of being alive in a different time or in a different culture.

I think the single most powerful teaching moment I had, along these lines, was when I taught for a semester in England in a study abroad program. At one point, I had my students down in the mud of the Thames River, working with a team of archeologists who had just uncovered the place where the Romans had anchored the first bridge that was put across the Thames in A.D. 55.

It was raining, it was cold, and we were down in the same mud with the archeologists who were pulling up Roman sandals and Roman coins and clamshells from the food that the Roman soldiers had eaten while they were building this bridge 2,000 years ago. It was one of those mind-boggling moments where you get as close to the past as is humanly possible, to bridging the gap of time and making the crossing into the experience of another era. For me and for the students it was unforgettable. So moments like that are the ones that I found the most powerful.

It was one of those mind-boggling moments where you get as close to the past as is humanly possible, to bridging the gap of time and making the crossing into the experience of another era.

Now in terms of moving toward lifelong learning, I taught some Elderhostel courses in the 1970s. There was an Elderhostel program on our campus for several years in which I taught courses on autobiography called, "Telling Your Own Story." People came for these short, one-week or two-week Elderhostel classes. It was my first time working directly with an older population.

I deliberately chose to do that kind of topic because they didn't have to do advanced reading. The participants had all the material they needed inside and I had to figure out, "How do you get the material outside?" As you well know, this is what telling your story is all about.

So to get them to write something about themselves and to recognize that their story had value was an enormous leap for most of them to make, either because nobody had cared, or they didn't think they were very important, or they didn't see why their story was worth telling, except maybe to their grandkids who weren't interested, or so they thought. That really was a very meaningful teaching experience for me, as I look back now.

This was long before our current baby boomer aging issues had arisen. There were many, many people out there who had wonderful life stories, who if they got a chance and had the right training, could begin to write them down. At that point my goal was to get them to at least write a chapter of their life and fill out the story a bit. That was a wonderful experience.

I didn't come back to this until much later, to get to OLLI. In the year 2000, after having taught for 30 years in the Hutchins School program, I had the chance to become dean of Extended Education. So I moved into administration, which gave me the chance to develop new campus and community-based programs and work in the university in a very different way.

Through a series of wonderful circumstances, Ed Stolman came to our campus and told the president about a program called the Fromm Institute at the University of San Francisco that he had been attending for the senior age population. He asked, "How come we can't have this here?"

The president mentioned to me that I should get in touch with Ed. I had heard something about the Fromm Institute but hadn't yet had a chance to check into it. So I arranged with Ed to meet in San Francisco, visit some Fromm classes together, and talk with the director of that program.

Immediately on seeing the classes, I thought, "Well, of course we can do that here." The two questions I had were: "Do we have the right demographic in our region to do it?" And, "Can we afford it?"

OLLI did not exist at this point. I didn't know of any other models. But within six months we had a program up and running. I knew the faculty and how to build a curriculum, and I had a staff of people who could do the marketing and the finance work and all the other things to get it going. We basically decided to follow the structure of the Fromm Institute.

Ed Stolman provided inspiration and seed money and helped us find community members to become part of our initial board, many of whom also donated money. So we had start-up funding but no idea whether this was going to succeed or not. We put it out there, marketed it, and in September of 2001, (as it was the 10th of September of 2001, the day before 9/11, I remember the date), we opened for the first time and we had 234 people show up who had registered for our program.

There was huge interest, the classes succeeded, and the model seemed to work. The big question was, "How to finance this for the long term?" It was at that point that Ed Stolman told his friend, Bernard Osher, about the program we had started at SSU. Mr. Osher was interested because he was already funding a similar program for seniors at the University of Southern Maine, and he saw what we were doing as part of the same process.

We were invited to meet with Stephen Dobbs from the Osher Foundation who asked us to submit a proposal for funding. So we designed it, projecting that we would need approximately $100,000 a year in external funding to sustain the model. In its wisdom, the Osher Foundation granted us that amount for three years, along with the promise that if we succeeded, they would make a $1,000,000 endowment gift to the campus to make the program permanent.

That was the start of our program in an effective way, because suddenly we really had the capacity to plan ahead. Our enrollment grew 20 percent a year over the next several years. Also, in my position as dean of Extended Education, I was in touch with 22 other deans from campuses in the California State University system. Since it seemed that the Osher Foundation was interested in expanding its funding for lifelong learning, I offered to help facilitate contact with other CSU campuses.

I helped arrange for Dr. Dobbs to speak to a meeting of the statewide deans where he made a remarkable offer to all of them: the same type of funding we were receiving for three years with the potential for a million dollar endowment if their programs succeeded. So instead of having just one east coast program in Maine and one west coast program at Sonoma State, soon there were 16 or 18 bearing the Osher name. The Foundation then made the same offer to the University of California system with its nine campuses, most of which accepted. So suddenly, there was a network! Unbelievable. In short order it went nationwide, and has now grown to more than 120 OLLI campuses.

This has certainly been the most positive experience in my whole academic and professional life, to have helped put something like this together. Our program at Sonoma now has more than 1,500 members on three sites and has probably had a greater impact on the community than anything the university has ever done. We have created a community of engaged learners enjoying some of the best educational experiences that many of

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them have ever had, and providing the best teaching experiences that any of our faculty have ever had in teaching in the program.

Our classes range across all the disciplines. Faculty are encouraged to teach the course or courses they always wanted to teach. We have a professor of biology, a former provost of our University, who in addition to teaching courses in human sexuality and human evolution now teaches courses in opera for us because that had always been his other passion.

Faculty are hired because of their expertise in one or another area, but if their students love them and say, "Well, we're also interested in this, why don't you teach a course in it?" they often do so. Or, in addition to a course on China or Cuba, "Why don't we take the group and go to China or Cuba?" We've now sent three groups to Cuba, a group to Vietnam, and a group to China. I have led OLLI groups to Turkey and most recently to Egypt.

The active part of learning is central. OLLI students want to participate; they want to see and experience things directly that they've just read or heard about or places they've always wanted to visit.

It's not so much the format of the courses, it's the engagement. While most of our OLLI classes are large, (we have classes of 100-200 regularly which are much too large for seminar discussions) the students are always engaged, in class, out of class, at lunch. Our faculty look for ways to balance presentations with time for student participation since the students themselves bring so much to the classes that you're never starting from ground zero. You're starting with individuals who have lived full lives, have serious questions to ask and are there because they want to be there.

We didn't know what our population would be when we started. It turned out that two-thirds of the participants already had B.A. or B.S. degrees, 40 percent of them had advanced degrees, J.D.s or M.D.s or Ph.D.s. It was a highly educated population. That has continued to be the case. Teaching people who already know a great deal and are accomplished in their own fields creates a wonderful challenge for faculty.

The other great value of OLLI is the learning community that develops. What I think the seminar model does for the undergraduate population is to create a learning community which most young students have never experienced. Learning is a lonely process most of the time. Students are supposed to work on their own papers, do their own assignments, and take their own tests. It can be very isolating.

A true learning community, however, is a much more powerful model because you can learn from your peers, talk through issues and refine ideas, questions, and topics; you can get to know yourself and other people's ways of looking at the world. This is one of the prime values of OLLI. We have consciously created a community of lifelong learners.

OLLI students have become friends. They meet for lunch when they are on the campus. They go to films and concerts together. We've arranged

discounts for them at performances on the campus. Groups that have taken a class together may decide to continue meeting. One group that began by taking a film class six or seven years ago still meets once a month to attend films, along with the instructor, and then have lunch and talk about the experience. It brings people together.

From my lifetime experience in higher education, this is as satisfying an outcome as is possible. A completed arc of lifelong learning has now become available to a population which apparently is eager for just such engagement. All the speakers we've heard and the various studies that have been written about lifelong learning are absolutely true. It gives meaning; it helps people be healthier and more engaged. It's good for communities. It's all good, a win-win.

All life, all history, all of the future was bound up on that floating blue-white ball in the vastness of space. We were all on this ship together.

As a side note, those who've participated in university life know that academic senates are usually fractious and combative places. The only time I've ever been applauded by the academic senate on our campus was when I presented the OLLI program.

I had been asked what all these grey-haired people are doing on the campus? What's going on here? Is it costing us money? Taking up needed space or resources? But when I came to the senate to report on OLLI in the second year of the program, nobody could find anything wrong with it. Even those who are critical of anything started by the administration couldn't! They saw that it was all positive, for the university, the students, the community, the faculty, and the retired faculty.

I grew up in a family that prized learning. I've been fortunate to spend my life in and around universities with people who also prize learning. I find my deepest satisfactions from continuing to learn, and I think my wife and I have transmitted that to our children. We have three daughters, all grown at this point, and now four granddaughters.

One way or another they're all involved in teaching and learning. Our oldest daughter is a historian, teaching Jewish history at the University of Maryland. Our middle daughter is a 1st grade teacher. Our youngest daughter is an artist specializing in scientific illustration. If there's continuity there, I guess you could say the family business is education.

What sustains me now? I've just retired as dean and I'm entering this third phase. I'm returning to teaching on a part-time basis in retirement both in the regular university and in OLLI. I am also developing new areas of interest, most recently in the environment, particularly in issues related to water, very far away from the Cold War, very far away from many of the topics that I've studied and taught.

Learning is transformational. The kind of teaching and learning that I've done has certainly had that effect on me, and I have seen the changes as well in my students. Every time I move to a new area or new angle on learning is a transformation. So, in studying Egyptian history or preparing for a course on water or beginning to write about and explore new subject

matter, I see myself moving toward another transformation, another phase of my life and education.

I'm still going to remain close to the OLLI program on our campus. I'm on the board of directors and the curriculum committee, and I'll continue to work to sustain the program and, hopefully, develop some new classes to teach. I've envied those who have been able to teach regularly in OLLI because it is such good teaching, such a wonderful experience.

Every time I come to one of the OLLI conferences I'm amazed at the variety of approaches and the creative things people are doing elsewhere. Though I think ours has been one of the most effective models, I realize how many other successful ways there are to structure such programs. On a personal level, I do plan to do more travel programs. I've enjoyed taking groups abroad, since such cross-cultural experiences, which I haven't said much about so far, have been among the most enriching experiences for me and my family.

I taught abroad in England, and later in Singapore at the National University as a Fulbright scholar, which gave my kids the chance to live and attend school in other countries and develop a different relationship to their own country. I want to continue finding ways to help people have learning experiences that lead to growth.

What crystallized my own emerging ideas about the world was an experience I had on a backpack trip in the Sierra Mountains of California in the early 1970s. While lying on a rock ledge looking up at white clouds floating across an otherwise clear blue sky, the movement of the clouds across the blue dome provided a vision only astronauts had experienced directly and which I'd only previously seen in pictures, a vision of the whole earth revolving in space. Though it was only the movement of the clouds against the sky that created the illusion, its impact on me was profound.

I suddenly understood in a deep way that from the new perspective space flight had given us, there was no there other than here. All life, all history, all of the future was bound up on that floating blue-white ball in the vastness of space. We were all on this ship together. As Joseph Campbell and others later commented, while most of the symbols people have identified with have had to do with specific gods, religions, regions, countries, flags, heroes, ideologies, or individual locations, this symbol was something new. It was about the whole of this life that we share on this limited planet, where all the boundaries we draw are artificial.

I've never forgotten it and for years afterwards required that my students buy copies of the iconic picture of earth from space to put up in their rooms, just because I wanted them to feel and share the significance of this new moment in time.

Lincoln, the Civil War, and the Charms And Terrors of Teaching History

Bill Evitts

Abstract

Presenting a well-known subject, especially in the highly accessible discipline of history, not only requires faculty to mothball their egos but also brings into question what it means to "teach."

I have, once again, bumped into the question of what it means to be in the business of absorbing, synthesizing, and relaying information, and my understanding of it, to a curious public.

Take the matter of Abraham Lincoln. While this is the bicentennial year of his birth, our 16th president has been an American fixation since his martyrdom, and the fascination doesn't stop at our own borders. There is a Lincoln City in Argentina. Cuba has named schools for him. You'll find statues of Lincoln in Havana, Mexico City, Juarez, and London, as well as Union Square, Guatemala; Brantford, Ontario; and the Israeli town of Ramat-Gan. Streets called Lincoln can be found in Barcelona, Brussels, Caracas, Florence, Jerusalem, Milan, Paris, Rome, and Tel Aviv. Many Spanish speaking countries issue Lincoln stamps; Nicaragua and Honduras have the most. There is a reproduction Abraham Lincoln log cabin in Denmark. The Japanese revere him because he overcame hardship to attain greatness and because he reinvented himself and his nation in a time of crisis, just as they did, twice. Germans admire him because he unified a nation at roughly the same time their nation was being unified. Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, the president of Liberia, an African nation created for freed slaves who emigrated from the United States, notes their love of Lincoln stems not only from his role in ending slavery but also for his being the first American president to recognize Liberian nationhood a decade and a half after they had declared themselves a sovereign nation in 1847.

The bicentennial, then, is heady stuff, and I personally have been swept up in it. I helped edit a massive new biography of Lincoln (*Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, by Michael Burlingame, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), and I currently teach two courses about Lincoln. But explaining Lincoln for a living-like teaching the Civil War, which I also do—requires any self-proclaimed authority to check his ego at the door.

The challenge is this: the literature on Lincoln is simply massive. In 1939 a man named Jay Monaghan undertook to create a bibliography of everything ever written about him. Merely listing all the titles produced a 1,079-page book. In the three score and ten years since Monaghan's heroic effort, the volumes written about Lincoln have grown exponentially.

So every time a Lincoln "expert" steps before an audience—and, despite my background, I am far from expert status—he or she confronts individuals who are very likely to know something about Lincoln that the speaker does not, having read something the speaker has not. If the professor's self-conception requires him or her to be "the sage on stage" who cannot be stumped, one-upped, or outflanked by anyone in the room, then he or she is likely in trouble.

The same holds true of any Civil War "authority." Interest in the subject is so widespread, and the literature so vast, that claims to know it all crumble quickly.

The challenge of maintaining expert authority in the face of well-read students is particularly acute in the field of history. No other academic discipline is so completely approachable by laymen. The best cutting-edge scholarship—and the Lincoln biography with which I was involved is a perfect example—is totally accessible to the average intelligent reader. Try applying that same standard to professorial utterances in political science, philosophy, or English criticism, especially the journal articles. It's not that history professors can't screw things up; those smitten by deconstructionist theory can be maddeningly opaque, for example. Still, history overall is the most clearly presented of all academic research.

Not only that, but good history is regularly written by people without any formal academic credentials or faculty positions. Civil War military historian Bruce Catton did splendid work from a background in journalism. The prolific David McCullough holds no earned degree higher than a Yale B.A., and that in English literature. Pulitzer Prize winner Barbara Tuchman (*The Guns of August, The Proud Tower, A Distant Mirror*) was entirely self-taught. And so on . . . which brings me to the whole point of the teaching/learning enterprise.

I realized, long ago, that if I gave a short-answer quiz to my students five years after they'd left my class they would probably fail it. Did that render my efforts pointless? What is the essence of teaching, especially in my own field of history?

First, I had to face that I am not personally strong at diligent, patient, exhaustive archival research. To quote former Johns Hopkins University President Steven Muller, I "don't have the *sitzfleisch* for it." What interests me is being a synthesizer and explainer, bringing a wide and diverse set of facts and insights together to create a platform for learning. My job is to give students the materials and directions to erect their own structure of knowledge. At best, a professor/teacher is like the starter in sourdough bread, imparting a living essence that keeps on going from generation to generation.

Homely similes aside (Sourdough bread? Oh, good grief! Can't I do better than that?), what does this mean? It means guiding, rather than merely informing. It means planting germs of interest and ideas that will sustain themselves. It means creating a framework and a familiarity that students can use to take off on their own. It means leaving a residue of understanding long after the specifics (what year was the *Amistad* episode?) have evaporated. In history this usually entails a focus on stories that capture the essence of the situation. For example, offhand, I can't rattle off the birth dates of the founding fathers, but I can tell you that when the Revolution began, Washington was a venerable 43 years old, Patrick Henry 39, Jefferson 32, Madison 24, and Alexander Hamilton a downy-cheeked youth of barely 20. I know this because my point is that the Revolution was largely a young man's business; Franklin, at nearly 70, was the only really old "founding father." The story carries the details with it.

The challenge of maintaining expert authority in the face of well-read students is particularly acute in the field of history. No other academic discipline is so completely approachable by laymen.

In class, then, the best model is a partnership in which the professor is simply a somewhat better informed participant, the one who has thought about the subject the most and can provide structure. Beyond that, all is fair. We all swim in the same ignorance pool.

And that is why Osher Lifelong Learning Institute is such a hoot. Give me a room full of curious people who will absorb what I say, then talk back, and chip in their mite to the larger enterprise, and I am a happy and fulfilled guy. But I also know that I am not an indispensable guy. It's entirely possible for people to accomplish an education on their own. The proof? Well, for one, there's Abraham Lincoln.

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My Merger Melodrama at the University of California, Davis

Romain Oliver Nelsen

Abstract

This memoir recites a tale of personal travails involved in joining two dissimilar senior learning programs competing for members in the University of California, Davis to create an enduring OLLI. The task turned from mating reluctant mindsets into an established framework for the growth of beneficial intellectual entertainment. To date the twain are one and look to remain so.

On a pleasant Monday morning in May of 2005, while proceeding apace in my retirement, I was asked to help with a problem involving UC Davis senior learning programs. Why not? It seemed like the administrative analog of straightening up the classroom chairs. I agreed and unwittingly stepped into a drama. What happened to me was akin to the Fool falling through the on-stage trap door of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, down into the under workings, down there with old Hamlet's ghost. Since then and from that vantage, I howl up at the actors.

A bit overdone? Yes, of course, but after that encounter I've played at least two parts I didn't reckon on: first as mediator in consolidation of two lifelong learning programs at UC Davis; and then as director and stagehand in the new OLLI production born of that union. This recount asks if the charge was worth the *strum und drang*. I'll stage my conceit as melodrama, perhaps even opera buffa. Here goes.

Act One

Pamela and I moved our cats and accumulations from Santa Monica to Davis, California, in April 1998. We wanted just such a place, a town built around a university. One of our daughters was a 1993 UC Davis Law School graduate. Her stay gave us a taste of this town that some call quirky,

not far from an off-ramp on I-80 between Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay, a place with a sign painted on a water tower. We liked this small "company town." Still do, even in summer heat.

Our kids were through college or through with college. Three of the five children did or would live in northern California with grandchildren, giving us a usual family motive, with an escape back-story, ideal on several counts. I'd been a lawyer in private civil practice in southern California, principally involved in business-insurance coverage problems. The work was demanding and rewarding, although technical and obscure. My practice required considerable travel. I was 63 and might have held on longer, but my client's corporate reorganization and a Willy Loman kind of burnout sapped me. I wanted some distance from the office while I wound down my last few cases. We'd staged an exit to Davis, knowing what I would do: go back to school.

This recount asks if the charge was worth the *strum und drang*. I'll stage my conceit as melodrama, perhaps even opera buffa.

I also knew what I would study for starters: the Bible and the Bard. Stephen Jay Gould remarked, "No one who has not read the Bible or the Bard can be considered educated in Western traditions…." (*Time* magazine, July 23, 1999. By that (or any) standard, I had much to learn and to that end, enrolled in courses along those lines through University Extension. It wasn't entirely new. I'd sampled Biblical subjects in lectures at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles and had begun to delve into the ironic intrigues of English Bible translations. Religion and Shakespeare's works were interests, but I lacked the free time to really dig in. Retirement made study both a joy and a transition. I took inactive status in the California Bar at year-end 1999 and became fully occupied in making up my neglected education. After three or four years and sixty credit hours, including graduate creative writing workshops, I drifted out of the classroom and meandered toward writing a memoir.

In the process, I began taking courses in Senior Learning Unlimited (SLU), a UC Davis-affiliated senior's division offering learning at a slower pace with no exams, papers, or grades. In SLU, I was both student and teacher: a bit of Shakespeare; William Tyndale's Bible translation; a Monday morning discussion called "Whither America." All this was catch-up on the chances I'd wasted as a young man on the mid-American plain or missed when I stumbled into a chopped-off career as an airline pilot.

As a boy, I first lived on a small farm on the Iowa-South Dakota border. We moved to Sioux Falls at the start of World War II as a temporary airbase of tarpaper barracks was thrown together. Dad worked building the airbase and signed on as a fireman when it became operational. The family prospered with war but struggled with the post-war peace. Dad worked road construction. Mother, dad, two younger sisters, grandmother, and I lived stuffed together in a 28-foot short trailer, following the asphalt trail. After high school, I began at South Dakota State in 1953, but dropped in and out, wandering. In 1956, on a whim and jet noise, I enlisted in the

My Merger Melodrama at the University of California, Davis

South Dakota Air National Guard, where I was packed off to the active duty USAF to train as an aviation cadet. I was duly commissioned an officer and radar technician to fly shotgun as "back-seater" in an Air Force air defense interceptor called the F-89 Scorpion. Following that purgatorial stint, I bounced back to South Dakota to finish my Cold War service in the Air Guard. After another couple years at South Dakota State, I cycled back to the Air Force to become a fighter-interceptor pilot in the F-102 Delta Dagger, which we lovingly called the Deuce. Flying it was sensual delight, a labor of love. I did well. With a few years' seasoning and as graduate of the advanced interceptor-pilot training program, I hoped for a flying career in the Air National Guard.

Changing times, along with marriage and a first baby, cast airline flying as a more stable occupation. In 1966, I took a pilot job with Continental Airlines in Los Angeles and transferred to the California Air Guard. Continental expanded with the War in Vietnam, putting me up for promotion to Captain by 1968. I flew both Boeing 707s and Deuces, enjoying the variety. We had three more kids and bought a GI Bill house in the Los Angeles suburbs. Things looked good.

But in 1969 Richard Nixon became President. Continental Airlines had provided airplanes with lovely flight attendants for John Kennedy to campaign against Nixon in 1960. Three days after taking office, the Nixon administration revoked and remanded Continental's newly awarded international routes. That meant I would fly second-seat into a foreseeable future. Not bad as work goes, but, considering my ego not good either. So what to do?

A stint of jury duty then piqued my latent interest in lawyering. Southern California offered several night law school possibilities, feasible on an airline schedule but not with Air Guard duties. The newly forming Whittier Law School accepted me, and I cut short military flying at a bit more than 15 years, 9 in the Deuce. After 4 years of juggling flying and classes, I graduated and was sworn in at age 38 in 1974, becoming both lawyer and fellow-Whittier alumnus with then-resigning President Nixon.

A small Los Angeles insurance-defense law firm offered me a chance to try my hand at courtroom work. That experience was invaluable, but quickly convinced me that I'd rather fly airplanes than try cases for insurance companies. But I hedged. While retreating to Continental, I retained a small ownership in the law firm and continued part-time in a coverage-analysis specialty, with more writing and less courtroom work, which I do while flying a schedule.

When my airline seniority number came up for Captain in 1977, I took a post as a junior supervisory pilot on both the Boeing 727 and DC-10, while continuing part-time legal work. That arrangement lasted until 1981, when Continental became a take-over target in the deregulation fiasco. I held a tenuous position at Continental as assistant to the interim chief pilot.

Chaos dominated the corporate acquisition. Our CEO committed suicide in the executive office on August 9, 1981, after losing the hostile takeover. With that shot, my flying career flamed out. I continued at Continental until year's end and bailed out to my fallback, taking early retirement to salvage my pension.

The legal niche I'd developed blossomed with computer use. Insurance coverage questions became my ticket to ride around the country tending insurance disputes about who paid what and how much for business squabbles, mostly on intellectual property issues spawned by the information technology boom. I was busy and productive. By the year-end 1997, however, I'd had enough of travel and tension, and I began the retreat to Davis. Good move.

Act Two

The plot twist came on that May Day Monday in a "Whither America" class, when the late Bob Cooper, then SLU president, sat in. I'd met Bob, but he wasn't a regular. Why was he there? At the break, he put his hand on my shoulder, in passing, and asked if we could talk. "Of course," I said. Bob had flown a full combat tour over Europe as a B-17 pilot. But I admired Bob for more than his military service; he was a Davis community leader and a good guy.

Dorothy Reinke, the president-elect and co-founder of SLU, was at that first after-class meeting; she'd suggested me as candidate to check out a proposed merger with OLLI. They sketched the controversy; the Board was divided on a consolidation. "You were a lawyer," Bob said. "You might find this interesting." I was being drafted and I knew it, but I didn't resist. "Okay," I said. "Should be simple. Piece of cake. Why not?" A fool's question: I knew these could be sticky. I can't say that I wasn't warned and aware, but my overblown self-esteem and difficulty saying *no* overruled the caution light blinking on the instrument panel. Pamela reminded me that I hadn't retired to regress into the morass I'd just escaped. Gilbert and Sullivan, among others, noted that "things are seldom as they seem."

And they weren't. I agreed to chair an *ad hoc* committee. Over the next months, we garnered information and heard arguments, each with validity, some vociferously made. I'd been in SLU courses since 2003 and read OLLI course bulletins, but hadn't ventured into the UC Davis OLLI that had formed in 2002 while I was taking on-campus courses. I didn't have a position and had nothing at stake. Each had different operational concepts.

With contrasting formats, the two UC Davis senior learning programs co-existed uneasily in the Extension Department. SLU was low cost, entirely self-supported by volunteers and unpaid instructors, with space rented around Davis as it came. OLLI at UC Davis operated as a discounted part of the Extension programs, supported in part by an Osher Foundation

In the process, I began taking courses in Senior Learning Unlimited (SLU), a UC Davis-affiliated senior's division offering learning at a slower pace with no exams, papers, or grades. In SLU, I was both student and teacher: a bit of Shakespeare; William Tyndale's Bible translation; a Monday morning discussion called "Whither America."

grant, with Extension administration and paid instructors. Each was by membership, SLU had about 150 members and OLLI had nearly 100. The Osher Foundation required 300 members to continue the annual $100,000 start-up grants. OLLI at UC Davis wasn't going to make the renewal.

UC Davis Extension didn't want to lose either the grant or the prestige that went with an organization such as OLLI. On the other side, SLU feared being overrun by OLLI procedural requirements. SLU could accept a conceptual consolidation, but wanted to stay with its successful SLU name and method. The Foundation funded OLLIs in colleges across the country with few limitations, but required a uniform brand on a single OLLI logo. Other requirements were favorably structured, allowing considerable latitude to individual operations. More than 100 OLLIs were already in progress under this formula. In essence, it came to the name, but not the content so long as program quality was high. The dean of UC Davis Extension, Dennis Pendleton, and his special assistant, Howard Schutz, gave me unfettered access to investigate and report.

Despite objections, I concluded the better choice was to merge and apply for OLLI status, while using the SLU management structure—in effect a reverse take-over—making the UC Davis OLLI over on the SLU model, which had been funded from a single source with some help from University Extension. The newly constituted OLLI would, however, be funded from three sources: the Osher grant, UC Davis Extension, and memberships and course fees. The SLU Board was wary, but agreed to try. With effort, the newly combined organization reached about 350 members by year end 2006.

Then the Foundation raised minimum membership to 500. That required further persuasion, first to the Board, then the membership at large, through modest course fee increases. The number of courses and events was expanded to accommodate growth. Annual membership fees were lowered for a recruitment period. The community responded, meeting the 500-member goal. The Osher Foundation extended the $100,000 yearly grant to our newly modeled program. Our OLLI was endowed in 2007. My simple assignment had taken the better part of two years, with shifts and reversals, more time and emotional investment than I'd thought.

While this was underway, I'd moved from the *ad hoc* committee to chair of curriculum, on condition that the outgoing chair, Susan Hodgson, stay on to train me. She'd agreed and we proceeded with the help of a part-time employee. The workload increased. Christine Ficker, executive assistant to Dean Pendleton, met the challenge with verve. I became recruiter and utility player, sometimes more than a full-time job, heavy on typing and e-mail. Our OLLI had a fortunate upturn when Lorraine Townsend was hired as program coordinator. She'd been at UCLA Extension, although not at that OLLI. Lorraine gave us the essential element, and freed me to play a supporting role.

Our OLLI took an experimental-experiential approach with courses. We established relationships with the Davis Art Center and the Eleanor Roosevelt Circle senior co-op for course-room space, added basic audio-visual equipment to courses, offered film studies courses at the locally historic Varsity Theater and video recorded selected courses for broadcast on Davis Community Television and DVD distribution. Other works wait in the wings.

OLLI has been my preoccupation since Bob Cooper and Dorothy Reinke tapped me. My lifelong-learning plans hadn't included behind-the-scenes activity, including the financial acrobatics of the last years. Much Pamela and I had in mind when we first moved to Davis has been in a holding pattern. All this sounds like grousing. It is. Back to the question: was it worth it?

Gilbert and Sullivan, among others, noted that "things are seldom as they seem."

Yes. We've made friends. Members thank me. That's heady and rewarding, ample return. But I'd like to take a seat in the audience and scribble on the flying story memoir. Until I recommended the OLLI merger, I didn't have a personal stake in the production. Then, to further mix metaphors, fearing either a flop or a bad landing, it became *my* OLLI. Many others worked longer, harder, and better than I did, but since this is my melodrama, I can play hero or villain: Figaro or Dudley Do-Right, Count Almaviva or Snidely Whiplash. All of these have been my roles. And I'm invested in UC Davis OLLI and the entirety of OLLI, wherever it may provide intellectual entertainment for lifelong learning. Bravo Osher Foundation for all these second acts.

And, as it turns out, Juliet's take on a name was dead on. "That which we call a rose/By any other word would smell as sweet."

Romain Oliver Nelsen reflects on his happenstance tumble into roles as mediator between two senior learning groups and nurturer of the OLLI that emerged. He is an inactive California lawyer, retired Continental Airline pilot, and former Air Force and Air National Guard fighter-interceptor pilot. As a boy already burdened with an odd given name, someone discovered his middle name and mean kids took to calling him Ollie. He despised the nickname that he now relishes.

To Shine Like a Beacon

Ellen Beinhorn

Abstract

Designing a course for older adults is a challenge. One in poetry is a dare. This is a personal essay written by an 87-year-old sculptor and poet who teaches poetry classes at the OLLI at the University of South Carolina. Originally designed as a course of study on Emily Dickinson, participants began to write their own verses and share them with each other.

When I opened a borrowed copy of *The LLI Review* (Volume 2) my attitude was, "Ho hum, yet another journal." However, as I started through it I found crisp writing, solid editing, and when I linked up with the "Save Our Stories" article I was "turned on." It was exactly what I had been trying to do in my classes at OLLI in South Carolina, not in narrative form, but in poetry.

I'm getting ahead of myself and at the age of 87, I find that a common happening. Two years ago I applied to the OLLI program at the University of South Carolina, Beaufort, to teach a course on Emily Dickinson. Inspired by Dickinson's poems I had created faces to selected verses. A book, *Emily and Me,* was the result and, in August of 2008, I presented my work at the 20th anniversary of the Emily Dickinson International Society in Amherst, Massachusetts.

When it came to planning the course for OLLI, I became curious as to whether the added dimension of portraits to the poems would stimulate deeper interest in the verses as well as cause the class to listen more attentively and more critically to what they heard and saw. At this point I didn't know what to expect from adult students. My life as an educator, artist, sculptor and poet had always found me in the classrooms of the young.

Responding to the call of Emily Dickinson were adults, ages 55 through 90, and as different as A from Z. They were strangers to me and to each other and very different from a class of young people who were at ease

with one another while also being inexperienced in life. However, there was an exciting something else in my classes for the elderly, in a word: stories!

With their own lives as background, the understanding of the content of the lectures was keen, personal, and surprising. The easy back-and-forth dialogue among them signified to me that they had something to say and were anxious to say it. Then the time came when I asked them to write poems of their own. Silence! My instincts said "start slow, lady; asking adults to write poems is a dicey thing."

I was absolutely amazed when they all agreed and at the close of class, spirited talk began among classmates along with gentle touching, laughter, and utterances such as "who'd of thought!" Many students left the classroom feeling ten years younger.

And here was when the magic word for what OLLI is all about emerged: purpose. The richness of the mind in the elderly is a fertile planting ground just seeking a means to reveal its stories and a "now I can tell it" spirit.

I am convinced the OLLI program is mining that resource with its numerous classes in poetry, literature, writing, and art, all calling for reflection, experience, and understanding. "My people" were eager to share, reveal, and consort with each other. Our classes became a place where each one shared the others' trials and tribulations, as well as their lot in life.

Is all this important? You bet! Creating this avenue of communication opens a myriad of opportunities for unleashing thoughts to words and expressing oneself in ways never before considered. Our classroom had become that special place where age and experience counted and where warmth, sympathy, and understanding were underlying strengths.

Let me again address the age factor. When I encountered my first OLLI class, there were people in middle age and in their prime who were ready for intellectual challenge. Only a small portion of participants were in their seventies and eighties and those that were ready to defy their antiquity.

As their instructor I became wary that the difference in ages might present problems that could reduce optimal teaching conditions. Happily, my experience was to the contrary. Those in the younger age group tuned into the maturity and experiences of the more aged, while those in the older group were curious about how their younger classmates might have fared had they lived in a distinctly different time period. Above all, however, tolerance, respect, and consideration were observed at all times.

The mesh was extraordinary. Initially the intent of the course was to focus on the poems of Emily Dickinson. The stated goals directed the learning to this great poet's life and work. Over time, however, students grew in awareness and interest in each others' poems which inspired conversational exchanges and the profound pleasure of seeking accomplishment in "doing."

At this point I didn't know what to expect from adult students. My life as an educator, artist, sculptor and poet had always found me in the classrooms of the young.

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This is the ultimate learning experience for an educator. When your students take off independently to expand beyond the initial starting point, all that one has poured into attaining this milestone justifies the means becoming the end.

As you would expect, this digressive move gave birth to some special episodes. In one event I had just finished reading and discussing a Dickinson poem about death:

> A Train went through a burial gate,
> A bird broke forth and sang,
> And trilled, and quivered, and shook his throat
> Till all the churchyard rang.

It was observed by the class that tears were flowing from one of their members. She murmured she had just buried her husband. Nothing more was said.

The next week a gentleman in the class approached and asked if he could start with his poem. He turned to the widow and read:

> What could be more real than tears?
> Behold the laughter, the sadness, the pain reborn
>
> The intruding moments of life's journey
> Uncorked in honesty.
>
> *-Vito Carpitella 2008*

Following this became volcano-eruption time in my classes. Poems began to flow, accompanied by a desire to read them to each other but, regrettably, all is not perfect in this tale. My new poets were indeed inspired but when it came to rendering their poems it became a slippery slope. How do you tell grown adults to "speak up . . . enunciate more clearly . . . shine like a beacon?"

My first effort was to place the chairs in a tight circle with the performing poet located in the middle. I then asked that this individual turn and speak to each of the class members as they recited. This worked to a moderate degree but wasn't getting us were we needed to be. What's that old joke about how to get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice.

Clearly, a follow-up was needed at the completion of this OLLI course. How could this be done? Poetry is not exactly a second language these days and getting people to participate was and is a big challenge.

In my personal life I was a great reader of poetry and especially Emily Dickinson. This deep engagement inspired my book and also prompted me to become a member of the Emily Dickinson International Society. I mused

that perhaps an Emily Dickinson Society Chapter could be created in our area, thus giving poetry lovers a chance to gather, read and talk about Emily, present their own poems, and exchange thoughts about poetry in general.

To this end I founded the first EDIS Chapter in South Carolina, headquartered in Beaufort County (B-EDIS). Members from all my OLLI classes turned up as well as people from across Beaufort County. The project was successful and our third monthly meeting took place on March 13, 2009, at the Bluffton, South Carolina Public Library.

Here was a way to continue involvement in reading, writing, and reciting poetry. One member of our family of participants asked why I spent so much time, energy, and even money lecturing in the OLLI program. As Charles Lamb once said: "I love to lose myself in other men's minds."

My new poets were indeed inspired but when it came to rendering their poems it became a slippery slope. How do you tell grown adults to "speak up . . . enunciate more clearly . . . shine like a beacon?"

Ellen Beinhorn, B.A., M.A., B.Litt. (Oxford University) lectures for the OLLI program at the University of South Carolina in Bluffton, Beaufort, and Hilton Head. She is a member of the Emily Dickinson International Society. Ellen was sculptor/owner of Sculpture House and Gardens in Carmel, California, for 13 years and creator and curator of the John Turchin Art Gallery in Banner Elk, N.C. Author of *Emily and Me*, Ellen conducts classes on Emily Dickinson and the Poets Laureate of the United States. Her next book will encompass her OLLI experiences with emphasis on poems created in her classes.

What Sustains Learning in the Later Years?

Barbara F. Cherem

Abstract

This article describes ongoing research on motivations for seniors who seek learning opportunities. The 70 survey participants took classes or attended lectures at one of two senior groups. All participants were surveyed and then a sub group of 15 volunteered for one-hour interviews. The interviews explored the source of ongoing interest in learning as well as ways in which individuals participated in such learning (e.g., alone, self-styled learning projects through library or other organizations). This study is part of ongoing research investigating older learners from various demographic groups to determine similarities and differences and the potential impact such learning has on their lives and their aging.

Without obvious utilitarian reasons for learning, such as professional development related to one's paid work, why do some seniors continue to seek out learning opportunities? What topics and formats do they seek out? What is the source of this love of learning? Are there benefits that emerge that the ever-growing body of seniors can draw upon for issues of aging, such as improved mental function or an improved quality of life?

In the literature on motivations for adult learning, there are many studies drawing from the nine most common recognized motives (Merriam, 1984). These nine motives constituted the core list of possible motives which 70 seniors rated over the fall 2008 through fall 2009.

The researcher surveyed these 70 seniors in southeastern Michigan from two senior groups. Forty seniors were from the Ann Arbor-based Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), and 30 seniors were from the small town Adult Learner Institute (ALI, an Elderhostel affiliate). The main focus of the survey was to determine participants' motives for being involved in formal learning opportunities such as lectures or classes.

The nine learning motives rated by the 70 seniors were cognitive interest, external expectations, social contact, social stimulation, community service, intellectual stimulation, to express myself, to cope with a change in life, and improves my sense of purpose. There was also the option of responding to "other reasons—please specify."

Additional survey questions requested demographic information such as age, gender, and educational level. The survey queried such issues as retirement, if retired, when, and former occupation. Additionally, the survey asked individuals what types of learning formats they participated in and what topics they preferred. Possible responses included recreational, lectures, classes, adventure/ learning travel and "other."

What is the source of this love of learning?

Forty OLLI participants constituted nearly 60 percent of the sample whereas the other 40 percent were from ALI. The gender distribution was 80 percent women (56/70) and 20 percent men (14/70), with this ratio being four to one within both groups. Ages ranged from 55 to 97, with the majority in their late 60s.

These survey participants were highly educated, especially the OLLI university town participants. This is a common finding in research on older learners. There are many examples in the literature to indicate that "the more educated a person is, the more likely it is that he or she will seek further education" (Dychtwald & Flower, 1989). Most had at least a bachelor's degree (80 percent). Nearly half had retired within the past eight years. These two groups also matched other demographic trends noted in the literature that the main consumers of such learning opportunities in retirement are white, female, and with income and educational attainment higher than non-participants (Martin, 2003).

The fact that this sample was mostly women is typical of senior learning, but the high level of education was unique. These people grew up in a time when a small minority of women completed college. Most would have attended college in the 1950s and 1960s, a decade or two before the advent of women's consciousness-raising in the early 1970s when more women began to plan degrees and subsequent careers in the paid workforce. Yet a majority of the female older learners in this research sample had completed college. Many of these women had gone on to become educators.

Interviews

The researcher drew from a smaller group of those surveyed that agreed to a follow-up hour-long interview. Fifteen volunteers were drawn from the two groups and interviews were conducted in the summer 2009.

The protocol of 11 questions delved into the source of their love of learning, when it had begun, and in what manner it had ebbed and flowed over the most recent decade, and then contrasted that most recent decade with interest in learning over their lifetime. The researcher also probed if

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subjects had crafted any sorts of self-styled learning, or if any learning had led to further actions, such as political or community involvements. Additionally, the interviewees explored the types of learning with which people were most involved as well as the breadth and depth of that involvement. They were asked about with whom they had participated (if anyone), and through which organizations they mainly participated (e.g., OLLI, ALI, the local library, an arts organization). Many of the interviews ended up becoming a life story as much as a learning story.

Findings

Of the nine common motives for adult learning that were listed for ranking, "cognitive interest" and "intellectual stimulation" emerged as primary motives in later-life learning for both study groups. These two differed only in their rank order with the more educated OLLI group preferring "cognitive interest." Other research also found this as the preferred motive for more educated seniors (Kim, 2004). The Kim study also took place in a university town but in southeastern United States.

Secondary motives were more varied with "a sense of purpose" a popular second choice for both groups (30 percent) followed by "social stimulation" (25 percent). However, the ALI folks rated two other motives nearly equally to the second-tier motives, making for a four-way tie for ALI participants' second-tier motives. These ALI seniors added "community service" and "expressing myself." Whether this is indicative of the community-based structure of this Elderhostel affiliate, of its location in a small town, or some other reason, one can only speculate, but the "community service" and "express myself" motives were clearly higher among the ALI participants (29 percent). Few of the university-based OLLI learners chose these same motives as secondary ones (only 10-15 percent). In fact the OLLI participants had no additional secondary motives beyond the two previously referenced that they shared with ALI participants (social stimulation and sense of purpose).

Interview Findings

Fifteen interviews conducted in the summer of 2009 sought to determine the source of curiosity among these seniors. Twelve women and three men were interviewed: six from ALI, the small town Elderhostel affiliate, and nine from OLLI in Ann Arbor.

In many cases, love of learning began at a young age with early encouragement for reading. This was typically due to a parent or relative who modeled and encouraged such behavior. Enjoyment of reading and becoming an avid reader were themes that ran through many of the interviews. These early reading and family models were the major source of love of learning. Reading most often had been a lifelong pursuit, not something

emerging at retirement due to increased leisure time. However, the amount and intensity of reading in some cases did increase later in life with retirement and having more time. In only one case was this pattern not true. One subject, a man who had been a skilled tradesman, talked about how he had "caught" a love of learning later in life when he traversed a midlife meaning-making period. He so wanted to have a formal education that in the interview he stated that he hoped he hadn't "misled" the researcher by stating on the survey that he had "two years of college." He stated that he had only attended some college later in life to test the waters and to "see if I could do it." He had assembled enough credits to equal two years but had taken courses he liked, not focusing on any program of study. He proved to himself that he "could do it" because he had succeeded in these courses.

Many of the interviews ended up becoming a life story as much as a learning story.

This 75-year-old man could never recall being encouraged by his single mother or later on by his stepfather. He was a "C student" who had only been interested in "cars and girls" when in high school. He had married young, had four daughters, and only in his late 30s to early 40s did he suddenly get enchanted by ideas, and began to read voraciously. He recalled the exact book that had caused such reflection and stimulated the zest for more reading and learning; it was J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye.*

This man was the exception in the 15 interviews with the 14 others, exemplifying the theme of curiosity laid down as a learning foundation early in their lives. Love of reading was central to most of those seeking learning opportunities as seniors, although some also expressed deep interest in learning through nature, scientific inquiry, or outdoor exploration. Many had parents who greatly valued education even though not formally educated themselves. One man's elementary educated father would give him assignments to read and quiz him at dinner over the reading when he got home from working in the mines. Despite differences in upbringing due to social class, parental education, and sometimes poverty, these individuals shared the similarity of families who encouraged learning and were most often curious people themselves.

These seniors exemplify Nisbett's (2009) position that defies the heriditarians' view of intelligence as a fixed entity via IQ. Rather, Nisbett's research claims nurturance as the clear trump card in building persons who value education and thereby build and become intelligent due to their surroundings, encouragement, experiences, values, and choices.

Topical Interests: Findings

The arts were the most preferred area of desired learning by both OLLI and ALI participants as well as by both genders. Arts included music, visual arts, and theater/dance. Among male participants, after the arts, history surfaced as a primary topical interest.

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The university-based OLLI group members expressed more in writing on the open-ended portion of the survey and listed more varied learning than did the ALI participants. They also listed more travel as a source of their learning. Nearly 70 percent of OLLI respondents mentioned having participated in travel, and 10 percent specifically in Elderhostel. Whereas the ALI participants mentioned travel less frequently (56 percent), none mentioned Elderhostel travel.

Few participants mentioned an area frequently cited in other studies of senior learning, i.e., spiritually oriented classes (Hansen & Haas, 2009). Although the ALI group had four respondents who did mention some church or biblical learning, the OLLI group had only two who referenced any spiritually oriented learning.

The Milan Small Town Five

Much of the research on older learners has been conducted among people of affluence and high levels of education so potentially different types of learning, topics, and formats would emerge if more varied demographic groups of seniors were included. In an effort to diversify, this researcher also surveyed two groups of older learners other than the OLLI and ALI groups.

One of these, consisting of five people, was from a small town with an employment base primarily associated with a federal prison. The Milan Parks and Recreation Department sponsored a program for seniors involving mostly recreational and social activities such as cards and crochet. However, there were also several formal learning opportunities offered. The director solicited five participants who volunteered for the survey. All five were women who also volunteered for the follow-up interview at a later time.

This group was similar to the other research groups in that they were white women who ranged in their late 60s to mid-70s (although one was in the 55-59 range and, as she stated, "retiring soon"). However, they were different demographically from the OLLI and ALI research participants overall in their educational level. Two had B.A. degrees, two had two years of college and one had a high school diploma. Their occupations included secretary, teacher, massage therapist, and two persons who had worked with computers.

Like the other groups motivations of these five individuals in Milan included "intellectual stimulation" (5/5) and "cognitive interest" (4/5). In addition, they ranked as high priority motives the following: community service (3/5); to express myself (3/5); and to cope with a change in life (3/5). Variables which two subjects rated as their primary motive and the remaining three rated as their second motive were social contact, social stimulation, and the improvement of a sense of purpose. This compared

favorably with the other small town (ALI) group and in their primary and secondary motives for learning.

Very few individuals (in any group) rated "external expectations" as a motive for learning. This variable refers to "others who press on you to be involved and participate." This motive was brought up in several interviews in the context of a wife bringing along a reluctant spouse to classes. This motive was rarely rated above a 3, however, and typically the majority in all groups rated it as a 4 or 5, indicating that it was the only one of the nine possible motives listed that was not commonly operational as a motive.

The area of religion and spirituality did emerge as a topic of interest in the Milan group. Three women reported having taken a class on the Bible and one wrote extensively about an interest in religious issues. As mentioned earlier, religion and spirituality did not emerge as a topic of interest in the OLLI group and had only minor mention from ALI members. However, the Milan sample may have been skewed in the direction of religious interests because the director of Parks and Recreation, who recruited the sample, utilized a Hebrew language class in doing so.

The Milan group also differed in the types of classes they had participated in. Four of the five women wrote extensively on the survey, just as the OLLI seniors had done, but only one mentioned the arts as a major topical area of past interest. Craft and skill acquisition classes were more frequently reported as were exercise and fitness classes (under the recreational category). Two from the Milan sample did have travel experiences although one was exclusively domestic travel. Finally, four of the five wrote comments under "other" mentioning teaching piano and "published two books and written four books."

Much of the research on older learners has been conducted among people of affluence and high levels of education so potentially different types of learning, topics, and formats would emerge if more varied demographic groups of seniors were included.

The Congregation of Ph.D.s: Nifty Nines

Another group who recently participated in the survey was recruited through a Unitarian congregation where nine seniors studied a book entitled *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing* Older (1995). They were demographically more like the university-town OLLI participants in that they were white, mostly women (8/9), highly educated (five Ph.D.s and three M.A.s) and lived in the same university town of Ann Arbor. Although their responses were closest to those of OLLI in their major motives for learning, i.e., "cognitive interest" (9/9) and "intellectual stimulation"(9/9), they were more like the small town groups of ALI and Milan in frequently rating other motives for learning. Their ratings of second-tier motives were: social stimulation, community service, express myself, and improves my sense of purpose. This ranking of learning motives paralleled the small town ALI seniors' ranking. In addition, this group stressed physical fitness more often than the arts as topical interests. This group also traveled to learn much like the OLLI participants. As one might

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imagine from the context in which they were recruited into this study, this group expressed strong interest in spiritual issues although these were fairly exotic and eclectic and not clearly associated with any single faith tradition. (Therefore they were not as expressly "religious" as the Milan group's clearly Christian-oriented interests).

Such an array of differences suggests that there are vastly different "markets" for curricula and learning formats because older learners do not fit into any particular mold. As Palmer aptly states:

> Their personalities, coupled with the realities of their life experiences, have made them uniquely different not only from the members of other age groups, but also from each other. Therefore, any assumptions, inferences, or generalizations about senior students as a group must be made with great caution (Palmer, 1992, p. 2).

Conclusion

Although there may be differences of topical and format preferences among seniors interested in learning opportunities, the importance of new learning to one's quality of aging seems undisputed. Chandra Mehrotra has conducted interesting research on schooling, aging, and cognitive functioning. She states:

> People with more years of schooling are more likely to maintain high cognitive function. This continuing impact of education nearly 50 years after the participants finished school suggests two possible effects. First, education in early life may have a direct beneficial effect on brain circuitry which, in turn, enabled the maintenance of cognitive function in old age. Second, education may set a pattern of intellectual activities—reading, chess, crossword puzzles, and the like—and this continuing exercise of cognitive function serves to maintain it. (Mehrotra, 2003, p. 650).

This last rationale seems to describe aptly those interviewed in this study, most of whom had the start of their love of learning set young in life, chiefly through early and avid reading.

At the time of this writing (winter 2010) a grant for a community needs assessment in the Flint, Michigan, area is under review. This grant seeks to grow learning opportunities within the area as well as extend UM-Flint's outreach in community involvement. These initiatives would potentially illuminate the learning needs of a more diverse group of seniors. Additionally, another university-affiliated group has agreed to support

the research by allowing access to their Elderwise group for solicitation of potential participants. This group is sponsored through Eastern Michigan University and Cleary College and draws from a more diverse pool of senior learners.

More than half of all the human beings who have ever lived beyond age 65 are alive today (Moody, 2002). The issue of "optimal aging" is a key one when considering this demographic fact. Having opportunities to learn in later life will only increase in importance as people live longer and healthier lives. Educators and gerontologists who focus attention on studying motives, topical interests, learning contexts, and other issues related to older persons as learners will have an important role to play in the future of aging and society as a whole.

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Barbara Cherem is assistant professor of education at University of Michigan-Flint and has been conducting research on seniors' motivation for learning over the past three years. She has her M.A. and Ph.D. from Michigan State University. Her degrees and expertise are in special education, educational administration, and adult learning and development. Barbara enjoys working with older persons and has facilitated many workshops and presentations in the Midwest, chiefly on aspects of the aging process. Interests include the connection of disability studies to the aging process, human learning and development, international education, and the history of aging. Cherem has spent approximately 15 years as a P-12 teacher in public education, another 15 as an administrator/researcher, and 15 as a professor in higher education.

School Return Stimulating for Mature Student

Elaine Parker Adams

Abstract

The volatile economic and employment markets have sparked the return of many older workers to the classroom. Workforce layoffs and job boredom are but two of the reasons impelling their pursuit of new classroom experiences. This chronicle reports the experiences of a higher education administrator as she returns to the college classroom as a full-time student for the first time in 25 years. The author shares the humor of adjusting to multiple generations in the classroom and encourages peers to relish the challenge of the new academic arena.

The erratic economic and employment markets have triggered the return of many mature active and retired workers to the classroom. Financial markets are dwindling, employers are recouping, and seniors are becoming more innovative in managing their assets. Proactivity is in; passivity is out. For me, the stimulus was a particularly hectic year at the community college. I was holding down my regular administrative assignment while pitching in to fill a temporarily vacant administrative slot. As the year of double duty progressed, the desire to experience the excitement of a different career path grew increasingly demanding. After two decades in higher education administration with a doctorate in another field, a change beckoned. I developed a proposal for an administrative sabbatical and presented it to the administration. Fortunately, my employer was willing to support financially a year's sabbatical that allowed me to prepare for a new career direction.

I had entered college as a teenager during the late 1950s. In those days, counselors and parents steered girls to classroom careers. The oft-repeated mantras were: "There will always be children to teach; teachers are never unemployed; and teachers have summers off, so you can travel and/or watch your own kids!" I heeded the advice of my elders and obtained a

degree in secondary education, preparing to teach high school Spanish and French. Secretly, psychology fascinated me, but I did not know any psychologists and neither did anyone else that I could go to for advice.

Over the years, I indulged my interest in psychology by reading avidly in the field. Occasionally, I might meet a psychologist at a conference or see one depicted in film or on television. They seemed interesting and thoughtful people. They appealed to my desire to help others while retaining a scholarly persona. With my sabbatical, I proposed to obtain credentials for teaching college-level psychology. At the send-off party on my last day as an administrator, I was feted with gifts of a backpack, pens and pencils, and study snacks. My colleagues and I chuckled about my moving to the far side and becoming a student. Every now and then I entertained the sobering thought that I was 57 years old and about to enter a new world. I questioned my sanity!

I had entered college as a teenager during the late 1950s. In those days, counselors and parents steered girls to classroom careers.

On my first day as a student at the university, I wore my old business uniform: a serious-looking, skirted below the knee, dark-hued suit. I discovered quickly that nobody except auditors ever wore this type of outfit on campus. People would back away from me in either reverence or fear, mostly the latter. Both faculty and students watched me warily, speculating that my purpose was to report on somebody and hoping they weren't the chosen. I realized that this formal look was detrimental to the social experience that I desired and pondered what my next fashion statement should be.

Roaming the campus, I noted several fit, mid-life women on campus displaying their trim, muscular bodies in sports bras and biker shorts. I sadly concluded that these ladies and I were not going to be clothing "sisters." While Michelle Obama's marvelous arms are "thunder and lightning," my own arms were more like "fog and drizzle." My weight was also in the sensitive category and personal hang-ups (probably from too much Freud) precluded my wearing "underwear" as "outerwear." I eventually settled on the pervasive unisex wardrobe of slacks, jacket, and shirt or tee. I had read somewhere that backpacks were verboten for middle-aged women, so I carried my belongings in canvas book bag.

Luckily, classroom furnishings had evolved since the 1950s. Some brilliant mind had recognized that big and sluggish bottoms demand classroom table arrangements with individual mobile chairs. Granted, the plastic chairs did not cushion those bottoms very well. Occasionally, a classroom was furnished with the tiny "coed" desks of bygone eras. Sitting down in one of those pieces of mini-furniture required distortions not easily managed by the aging body. On truly bad days, the desk became an appendage to my lower torso, making me appear snail-like when I tried to stand up while bonded to my chair.

I began the fall semester with a full course load of 12 semester hours that can only be described as "the good, the bad, and the ugly." On the

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"good" side, the personality course re-triggered all my previous excitement about what makes people tick. The professor seemed to be truly delighted that his course, normally populated with late teens and twenty-somethings, had a student enrolled who shared his memories of the "days of yore." We shared smirks at the sympathetic, but puzzled reactions of his younger students to pre-1970 events and personalities. He and I were quite smug, since we knew Jimi, Janis, and Joan (as in Hendrix, Joplin, and Baez).

Likewise, I loved the course in cross-cultural psychology in which I, as the class elder, served as the official griot. Having grown up in a world class cross-cultural community, I delightedly led old culture/new culture discussions. My home city offered examples of virtually every anomaly the text and the teacher could identify. Explaining why in the month of March in that city African Americans parade as Native Americans, Italian Americans stage public food altars, and Irish Americans toss cabbages and potatoes from floats to the well-fed citizenry was a course in and of itself.

The learning principles course was part of the "bad and ugly" of my first semester. This class included the rat labs. There were extra points to be gained for being a rat captain. Recognizing early on that I would need every extra point I could muster to pass the course, I eagerly volunteered. My team called its rat Shaneequah, and true to her name, she didn't take any crap from us. Shaneequah always made it a point to urinate on my hand as a cautionary warning when I picked her up to move her to the Skinner box. I dread to this day thinking about what would have happened if I had accidentally squeezed her too hard. I truly suffered for science.

During some odd moment of enlightenment, I decided that eating a big meal just before an exam would enhance my performance—more brain energy? For the first learning principles exam, I loaded up on carbohydrates in the campus cafeteria. As I took the test, I literally felt my blood race to my stomach, leaving my brain high and dry. Not only was I bloated and on the verge of a food-induced coma, I was facing a multiple-choice examination—the bane of the middle-aged learner. These tests force a choice from A, B, C, or D, and I had lived long enough to know that in life, it could be a little of A, some of B, most of C, and none of D. It's all about circumstances!

Let me add that the middle aged learner fares no better with the fill-in-the-blank or essay exam. The course on brain biology used these test formats and played major havoc with my aging brain. When was the last time I had to memorize anything? My job success had been premised on problem solving, not memorization. However, I truly enjoyed the course for its fascinating subject matter and eagerly volunteered for the teacher's demonstrations, while my younger classmates played hard to get. I was overjoyed to sense in both teacher and students a rooting for the underdog as I plodded through elaborate exercises in front of the class, occasionally wandering into uncharted cerebral territory.

I completed the first semester wounded, but with honor. By the spring semester, I had gotten a grip on life as a college student. My dormant brain cells re-fired, intensifying my appetite for intellectual challenge. I spent wonderful hours in the library reading and browsing the Internet, happily tackling assignments on intriguing topics. I sipped coffee with friends, attended campus events, lived one semester in a student apartment with an international student from Japan, and learned how to get a good parking spot in the student lot. Finally, at age 60, I earned the master of arts in behavioral science-psychology. During those classroom years, I had also completed a teaching internship and presided over a classroom of my own as a psychology professor.

Like many senior workers, I am now semi-retired. However, I still teach a face-to-face class or two in introductory psychology each semester. Knowing that I must compete in the electronic age, I also tutor online in psychology and English for the college. Most of my classroom students fall into the 18-25-year-old age bracket. There are usually one or two students in each class, however, who are attending college after a long hiatus and who are plagued with great concern about whether they can handle it. I have special affection for these students. I spur them on with personal pep talks, making sure that they know I've shared their experience as a nontraditional student. I involve them fully in the class, honoring their life's wisdom. I also remind them that I had so much fun as a "silver star," that I may do a degree a decade for a while and invite them to join me.

Not only was I bloated and on the verge of a food-induced coma, I was facing a multiple-choice examination—the bane of the middle-aged learner.

Elaine Parker Adams, Ph.D., a veteran higher education administrator, switched back to the student role and earned a graduate degree in psychology at age 60. Now semi-retired, she teaches and tutors for the Houston Community College System and reviews for the professional journal *Teaching Psychology*. Along with her survivor son, Elaine actively advocates for individuals with traumatic brain injury. She and her husband also provide much unintentional humor for their two grandchildren.

Double Feature

John A. Vanek

You live life like a car chase, your sweat
just spent rubber on the office floor,
as you fly in a vintage blue convertible
desperately searching for something,
anything, like Thelma and Louise,
always looking over your shoulder
for cops in the rearview, as if
you just robbed a liquor store
or shot someone for no good reason,
no time to think, no time to reflect,
just react, stand on the gas pedal
trying not to spin out, flip over,
flip out, knowing the ending
will be funny, tragically funny,
when suddenly tires screech
as you arrive at the edge
of the Grand Canyon, and they
present you with a handshake
and a gold watch that melts,
runs through your arthritic fingers
like a Dali painting, while you
peer over the cliff.

And you are in an Ingmar Bergman film.
Life is black and white and slow.
You sit at a table, conversing
in Swedish, a language
you do not understand.
You stroll with a striking, young thing,
lusting after god-knows what.

You ride with your son in a Studebaker, drowning
as the car fills with indifference.
Then, you are at your desk,
writing your autobiography,
but lose interest.
You begin to wonder how you lived life without
knocking off a liquor store,
and you wonder about the accelerator,
the cliff,
and whether you could make it
to the other side of the canyon.

John Vanek is a retired physician and poet with works published in numerous journals and magazines. He has read his poetry at the George Bush Presidential Library. His first book of poetry, entitled *Heart Murmurs*, was published in 2009. "Double Feature" was inspired by an Eckerd College course on transitioning into retirement and aging, which included movies cited in the poem. Visit his Web site at: http://mysite.verizon.net/vanekj

Night Blindness

Ruth Webber Evans

Twilight and the road blurs into edge and the edge into road,
no white lines anywhere.
Nothing tells me the right of way
or the wrong way.

Somewhere there is a ditch
somewhere a hill with a drop off

I keep driving
trusting to a macadam path I can not see,
desperate to get through these woods,

hoping for moonlight

for a dark line of road
between fields of corn and beans.

Now, like Cinderella with her inconvenient curfew
I must rush from the party
to be home before dark

The eyes suddenly night blind
—an early warning signal—

all is less certain than it seems.

At the age of 77 **Ruth Webber Evans** earned her M.F.A. in poetry from Vermont College of Fine Arts. This was an outgrowth of a poetry group led by the poet Henry Brawn, which started as a Gold Leaf course at the University of Maine, Farmington. Ruth's poems have been published online at www.dailybulldog.com, the *Aurorean, the Wolf Moon Journal, Puckerbush Press,* the *Beloit Poetry Journal,* and in last year's *LLI Review.*

Smuttynose

Nancy Billings Bills

Abstract

This is a memoir written in the third person with the actual persons and places concealed. It was composed in 2009 as part of "Writers Workshop: Memoir" mentored by Ruth Story at the University of Southern Maine's OLLI. The piece examines a family's response to a sudden, violent accident. Like most of Nancy Bills' work, Smuttynose struggles with the universal themes of love, loss, and death.

"Mrs. Green, I need to speak with you."

Annie looked up at the young doctor who stood in the doorway of the small ICU room. She read the nametag on his white coat, *Dr. Donald Pierson, Coastal Community Hospital.*

"What's wrong?" Annie asked.

"Nothing. I just need to talk with you," Dr. Pierson said. "Please come out to the nurses' station."

Annie studied Teddy as she squeezed around the hospital bed. The mask of the ventilator covered most of his young face, but his hair was reassuringly familiar—dark brown and curly. She had the impulse to kiss his cheek and hug his big shoulders, but, of course, she couldn't. The cramped room beeped with his breaths and heartbeats. As she passed through its door, she thought, *Don't stop breathing, Teddy. Whatever else is wrong, we'll face it, but don't stop breathing.*

She followed the doctor to a hallway where Simon, her older son, stood sipping a cup of tea. He'd never been a coffee drinker, just tea. He was twenty-four. *He looks brave. And frightened. Just like me.*

"I need to talk with you both," Dr. Pierson said. "Good news. We think it's time to try taking the ventilator out again."

"Oh," Annie said.

Simon tossed his cardboard cup of lukewarm tea into the nearest wastebasket. "You think it will work this time?"

"Yes," Dr. Pierson said. "We think Teddy's ready."

Annie sat across from Teddy in the living room of his new apartment on the Maryland shore. It was almost exactly a year since what she, Teddy, and Simon all referred to as "the accident" had happened.

Smuttynose

"But what if it doesn't work?" Annie asked.

Dr. Pierson took a long breath and spoke, "Teddy's twenty. He's basically healthy. Even though he sustained a lightning strike, we're very hopeful about his prognosis. It would be irresponsible not to get him off the ventilator as soon as possible."

"So it's the right thing to do?" Annie asked.

"Mom," Simon said putting an arm around her and patting her shoulder. "Mom, it's good news."

"All right," Annie said.

"We'll go ahead then," Dr. Pierson smiled and nodded.

Two days before, the emergency room doctor had said to Annie, "I'm sorry about your husband, Mrs. Green…. No, none of us on the staff have ever treated a lightning victim before. It's rare; one death in a million. But we have a protocol to follow for electrical injuries…. We'll do our best to take good care of Teddy…. And no, I don't think he should be transferred…. An unnecessary risk. No, not to Boston."

"There is something else," Dr. Pierson said to Annie and Simon. "Something important we need to talk about."

"What?" Annie asked frowning.

"Well," Dr. Pierson said, "Until now, every time Teddy woke up he couldn't talk, couldn't ask questions, because of the ventilator. His periods of consciousness have been brief and …"

Simon interrupted, "You've knocked him out each time he started to ask questions…. Haven't you?"

"Yes, Simon, we've done our best to delay …"

Annie cut in, "But now he can ask questions…. And now he's going to ask about his dad."

"Exactly," Dr. Pierson agreed. "Now, he's sure to ask about his father."

"I should tell him. I'm his mother."

"We can tell him together, Mom," Simon said.

"Fine," the doctor said. "But, of course, I can answer any medical questions."

Annie said, "Oh, God." *Oh, God help us to find the right words.*

Annie sat across from Teddy in the living room of his new apartment on the Maryland shore. It was almost exactly a year since what she, Teddy, and Simon all referred to as "the accident" had happened. Teddy had completed his outpatient follow-up with his neurologist; he'd settled in with a grief counselor; he had a part-time job as an EMT. Annie had waited a year to ask him a question.

Annie asked Teddy, "What do you remember about the accident?"

Teddy stared out a window. He was silent for several seconds. Then he answered, "The last thing I remember is lunch, lunch with Dad on a little

island in Smuttynose Bay. That's the last thing—tuna fish sandwiches and potato chips."

"And a Mountain Dew, I bet?" Annie asked.

"Yeah, a Mountain Dew."

Annie asked, "You don't remember kayaking after lunch or the storm?" She watched his face, "Or Fort Chamberlain or the bunker?" He shook his head. And she thought … *not the sudden dark clouds, not the boom of thunder. Not the rush to get off the water, not the beaching of the kayaks. Not the pelting rain, the hail. Not running across the park or racing up the concrete steps of the WWII bunker.*

"We don't have to," Annie said.

"No. No, Mom, it's actually good to talk about it." She sighed. *So much he didn't remember. Not the streak of lightning zooming across the summer afternoon sky, not the lightning bolt exploding into the steel beams of the bunker. So much he didn't ever need to know.*

Annie glanced at her son sitting in a comfortable chair across from her. "You look so well," she said. Teddy smiled indulgently. She reassured herself, *No memory of a sizzle entering the back of his neck and exiting above his sneakers. No memory of sirens screaming around fallen tree limbs. And blessedly, no memory of himself and his father lying only feet apart on the cracked concrete floor.*

"So," she said, "just lunch? And then … what next?"

"The memorial service," Teddy said.

"Oh, you do remember the service?"

"No," Teddy answered, "not the service. It's like I just wake up in the receiving line. I remember Simon patting my shoulder." And she could remember the two brothers standing side by side shaking the hands of hundreds of mourners.

"Anything else?" Annie asked. "Anything after you got transferred out of the ICU? Do you remember any visitors?" Teddy shook his head. "How about the couple who were at the park having a picnic who gave you CPR?" *For twenty-five critical minutes.* "The ambulance team from the Naval Shipyard?" *They were so happy to see you alive.*

"No, I don't remember," Teddy grimaced and held a hand to his mouth. "In the hospital … I do remember something … a thing getting pushed down my throat … I tried to fight it….

"When the doctor put the ventilator back in?"

"Yeah, that's what it must have been."

Mother and son nodded at one another.

Annie asked softly, "Do you remember Simon and me telling you about your dad?"

"No," Teddy said," I don't."

She thought about the multiple times he'd asked, "Dad didn't make it?" And she and Simon had told him again and again, "No, Teddy, Dad didn't make it…."

She thought about the multiple times he'd asked, "Dad didn't make it?" And she and Simon had told him again and again, "No, Teddy, Dad didn't make it…." *So ironic how much we worried about finding the right words to tell you, Teddy. And you don't remember them.*

Annie concluded, "So you don't remember anything after lunch on the little island."

"No, and nothing much in the hospital," Teddy said. "It's like I lost a whole week of my life."

"Maybe it was psychological," Annie said. "Maybe your mind just closed down."

"Mom, you're such a total shrink!" Teddy teased. "Seriously, maybe it was just electrical."

"Maybe …" Annie said," I don't suppose we'll ever know."

Teddy agreed, "No, probably not." They were silent for several minutes.

"You look really great, kid."

"I feel good, Mom. I'm planning on going back to the university next semester. But I like working for the ambulance service."

"Yes, I can tell." She studied his young body. "And you're really better." She remembered the first days after the ventilator had come out for good when he couldn't stand, couldn't walk, when he'd vomited up every meal. She remembered the round, black burns on the back of his head and above his ankles, the entry and exit wounds. She thought of the random path the lightning had taken, zigging and zagging through his young body ravaging nerve paths. She didn't want to remind him of any of that.

She asked about something he'd found amusing, "So how's your balance. Do you still fall over every time you open the refrigerator door and lean over?"

"No," he laughed. "It's just my memory and concentration now, but even they're better. He headed toward his kitchen. "Do you want a beer?"

"Sure, I'll have a Smuttynose? I brought some from home. It used to be your favorite."

"It still is." Teddy handed her a bottle. She looked at the familiar label with a harbor seal raising its head out of dark ocean depths; only its head with its somber eyes and spotted nose were above the surface. She thought of its big, heavy, grey body hidden underwater. *That's where we are. Our heads are barely above water, just our eyes and noses. We've just begun to grieve, and there's a lot more ahead that we can't even see.*

Nancy Bills is an active member of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Southern Maine. She earned a master's degree in twentieth-century art and literature from the University of Rochester and an M.S.W. from the University of Connecticut. She is a retired clinical psychotherapist.

Poems of Experience

Heart Murmurs **by John A. Vanek**
Bird Dog Publishing, 2009
ISBN 978-1-933964-27-0, $15.00

Equivocal Blessings **by Mary Carol Moran**
Negative Capability Press, 2009
ISBN 978-0-942544-89-5, $16.95

Reviewed by Patricia Budd

This is not a standard book review. The poems in the book *Equivocal Blessings* by Mary Carol Moran and *Heart Murmurs* by John A. Vanek are taken from observations that expand and become the emotional core of their life. The poets are active OLLI members with very different backgrounds and life paths. I would like to thank Peggy A. Stelpflug for sending Mary Carol's book and bringing her to our attention.

I would like to start by quoting a poem I admire by Ted Kooser, former U.S. Poet Laureate:

At Midnight
Somewhere in the night,
a dog is barking,
starlight like beads of dew
along his tight chain.
No one is there
beyond the dark garden,
nothing to bark at
except, perhaps, the thoughts
of some old man
sending his memories
out for a midnight walk,
a rich cape
woven of many loves
swept recklessly
about his shoulders.

Ted Kooser's poem starts with a dog barking at nothing, an occurrence often encountered, and travels down that leash to one possibility that illuminates the darkness, tells the reader that there are more things going on than anyone can see or hear, awakens the reader to what they may be missing. The poems of John and Mary Carol also take their starting points in the observable; and then they open the reader to possibilities and an awareness of things beyond the senses. They are the work of experience.

Mary Carol Moran lost a treasured book, a dictionary given her by her father. She sent it early to college expecting it to be there waiting for her, but it was lost by the Post Office. "Chambers Dictionary" gives the reader a sense of the effect that loss had on her life: the love of words she shared with her father that allowed her to hold that small dictionary, even years after the loss of both books and her father, still "pliable and green." A too-tight dress, how does that make a soul feel? Can the layers of a Matrushka set of dolls reveals the internal "dolls" we all carry within us? Where does a page in a dictionary and the meanings of words on that page take your thoughts? Mary Carol, the poet, is also a math teacher and that language, that discipline, allows her to make a gift to her readers from that experience. In "Villanelle for an Afghan Boy" the poet observes one of her students. The villanelle is difficult in English, a repetitive rhyming form. She paints a word picture of a distant, quiet, immigrant child. She thinks it's her "math class that kills his joy," but learns from his essay that "He survived by being a quiet boy, /Sixteen of his teachers' lives destroyed … There's the math that killed his joy/and made him such a quiet boy." One hardly realizes the form when reading it. High praise from me. Her poetry ranges from the love of her dogs and her family, to coping with death, delight, and sadness and the justices and injustices of this world.

John A. Vanek uses metaphor to transform his observation into sometimes unexpected parallels. In "Rocks" he begins: "Frogs complain like rusted hinges" and proceeds to describe a scene in which the territorial dance between a blue heron and a white heron transforms the terrain into disputed land: "Palestine?" he compares, "Tibet? Kashmir? Israel? Or America?" He writes from childhood's memory in "I'm Six," where he turns coloring with crayons "between the lines" into something "that usually/ makes them happy." Hard to do, be a child as an adult and get the nuance right. John, the poet, is a physician and that perspective colors the metaphors he offers his readers: "as I read the braille/ of battered lives," "old bones rattling like maracas." His poems are often sustained metaphors in themselves and, only as the reader unfolds the poem line by line, are the parallels wholly evident. A visit to a museum, autumn leaves clinging to trees through winter, his "bestselling novel,/ which I've not yet begun;" each explored with a humor and attention to detail and a willingness to let

experience find its own way to realization shows us that even the simplest as well as the most mysterious or complex experience can become portals to a wider understanding.

These poets have lived long enough and done more than enough to become mindful of what they see and do. They write in the same English that most of America uses; it's clear, it's accessible. It is poetry to enjoy and learn from. And, I might add, to encourage those of us with a lifetime of experience, stories to tell, and a love of language, to tuck a pen and paper in a pocket and see what comes. It doesn't matter where or how. Kooser used to write on the 45-minute commute to and from his office. Mary Oliver took walks in the morning with pencil and index cards in her pocket. Jim Harrison has a shed out back of his house in Montana with a sleeping cot (quilts piled up in a wad) and a desk. I don't know the writing habits of John and Mary Carol; he is a midwesterner by birth and she a southerner.

These poets have lived long enough and done more than enough to become mindful of what they see and do. They write in the same English that most of America uses; it's clear, it's accessible. It is poetry to enjoy and learn from.

The first step to writing is reading. Read these poets and any others you find on your library shelves. Bookstores have comfortable chairs these days, some even have coffee, tea, and pastries. Take advantage. Sit and read awhile. Maybe jot down some ideas of your own. Take the rich cape of your own experience, sweep it recklessly about you, and write. You never know, that clump of nasty vetch that sprouts up each spring just where you don't want it may be the vehicle to your thoughts on longevity.

And by all means, read the poem by John and the poem by Peggy Stelpflug in this volume of *The LLI Review*.

Patricia Budd is an active teacher and learner at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Southern Maine and serves as poetry editor of *The LLI Review.*

The Third Chapter: Passion, Risk and Adventure in the 25 Years After 50

by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot
Sara Crichton Books
ISBN – 13: 9780374275495
Hardcover, 248 pages, $25.00

Reviewed By Barbara Cherem

Members of the Baby Boomer generation may be the first generation in history to re-invent themselves in large numbers after the age of 50. According to Dr. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, the first African-American woman at Harvard University to be honored with an endowed professorship, in increasing numbers people in their fifties and older are re-inventing themselves according to vastly different priorities than they had in earlier years when they were consumed with the responsibilities of work, children, and other obligations. This well-known educator and author has identified this phase of life, which she calls "the third chapter," as a new developmental milestone for people ages 50 to 75 years.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, a sociology professor, has written nine books on a range of subjects. This latest book purports to define what the author claims occurs only every 100 years, i.e., a new developmental phase in the lifespan, akin to what "adolescence" was to the twentieth century. Through personal interviews with 40 individuals who had successful work lives, Lawrence-Lightfoot chronicles the next phase of their post-50 lives as they seek challenges they have not yet embraced. How well this generalizes beyond the professional middle to high socioeconomic class is not yet certain, but these interviews provide richly textured individual stories of re-invention while also identifying a common trajectory, that of defiance of the idea that later life necessarily brings decline.

What's most illuminating is all of the "heavy lifting" that this search entails. It is an inefficient journey, much like that of two other periods of individuation, e.g., adolescence and the midlife-years. These senior pilgrims seem to face opposing forces which must be reconciled in their later years to settle in a new place, and old unresolved issues can no longer be avoided. Despite some of the struggles these stories entail they also express verve,

hope, and fearlessness. This particular sample of people selected by the author take change in stride. They embrace a hopefulness which trumps the losses of aging, are willing to take risks, and even manifest humility that they do sometimes fail but, yes, that, too, is part of learning.

Such resilience conjures up leadership guru Meg Wheatley's "possibility thinking" which she believes is essential to thriving in the twenty-first century. Wheatley focuses not on "problem solving" but "possibility thinking" as the new way to remain healthy and adaptive. Lawrence-Lightfoot's interviewees embrace the same spirit in their respective third chapters of life.

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Lightfoot's book challenges many assumptions about what it means to age, and provides well-documented alternatives to the common assumption that both body and mind decline with advancing age. "Not me!" say these seniors, who embrace change and the opportunity in later life to express themselves and even grow in creativity. Equally important is the fact that these individuals often choose to create meaning through involvement in some passion that they now use to build a legacy of giving beyond what they've felt able to do in the earlier phases of their lives.

I suspect large numbers of people involved in Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes may be of similar mind, seeking out new experiences and reveling in the possibilities that lay ahead. In many cases these new learning experiences involve venturing into the humanities, natural sciences, and the performing arts which had been heretofore unattended. OLLI members who are undertaking such a late-life adventure may well see themselves in the stories and experiences described by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot. They may find that taking the time to read this book is well worth their effort.

Barbara Cherem, Ph.D., is assistant professor of education at the University of Michigan-Flint. A more detailed biography appears at the end of her article entitled "What Sustains Learning in the Later Years?"

Spirituality and Aging

by Robert C. Atchley

Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, $45.00
ISBN-13: 978-0-8018-9119-9
Hardcover, 200 pages, $45.00

Reviewed by E. Michael Brady

In some ways one may consider *Spirituality and Aging* a culminating achievement in the career of noted teacher and writer Robert C. Atchley. Atchley, who taught for many years at Miami University (Ohio) and authored *Social Forces and Aging*, one of the most re-issued and honored textbooks ever published in the field of social gerontology, moved to Colorado later in his career to serve as chair of the Department of Gerontology at the Naropa Institute. His interest in and investigation of issues related to spirituality and aging have spanned more than three decades.

Although only 200 pages in length this book is rich in detail and nuance. Even though I have read widely in philosophy, religion, and other disciplines commonly associated with studies in spirituality and feel I am reasonably well-versed in this area, I found that I moved slowly through Atchley's book, sometimes re-reading paragraphs, carefully considering and savoring his ideas.

Spirituality and Aging deals with a number of fascinating and complex themes. These include the nature of the spiritual experience, spiritual identity, transpersonal sociology (the author is a sociologist by training), the experience of time and aging, elder "sage-ing," and spirituality in the face of dying and death. One of the author's special attributes is his ability to effectively blend serious sociological scholarship (including many of his own research findings) with philosophical ideas into a well-written and thoughtful narrative.

Atchley is well-versed in gerontology and spirituality which gives readers the feeling that they are learning from an authority. As a reader whose interests are eclectic I enjoyed his use of a variety of literatures. Within several pages Atchley may make a reference to or directly quote such diverse voices as Erik Erikson, Rainer Maria Rilke, William James, and Ram Dass. The influential philosopher and gerontologist Harry (Rick) Moody has

apparently had a deep influence on Atchley's work and there are numerous references to Moody's book *The Five Stages of the Soul* (co-authored with David Carroll) in *Spirituality and Aging.*

Atchley dedicates an entire chapter to an examination of the roles of "sage" and "spiritual elder." The author explains and further develops these concepts introduced 15 years ago by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald Miller in their celebrated book *From Age-ing to Sage-ing.* Atchley's own research concludes that, while there are minor technical differences between these two roles, sages and spiritual elders often have notable personal characteristics in addition to many years of life experience. These include clarity, patience, an air of quietude, good listening skills, a nurturing attitude toward others, and a lack of anxiety even in the face of distressing circumstances. In the author's own words: "A recurring theme in this chapter has been that sages and spiritual elders are not rare and that by raising consciousness about the characteristics of sages and the process of becoming a sage, we can better recognize them" (p. 90).

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Book reviewers do not frequently mention appendices. I shall because I found the appendices in *Spirituality and Aging* to be useful and provocative. In his first appendix Atchley generously shares an original research instrument he developed and has revised over many years. This "Spiritual Inventory" consists of 85 statements with Likert-type responses that served as the basis for much of the author's own empirical work. A second appendix is entitled "Questions for Reflection and Self-Assessment." These questions might be used to lead group discussion in a lifelong learning institute setting or as grist for personal reflective writing. Examples of questions I found to be especially thought-provoking include "What qualifies an experience to be called 'spiritual?" "Does the capacity for spiritual experience evolve and, if so, what stimulates the evolution?" and "How does my personality affect spirituality?"

In sum, this is a comprehensively researched and well-written book that would make an excellent text in lifelong learning institute courses in which issues of elder spirituality are explored. I believe that years from now Robert Atchley's name will be among those credited with making important if not seminal contributions to the emerging literature in the spirituality of aging.

E. Michael Brady is professor of adult and higher education at the University of Southern Maine and is editor of *The LLI Review.*

The **LLI** *Review*
The Annual Journal of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

2011 Call for Papers

The LLI Review is an annual publication of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute's National Resource Center. The mission of this peer-reviewed journal is to present original research, provide thoughtful and engaging commentary about issues related to older learners and lifelong learning institutes, and publish fiction, poetry, and other creative work written by persons over the age of 50. To accomplish these goals the review publishes work by members of the OLLI national network as well as by gerontologists and educators working and conducting research in the field of older adult education.

The following submissions are welcome:

- Articles describing a completed empirical research study dealing with older learners and/or lifelong learning institutes (maximum length = 5,000 words)
- Research briefs/abstracts (500 words)
- Essays that involve a critical review of literature and/or original thought on an issue that is salient to mature learners but which is not necessarily based on empirical data collection (5,000 words)
- Book reviews (750 words)
- Articles that describe "best practice" in curriculum design and/or teaching in LLIs (2,500 words)
- "WOW! Programs" These are detailed descriptions of especially creative or successful courses or programs. What took place? Why was it so successful? (2,500 words)
- A personal story (memoir) related to older adult learning (2,500 words)
- Brief fiction related to teaching and/or learning in later age (2,500 words)
- Poetry (preferably about late life learning, the experience of aging, and related matters. No maximum length, but brief is preferred).

Manuscripts should be prepared in Microsoft Word, double-spaced, and use 12-point font. **Two hard copies** should be mailed to the editor along with an electronic version of the manuscript e-mailed as an attachment.

All submissions will be read and evaluated by a panel of reviewers knowledgeable in the areas treated in the manuscript. References, citations, and the general style of manuscripts should follow APA style (as outlined in the

latest edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*). Only manuscripts that have not been published elsewhere will be considered for publication in *The LLI Review.*

Submission Deadline: January 15, 2011

Submit manuscripts to: E. Michael Brady, Ph.D.
Professor and Editor
University of Southern Maine
Bailey Hall 400-B
Gorham, ME. 04038
mbrady@usm.maine.edu

To discuss a manuscript idea beforehand and/or to otherwise communicate with the editor, please send an e-mail to the above address or call (207) 780-5312.

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

The first Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) was started as Senior College at the University of Southern Maine (USM), in Portland, Maine, in 1997. In 2001 it was renamed after the Bernard Osher Foundation made a generous gift that enabled the program to expand its peer-taught courses and other activities for adult learners ages 50 and over. The Osher Foundation has now funded more than 120 Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes on campuses of colleges and universities from Maine to Hawaii. No two institutes are alike; each provides a distinctive array of courses and activities for seasoned adults interested in learning for the joy of learning.

In 2004, the Osher Foundation designated the Osher Institute at USM as the National Resource Center for Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes. The national center facilitates the exchange of information, solutions, and experiences among institutes throughout the country. It publishes this journal, plans an annual conference, and provides a number of ways that the OLLIs in the network can connect with one another.

www.osher.net

The Bernard Osher Foundation

The Bernard Osher Foundation was founded in 1977 by Bernard Osher, a respected businessman and community leader. The Foundation seeks to improve quality of life through the support of post-secondary scholarships, lifelong learning institutes, integrative medicine programs, and—in the San Francisco Bay area and the state of Maine—arts, cultural, and educational institutions. The Honorable Barbro Osher, Consul General of Sweden in San Francisco, chairs the Foundation's Board of Directors.