Profile
John McLaughlin

He shares with OLLI students the universe’s showering love

Above all, he is curious: The very breadth of John McLaughlin’s study and life experience attests to the gift of his “extremely plastic mind.”

At the age of seven, he was drawing houses on quarter-inch graph paper. He still designs houses, one of which has been featured in House & Garden.

As an adult, his greatest interest, however, has been spiritual inquiry. John has taught The Practical Path of the Mystic Way for several semesters at OLLI. Coincidentally, he first started teaching this approach to spiritual growth in the extension division of USM in the 1980s, and then continued for more than three and a half years at the College of Marin in California. He is guided by a sense that “we humans are frail, vulnerable, and live in mystery.”

In his late 20s McLaughlin, trained in art and architecture, turned aside from a series of leadership positions in the art world because “I had to step out of that structure ... and break the spell. I realized I wanted people to understand the process of creativity, not the finished product.”

After earning a doctorandus at the University of Amsterdam in architectural history and philosophy (while lecturing in English and Dutch at local art museums), he went to Italy to study psychosynthesis with its founder, Roberto Assagioli. (Psychosynthesis emphasizes integration of all aspects of the personality, and self-realization through higher, or transpersonal, evolution.)

After a year at Findhorn, a still-vibrant spiritual community in Northern Scotland, he traveled to India, without intentionally making the decision to do so. It just happened: “A voice said, ‘You

continued on page 2
McLaughlin (continued from page 1)

leave for India in October.’ My inner voice has led me with a ring in its nose.” In Pune, he was given discipleship by Rashneesh (later Osho), a mystic and spiritual teacher.

McLaughlin continues to meditate daily for up to an hour. His non-clinical training spans a range of theories and experiential approaches to human growth: transactional analysis, transcendental meditation, gestalt, psychoanalysis, rebirthing, bioenergetics, hypnotherapy, astrology, and not least, psychosynthesis. He maintained a private therapy practice in Portland for a number of years until 1992. In 1995 he served as director of education at Findhorn.

John grew up in Boston, one of three sons of parents who were amateur actors on the side. His mother was a writer, his father an attorney. He is grateful to them for emphasizing the value of education and the importance of ethical behavior. He had an early Quaker education, then went to Oberlin College, majoring in art history. He also received a Masters in architectural history from the Harvard School of Design before pursuing his doctorandus. in the Netherlands.

In his previous career, McLaughlin served as director of the deCordova Museum Art School (Lincoln, Mass.) and of Museum Education for four years. During this time he hosted an arts-related television show in Boston that emphasized the process of creativity. He also taught architectural history and aesthetics at the Massachusetts College of Art.

McLaughlin says he was “born cheerful.” His spiritual openness is evident in his classes, where he is given to spontaneous laughter; tears come readily when he deeply feels compassion, oneness, insight, vulnerability. He likes jokes. He refers to the processes of life and fate as “central casting running things” except when we get in the way and say “No.”

He has always known that “there is a teacher inside of me,” but greatly enjoys his downtime. He bicycles, and years ago he sailed a 43-foot boat out of the Golden Gate to the East Coast. He loves dancing. He acknowledges that he is “not called to be on the barricades” of social action, but feels more suited to the classroom and to interpersonal exchange.

John has lost two partners in recent years. In some way, he feels blessed to have helped and guided them in their dying process.

At OLLI, McLaughlin is moved by “the degree of trust and presence” among his students, who “meet the challenge from their different places of development. It’s an extraordinary gift. We share a lot of spirit.”

These days, he says, “I don’t ask much of life. The magic of life I got early — I knew how to enjoy myself.” Beyond that, he is grateful. “I’ve had a lot of lovingness,” he says. “The universe has showered me with love.”

—Amy Liston

Passages: Olga Meleshkova

Olga Meleshkova, longtime OLLI member, died on May 25. She was born in 1931 in Russia. After surviving a Nazi concentration camp, she emigrated to the US in 1947. She settled in Portland in 1993. Her obituary in the Portland Press Herald mentions her active role in OLLI. Contributions in Olga’s name may be made to the Keith Sherburne Memorial Fund at OLLI.
June! Such a nice month — weddings, proms, graduations, Little League baseball games, gardens, flowers and the beginning of summer vacations. At OLLI the end of June is the end of our fiscal year. We have also made it the end of all year-long committee assignments.

Every July, new committees are formed and new people join the OLLI Advisory Board. This July will see all new Board officers. Sue Gesing (who was vice-chair) will assume the Chair position, Jack Lynch will become the vice-chair and Lynne Gammon will become the Board secretary, replacing Joy Larrabee, who has done an outstanding job recording Board and Executive Committee meetings.

Four people are leaving the Advisory Board this year. Stephen Jenks has completed a three-year term, serving on the SAGE Committee and being a valued member of the OLLI Speakers’ Bureau. Henry Warren has completed a three-year term, serving two years as Chair of the Resource Development Committee and as a member of the Education Committee. Joan Aldrich has completed a three-year term, serving as an outstanding Chair of the Education Committee and a member of the Executive Committee.

I cannot express how thankful and appreciative I am for their dedication and service to OLLI.

The fourth person leaving the Board this year is Dick Sturgeon. Dick has been on the Board for six years, the limit set by OLLI policies. During that time, he helped create and chair the Resource Development Committee, establishing both the OLLI scholarship raffles and the annual book sale, and for the past three years, he has been Chair of the Advisory Board.

As Chair of the Board, Dick has always been calm, friendly, and caring. He has the ability to identify what needs to be done and the best way to accomplish it. He respects the structure of OLLI and works with the various Standing Committees to guide and support their ideas. I have leaned heavily on his wisdom and judgment, as I have on all of the past Board chairs, and he has always responded in the most supportive ways. I value his friendship and will truly miss his leadership.

Please take a moment to thank Dick for his service to OLLI the next time you see him.

—Susan Morrow, Assistant Director for Program
OLLI Advisory Board

This is my final message after serving three years as Chair of the OLLI Advisory Board. I have much to be thankful for. I began my term during a period of moderate growth. There were a few controversial matters to work through, such as discontinuing the policy of providing free books to members for their classes.

Actually, it all worked out just fine, as I was blessed with a bright, informed, and active group of Board members and our extremely competent and dedicated Susan Morrow, Rob Hyssong, and the OLLI office staff.

Provided with this team of Board volunteers and effective administrative personnel, OLLI has continued to grow in three years from 1,460 to 1,723 current members. During this same period each course term (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer) has grown both in the number of courses offered and the number of members attending.

Thanks to the good work of the Education Committee, we have retained virtually all of our great volunteer faculty and added a number of new instructors. The Education and Community Committees have sponsored a number of very successful special events such as Wrinkle in Time, One Book One Community, the Literary Fair, and some memorable trips and excursions. As I write this, there are 35 OLLI members traveling in France — and who could forget the trips to China, Greece, and Egypt?

Member interest beyond classes has resulted in OLLI’s now having 17 Special Interest Groups such as Recorder, Wine Tasting, Bridge, Mah Jong, Book Clubs, the Walking Club, and many more.

SAGE continues to offer stimulating Tuesday morning lectures each Fall and Spring term, with large and appreciative audiences.

The OLLI Fall and Spring raffles, managed by the Marketing and Resource Development Committee, have been successful in raising funds for scholarships for OLLI members. The most recent one set a new record by raising $1,200 in scholarship support.

OLLI has a first-rate monthly Newsletter and Reflections, the annual art and literature journal, which are generated by the Communications Committee. I encourage all OLLI members to take the time to visit and read the Newsletter on-line and to pick up a copy of Reflections.

In the past three years the Nominating Committee has been outstanding in nominating new Board members, who have all made immediate positive contributions.

As I leave the position of Board Chair, I am extremely confident OLLI will continue to grow both in membership and quality of offerings under new leadership and three new Board members.

Thanks to all who have made these three years pleasant and more rewarding than I could have imagined.

—Dick Sturgeon, Chair

Remember to pick up a CLYNK bag at the office for your deposit bottles and cans! Proceeds benefit OLLI.
Two from OLLI at USM attend OLLI National Conference

Rob Hyssong, Program Coordinator, and Jack Lynch, member of the Advisory Board, attended the three-day OLLI National Conference held in Carlsbad, California, in April. The purpose of the conference was simply to share ideas and best practices. Details of the conference can be found here: http://ollinrc.squarespace.com. Rob’s and Jack’s brief account follows.

The key benefit of attending the National Conference is to appreciate more fully the Osher mission of providing meaningful educational experiences to seniors. We in Portland are truly part of a significant national movement involving OLLIs at 117 universities. With profound foresight, the Osher Foundation’s benefactor, Bernard Osher, established the OLLI network with a minimum of restrictive guidelines, making it possible for each OLLI to best meet the needs of its local environment.

As a consequence, the OLLIs vary significantly in almost any way you might imagine. They vary in size, in whether they pay teachers, how much they charge for membership and classes, the size of classes, the centrality and quality of the classroom space, the nature of their relationship with their host university, the demographics of their community, the kinds of courses and workshops they offer, how much emphasis they place on social activities and special interest groups, how they are dealing with the use of technology in the classroom, in marketing, in planning, and in registration and payment of fees, and in ways to reach members unable to travel.

Because of this diversity, it is often hard for OLLIs to implement directly the successful features of other OLLI programs. Nevertheless, the exposure to other ways of operating fosters program innovation at all the OLLIs. One area in which our OLLI can develop further is by understanding how to apply new technology. Possibilities include member registration and fee collection, assisting the hearing impaired, reaching those members no longer able to travel, and enhancing the learning experience in the classroom.

The Osher Foundation representatives emphasized that, besides taking courses, teaching courses, and participating in both social activities and Special Interest Groups, all OLLI members have the opportunity to participate in guiding and implementing the evolution of OLLI. Volunteering in the OLLI mission is one way to grow as a person and feel more connected to others during our senior years.

—Jack Lynch and Rob Hyssong
Announcements / Calendar / Special Events

OLLI Night Out: Let’s Meet to Eat!

June is our last OLLI Night Out until September and should be a culinary adventure for many of us. If you liked the food on OLLI’s Turkey trip, you’ll love this place.

We will be going to Babylon Restaurant at 1192 Forest Ave., Portland. The date is Monday, June 16, at 5:30 p.m. Babylon serves authentic Middle Eastern food made from family recipes.

It is affordable and the nicely seasoned dishes are a rare find in Maine. You can view the menu and the location map by clicking here. Take a shot at something new — or if you know the cuisine, come and give us some hints.

Let me know by noon, Sunday, June 15, if you will be with us.

—Barbara Bardack, OLLI Night Out Coordinator  
lascala2@comcast.net; 865-2009

OLLI raffle a success

THANKS to everyone who purchased raffle tickets in early May to support the OLLI Scholarship Fund. The Fund is important to many members of OLLI to underwrite the cost of classes. The raffle raised over $1,200, easily surpassing the scholarship fund raffles of Spring and Fall 2013. The success is due solely to the generosity of those who purchased tickets.

THANK YOU!
Walking Club news

In May about 20 walkers met at the Blackstrap Community Forest in Falmouth for a rigorous but pleasant 3-mile walk, most of which was uphill. We all survived and vowed to return for another excursion.

**Wednesday, June 11:** We will take a longer trip to the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay. Because our travel time will be over an hour, we will leave from Back Cove parking lot across from Hannaford at 9 a.m. You will need $11 for your group admission to the Gardens. If you ride with someone, please offer a few dollars for gas since this is a longer drive. You can buy lunch at the café, or you may bring your own lunch. Call me at 846-3304 to make a reservation if you plan to join us. We will return by 3 p.m.

Here is a link to a video about the gardens:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSSs8tap3vs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSSs8tap3vs)

**Tuesday, June 24:** we will make our annual visit to Gilsland Farm to view the peonies and do some bird watching. Meet at Back Cove at 10 a.m to carpool.

For both walks, bring water and your lunch (or money for the café at the Botanical Gardens). Use sunscreen and bug repellant and wear clothes to protect from ticks, which may be in residence in both places. Call Rae Garcelon at 846-3304 with questions.

—Rae Garcelon

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**Contest!**

We are interested in finding out how many OLLI members read the Newsletter on-line. If you are reading this Newsletter on-line, you can enter a contest to win a $30 gift certificate to Longfellow Books. Send us an e-mail by clicking [here](mailto:ollinews@usm.maine.edu) — or send it to ollinews@usm.maine.edu with the subject “Contest.” A winner will be selected randomly and announced in the September Newsletter.
Peer learning and peer teaching at OLLI

OLLI’s Education Committee sponsored a Brown Bag Lunch event on May 5, which featured a panel discussion on peer learning and peer teaching. The panelists were Mike Brady, Fred Brancato, Bill Gregory, David LaGraffe, Jean Sheridan, and Peter Stead. Henry Warren served as moderator.

The event was well attended, with 41 participants, about evenly divided between current faculty and members interested in future teaching.

Much of our lifelong learning has been delivered by professionals (teachers, supervisors, etc.). But learning is also generated in dialogues between peers, and peer teaching is certainly at the heart of our OLLI, since faculty members are also volunteers. There is great variety in ways that learning can take place: lecture courses, discussion-based courses, and hands-on art and movement-based courses.

Here for the sheer joy of learning, together we create a great intellectual playground. Positive regard seems to come naturally as we join in the learning process, aware that our teachers are also our fellows.

The peer teaching concept is thought to have originated with Aristotle, who used students as leaders to help their fellows understand philosophy. Any OLLI member is welcome to teach. Teaching becomes infectious: when we see how enthusiastic class participants become, we get interested in new subjects. Every class develops its own unique, collective personality.

Those of us who have offered repeat courses are often surprised that the repeat is nothing like the original. Peer engagement changes the direction of discussions. Talking reflectively with one another and sharing our life experiences help us to value that experience more: engaged peer learning is about adding information to what is already known. One of our tasks as teachers can be to evoke that sort of experiential learning. At OLLI, learners are co-creators of knowledge.

—Joan Aldrich

A story by OLLI member Nancy Bills — “Judith, or A Dish Served Cold” — has been accepted by Goose River Press for their 2014 Anthology. Goose River Press is a Maine company headquartered in Waldoboro.