Profile

Betsy Wiley

For Betsy Wiley, it’s both teaching and learning

In Betsy Wiley’s family “almost everyone’s a teacher.” So it comes as no surprise that she began her OLLI career as a faculty member before ever taking a class.

Betsy arrived at OLLI about five years ago. She saw the course catalogue, and thought — with a whiff of Forrest Gump — that “it seemed like a box of chocolates”: delectables for this longtime English teacher who reads four to six hours a day.

For the most part Betsy has been co-teaching with faculty member Sarah Franklin, who was her teaching supervisor in the USM ETEP (Extended Teacher Education Program leading to Masters of Science in Education) in 1984. Together they have focused almost exclusively on contemporary novels (When We Were the Kennedys by Monica Wood the only non-fiction exception).

Betsy usually selects the books to teach and gets the nod from Sarah. Their courses have included “Prizewinners — Eyes of the Prize 21st Century Novels We’ve Lived,” and “Maine Authors — Maine by Mainers.” This spring, Betsy taught the first half of “Happy Families” solo while Sarah concluded her winter as a snowbird in Arizona.

“The students are so amazing, so smart and engaged,” Betsy says. “I’m delighted to see them, and I miss them when we don’t meet.”

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Betsy Wiley (continued from page 1)

Betsy has taken various courses, including Tan Larrabee’s “Goya — The First Modernist Rebel,” and Tim Byrne’s “Photography — Putting Art in Your Digital Photography.” She continues to be interested in photography, especially macrophotography, which involves extreme close-ups.

She was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, where her babysitter was the bugler for the Charlestown Navy Yard. After Betsy’s father retired from the military, he taught physics and chemistry. Her brother Mark, who is now deceased, developed educational programs for gifted and talented students. Another brother, Brian, recently retired from teaching high school chemistry in Okinawa and now lives in Maine. Her great aunt was Helen M. King, the longtime Portland principal after whom King Middle School is named. It is truly a family affair. “All the teachers in the family are so curious. We love learning,” is how Betsy sums it up.

Betsy graduated from the University of Maine, Orono, with a degree in English and Speech. After the ETEP and some subsequent teaching, she earned a Master’s in American and New England Studies from USM.

She married Peter Wiley, an attorney who worked for then-governor Angus King and who was serving as then-Congressman Tom Allen’s chief of staff. Peter died suddenly in 2006.

While living in the Washington, D.C., area, Betsy earned a Ph.D. in American Studies. Back in Maine, her teaching career included extended stints at Catherine McAuley High School and at Cape Elizabeth High School, where she served as chair of the English department.

Betsy writes every day. She is currently working on an essay entitled “Good Women” that is part of a series — “really a collection of family stories” — she is writing for her daughter Martha, granddaughter Grace, and other family members.

She has been published twice. While in Washington she worked at the Smithsonian, where she wrote subject biographies for a book on the turn-of-the-20th-century celebrity photographer Zaida ben Yusuf. Frank Goodyear, the lead author of the book, was curator of photographs at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington and is now co-director of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art. Betsy’s written work also appears in a collection of essays by teachers entitled As Leaders Learn.

Betsy loves to knit. She is happiest in a bookstore or a yarn store. She treasures the company of Martha and Grace, who live in Gorham, and laughingly refers to herself as their “backstop.” She recently took Grace along on a Road Scholar trip to Spain, where she had lived for several years when first married. This winter Betsy took in the Philadelphia Flower Show, and now that summer is near, she’ll be spending time at her brother’s camp on Norway Lake.

At OLLI, Betsy, the veteran English teacher, has “discovered writers I’d never met before,” and “learned to be a better reader” while working with her intellectually sophisticated adult students. She and Sarah Franklin are developing some additional iterations of their 21st century fiction course. One will focus on “remarkable women,” another on the theme of “misfits.”

Though her OLLI course material is quite clearly contemporary, Betsy has another era in mind when it comes to her epitaph. Borrowing from Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, she muses that her tombstone should declare “And gladly did she learn and gladly teach.”

And gladly did her students fill the classroom.

—Amy Liston
June is the last month of the OLLI 2014–2015 year and, as Advisory Board Chair, I think this is a fitting time to say a few thank-yous.

Two Advisory Board members, Judith Harris and Rich Machlin, will be finishing up their terms and leaving the Board.

Judith has served for six years and was a member of the Community Committee for three years, chairing it for two. She was also a member of both the Nominating and Resource Development Committees for two years each. Rich is completing a three-year term and was active on both the Education and Communications Committees. We appreciate the time and energy they have given to OLLI.

At the same time we welcome three new Advisory Board members, who will begin three-year terms starting July 1:

Matthew Goldfarb has been an OLLI member for three years and a teacher for two. Matt volunteered for two years on the Education Committee, one year on the Nominating Committee, and has helped as a volunteer at the welcome table the first week of classes. Professionally, Matt practiced law for almost 50 years in Portland. He has agreed to be the new Chair of SAGE.

Stephen Schiffman has also been an OLLI member for three years and a teacher for two. Steve’s professional accomplishments include eight years as Dean of the undergraduate program at Babson College, where he was the architect of a revised curriculum. He participated as one of the founding faculty members of the Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering and helped create the original curriculum. Steve spent a year as visiting faculty in Creative Entrepreneurship at MECA in 2011.

Elsa van Bergen has been involved at OLLI for nine years. She has volunteered as coordinator of the OLLI book group for four years, keeping that group organized and intellectually lively; chaired One Book/One Community in 2013; and served for two years on both the Community Committee and the Resource Development Committee. Professionally, Elsa spent twenty-five years in publishing as an editor and developmental and production manager specializing in college textbooks.

OLLI is fortunate to have such capable people moving into leadership positions.

—Susan Gesing, Advisory Board Chair
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NOTES FROM SUSAN

The busy schedule of events this Spring attests to the active and robust program that is OLLI at USM. As classes and SAGE started to wind down, activities seemed to kick into high gear.

The Education Committee offered a Brown Bag Lunch series to spotlight some outstanding OLLI faculty members. Each 45-minute presentation offered a chance to experience a faculty member you might not be familiar with and provided the faculty a chance to highlight a favorite subject. Each Brown Bag Lunch was well attended. The Education Committee is planning to continue the series again in future terms.

The Community Committee sponsored a wonderful event called The Writers’ Showcase, featuring 20 OLLI writers who shared their original works. Many thanks to Ruth Story and her committee for making this such a successful event.

The Resource Development Committee held a Book Sale on May 1 and 2. It was the largest OLLI Book Sale to date. All money raised goes directly to OLLI scholarships. This year’s funds will allow 45 people to enjoy OLLI — people who might not have been able to participate otherwise. Thank you to Jim Thorne and his committee (especially Dick Sturgeon) for all their hard work and effort.

Once again, thanks go to the Community Committee for organizing and sponsoring the annual Spring Celebration (Ninth Week). May 13 was a day full of OLLI performances — the OLLI Singers, the Recorder Ensemble, The Senior Players, The Readers’ Theatre, a short video of a line-dance class, and a day-long art show. Attendance throughout the day was solid, with people coming and going as their schedule allowed. Every group had a warm and enthusiastic audience.

And finally, the OLLI Advisory Board hosted a Volunteer Recognition Lunch on May 19. This was an opportunity to acknowledge and thank the 97 non-faculty volunteers who give so much to our organization. From serving on committees to staffing the reception desk in the office, these volunteers make it possible for OLLI at USM to serve such a large community with a minimal staff.

Thank you, thank you. We couldn’t do it without you!

—Susan Morrow, Assistant Director for Program

Important Summer Term Dates

June 23: Start of OLLI summer term classes
July 2: Deadline to receive refund on dropped classes
July 3: OLLI and USM closed in observance of Independence Day
July 30: End of OLLI summer term
Aug. 4–6: OLLI summer term makeup week
More of Portland’s Hidden Treasures

The second in this series of OLLI Excursions to Portland’s Hidden Treasures will explore three churches in Portland. Though each has unique features, they all continue to play a strong part in the history of Portland.

On July 6 we will relive some of Portland’s most interesting and intense early history at the 1828 Abyssinian Meeting House on Munjoy Hill. The simple wood-framed building is the third-oldest extant African-American meeting house in the country. It has been the site of spirited abolitionist meetings at which nationally known figures appeared. It is recognized nationally as an Underground Railroad site. It has survived major fires, including the Great Fire of 1866. It sits atop one of Portland’s many hidden rivers. Leonard Cummings, Chair of the Abyssinian Restoration Project, will be our guide and historian.

On July 13 we visit The Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church on Park and Pleasant Streets. This church was originally the Second Parish Church, sister of the First Parish Church on Congress Street. Built by the Methodists in 1828, it is the second-oldest existing church in Portland. Its steeple housed one of only thirteen Liberty Bells cast by the Paul Revere Foundry. Father Constantine Sarantides will talk about the church’s rich collection of Byzantine Orthodox religious icons.

July 20th’s exploration is of the 1926 modified English Gothic, granite Williston-Emmanuel Church on State Street. This church has often been called “a poem in stone.” We will have an opportunity to enjoy the quiet of the church cloister, as it reveals some of the most exquisite contemporary stained glass windows in Portland. OLLI’s own Denney Morton will be the docent for this visit.

We will gather at 10:30 a.m. at each site. Details and directions will be sent several days in advance. Transportation is on your own. Visits last approximately an hour.

Cost for each tour is $10. Registration is limited to a maximum of 20 OLLI members. Deadline for registration is June 22. No refunds thereafter. For further information call Gael McKibben at 774-7177.

To reserve, use one of these methods.
Beginning June 1:
  by using the online OLLI registration system
  (http://pce.usm.maine.edu/modules/index.html)
Beginning June 6:
  by mailing a check to OLLI, PO Box 9300, Portland, ME 04104
  by calling 780-4406 to pay with a credit card
  by registering in person at the OLLI office
**Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon: A Piece of Cake**

On March 19, OLLI hosted a luncheon for non-faculty volunteers, the folks who keep OLLI running outside the classrooms. (There were some instructors present because many of us serve in more than one role.)

Of the 97 volunteers, 70 attended. Committees and their chairs were recognized and applauded, along with others who donate their time to the smooth operation of OLLI. There was also a raffle of sorts: Dick and Barbara Sturgeon donated “treasures” from their basement, to the amusement of all!

We had a great lunch followed by a lovely cake (see the picture). The cake was delicious, but next time we’ll ask the baker to leave out the deep blue frosting. Our teeth and lips will be thankful!

—Tim Baehr

**Writers’ Showcase, Spring Celebration, Dance Class, Creative Arts Display**

KUDOS to Ruth Story and her team for a wonderful Writers’ Showcase held on May 4, with 20 OLLI writers sharing their talents and works. Words are just not enough!

On May 13, our Spring Celebration was held. The performance groups had delightful audiences with marvelous feedback about the performances. HATS OFF to the Singers, Players, Recorders, and the Readers’ Theater Class. A big thank-you to those performance groups for their donations to our dessert table, which we all enjoyed.

An added attraction was a video of Jack Lynch’s dance class. Thank you, Jack! Our events have received high praise from many who attended the day’s event.

The Creative Arts display under the direction of Sidney Lincoln and John Sutherland received brisk foot traffic and was very pleasing to the eye. To those who do not attend these kinds of events, you do not know what you’re missing!

Note: See the collages on pages 7 and 8.

—The Community Committee

**Marvelous Mayan is OLLI Summer Dining Choice**

In June we will meet for the last time until September, at Bueno Loco in Falmouth. Rave reviews and a great location make this a must for our last Night Out. Be sure to join us. ¡Hasta luego! Website: http://buenoloco.net/

**When:** Tuesday, June 23, at 5:30 p.m.

**Where:** Bueno Loco, 240 Route 1, Falmouth (strip mall)

**Reservations:** Please call or write before noon on Monday, June 22.

—Barbara Bardack
865-2009
lascala2@comcast.net
Writers’ Showcase

Photo credit: Tim Baehr
Spring Celebration

Photo credit: Tim Baehr
Two Scenic Falmouth Trips on Walking Club Agenda

We are welcoming the return of warmth.

On Wednesday, June 10, we will make our yearly visit to Gilsland Farm in Falmouth to enjoy the profusion of peonies in bloom. This is an area where we may encounter ticks; dress accordingly: long pants, socks that cover your ankles, and long sleeves.

On Tuesday, June 23, we will return to the River’s Edge Gardens on Merrill Road in Falmouth at the invitation of Steve and Darlene Linsky. We will enjoy their expansive and beautiful landscaping, after which we will walk on their property.

For both walks we will meet at the Back Cove parking lot across from Hannaford at 10 a.m. to carpool — or you may meet us at the properties no later than 10:15. These are scenic walks and are not difficult. Wear sunscreen and bug repellant, and you may want a hat. Bring your lunch and water. On both days we will eat outside, weather permitting, at Gilsland. If you have questions, please call Rae Garcelon at 846-3304.

The group photo was taken on the Eastern Promenade in April. The other could be called the OLLI Swingers, as some stopped to partake of the swings at the end of the walk.

SAGE Spring Term

The Spring Term at SAGE included eight outstanding speakers:

Kate Braestrup, a chaplain with the Maine Warden service; Mark Vogelzang, CEO of MPBN; Regina Phillips, manager of Portland’s Refugee Services Program; Linda Robinson, a nurse-midwife with Doctors Without Borders in the Democratic Republic of Congo; Earl Shettleworth, Maine State Historian and Director of the Maine State Historic Preservation Commission; Jon D. Levy, a judge in the US District Court and expert on Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis; Mary Allen Lindemann, co-owner and Community Builder, Coffee by Design; and Lois Lowry, a nationally renowned children’s author.

This term’s SAGE was typical of the variety and excellence of the SAGE program’s presentations. The Program Planning Committee included Bob Bahm, Chair, and Ed Bell, Stephen Jenks, Ann Landsberg, Jack Lynch, Lou Marcucci, Marti Rosenblum, and Lois Winter.

See page 10 for pictures of these speakers.
Spring 2015 SAGE Speakers

Photo credit: Tim Baehr