OLLi’s early years

This is the second of a series of articles celebrating OLLi at USM’s 15th anniversary. Part I described the founding and early years. (See http://tinyurl.com/OLLI-Sept) Now we’ll consider the “early years” between 1998 and 2005, when the little owl reading a book was our mascot/insignia.

When OLLi classes met only on Fridays, many members had lunch together — at first in the basement of Payson Smith, and later in the Woodbury Campus Center.

An “OLLi Trolley” (a golf cart that seated six) ran in a loop from the parking lot (now the garage) to the Woodbury Campus Center to Luther Bonney to Payson Smith.

Kali Lightfoot was hired in 2000 to work toward spreading the Senior College idea across Maine. Several USM Senior College members had worked hard to help secure state funding to support this expansion. Then in early 2001, a generous grant from the Bernard Osher Foundation led to our USM Senior College’s becoming the first OLLi.

In 2001, Payson-Smith Hall underwent extensive renovation and retrofitting, partially funded by OLLi member contributions. OLLi offered its only course (so far) over the Internet in the spring of 2002 (Terry Foster’s “Religion and Social Values” Web course). It was partially successful, but it also pointed up the fact that the technology was less than user-friendly. Also in 2002, the first Service Learning courses were conceptualized, and the first statewide conference for the leadership of Senior Colleges was held.

By May 2003 there were 18 OLLi’s, 15 based in California. University of Vermont, University of Hawaii-Manoa, and USM were the only non-California OLLi’s at that time.

Harry Sky offered a statewide ITV course in June 2003, originating at OLLi. It was quite successful, but the technology proved to be cumbersome for seniors. Also in 2003, the Maine Senior College website went online.

In 2004, USM was chosen as the home of the OLLi National Resource Center for (then) 48 OLLi’s throughout the United States. Kali was hired as Executive Director because of the experience she had already gained with our Senior College and its becoming the first OLLi.

By 2005, our members could take OLLi Saturday classes on USM’s Gorham campus.

Continued on page 4

Click!

Starting with this issue of the OLLi Newsletter, you will see some words or phrases that are underlined and in boldface. In the on-line Newsletter, the words are in blue. If you click on those words or phrases, you will be taken to a related website. Here’s a sample. If you click on the word “sample,” you’ll be taken to the OLLi website!
Why doesn’t OLLI have on-line registration?

I’ve heard this question more this term than any other. Though USM registration is only on-line, OLLI’s is not. There are three main reasons for this decision:

1. Payment would need to be made by credit card or routing number to your checking account. If a credit card is used, USM passes the credit card usage fee back to you. This means that every time you use your credit card (membership, classes, events, trips, etc), your credit card company would charge an additional $1 to $3 per transaction. Under our current system, OLLI absorbs all of your credit card transaction fees, totaling more than $3,000 per year. The other option, your checking account routing number, means USM withdraws money directly from your checking account. Most of our members are very uncomfortable with that.

2. On-line registration would make it impossible to have a class placement lottery. All classes would be first-come, first-serve. And obviously, people who use their computers to read the catalog would have a time advantage for all class registrations, leaving non-techies in the dust.

3. And though the entire UMaine computer system is very, very secure, we cannot guarantee that it is 100 percent.

For these three reasons, OLLI has chosen not to have our students participate in the on-line registration system of USM. But this is also the reason the OLLI office often runs a little behind in money processing. Though you, as members, do not register on-line, each and every registration must go through the USM on-line system. This means that the office staff, primarily Sue Schier, must register every one of you on-line, one-by-one.

Susan Morrow, Assistant Director for Program

Baxter Blvd. lot to be closed

USM has let its lease expire on the property at 15 Baxter Blvd. as of the end of October. This means that OLLI students and USM students will no longer be able to park in its lot.

OLLI students may continue to park without cost to themselves in the USM parking garage. Note, however, that the loss of the 72 parking places on Baxter Blvd. will mean increased competition for space. It is always wise to arrive 20 minutes or more before the beginning of class or S.A.G.E. (Fridays are usually not much of a problem because there are few USM classes on Friday.)

The lease on the Baxter Blvd. property, including a building used by the Muskie Center and the Office of Sponsored Programs, was costing USM $7,374 per month. In addition, the university had to provide for upkeep, heating, lighting, plowing, and janitorial service.

The full story is at this link: http://usmfreepress.org/2012/10/15/university-to-let-lease-expire-at-Baxter-lot/

It’s Raffle Time at OLLI again

As long as we have folks needing scholarship help, we’ll need your support at the raffles. Get your tickets in the classrooms or the lobby, starting now.

An investment of $2 per ticket or $5 for three tickets will support the scholarship program for your fellow OLLI members, and could win you a first prize of two free classes at OLLI or a second prize of one free class.

Be sure to get your tickets and a few extras!

Rev. Henry Warren
799-4593, 653-1198
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OLLI is off to a great fall start with the largest number of courses ever offered in a fall term. Thanks to you all for continuing to support OLLI.

I also want to thank the OLLI Resource Development Committee for again conducting the Raffle and Book Sale, which are coming up on Nov. 10. The funds raised will help support OLLI scholarships and other needs.

Both of these activities are scheduled for Ninth Week, and I encourage your support of them.

During the Ninth Week celebration on Saturday, we will also be featuring special workshops and performances. Also during that week, 29 of our fellow OLLI members leave for the trip to Italy.

—Dick Sturgeon
Advisory Board Chair
rbsturgeon@juno.com, 773-3174

Cookie and book sale Nov. 10

I know that the graphic of cookies in the last Newsletter has your brain on alert for a great cookie and bookie combination.

Well, they’re coming, and this is the last call for your help to make it happen.

Remember: The cookie and book sale happen on Friday, Nov. 9, for OLLI members-only access. The delicious treats and fabulous array of books will become available to the awaiting public during our Ninth Week celebration on Saturday, Nov. 10.

Your help is needed to turn this dream into a reality.

Volunteer bakers can call Donna Sherburne (883-2688) to get details for your contributions to the cookie table. Folks who would like to join the fun of putting on this day-and-a-half-event can contact Henry Warren (653-1198) to schedule a time to pitch in.

And above all else, get those terrific books into the office whenever you can. If you need help lugging them from the street to the office, give Henry a call, and we’ll work something out. And be thinking about how these items can make your holiday shopping easier and less expensive. I’ll see you there with all your friends and relatives.

Rev. Henry Warren
799-4593, 653-1198
OLLI’S early years (Cont’d from page 1)

USM Senior College and OLLI publications

Early newsletters depict us as determined to expand the experience of growing older — not to fight it, but to embrace and enjoy it. Rabbi Sky (see the profile in the October Newsletter) used the words “a senior revolution” to express his vision that our mix of generations can bring a sense of purpose to the larger society. The newsletter has grown from a few word-processed pages to an eight-page periodical with a full-color version available on the OLLI website.

USM Senior College participants published a book in 1999 entitled Spirituality: A collection of writings by members.

Reflections, our annual journal of member-created literature and art, was first published in 2001. It continues today as one of the bright faces of OLLI at USM.

Beyond the classroom

Lectures and presentations. Many activities extended beyond regular classes. We conducted “Second Sunday” lectures; roundtable discussions (a community forum in April 1998 featured Angus King); several film series; and conferences and convocations.

A traveling puppet theater company, the “Sixth Age Puppet Opera Company,” presented bunraku (traditional Japanese puppet theater) and other puppetry in Philadelphia, Boston, and Montpelier, Vermont.

In November 1999, the Senior College Players, still a very active group today, presented a program written and performed by members.

Travel. OLLI members came up with ideas for educational cruises and trips abroad: a Panama Canal Cruise, a Kentucky trip, trips to Canada and to England, and a trip to Prague. OLLI Excursions (day trips) and OLLI Expeditions are still a vital part of our activities, with recent trips to Greece and Egypt, and this year’s trip to Italy.

Winter and summer

Winter and summer terms started as special events before evolving into regular four-week (now six-week) class sessions.

The first “winter semester,” a three-day seminar in February 1998, was held at USM’s Stone House at Wolfe’s Neck in Freeport, entitled “Evil in Our Times.” Another 3-day seminar was held in January 2000 exploring the topic “What Are We Bringing into the Millennium?”

A precedent for our summer courses, called “Four Tuesdays in July,” was offered annually. These tended to focus on a single theme, presented from four different angles; the 1998 theme was Maine’s environment; in 1999, Maine’s history.

The Senior College spreads out

By March 2000, in addition to our USM Senior College, there were Senior College enclaves, called satellites, in other locations: Sanford, Lewiston, and Brunswick/Bath. The $25.00 membership fee was good for any of the four locations, and members could take classes almost any day of the week. Plans were also underway to open satellites in Mt. Desert Island and Bridgton. By 2001, new, independent Senior Colleges were under development in Belfast, Augusta, Fort Kent, Bangor/Orono, and Bethel; Presque Isle and Farmington were also in the process of affiliating with the Maine Senior College Network, which today has 17 affiliates, including us.

The vision of a few people proved contagious, evolving into the Maine Senior College Network and the numerous OLLIs throughout the nation. In 2004 the late Keith Sherburne, an OLLI Board member who had visited other learning centers like ours, noted that “Ours, having been formed by a rabbi, has a spiritual component. It has a regenerative effect on us.”
One person important to the setting up of our Senior College in 1997 is Terry Foster, who was then USM’s Director of Extended Academic Programs, later part of the Division of Outreach.

Then-President Richard Pattenade sought Terry’s help after Rabbi Harry Sky had broached the idea of programs geared to educating older adults. Terry admits it wasn’t in his job description, but as he told Colleen Wald, a former Newsletter editor, in an interview: “Give me a little time to get my feet on the ground to do what you hired me to do, and I’ll see what we can put together.” He and Rabbi Sky laid the groundwork, and the USM Senior College (later OLLI) hit the ground running.

Since our organization’s first days in 1997, Terry has become a fixture at OLLI, with infectious enthusiasm. He has served as a teacher of religious studies and music classes, including singing. His “Singing: A Performance Class,” which Terry co-directs with Faith Varney, is still a feat of OLLI’s Ninth Week.

A native of Lexington, Kentucky, Terry developed a love for music from an early age, playing the piano both by reading music and by ear. Music, whether it was in a rock or dance band or playing piano four nights a week at a dancing school, was part of his educational journey. He earned two masters degrees and later a doctorate in education from Indiana University.

Terry came to Maine and USM because “I always wanted to live by the ocean.” He left a higher-paying education and administration post in Kentucky to come here.

As a “real” Southern gentle-man, Terry’s love for food (he misses Southern cooking) prompted his promoting of OLLI Night Out, which has given seniors an introduction to the many and varied culinary temptations in the Portland area.

—Don King

Passages:
Margaret Raymond

Margaret Raymond, OLLI’s oldest member, died on September 29. She was just short of her 100th birthday. Here are a few lines from her extensive obituary in the Portland Press Herald:

“At 97, she was tickled to be awarded life-time free tuition to USM’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, where she took courses for years…. Margaret believed that one was never too old to change, try new experiences, or meet new people. All who knew Margaret will remember her for her undying optimism, her ability to see the best in each person she met (and she met many!), and her enduring ability to create her own happiness from the solace she found in the beauty of nature.”

OLLI movers and shakers: Terry Foster

Reflections available
OLLI’s literary and arts magazine, Reflections, is now in print and available at the OLLI office. Many thanks to the editor, Domenica Cipollone, and her committee: Claire Knox, Linda McLoon, and Edith Yonan for their excellent work!

Calendar

Cookie and Book Sale
Fri., Nov. 9, and Sat., Nov 10. See page 3 for details.

Ninth Week
Sat., Nov. 10. See page 8 for details.

Walking Club
Wed., Nov. 14, and Tues., Nov. 27. See page 7 for details.

OLLI Night Out
Tues., Nov. 27. See page 7 for details.

SAGE
Tuesday, November 13
“Unsupported, Unguided Ascent of Mt. Everest’s Northeast Ridge”
Presenter: William Yeo
Profile

Susan Gesing

Susan Gesing—selling OLLI to seniors

Susan Gesing once sold real estate. Nowadays she’s selling OLLI.

This Advisory Board member has taken on the task of convincing other seniors that OLLI offers them intellectual challenges and a great way to meet new friends.

Sue was born in Buenos Aires, where her father represented Quaker Oats before the start of World War II. Her life since then has been spent in the United States, growing up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and graduating with a BA in American Studies from Smith College.

Married and with a growing family, Sue moved about the country with her husband as he took different assignments with Quaker Oats. She was involved in community service groups, including the founding of a New Jersey college counseling program for African-American youths, a program that was to foreshadow her later career.

Sue worked in real estate for seven years in Springfield, Massachusetts, while earning an MEd in counseling/adult learning from Cambridge College in Northampton in 1982. She then began to move full-time into the field of career counseling.

“Especially in the 90s, I was working with people who had been laid off from the Hartford Insurance Companies, helping them through that traumatic experience. I likewise was helping those who were in transition, as it were, seeking late career changes, or entering the job market for the first time.”

Sue worked first for career management and outplacement counseling business firms and then operated her own career counseling business. During these times she provided career counseling, coaching, and workshops for several Maine firms, including L.L. Bean, National Semiconductor, Hannaford Brothers, Sappi, and Bass Shoes.

In 1994 Sue and her husband Rand, who runs his own executive search firm, decided that, since they had their own, portable businesses, they would “try a new adventure and move to Maine.” So they moved permanently to Kennebunkport, an area they knew well from their summer stays.

Ten years ago Sue decided to leave the counseling business and work at home part-time as the backroom support person for her husband. “I love the Internet as a way to do a lot of research on people and companies.”

There was plenty of time for other challenges, including leadership positions with the Kennebunk Portside Rotary, a link that eventually brought her to OLLI. “I had heard about OLLI from a fellow Rotarian 10 or 12 years ago, but Portland was 45 minutes away. But then I saw I was missing something in life. I was in many activities, but the intellectual piece was missing.

“So about seven years ago I decided to join OLLI, being especially drawn to the Great Decisions classes. But after three or four years, when those courses had waiting lists, I looked elsewhere. I particularly enjoyed Jack Lynch’s dance and metaphor classes.” Those classes led her to new friendships; three of her dance class friends later joined together to create and perform musical parody acts for both of the OLLI Follies.

Sue’s election to the Advisory Board inspired her to design a PowerPoint slide show to spread the word about OLLI. She tells her audiences, “It’s wonderful to be a senior, live in the Portland area, and have an active brain. And OLLI is one way to keep it active.”

Sue’s pitch has been successful. At least six or seven people who heard her in Kennebunk were enthusiastic and ready to sign up for courses.

—Don King
Announcements / Calendar / Special Events

Veranda Noodle Bar is next for OLLI Night Out

Take a break from Thanksgiving turkey and join us for another fine eating tradition.

We will head for Veranda Noodle Bar on Tuesday, Nov. 27, at 5:30 p.m. This eatery is located at 14 Veranda St. in Portland.

A highlight from the Maine Sunday Telegram: “Hot bowls of broth and noodles are popular around the world for good reason, and Veranda Noodle Bar’s versions made with broths infused with spices are a one-meal lesson in why.”

Please let me know by Sunday, Nov. 25, if you’ll be joining us for this spirited gathering.

Note: This will be the last OLLI Night Out until February.

—Barbara Bardack lascala2@comcast.net 865-2009

Two area sites set for Walking Club

Wednesday, Nov. 14: We will walk at Oat Nuts Park, which is off Summit Street, off Allen Avenue Extension.

Tuesday, Nov. 27: We will try one of the newly completed Portland Trails paths.

For both walks, meet at Back Cove parking area across from Hannaford by 10 a.m.

Bring your lunch and water. If there is frost, wear proper foot gear, as the terrain may be slippery.

If you have any questions, or you are a first-time walker, please call Rae Garcelon at 846-3304. That will allow us to make plans to look for you and to give you any needed information, such as weather cancellations and the like.

OLLI book group won’t meet Dec. 20

The OLLI book group, which meets the third Thursday of each month from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m., will NOT meet Dec. 20, in view of the holidays.

This group selects books from a variety of genres—memoir, history, fiction, etc.—and is open to all OLLI members. For more information contact Elsa van Bergen at evanbergen@maine.rr.com

41 to receive bonus for recruiting efforts

In August, the OLLI Advisory Board announced a special fall recruiting program. If a new member listed your name when they joined and signed up for at least one class, you would receive $15 credit toward any OLLI program, with the exception of trips.

We are pleased to announce that 41 OLLI members will be receiving the bonus. Thank you for encouraging your friends to join our program!
Celebrate Ninth Week

**WHO:** OLLI Senior Players and OLLI Singers

**WHEN:** November 10, 2012

**WHERE:** 10:30 a.m., in Room 133, OLLI Players: 1:00 p.m., in the Atrium, OLLI Singers

**WHAT:** Ninth Week, OLLI’s end-of-semester celebration, is a wonderful way to come together in community and celebrate our accomplishments with performances of the OLLI Senior Players and OLLI Singers. We look forward to having our friends join us for this event. See you on Nov. 10!

—The Players and Singers