Professional Profile

Ralph Carmona

Ultimate outsider probes the inside of Portland

Ralph Carmona spent the first 60 years of his life in California before moving to Portland last August. Within a matter of months, he was teaching a course at OLLI that explored the politics and policies of his adopted city.

Such an undertaking may seem bold, even foolhardy. But Carmona, who holds a doctorate in political science and has just retired after a career in the public and private sectors, makes it look easy.

His students, a mix of longtime Greater Portland residents and relative newcomers, could not help but be amazed at the depth of Carmona’s familiarity with the key issues facing the city, its cast of characters, and the historical background that enabled him to put the leading events of the day into context.

His desire to get back into teaching led him to OLLI, and he plans to teach a second course on Portland’s future this summer.

The city landed on Carmona’s radar screen because his wife, Vana, grew up here before moving to New York and later to the San Francisco Bay area. After the couple got married eight years ago, they visited Portland and were taken with how it had developed into a livable, cosmopolitan city.

The Carmonas had been living in Sacramento, and Vana was eager for a move. They considered various options in the U.S. and abroad, including South America. But when her husband suggested Portland, Vana embraced the idea, made a house-hunting trip to the city, and quickly bought a condo on Munjoy Hill.

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OLLI NEWSLETTER

March 2011

CALENDAR

OLLI Events

Ski Club
March 9, 11, 16, and 25. See page 7 for details.

Walking Club
March 9 and 22. See page 7 for details.

OLLI Night Out
March 22. See page 6 for details.

OLLI Follies
April 16. See page 6 for details.

OLLI Excursions


SAGE

Tuesdays 9:30–11:30 a.m.
102 Wishcamper except where noted

March 22: His Beat Is Maine and the World—William K. Nemitz (at Hannaford Hall)
March 29: Egypt on the World Stage—Edward Knox (at Hannaford Hall)
April 5: George Washington’s Great Gamble—James Nelson
April 12: U.S. Economy: Waiting for Superman?—David Chute
April 19: A Community Approach to End-of-Life Decision Making: Is Maine Ready?—Frank Chessa
April 26: The Man Behind the Music—Robert Moody (at Hannaford Hall)
May 3: Active Imagination—Christopher Beach
May 10: The Science of Flowers—David Champlin
May 17: Birds, Fish, and Snails: Archaeology Expands Knowledge of the Historic Gulf of Maine—Nathan D. Hamilton
NOTES FROM SUSAN

Don King, *OLLI Newsletter* editor and avid OLLI student, has given an incredible gift to OLLI. He has donated videotapes or DVDs of 64 *Great Courses* from The Teaching Company.

Each course features 12 to 90 hours of world-renowned lecturers sharing their expertise on topics ranging from history to art, science to religion, great literature to philosophy.

We intend to make these filmed courses available for any OLLI member to borrow. We are currently cataloging the tapes and DVDs so we can track them. A full list of course titles will be available soon at the volunteer desk in the OLLI office.

Most courses are on VHS video tapes, requiring a VCR for viewing. Several are on DVD and can be viewed using a DVD player or a computer with a DVD drive.

We hope people will take advantage of this wonderful resource. Many thanks to Don King for his generous gift.

—Susan Morrow, Assistant Director of Programs

Ensuring OLLI’s future

Some of OLLI’s members have chosen to help ensure the future of our organization by making a “legacy” gift through their estate plans. Planned gifts make future OLLI support a reality.

Here are two examples of OLLI members who have included OLLI in their estate planning:

**Terry Foster**, an OLLI founder and early administrator, says, “The most important work that I undertook in my professional career in university administration, and in personal life after retiring, has been with the Senior College/Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at USM. I have remembered the OLLI program in my will. I hope this program will continue long after I am gone, and making a provision for its sustenance in one’s will is a way of ensuring that OLLI will survive.”

**Nancy Payne**, an OLLI charter member, states, “Why would someone like me, who has always lived rather frugally, decide to make a rather substantial donation to an institution like OLLI? I discovered a wealth of interesting and interested people, made new friends, and stretched my mind, resulting in a broader lifestyle and outlook. Life was exciting again! Establishing a gift annuity as I did is a win-win opportunity. The money is invested, and I receive a quarterly dividend just as I did when it was in the stock market, and the IRS gave me a nice deduction for this gift to a non-profit.

“At the time of my death, the original gift, plus what it may have grown to over the years, reverts entirely to OLLI for scholarships. My children, grateful for all OLLI meant to me, will say thank you, too.”

If you are interested in joining Terry and Nancy in a commitment to future OLLI support through your will or estate plan, contact Dick Sturgeon at sturgeon@usm.maine.edu or by phone at 780-4448.

—Dick Sturgeon
OLLI students discovering USM Bookstore

Until a year ago, most OLLI students passed by the USM Bookstore in the Woodbury Campus Center on their way to the cafeteria. After all, OLLI students whose classes called for books generally received them when they showed up for the opening session.

But the change brought about by tightening finances has meant that OLLI students have to obtain books required for their courses. That has meant a learning curve for Barbara J. Kelly (left), USM’s trade book and software manager for the past two decades.

As she explains it, “When the Senior College was set up, Harry Sky, one of the school’s founders, took care of buying books. But after a couple of years, either Kali Lightfoot or Susan Morrow asked me to take over the job.”

Until the change last year, Kelly (the name she goes by) says, “I would order a certain number of books for a course, and they would be shipped to the OLLI office, and that was that.” Nowadays, she says, the OLLI office informs her what books are required for a course, and she makes sure they’re in stock. Knowing how many books to procure is a challenge, she explains, because “it’s not certain how many students will order from the bookstore. The students have other choices: They can go to the Internet and order from Amazon or find the book in a library.”

However, Kelly adds, more and more OLLI students are coming to the bookstore early and picking up their books from the special OLLI section. That’s particularly true for those taking “Great Decisions” and seeking its guide.

When she gets a request for a book, Kelly determines if it is available. If a certain quantity is needed, say 30 copies, she goes directly to the publisher, since she can get a better price. If it is a small quantity, say five or so, she contacts a distributor and combines the small order with others. Kelly’s long experience in dealing with publishers has won her rapport with them and made it simple to arrange shipments to arrive in plenty time for classes.

Kelly likewise enjoys her contacts with OLLI faculty members and advises them on what is available. Price can be a factor that persuades some faculty members to change their options.

She also points out, “We’re like any college bookstore. There’s more than textbooks; we also have journals and fiction and non-fiction best-sellers.” In fact, she jokes, “I might put a sign outside Wishcamper pointing to the USM Bookstore.”

—Don King
Ralph Carmona said he trusted his wife’s instincts. “She said, ‘Honey, you’re very portable. I can take you anywhere.’”

Carmona researched Portland’s political scene as he prepared for the move, and he immersed himself in local issues after his arrival. He soon got up to speed on controversies ranging from waterfront zoning to popular election of the mayor. And he quickly became an activist on various matters, most notably those related to immigration and civil rights.

Carmona’s biography is a success story that recent immigrants to Portland can look to for inspiration. A third-generation Mexican-American who grew up with an abusive father in a tough barrio in East Los Angeles, Carmona says that with help from friends and mentors, he sidestepped the gang life and won a scholarship to the University of Southern California.

His interest in politics led him to pursue advanced degrees at the University of California at Santa Barbara, and he went on to high-ranking public affairs posts at Bank of America and the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, the nation’s sixth largest publicly owned electric utility. He previously served as a legislative assistant to the speaker of the California State Assembly and later taught at American River College and served on the University of California Board of Regents.

Carmona hit the ground running in Portland, networking with political leaders, activists, and academic types. He divided his free time among a slew of neighborhood and political organizations, serving as vice chairman of the Portland Democratic City Committee and president of the Portland council of the League of United Latin American Citizens, where he has been a visible critic of newly elected Gov. Paul LePage’s headline-grabbing comments about the NAACP.

Carmona expects to maintain a high political profile and would like to run for elected office. He describes himself as “a Green business Democrat” who is very liberal on civil rights but “a fiscal agnostic” on economic issues.

“I have 30 years of watching politics and business from the inside out. So I’m the ultimate outsider-insider. And yet, my heart is with the public interest,” he said. “I want to do what’s right.”

—Jerry Harkavy

Using the Glickman Library

One of the benefits of being an OLLI member is access to the Glickman Library on the Portland campus. This library is an amazing compendium of books, journals, and online resources.

The Glickman is for use by all USM students, including OLLI members. Before visiting the Glickman, be sure you have your valid USM ID card. This is the photo ID used for garage access. If you don’t have one, you may get one for free in the Telecom office in the lowest level of Payson Smith Hall.

The Glickman’s computer system allows library access to current USM enrollment. If you are not currently enrolled in an OLLI class, plan your first visit to the Glickman during OLLI office hours (8 to 4:30) so the Glickman staff can call us (780-4406) and confirm your membership.
OLLI then and now

In the winter and spring of 2007–2008, OLLI formed a transition team to implement changes that were coming to the program. As we watched the Wishcamper Center rise from the former site of the Portland Plastic Pipe Company, OLLI members greeted the future with excitement, tempered by the challenge of change.

The challenge was to carry out the OLLI mission in a space dedicated to OLLI’s growing needs and membership while maintaining a sense of community.

For 10 years OLLI members all gathered on the same day each week. The size of the membership and the space available at the university in Payson Smith Hall were a comfortable fit. The enthusiasm for the classes was palpable, and in addition to keeping our aging minds working, the classes got us out of our homes and gave us the opportunity to make new friends. OLLI represented a gathering as well as a learning place.

OLLI is still a great learning and gathering place, and though the community aspect has changed, having classes five or six days a week has opened the program to people who were not able to be a part of OLLI before. Whenever we seniors gather, the sense of community is still strong.

We have grown from 300 to 1,300 members, and our new space lets us accommodate everyone. Continued change will be needed to keep the program vital, and we will continue to look for new ways to enhance the community aspect of OLLI.

Stay with us and continue to love the classes. Join in the fun at the special events, special interest groups, and travel opportunities. And let’s explore new ways we can bring groups together.

—David Murray

Spring term reminders

- OLLI spring term classes begin Monday, March 21. To see what classes are still available, call 780-4406 or visit the OLLI office. If your class calls for required or recommended readings, check the USM Bookstore in the Woodbury Campus Center.

- SAGE lectures will resume on Tuesday, March 22. To register, call (780-4406) or visit the OLLI office or send your registration to OLLI-SAGE, USM, P.O. Box 9300, Portland, ME 04104.

- If you have a Fall term parking permit for the garage, you must renew it for the Spring term starting March 7.

- Please turn off your cell phone, pager, or similar device when you come to class. And please don’t come to class wearing perfume, after-shave, or other fragrances. Some students are allergic to them.

OLLI Book Club continues

The OLLI Book Club continues to meet on the third Thursday of each month. All OLLI members are welcome to join in. The book for March is *The Blood of Flowers*, by Anita Amirrezvani. The book for April is *The Butterfly Mosque*, by G. Willow Wilson. FMI: contact Sue Gesing at susangesig@gmail.com.
Recycling program and raffle to benefit OLLI

Beginning in March, OLLI members should look for the start of a recycling program that helps OLLI. Pick up a CLYNK green bag at the OLLI volunteer desk and use it for returning your deposit bottles and cans to any Hannaford store. The refunds generated by the specially marked bags will go to OLLI. It’s a small effort with a potentially large benefit.

In early April, OLLI will raffle off a prize that includes one free membership and two free courses for the Fall 2011 term. Raffle tickets will be $5 for one and $10 for three with far better odds of success than any lottery! Tickets will be available from OLLI board members, at a table in the lobby, and at the OLLI volunteer desk.

—Dick Sturgeon

OLLI excursion to Garden in the Woods

Save the date, Thursday, May 26, for a springtime trip to New England’s premier native plant garden in Framingham, Mass. Enjoy 1,000 species of wildflowers in a unique setting that features a garden of rare and endangered plants. We will be joined by well-known local landscape gardener and OLLI member Ellen Klain, who will speak to us during the bus trip.

When we arrive at the Garden in the Woods, we will be divided into small docent-led tours, after which there will be free time to explore. There are limited cart tours for those needing assistance with mobility. For others, the walking tours will require only a very moderate pace.

The price includes a three-course lunch at the historic Longfellow’s Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Mass., the oldest operating inn in the country, dating from 1716. The Inn includes secluded grounds and a gift shop.

Departure from Portland will be at 9 a.m., and we will return at 6 p.m. The all-inclusive cost is $77 per person for bus (including driver’s tip), lunch, and tours at the Garden. Register by mail with your check to OLLI, P.O. Box 9300, Portland, ME 04104, or by phone at the OLLI office with credit card by calling 780-4406. There will be no refunds after May 6.

For questions or further information, call Anita Jones (797-3612).

The OLLI Follies

Come join your fellow OLLI members for a short afternoon of serious silliness. We have a new lineup of fun acts for you!

Save the date: Saturday, April 16, at 2 p.m., in Hannaford Hall.

A small donation is requested to help defray the cost of renting Hannaford Hall: $5 in advance at the OLLI volunteer desk, or $6 at the door.

OLLI Night Out for March

In all of our OLLI Night Out events, we have never been to a Japanese restaurant. Well, we’re going to the best—King of The Roll, which is located at the corner of Congress and State streets.

The date is Tuesday, March 22, with the fun beginning at 5 p.m. This OLLI event is completely social.

The owner of this restaurant is Asian, but guess what his name is? John Wayne! Come meet John and your friends from OLLI as we enjoy a Dutch-treat dinner out. The food at King of the Roll is scrumptious!

If you want to join us, leave a message for Terry Foster at 780-4895 or e-mail him at tfoster@maine.edu. Let him know how many will be in your party and if anyone needs a ride.
Volunteers to be honored

On May 20, the Community and Volunteer Recognition committees are planning a free lunch for members, during which OLLI’s wonderful volunteers will be recognized.

Plan to come and enjoy the 9th week performances and eat lunch with your friends — just like the good old days.

Volunteers needed

During the first week of Spring classes, the Volunteer Committee will be in the Wishcamper lobby encouraging members to volunteer at OLLI. But you don’t have to wait until then; application forms are always available at the OLLI office.

Right now the Community Committee, which plans special events and trips, and the Resource Development Committee, which helps raise money to support OLLI, are looking for help. And the Education Committee is always on the lookout for additional faculty members.

OLLI skiers schussing into Spring

OLLI Ski Club members need to pace themselves; plenty of winter plans remain on the calendar. Cross-country outings are planned for Twin Brooks in Cumberland on March 11 (contact Bev Blair at bblair@maine.rr.com or at 799-5043) and at Carter’s in Oxford on March 25 (contact Libby Hyatt at 729-8721).

Downhill ski outings are planned for Loon Mountain, N.H., on March 9; Bretton Woods, N.H., on March 16 (for both DH and XC); and Mt. Abram in Greenwood, Maine, on March 24. Contact Steve Donahoe at stevedonahoe1@gmail.com or 239-6517 to sign up.

Ski events depend on weather. Please contact an event coordinator and sign up in order to receive updates and carpool information.

Walking Club plans two walks

The Walking Club plans two local walks this month: on Wednesday, March 9, and on Tuesday, March 22. The goals of these walks will depend on the weather.

Club members will gather at the usual spot in the Hannahford lot at 10 a.m. Carry water and a light lunch. Any OLLI member can be in the club — just show up!

Copies of the year’s schedule are available at the OLLI office. For more information, call Pat LeFebvre (883-2936).

We’re online!

The OLLI Newsletter is now online. As a first step toward electronic publication, we have put this newsletter onto the OLLI/USM website. It’s in the Adobe Reader format. Go to http://usm.maine.edu/olli/olliusm/ and click on “OLLI News” in the left column. On the next page you’ll find a link to the Newsletter.

In the electronic version, you’ll notice that the links to websites and e-mail addresses are live. If you click on a link, and your computer cooperates, you’ll be taken to the website or your e-mail program automatically.

We’ll announce future improvements soon.
The challenge of parking at OLLI

Finding a parking space in the USM Parking Garage often can prove a formidable task.

While the garage contains 1,200 spaces, OLLI students have to compete, particularly in the morning, with USM students, faculty, and staff. That means navigating up and down aisles, meeting drivers coming the other way, to find a space. In the afternoon, when you are trying to get to your classes, you can be caught in indoor traffic jams as USM students leave their morning sessions. And that can mean difficulty in reaching classes on time.

Recent changes in USM parking policies have given garage access to more faculty and staff, who had been parking in surface lots. This has created problems, especially in the winter, when more people choose to park indoors. And OLLI members do not have the option of surface parking near Wishcamper.

For now, the best strategy for OLLI members is to arrive well before the start of class. Even then, you may have to explore a bit before finding a space.

The Advisory Board and the OLLI office are aware of this problem and working to improve the situation. Watch for updates in the Newsletter or your e-mail in-box.