Profile

Elsa van Bergen

For Elsa, life is keeping her busy all the time

Elsa van Bergen has had a busy summer. She and her husband, Richard, sold their two homes last month and are moving into a newly built house in Kennebunk. Elected this spring to the OLLI Advisory Board, Elsa just agreed to chair the Library Committee. Did I mention she’s writing a book?

That’s not the half of it. “I have three passions — gardening, books, and weaving,” Elsa offers at the outset of our recent meeting. When it comes to the garden, “I get to start my fifth — and last” at the new house. Elsa, who worked for 50 years in the book publishing industry, packed up hundreds of volumes for this move. And as for weaving, she is currently creating a tapestry that will be “years in the making.” She is doing this essentially freehand, without a cartoon or a full-scale model of the design.

Elsa got involved with OLLI about 10 years ago. She formerly served on the Community Committee and in 2013 revived the “One Book One Community” project (with Colin Woodard’s American Nations). She has coordinated the monthly book group for four years, and serves on the Resource Committee.

“OLLI is the best bargain around,” Elsa feels. “It’s so enriching to have these high-quality teachers on such a wide range of topics. I would do anything to perpetuate that.” Among her favorite OLLI courses are those on Irish culture by Bob Lyons — “I’d take anything he teaches” — a course on Shakespeare by Chris Quelly, and the art history classes of Tan Larrabee.

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Elsa van Bergen (continued from page 1)

Born in Brooklyn, Elsa received a BA in English Literature, cum laude, from Mount Holyoke College, and from there was recruited by Doubleday to begin her career in publishing. Over the years, she had several “firsts” there: first to get the Warren Commission Report into bookstores and first to publish the memoirs of humorist Erma Bombeck and writer Joyce Maynard.

During her tenure as an editor at Doubleday, Elsa studied in the evenings to earn a master’s degree in English Literature from New York University. She has worked “in every genre except children’s literature” and was an exchange editor in Germany while at Doubleday. Eventually, she moved into college textbook publishing and stayed for 25 years, focusing on the development and production of books, rather than their acquisition.

The book she is writing is an historical novel set in 1890s Minnesota. She has been researching her Swedish immigrant relatives and their culture on both sides of the family, as well as the vibrant Twin Cities of that era. She plans another trip to visit archives there next year.

Sweden figures large in Elsa’s life. She and Dutch-born Richard were married in the Swedish church in Copenhagen. She and her family lived in Stockholm for several years, a place to which she feels “so spiritually connected.” While living there she served as co-president of the board of trustees of the Stockholm International School and furthered her studies of textile arts. The scene in Elsa’s emerging large tapestry is derived from photographs of birches on a Stockholm island.

That Stockholm stands out for her is significant, given that the van Bergens have lived in various places, including England and Germany. Their recent move is but one of many made in the context of Richard’s career in international finance. Their travels have taken them to numerous other destinations, special among them Iceland, Crete, and Portugal.

All that said, Gooch’s Beach in Kennebunk has been central to van Bergen family life for decades. It’s been “the one constant” in the peripatetic lives of their two sons. Erik, a strategic product designer, lives in Charlotte, North Carolina with his wife Kristen. Christopher and his wife Rebecca are the parents of two-year-old Ella and five-month old Sawyer in Ridgefield, Connecticut. They founded and run a nonprofit called Nest, which helps artisans, especially women and mostly in third-world countries, build sustainable businesses.

In keeping with her first-mentioned passion, Elsa has a long association with garden clubs and is on the board of the Seacoast Garden Club based in Kennebunkport. The garden, in fact, may be an apt symbol of her life as described: expansive and full of growth, but also settled and contained by its enduring themes.

—Amy Liston

SAGE

SAGE registration was handled differently this fall. OLLI members signed up on-line for the entire eight-week series. Amazingly, the SAGE series was filled within two days. As of this writing, there were 46 names on the waiting list, with more likely to come.

This situation has led to some confusion and discomfort. The Advisory Board and OLLI staff are fully aware of this. If there are any changes to the SAGE schedule or venues, members will receive an e-mail with details. Watch your e-mail for any new developments!
As much as some of us love summer and hate to see it end, we are fortunate that Maine’s most glorious season, autumn, is upon us. It’s time for us, like the kids, to go back to school. Once again we have a great variety of stimulating courses and workshops from which to choose.

As Advisory Board members, we are always so grateful to our amazing faculty members who step up to offer us their knowledge and expertise and share their passions. We hope that you will all enjoy your classes and the opportunities to make new friends and renew existing friendships!

New members, we’re happy that you have joined OLLI! We invite you to an orientation meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 9, at 1 p.m. in Wishcamper, room 102. We hope to answer some of your questions before your first day of classes. (See more information on page 6 of this Newsletter.)

For all members, the Advisory Board will again staff a welcome table the first week of classes. Look for us in the lobby under the electronic bulletin board. We will be there to say hello, direct you to your classrooms, and answer general questions.

Your Advisory Board met this past month in a special meeting — a “retreat” during which we identified priorities for OLLI over the next three years and created goals and action steps for our work in the 2015–2016 OLLI year.

Next month we will share these with you in more detail. As always, we are interested in your ideas and feedback. Advisory Board member names are listed in every newsletter. Please feel free to speak to any of us or contact me by e-mail or phone.

Happy fall!

—Susan Gesing, Advisory Board Chair
susangesing@gmail.com, 967-5660

**OLLI Etiquette Reminders**

Here are a few things to keep in mind as we attend classes and workshops:

- Please do not wear anything scented: cologne, shaving lotion, moisturizer, and so on. Some of your classmates are allergic to them.
- Please wear your nametag so your instructor and classmates can identify you. If you don’t have a nametag yet, stop by the OLLI office and ask for one.
- Please silence all electronic devices.

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**WEB SITES**

Maine Senior College Network
www.mainseniorcollege.org

OLLI National Resource Center
www.osher.net

OLLI at USM
www.usm.maine.edu/olli

**OLLI NEWSLETTER**

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Please send newsletter material to the OLLI Office, via our e-mail.

**Deadline for the October issue is September 15.**
NOTES FROM SUSAN

Fall Classes begin September 14.

First, I need to say, I love summer, especially summer in Maine. But I am looking forward to Fall at OLLI. This Fall term is offering 64 courses and 10 workshops! This is a record for OLLI at USM. There are 10 history, 14 arts, 9 literature, 8 civic issues, and 7 religion/philosophy courses. There are 5 movie courses, 6 pertaining to aging issues, 1 foreign language, Mah Jongg, line dancing, and even knife sharpening. What a great selection of interesting subjects!

Online registration seems to be working well, with most OLLI members able to complete their registration from their personal computer or electronic device, at the OLLI office with staff assistance, or here at the Wishcamper Center’s computer lab. It hasn’t worked as flawlessly as we had hoped, but so far, thanks to flexibility of students and instructors, we have been able to work out all problems.

The OLLI staff is working with the website company to work out our remaining problems before the next large registration. We thank all of you who encountered a problem for your patience and understanding.

Currently, 12 courses are full, but that means that 62 courses and/or workshops still have space available. At this point, you can register online, by mail or by phone. Don’t miss the opportunity to get into the course of your choice. Register today!

—Susan Morrow, Assistant Director for Program

From the Education Committee

Brown Bag Lecture, Wednesday, Sept. 23, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Location TBA

SHERRIE CHAPMAN

“Everyone’s Favorite Guilty Pleasure: The History of Chocolate”

Chocolate has only been part of the human diet for a few centuries, but in that time it has been nearly everyone’s favorite treat. This illustrated lecture will explore the discovery of chocolate, its rapid rise in popularity and its current economic importance. The lecture will include a discussion of the different types of chocolate and samples to help you find new chocolate temptations.

So……….. This will be a “sweet” lecture. Bring your lunch and Sherrie will provide dessert!
OLLI Members Spend a “Wonderful Week” in Acadia

“THE BEST OF ACADIA” was offered by the College of The Atlantic in Bar Harbor through the Maine Senior College statewide network. The program took place July 12–18.

From afternoon check-in to our dormitory room, meeting with our host, Ted Koffman, a delicious dinner in the dining hall followed by a sunset trip up Cadillac Mountain, we knew we would have a wonderful week. And we did.

There were lectures and conversations with a local historian, a political scientist, an expert on monetary issues, and a local poet and author of books about Maine coast artists. We also took a walking tour of a bird sanctuary.

George Mitchell gave a talk at his reception and book signing. It was an outstanding evening.

There were in-depth tours of the island with box lunches, boat trips with guides, and a humorist. We also enjoyed an evening show of the stars far from the effects of light pollution.

Outstanding memories were a guided tour of the Seal Cove Auto Museum and the Wendell Museum of bird carving, a visit to the Abbe Museum of Native American History, and a trip to the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden.

We were transported everywhere by air-conditioned van driven by Doug Hawk, who has an encyclopedic knowledge of the island.

We met Acadia and Ellsworth Senior College members, who took part in some of the activities we enjoyed. [Ed. note: you can explore the 17-member Maine Senior College Network, which includes OLLI, at http://www.maineseniorcollege.org/]

Laura Johnson made the arrangements for the week, and Ted Koffman was our congenial host.

It was a wonderful week of discovery and friendship. When it is offered in the future, we hope to be among the first to sign up.

—David and Natalie Murray
OLLI at USM, Portland
Olli Community Committee ... News Flash

Hello Everyone!

It won’t be long now! We’ll soon be back in harness for an informative and enjoyable fall semester at OLLI.

Our SIGs (Special Interest Groups) that meet at the Wishcamper Building will soon begin their regular weekly or monthly meetings. At the moment, the following SIGs have given us their start dates as follows:

- Book Club, 9/17
- Bridge Club, 9/2
- Mah Jongg, 9/4
- Recorder Ensemble, 9/15
- Science Reading Club, 9/15
- OLLI Singers, 9/9

For more information on any of the SIGs, please contact their coordinators as shown in the Fall 2015 Class Schedule, page 5.

**Reminder:** SIGs are free and open to all members; the start time for SIG meetings in Wishcamper is 3:15 p.m.

The Bicycle & Nosh SIG planned a ride on Chebeague Island on Aug. 24. This SIG will be meeting soon to organize more fall bike adventures for the group.

Finally, you’ll find news about the Walking Club, and about OLLI Night Out’s first offering of the season on the next page of this newsletter.

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Passages: Robert Bent

Bob Bent, a longtime OLLI member from its first years as a Senior College, has died at the age of 86.

Bob served in the Merchant Marine, got a BS in political science, served in the Navy, and took an MA in International Relations. He traveled the world as a Foreign Service Officer. Later, he traveled for pleasure as a history buff. In Maine, he volunteered frequently, serving on several boards.


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New Member Orientation

Wednesday, Sept. 9, at 1:00 p.m.

Join us in Wishcamper 102 to meet other new members and learn more about the OLLI experience. Advisory Board members will be on hand to meet you and answer your questions.

If you plan to attend, please call the OLLI office at 780-4406 to let us know.

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OLLI Book Group Reconvenes

The OLLI book group meets the third Thursday of the month.

We start the new season on Thursday, September 17 at 3:15 in room 103 Wishcamper, with a discussion of *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* by Katherine Boo. We will also vote on the fiction and nonfiction titles nominated by members to line up selections for the coming year.

For more information please contact Elsa van Bergen, evan-bergen@maine.rr.com.
Saco, New Gloucester on Walking Club Schedule

On Wednesday, Sept. 9, we will walk the Saco Beach Loop through Ferry Beach State Park, visiting a tupelo (black gum tree) swamp and a freshwater tarn called Long Pond.

This is a nice fall walk offering a variety of natural delights and some ocean views.

On Tuesday, Sept. 22, we will have a guided walk of the Pisgah Hill Preserve in New Gloucester, which was canceled last year due to rainy weather. This area, which is near Pineland Farms, features remnants of old quarries covered with mosses and lichen. This is a walk where you might use your sticks.

For both walks we will meet at Back Cove parking lot across from Hannaford at the end near the Rte 295 overpass to carpool at 10 a.m. — back to our regular hours. Bring your lunch, water, and bug spray. There will be an opportunity at both walks to buy your lunch should you choose to.

You must be a member of OLLI and have signed a current release form to participate in the walks. Call or write Rae if you need one, or stop in the OLLI office to fill one out.

If you have questions, please call Rae Garcelon at 846-3304 or e-mail me at raellan@aol.com.

OLLI Night Out Resumes at Panda Garden

AAAND .... we’re back. Time to get together again for a relaxed and comfortable evening with friends, old and new, from OLLI at USM.

In September we will be dining at Panda Garden Chinese Restaurant at Nason’s Corner, recommended by OLLI members in the know. A Yelp review from March 2015 says: “Absolutely the best Chinese food around. Not greasy, huge portions for the money, and delicious food every time. Two thumbs up!”

Reviews and menu images: www.zomato.com/portland-me/panda-garden-chinese-restaurant-portland-portland

Be sure to be with us for this event.

When: Monday, September 21, at 5:30 pm
Where: Panda Garden Chinese, 1041 Brighton Ave. 874-6935
Reservations: Definitely required — call or write Barbara by noon Sunday, September 20.

Barbara Bardack
865-2009
lascala2@comcast.net

Fall 2015 OLLI RAFFLE!!

YOU can support the OLLI Scholarship Fund AND have a chance to win FREE CLASSES!!

October 26 – November 6, 2015
Wishcamper Center Lobby