Profile

Juris Ubans

Bringing art to people—
the goal of Juris Ubans

The journey of Juris Ubans to a 41-year career as art teacher and gallery director at the Gorham campus of USM began as his mother and her three sons fled to the West from their homeland of German-occupied Latvia during the waning moments of World War II. His father, ill with typhoid fever, had to stay behind, and Juris wouldn’t see him again until 1973.

During the chaos of a crumbling Germany, the Ubanses moved about like many refugees until they ended up in a displaced refugee settlement in Augsburg, Germany. They stayed there until 1950, when they sailed for New York, but instead landed in Boston. A church group enabled them to move to Syracuse, New York. His mother taught languages at Syracuse University, and Juris attended school. He was drafted into the Army, and after completing his two-year obligation in El Paso, Texas, enrolled in the university back home.

Honorable discharged in 1959, Juris embarked on a 10-year odyssey that brought him into the fields of architecture, mathematics, and English literature before he found what he wanted. He was to following his father’s footsteps to become an artist.

After earning his BFA in Painting from Syracuse, Juris earned his MFA, also in Painting, at Penn State University. During these college years he made many friends who aided him in his career. He was married to Mara Isaks, having met her while she was a doctoral student at the University of Southern California.

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Important Dates

Class Calendar
Feb. 7 – Deadline for mail or drop-off class registration to participate in the class lottery
Feb. 11 – OLLI members’ spring class lottery
Feb. 13 – Open registration for OLLI spring courses by phone, mail, and drop-in
Feb. 18 – OLLI and USM closed for Presidents’ Day

Walking Club

Ski Club
Wed., Feb. 27. See page 7 for details.

Senior Players

OLLI Excursions

Class Cancellations
For weather closings, call the USM storm line at 780-4800. If USM is closed, OLLI is closed.
OLLI History, Part III

2008 – 2013: The move to Wishcamper brings changes and growth

Many longtime OLLI members look back fondly to our days in the Payson-Smith building and Luther Bonney Hall. Dozens of people looked forward to spending all day Friday together, and having lunch, as that was the only day of the week when classes convened. Since the Fall term in 2008, we have taken classes in elegant, sunlit, and high-tech surroundings, choosing from programming offered five or six days a week.

Fundraising efforts and contributions from many OLLI and Muskie Institute members, in addition to the grant from the Osher Foundation, and the tireless efforts of Joe and Carol Wishcamper, led to the creation of our building, which houses both OLLI and the Muskie Institute. The $32.2 million project included buying and demolishing the Portland Plastic Pipes building, completing soil restoration from formerly hazardous materials, building the new Osher Map Library, and rebuilding the intersection at Bedford and Forest Avenue. The result was a dynamic, new campus center and a more impressive gateway to USM Portland.

The new construction met U.S. Green Building Council specifications and was certified by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). It is heated and cooled by geothermal energy from wells drilled 1500 feet into the earth. Rainwater is collected off the rooftop and recycled. Even the paved property surrounding the building is being restored into permeable landscape.

One immediate impact of the new building was the expansion of our offerings to five days a week. Within the first year at the Wishcamper Center, we went from approximately 65 classes a year to 38 to 50 classes each term. Membership increased and is still growing. In 2010 we added Thursday evening and Saturday classes and workshops for the Fall and Spring terms. This expansion in our programming was supported by an additional grant from Bernard and Barbro Osher, which funded additional marketing and advertising.

Wishcamper is home to other OLLI activities, including the SAGE lecture series, Special Interest Groups, and other special educational programs and presentations. It is also the home of the OLLI National Resource Center and the Maine Senior College Network.

We continue to carry the torch lit by Rabbi Harry Sky and Terry Foster back in 1997, and we have remained true to the values and goals of our founders.
OLLI Advisory Board

There isn’t a lot to share this month from the Advisory Board, but I do have a couple of items I want to make sure you are aware of.

First is the absolutely outstanding winter term, which has a record enrollment with a number of new and interesting courses. If you did not register for a course, I encourage you to seriously consider the spring term, as it is looking very good as well. Check out the catalog that was mailed to you, or on line at http://tinyurl.com/OLLI-Spring-2013.

Second, I hope you will take advantage of a truly outstanding schedule of SAGE lectures due to begin in mid-March. The committee has done a great job finding some very interesting presenters for us.

—Dick Sturgeon, Advisory Board Chair
dicksturg13@gmail.com; 773-3174

Bones for Life®—An Impromptu Winter Course

Please note the unusual class schedule: This class will meet twice a week, on Tuesday and Friday mornings, 9:30–noon, on Feb. 8, 12, 15, 19, and 22; and March 8, 12, and 15.

This exercise and movement course, “Bones for Life,”® is based on the Feldenkrais® Method, a natural-movement-based program for improving posture and bone strength. This class will include balance, flexibility, core stability, autonomy, and dynamic mobility. Most movements are learned and practiced while lying on the floor. Wear clothing appropriate for this activity.

Class participants may use a chair, if needed, to assist them in resuming a standing position. As with any exercise program, you are advised to check with your physician if you have any health condition that requires medical treatment.

Gretchen Langner is a certified Feldenkrais® Practitioner and Bones for Life Trainer, as well as the Bones for Life US Organizer since 2001. She also co-created the Foundation for Movement Intelligence, a non-profit located in Portland.

Cost of this 20-hour course is $65. Visit or call the OLLI office (780-4406) to register, or send a check with your name and phone number and a note, “Bones for Life,” to OLLI, P.O. Box 9300, Portland, ME 04104.
Ubans (cont’d from page 1)

In 1968 they came to Gorham, Maine, at a topsy-turvy time when the University of Southern Maine was being formed from the Portland and Gorham Campuses. While Juris mulled over several teaching offers from various places, an unexpected vacancy at Gorham opened up. He wanted to teach on the East Coast, so he accepted a position there.

Now an assistant professor of art, he began to emphasize a structural approach to being an artist: making art isn’t only an intellectual process — you have to arrive at the studio ready to work, not just ready to think. Once the thing is built on a solid foundation, then the art can enter its place.

Along these lines Juris, along with his friend, Michael Moore, and others, developed a program that combined a classical education emphasizing art history with contemporary practice.

Juris had another challenge at Gorham: gallery director. He took on this duty with gusto despite a paucity of funds, the first year exhibiting paintings, drawings, prints, photography, and film, and then later sculpture, a mix that underlined his broad definition of art. He sought to expand the gallery’s reach beyond the campus, and, over the years, its reach spread widely and well beyond Gorham.

Undoubtedly a highlight for the gallery was a film retrospective in 1970 of film director and Maine native John Ford’s work during Maine’s Sesquicentennial Celebration. For once there was more than adequate funding: the Sesquicentennial Commission came up with $2,000, and the Maine Commission on the Arts and Humanities found more money for the project. As a result, 44 Ford films were shown on five campuses: Gorham, Portland, UM Farmington, Bowdoin, and St. Francis College. Each showing was followed by a panel discussion and community dialogue.

Another film outlet that Juris explored was cable television. He produced a 20-part series of two-hour programs on “Contemporary International Cinema” and a 13-part series on “Filmmaking in Maine.”

Currently Juris is on the board of CTN-5 (local Channel 5), which provides interviews with various artists, community leaders, and, among others, Harold Pachios on politics.

As he reached retirement, USM hosted a Juris Ubans retrospective titled Ubart, which featured not only his work but also his collection of the works of other artists connected to the University, many of them his former students and friends. As the curator of Ubart, Dennis Gilbert said, “[It] is an expression of the many delights a life in art can bring.”

Juris has established close ties to his native land, bringing many of his father’s paintings here and exhibiting them at UNE (the old Westbrook College). Tennis partner George Mitchell helped to set up a foundation, Fiore Verde, which does student and faculty exchanges with the Academy of Art in Riga, Latvia.

While he admits he didn’t know much about OLLI, he credits Dick Sturgeon for his involvement with our organization. So now he’s teaching film courses in the Shep Lee Auditorium in Wishcamper. He finds it’s a comfortable setting for sharing his vast archive of films with his new (old) students.

—Don King

OLLI Senior Players

Upcoming meetings

Two sections of the OLLI Senior Players Special Interest Group will hold meetings next month.

Group A will meet Wednesday, March 20, at 3 p.m. in Room 103. For more information, call Antonia Medd at 831-0505.

Group B will meet Thursday, March 21, at 3 p.m. in Room 203. For more information, call Cheryl Squiers at 274-8876 or e-mail her at nenegirl@fairpoint.net.

Performance

Cheryl Squiers, OLLI Senior Players’ director and coordinator, has announced that The OLLI Senior Players will perform Thursday, March 14, at 1 p.m., in Room 133.
Movers and Shakers: Wallace H. Nutting

Wallace H. Nutting credits Terry Foster as one who enlisted him to become one of the founding members of what was to become the Senior College at USM. The retired Army general’s organizational background proved useful in those often hectic days when the future OLLI met Fridays in Payson Smith Hall.

Those days, he says, “Everyone pitched in, and with my experience I began teaching a course on national and world affairs in the fall of 1997.” He’s continued to teach a course every fall, save for four years when he served as mayor of Biddeford. He had retired there in 1985 after 40 years in one Army uniform or another. The Saco native served in the Maine State Guard during World War II before receiving an appointment to West Point and graduating in 1950.

One mark of his outstanding career is the 2008 Distinguished Graduate Award bestowed on him by the West Point Association of Graduates for “serving his country with integrity and distinguished throughout a lifetime of dedicated service as a soldier, statesman, educator, and civic leader.” The citation further notes that “in successive positions of increasing responsibility from second lieutenant through the rank of general, his career has exemplified the lifelong commitment to the principles expressed in the motto of the United States Military Academy: Duty, Honor, Country.”

That increasing responsibility included assignments in the Korean War, where he was twice wounded in action and received the Silver Star; and two tours of duty in Vietnam in 1966 and 1970. Nutting’s career included 12 postings across the U.S., with three years at West Point and repeated duty at the Pentagon, plus three assignments in Germany and four years in Latin America.

In 1979 he was appointed Commander, U.S. Southern Command and four years later Commander in Chief, U.S. Readiness Command, the first officer to lead two of the combatant commands. Ambler M. Moss, Jr., ambassador to Panama, said of Nutting as commander of the Southern Command, “It is no exaggeration to say that Wally Nutting set the tone and policies for USSOUTHCOM’s successful management of the Panama Canal treaties. His example inspired a new generation of Panamanians.”

Upon his retirement in 1985 as general, Nutting and his wife, Jane, made their 23rd move, this time to Biddeford Pool. His concern for the area’s environment helped him decide to run for mayor. The first time, he won election against a field of candidates; the second time, he ran unopposed. He’s also well remembered in Saco, where Mayor Bill Johnson pushed to have his portrait put up in City Hall.

Wallace is a strong supporter of OLLI. As he jocularly remarks, “It’s a good way to keep seniors off the street.”

—Don King

Reflections wants you!

Calling all writers, poets, essayists, photographers, painters, collage artists, sketchers, print-makers, and more, for OLLI’s annual journal of literature and arts.

Reflections submission forms are available on the OLLI website at http://tinyurl.com/OLLI-Ref. Electronic submissions will be accepted until April 1 for the 2013 edition, to be published in the fall.

Copies of past issues of Reflections are available free for the asking in the OLLI office.
Think spring: An April day in Boston

The first trip of the 2013 OLLI Excursions season has been planned for a visit to Boston’s Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and Museum of Fine Arts on Wednesday, April 3. We’ll arrive at the Gardner in time to tour the new wing and renew acquaintances with the original works in the collection. Nasturtiums will be in bloom in the courtyard, and the new wing houses a cafe for lunch or a snack.

Deadline is Monday, March 18. Don’t procrastinate too long, as seats fill quickly.

To reserve, mail your check to OLLI, P.O. Box 9300, Portland, ME 04104, or call 780-4406 to pay by credit card. Of course, you may register in person at the office. There will be no refunds after March 22.

For further information, call the trip leader, Ruth Cohen, at 774-3217.

Ideas for OLLI travelers

Travel plans for OLLI Excursions’ 2013 season are now in place. To titillate your travel bug, here is what we’re planning. Watch for more extensive information and signup dates in upcoming newsletters.

Our first excursion has been scheduled for early April: The Isabella Stewart Gardner and Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. See a full description and signup information elsewhere on this page.

In June we will visit The Museum of Russian Icons, just north of Worcester, one of New England’s newest museums. The trip will include the nearby Fruitlands, a 1840s utopian experiment in communal living founded by Transcendentalist Bronson Alcott and others. John Sutherland, OLLI faculty member, will be the onboard lecturer.

The Kennedy Library has been a requested Excursions destination for several years. This July, before seeing the exhibits there, we will take a narrated history and luncheon tour of Boston’s Inner Harbor.

When fall foliage is at its peak, we’ll cruise on Winnipesaukee Lake, at 44,586 acres New Hampshire’s largest lake, at the foothills of the White Mountains. Lunch will be available at the Fantail Grille on the M/S Mount Washington.

Read your newsletters and don’t get left behind!

Passages: Priscilla Thorne

OLLI member Priscilla Thorne passed away on December 25. Her obituary, published in the Bangor Daily News on January 5, notes, “Priscilla B. Thorne, 81, died … at home after a long and courageous battle with breast cancer. She was a very strong and brave woman and will be lovingly remembered by family and friends as a lady who was fond of literature, the arts and nature.” The full text is at http://tinyurl.com/PTthorne.
Walking Club plans
Falmouth, Freeport treks

Mother Nature saw fit to provide us with excellent snow conditions and a beautiful day for our outing at Twin Brooks in January. We are hopeful for more this month.

Please note these dates carefully.

Wednesday, Feb. 13. Our first excursion is snowshoeing at Gilsland Farm in Falmouth. If you want to cross-country ski, you may have to break a trail, as they do not groom for skiers. They do have a few snowshoes for rent at $5 a pair, but get there early if you want them. Walking is more difficult. Bring your poles.

Tuesday, Feb. 19. Our second outing will be moved, to accommodate the One Book/One Community program, which takes place on our usual day (Feb. 26). We will try snowshoeing or cross-country skiing at Wolfe Neck Farm in Freeport. No rentals there, but you probably can walk the trails in boots. Bring poles.

As usual, we meet to carpool at the Back Cove parking area across from Hannaford at 10 a.m. Bring your lunch and dress warmly. Both of these excursions depend on snow conditions and weather, but snowshoeing is usually more flexible.

Call Rae Garcelon at 846-3304 with questions.

Ski Club making on-the-spot plans

With significant snow and cold, OLLI Skiers enjoyed good conditions in late December and early January. Cross-country skiers got out to Gull Crest in Cape Elizabeth, and other excursions were arranged among members. Downhill skiers made the short trip to Shawnee Peak on Jan 7th and looked ahead to Sunday River later in the month.

Attempting to outwit Mother Nature, cross-country skiers will change their strategy and no longer have a published trip schedule. They will head out on short notice when snow and weather conditions are at their best, using e-mail to spread the word. Discussions among members will set the venue and date about 48 hours ahead of the event.

Downhill skiers plan to return to Shawnee Peak for “Carload Dayz” ($86/car) on Monday. Feb 11. Contact Lois Winter (lwinter@maine.rr.com or 871-8029) and to Sunday River on Wednesday. Feb. 27. Contact Steve Donahoe (stevedonahoe1@gmail.com or 239-6517.) Last-minute trips may also be announced via e-mail.

Ski events depend on weather conditions, so be sure to sign up for an event in order to get updates, carpool info, and last-minute alerts. To join the Ski Club’s Member Directory, e-mail Steve Donahoe at stevedonahoe1@gmail.com or call 207-239-6517.

OLLI Night Out — Out in February

We will not have an event in February, but keep a lookout for our announcement in the March Newsletter. We will get together to dine in March. Don’t miss it!

—Barbara Bardack
OLLI Night Out Coordinator
Did it!

[Want to share news about your publication, award, or the like in the past couple of months? Send us a note: ollinews@usm.maine.edu.]

Special Poetry Happening


The event takes place on Tuesday, February 5, 2013, at 11:30 a.m., in Room 133, Wishcamper Center.