Profiles

Deborah Crimmins, Dan Baschkopf

Two former teachers have retired to OLLI

Deborah Crimmins and Dan Baschkopf are former teachers who have lived in their South Portland house for 31 years. When they retired three years ago, they quickly gravitated to OLLI, which had been on their radar for some time.

“I decided that what I really wanted to do when I retired was write poetry,” says Deborah, who, following her bliss, joined Denney Morton’s ongoing Poetry Workshop. She has also taken poetry classes with Eleanor Steele and Sarah Franklin. She attended the USM Stonecoast Writer’s Conference in 2014 and 2015, and just finished a Maine Writers and Publishers Association class with former Maine poet laureate Betsy Sholl.

Previously a professional rock and jazz guitarist, Dan was enrolled in Carl Smith’s “Opera on Film for Both Beginners to Opera and Experienced Opera Fans.” “I was never receptive to opera before, and I figured if Carl couldn’t turn me around on it, nobody could,” he says with a laugh. “I’m beginning to understand it, as an appeal to the senses.” Dan is a hi-fi buff and a big fan of Smith’s top quality audio-visual equipment.

He also took Walt Allan’s “Understanding Medical Risk and The Math of Screening” last semester.

Deborah and Dan met at Colby College, where she earned a degree in French Literature, and he earned a B.A. in Philosophy. They followed non-teacherly paths at first.

Deborah learned to transliterate Russian while employed at the Harvard Coop. After moving to the Portland area, she was an intake and emergency secretary at Kennebec Valley Mental Health

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Clinic in Augusta. She then wrote advertising for a decade, once receiving the Broderson Award, which recognizes creative excellence in Maine advertising, for Best in Show.

Dan became a leather worker and owned a store. When he wasn’t honing this craft, Dan helped build several log cabins on some land he co-owned near Waterville. He lived in one of them, sans plumbing or electricity. “I like making things,” he says understatedly. Meanwhile, Dan educated himself in the burgeoning computer field “because I wanted to use [computers] to write music.” Later he owned another business as a computer consultant. His cyber knowledge got him on the faculty of USM’s business department, where he taught computer classes.

Music is a lifelong passion for Dan. He grew up on Long Island, listening to recordings of the cellist Piatigorski, and started learning guitar at six. He played in bands beginning at 12, but “I was not asked to sing,” jokes the instrumentalist, who did a lot of composing. His bands had some success. They cut records, and they once opened for Bonnie Raitt at the Portland Civic Center. Get this: in the sixties, he and his mates came in second in a battle of the bands competition—for which first prize was an appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show. In the seventies, Dan taught guitar, jazz history, and the business of music, and he directed jazz combos at UMaine Augusta.

Deborah was born in Washington, D.C. When she was nine, her family moved to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where her father was with the Foreign Service. She calls her four years there “idyllic. It was gorgeous!” She still extols the vibrant colors, exoticism, and vitality of the city. She loved learning Portuguese.

When their son Gregory started school, Deborah and Dan felt a calling to education. Deborah enrolled in the Extended Teacher Education Program (ETEP) at USM, and Dan earned a M.Ed. degree here. In the South Portland schools, Deborah initially taught middle school French before transitioning to the Academically Gifted program, where she taught reading. Dan taught math to gifted students at all levels up to high school. Together they developed and taught a course in critical thinking for high school students.

Deborah and Dan are teachers and multifaceted artists—writing, musicianship, leatherwork, and more. Deborah has worked in stained glass for ten years. She has made lamps that hang in her home, along with various other pieces. Every year she contributes a work of stained glass to her favorite charity, Maine Greyhound Placement, for auction. She has parented six retired greyhounds, most recently Fred, a personable brindle.

Their son, Greg Baschkopf, lives in Manhattan and works in the biotechnology industry. Deborah and Dan spent a week there last month. They have also traveled to Campobello Island, Canada, where they love combing the beaches to collect rocks. Last summer they took a Road Scholar river cruise through Holland.

These days they spend a fair amount of time at home. She works on her poetry; he reads philosophy and science, especially on theories of consciousness.

They split dog-walking duties.

—Amy Liston
OLLI Advisory Board

Announcements from the Nov 15 Advisory Board meeting

Paula Johnson, Community Committee Chair, announced that Mary Collins has agreed to chair *Wrinkle in Time*, to be held March 8–10, 2016. If you are unfamiliar with *Wrinkle in Time*, it is a very special three-day OLLI event, which focuses on a particular year or era and features a particular book that illustrates the major historical, political, and cultural events of that time. Next year’s theme will be “The 1950s.”

Paula also announced that Ruth Story has formed an ad hoc committee to plan a literary event for next Spring.

Dick Leslie, Resource Development Committee Chair, announced that the Fall Raffle grossed $1,763, $400 more than was raised last year. Proceeds from the raffle and other fundraisers provide scholarships for up to 80 OLLI members to take classes. Thanks to the organizers and all the volunteers who donned silly hats to stimulate sales and help make the raffle such a success!

What Should We Be Called? — Update

The last newsletter contained an article on NPR’s Ina Jaffe, whose new beat is the over-65 crowd. She is asking what this group (many of us) would like to be called when referenced in news stories and articles. Many of her listeners have suggested “older adults.” Several of you e-mailed in your thoughts on the subject. Here is a sampling:

“Enjoyed the little report about Ina Jaffe’s talk on names for people of conventional retirement age. I am well beyond that age and still working happily as a writer and editor. The preference for “older adult” as our moniker was especially interesting to me because, as an editor of scholarly writings, mostly in the medical/biomedical area, I’ve found that guidelines for medical journals discourage “elders,” “elderly” (especially “the elderly”), and “seniors” as names for us when we’re the subject of clinical studies, and instead advise authors to use “older adults.”— Lee Culvert

“I think that we’re not an easily categorized group. My first thought is “retirees,” with no age-related visual. My husband (85), retired MD, identifies as stone sculptor now. Many of us are retired teachers, librarians, etc. on different tracks now. I might say gardener and would be proud to identify as an OLLI member. My retired son, age 55, could say community activist.”— Marjorie Rosenbaum.

“Your item in the OLLI newsletter made me specifically recall a study I conducted [as a market research consultant] where the task

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NOTES FROM SUSAN

As I am writing this, our Fall Term has just about ended (a couple of courses have a make-up day this week) and the Fall Celebration/Performance Day has just wrapped up. Judging from the response I’ve heard about many classes, I’d say it was a very successful term. Class attendance stayed strong right through all eight weeks.

The performances today were great fun! What joy it is to watch people who thoroughly enjoy what they’re doing. From the Players to the Singers to the Dancers to the Recorders, everyone shared what they loved with the audience, and their enjoyment was contagious. It was a great day.

Winter registration begins December 1 at 10 a.m. for online registration. Once again, the OLLI Advisory Board will be staffing the Wishcamper computer lab to assist anyone needing a little help or encouragement. Phone-in or mail registrations will be processed beginning December 8.

During this holiday season, I wish you all peace and joy.

—Susan Morrow, Assistant Director for Program

OLLI Advisory Board

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was to ‘name’ senior services for a chain of hospitals. We interviewed 40-, 50-, 60-, and 70-year-olds. All they agreed on was their distaste for all the options presented to them!

“The real problem is not the words. It is the cultural perceptions, which ANY words trigger. So even if a ‘preferred’ descriptor is identified, over time it will become perverted because of underlying attitudes about aging. Also, this dynamic is somewhat different among men versus women, who suffer different age-associated issues and perceptions.” — Emily Johansen

“I’m a fellow USM OLLI member, and after reading your query in the recent newsletter, I have a thought. Since almost everyone here in the States and many from abroad who have been educated know about class/grade divisions, the following could make it universal (and simple):

Freshman = anyone under, say, 25 years of age
Sophomore = anyone from 25 to 39
Junior = anyone 40 to 59
Senior = anyone 60 and above

“The number ranges could be tweaked, but it’s a non-judgmental nomenclature that’s easily recognizable the world over. Just a thought, anyway.” — Robert Petrillo

Thanks to everyone who sent in suggestions. Many of us seem to be uncomfortable with categorization. Understandable. Almost any term blurs our incredible uniqueness as individuals!

Happy holiday season to all! Amazingly, 2016 and January classes are just around the corner.

—Susan Gesing, Advisory Board Chair
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News from the Community Committee

OLLI Fall Celebration a Sizzling Success! “You made it worth getting up this morning and coming here today” said one patron of Reader’s Theater performance on Tuesday morning, November 10th. The feedback of all the performances was positive—and there was a certain energy, a spark, if you will, that seemed to vibrate through the building.

The Dance Class performed a Greek dance in the Forum at the end of the lunch break as a lead-in to their performance in Room 102. They were like Pied Pipers leading their audience to their lair. The Recorders and Singers were at the top of their game, and their pleasure in performing was very evident.

We, the Community Committee, want to thank all the performers and volunteers for their dedication, time, and talents that allowed the event to be such a success. Members of the various performance groups donated the desserts that everyone enjoyed, and OLLI donated the drinks and paper products. Many thanks to you and to Susan Morrow.

As one can see, it takes all of us collaborating to get the job done. Again, thank you one and all!

Best wishes to you and yours in the upcoming holiday season,
—Paula Johnson, Chair, Community Committee

More Than a Reading Room!

Do you know that the OLLI Library on the first floor of Wishcamper is now a place to both relax and peruse a book and to borrow one or two? The evolving collection is shelved according to category for your convenience. Simply fill out the info on the signup sheet. Welcome!

And if anyone is interested in volunteering a half hour now and then to check shelves and returns, please contact Elsa van Bergen, evanbergen@maine.rr.com. If you are coming in for a Winter Term course, your help would be especially welcome. Thanks!

Save the Dates: March 8-10, 2016

Wrinkle in Time: The Dawn of the 21st Century

Wrinkle in Time is a biennial education program that explores an important point in time that has consequences for the future. The decade of the 50s is both a time when traditional mores and customs are still followed but also has within it seeds of the changes that are to come in the 60s and beyond.

Watch for registration details in the January newsletter!

Senior Moment


Stormy Weather?

A reminder: When USM is closed, OLLI is closed and there will be no classes or other events. Here are some ways you can find out if OLLI is closed:

1. The official Storm Line: 207-780-4800

2. Text Alerts—For the most timely notification of weather-related cancellations or postponements, you can sign up for text and/or e-mail message alerts at www.usm.maine.edu/usmalert.

3. The USM website home page

4. USM Official Facebook and Twitter platforms
Experiencing the Harvard Art Museums

On Tuesday morning, November 10, forty-five OLLI members boarded a comfortable bus and headed to Cambridge for a day at the new Harvard Art Museums facility, which houses three formerly separate art museums: the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums (www.Harvardartmuseums.org).

OLLI’s own art historians, Tan and Joy Larrabee, and OLLI’s seasoned volunteer coordinator for excursions, Gael McKibben, accompanied us and shared what they had learned on an earlier trip to reconnoiter the new facility. Their efforts and extensive preparation made our visit productive and pleasant.

Gael gave each of us a booklet produced by the Harvard Graduate School of Design called “Anatomy of the Harvard Art Museums,” which covered the details of the new building and consolidation of the three museums. Gael then explained what to expect when we arrived and the logistics of our visit.

During the drive to Cambridge, Joy filled us in on the history of the three original museums, beginning in 1874, when Harvard’s first art historian was appointed, and culminating with the present day’s consolidation, including tidbits about each museum’s acquisition strategy, collections, and importance in the Harvard and Cambridge communities. Of particular relevance to our group were theories she shared from articles on recommended strategies for looking at and appreciating works of art. Silent observation and allowing ourselves to be intuitively drawn to individual works where we could choose to linger was encouraged, enabling us to enjoy the exhibits at our own pace, in our own individual styles, with confidence. The layout of the museum with small, well-lit rooms housing exhibits lent a quiet intimacy to the experience.

After Joy’s presentation we received a three-page handout produced by Tan providing a map of each of the three main exhibit floors, color-coded to show where the various collections would be found, with full-color samples from each collection. He went over each of the three pages in detail, explaining how to use the guide and sharing highlights of his and Joy’s own favorites from each of the collections.

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OLLI Education Committee Brown Bag Lecture

Karen DeNitto: “A New Look at the Buddha.” Wednesday, January 20, 11:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Room 211.

Increasingly, the Buddha’s influence has been stronger in countries other than his own India. We’ll explore the difference between Buddha and Buddhism, as well as some alternate views on his teachings and sources of his teaching. Learn about the two distinct traditions surrounding the search for enlightenment. The role of women in traditional Buddhist society will also be touched upon.

Karen DeNitto, B.A. (Anthropology), M.Ed., has enjoyed extended stays in India, which are her source of interest in spirituality and society.

Do you have a Green Thumb?

Are you passionate about gardening? Are you sad as the Maine growing season is over?

We might have a solution for you.

The Wishcamper Center has some wonderful plants in the building that are in need of some tender love and care.

We are looking for two volunteers (one primary and one backup) to take care of the plants on the first and second floors of the Wishcamper Center.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Patricia Bola via e-mail: pbola@maine.edu

OLLI Raffle Success!

YOUR GENEROSITY made the OLLI Raffle to support the OLLI Scholarship Fund a tremendous success! Your support netted $1,673 to the Scholarship Fund, an increase of 32% over last fall. The fund allows 70 to 80 of your fellow OLLI members to take courses each year.

Thank you for buying tickets and contributing to the success of the Raffle!

Resource Development Committee —Dick Leslie, Chair

Harvard Art Museums (Continued from page 6)

We were so well prepared by the time we got to the museum that we were able to walk through and enjoy the art without having to wonder where various exhibits were or waste time wandering around trying to find those we especially wanted to see.

The museum is an architectural marvel with a pyramid-shaped, adjustable glass ceiling that allows natural light to be used to advantage in the restoration lab and throughout the galleries. The collections are so attractively displayed and accessible that several of us found that artworks—from periods and locations we were not previously interested in—held new attraction.

Thanks to careful planning and attention to detail by Gael, Joy, and Tan, we experienced a carefree day filled with learning experiences through art appreciation and returned to Portland enriched in ways that will continue to evolve. Walking through the centuries accompanied by some of the finest art representative of each period was a privilege, one that I won’t soon forget.

Note: The two articles Joy cited in her presentation are: “How to view art: Be dead serious about it, but don’t expect too much,” by Philip Kennicott in The Washington Post, October 4, 2014; and “How to View Art: However You Want To,” by Jill Oleniczak at The Engaging Educator (www.twitter.com/TheEngagingEd), October 6, 2014.

—Pat Walsh
Walking Club

Seventeen walkers were out for a beautiful walk in Cumberland to Knight’s Pond and Blueberry Hill.

Our guide, Penny Asherman, told us about the efforts of the Chebeague & Cumberland Land Trust to secure this magnificent property for local residents.

Walkers savor the pristine Knight’s Pond in this 215-acre parcel.

On a cooler day in November, 18 of us traveled to Phippsburg to hike Morse Mountain for an invigorating outing. Laura Sewall, Director of the Bates-Morse Mountain Conservation Area, told us some of the exciting ways this natural treasure is being used.

Laura explains some of the ecological features.

The group gets its first view of the ocean from the top of Morse Mountain, with Sprague Marsh in the foreground.

Walkers plan holiday lunch

On Wednesday, Dec. 9, we will hold our annual holiday lunch at The Egg & I in Scarborough. This luncheon is for people who have walked with us during this past year. We will gather at the restaurant at 11a.m., and you will be able to see photos of recent walks.

Here’s the Egg & I website, with a link to a map and directions: www.theeggandirestaurants.com/locations/scarborough.html.

The Egg & I is located at 183 US Route 1 in Scarborough, between the Scarborough Connector and Hannaford’s. No carpooling as a group.

You need to call Rae Garcelon at 846-3304 by Dec. 7 to reserve your place, as we need to give the restaurant a count. Hope you can join us.

OLLI Does Lunch

Join us for winter on the water as we lunch together at DiMillo’s on the Waterfront in downtown Portland.

The place is always warm and cozy with wonderful views. We usually have an outstanding turnout and get to sample delicious fish and seafood and creative sandwiches.

Be sure to be with us.

When: Tuesday, December 8, at 12:30 p.m.

Where: DiMillo’s on the Waterfront, Commercial St., Portland. Free parking.

Reservations: You must make reservations by 3 p.m. Monday, December 7. Call or write me.

—Barbara Bardack
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