2018 Osher Lifelong Learning National Conference

By Carl Lazarus

In mid-October, I had the privilege of representing BOLLI at the national conference of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes (OLLI), held in Scottsdale, Arizona. Each of the 122 programs across the United States sponsored by OLLI may send one volunteer and one staff person to the conference. As vice-chair of the curriculum committee, I was invited to be the volunteer representative this year. Executive Director Avi Bernstein was the other BOLLI representative.

There are OLLI programs in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia. All have had some support from the foundation which was created by philanthropist Bernard Osher, who is affectionately known as “Barney.” The purpose of the conference, held every 18 months, is to exchange ideas and information among the many programs and to inform representatives about initiatives of the national foundation.

We got to meet Mr. Osher, a spry nonagenarian who hopped up on the stage to give a brief talk at one of the general sessions. Other officials present included the president and senior program director of the Osher Foundation, which has a variety of philanthropic programs in addition to the OLLIs. The organization dedicated to the OLLI programs, the National Resource Center for Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes, based at Northwestern University, was represented by Executive Director Steve Thaxton.

There were sessions on a variety of topics including fundraising, community aging initiatives (with a panel that included Avi), innovative course content, and recruitment of instructors and members. The course content and instructor recruitment sessions were most relevant to my BOLLI Curriculum Committee role, but I also found other interesting topics such as distance learning and innovative centers for training seniors in basic computer skills. We also had a discussion table for volunteer reps from OLLI programs in Massachusetts and northern New England (New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine). This group may get together on another occasion to have a further exchange of experiences and ideas.

2009 Nobel Prize winner in physiology/medicine, Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn, addressed attendees on the subject of aging and telomeres, the end-caps that protect chromosomes. Dr. Blackburn, who was born in Tasmania in 1948, studied how telomeres degrade as we age. She reported that, (Continued on page 7)
Inside the Rose

We asked Roy Dawes, the Rose Museum’s Head Preparator, to tell us about his favorite work in the collection. Here's what he had to say.

Choosing a favorite work from the Rose Collection is a “Sophie’s Choice.” It’s impossible to name one’s favorite child, and my love of individual pieces has shifted over the years. Works that I initially felt ambivalent about have become paramount in my view. Nevertheless, the work I keep coming back to is our magnificent untitled de Kooning donated by the Aberbach family in 1964. (Photo courtesy of Roy Dawes.)

It is a large-scale painting (nearly 7’ by 6’) with huge, muscular strokes. The movement and the giant gestures are apparent and undeniable. De Kooning was well-known for “whisking” his paint into a froth and splashing it onto the canvas. His love for the ocean off Long Island is part of what draws you into the piece, and the colors evoke a serene seascape while also churning up the tides.

Photographers have attempted to capture the color and movement of this painting, but, alas, it is a fool’s errand. The painting stands on its own and cannot be tamed or captured. It must be approached and experienced on its own terms.

It is a privilege to have lived with this painting for these past 15 years, and I am so grateful that it continues to reside in our beautiful little museum with its immensely important collection.

Cartoon Caption Contest

Send entries by January 15 to jjc1791@outlook.com. The winner will be announced in our next issue.

Sam Ansell says that his interest in cartooning began “when I was very little. My father would read me the funnies after I was tucked up in bed at night. My heroes were not sports figures or soldiers--they were Moon Mullins, Mutt and Jeff, and Ignatz Mouse. So, I guess that’s when I started scribbling down little sketches.” And he’s been at it ever since.

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BOLLI Annual Report: Where We Are/Where We’re Going

By Avi Bernstein

In his piece about our recent experiences at the Osher Institutes National Conference, Carl Lazarus mentions a speaker commenting that, “When you’ve seen one OLLI, you’ve seen one OLLI.” I wish I had said that. While OLLI programs share many common traits, we are also different. I’m proud to report that Brandeis’s OLLI is distinguished among our peer institutes as one of the most intellectually vital and academically engaged. You need not take my word for it—our reputation precedes us, as I learn each time I attend the national conference. The word is out among many of the directors nationally. BOLLI is flourishing as a small liberal arts college for older adults, an academy teaching across the liberal disciplines, walking in step with Brandeis, an elite liberal arts college.

We thrive as a dialogue community, a place where a hallway conversation can morph into an idea for a study group, or the next book suggestion for our book group, or even become the motivating force behind a new extracurricular initiative. There’s a dynamism that characterizes BOLLI’s evolution of recent years, a sense among the most active that BOLLI can become whatever we want it to be. I suggest that this sense comes from an increasingly nimble staffing structure and member governance framework; it also comes from the “rank and file” membership who rejoice in learning for its own sake and want to be together simply because being in a community of learners is good. Our association is uncomplicated in this regard, and our purpose is clear.

It’s worth taking some time, however, not only to enjoy who we’ve become but to understand it in its detail. As our institute has grown in curricular richness and extracurricular breadth and depth, some of us can be left behind. How do we convey the many aspects of what we have created and encourage all our members to take full advantage?

Answers to these questions can be found in our 2018 Annual Report, now available on the BOLLI homepage. I invite you to take a look and have the opportunity to:

• **Meet Beth, Howard, Fran, and Sue**, each of whom has discovered a different path into BOLLI and, as a result, into the adventure of higher education. These members have created their own custom versions of BOLLI. I would urge you to ponder their strategies for making BOLLI optimally meaningful within their particular lifestyles, something that would be difficult to replicate anywhere else.

• **Find out what makes BOLLI different** in terms of what we teach, our distinctive formats and activities, and the leading characteristics of our faculty. (Continued on page 7)
A Visit to the Plumbing Museum

By Phil Radoff and Jack Curley

“If it wasn’t for your plumber you’d have no place to go.” So reads the sign that reminds visitors to the Plumbing Museum, appropriately located in Watertown, of the importance of plumbing to everyday life in the 21st century. We enjoyed a delightful hour-long, personalized guided tour of the museum, conducted by longtime museum coordinator Linda Veiking. The museum is supported by J. C. Cannistraro, a large plumbing contractor whose offices are located next to the museum, a 15-minute drive from BOLLI.

The Plumbing Museum had its beginnings in Worcester, where, in 1979, Charles Manoog and his family founded the American Sanitary Plumbing Museum. Upon retirement, the Manoogs entrusted their collection to the Cannistraro family who opened the museum under its current name in 2007. The building housing the museum is itself of interest. As evidenced by its high ceiling and thick brick walls, it once served as an icehouse for a meat distributor.

The museum is chock full of objects that afford visitors a close-up look at the sanitary devices and other plumbing-related household objects used by our ancestors during the past three centuries. Dust bins, chamber pots, earth closets, water closets, and china closets, some quite basic and others ornately decorated, are all on display. There also are oddities such as historic and modern train toilets, one-piece prison toilets, and the first dishwasher, the 1926 “Electric Sink.” The modern era of plumbing is well represented by Kohler’s Nu Mi toilet, retail price $6,500, which features a motion-activated cover and seats, foot warmer, deodorizer, air dryer, and a Bluetooth-compatible sound system. Mounted on the back wall of the museum is a life-sized replica of the piping and drainage systems found in a typical home. The display comes complete with a simulated thunder storm used to demonstrate the collection and usage of recycled rainwater.

Linda, who was once interviewed for a front page article about the museum in The Wall Street Journal, has many stories to tell. We learned, for example, that the creator of the indoor toilet was not, as commonly believed, Thomas Crapper (whose image is prominently displayed on the wall behind one of his creations), but rather the largely forgotten John Harrington. A godson of Queen Elizabeth I, Harrington was a failed poet who, in 1576, designed and installed the first flushing toilet, which he named “Ajax,” (i.e., “a jakes,” a common term for outhouse). Alas, Harrington’s creation was not flushed with success, and it wasn’t until 200 years later that Andrew Cummings received the first U.S. patent for the invention. Mr. Crapper, himself a plumber, simply made improvements to the work of others.

The museum also houses a tool room with a collection of plumbing devices from the past, including a pipe cutter the size of a small tree that took three men to rotate. It’s also worth a trip upstairs to visit the small reference library to view the amusing display of plumbing-related cartoons on the covers of back issues of The Plumbers Trade Journal.

Some of the objects on display might appropriately be viewed as conceptual or functional art, including...
The Plumbing Museum

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a wall-mounted urinal modeled after Marcel Duchamp’s infamous “Fountain” sculpture. But the museum’s association with higher ideas doesn’t stop there. It supports the arts through its administration of the Manoog Family Artist in Residency Program, which provides local artists with studio space, funding, and materials for their work. As part of their residency, artists engage with the local community through a series of public events and workshops. Finished works, which are expected to “reflect the relationship between art and industrial technology,” are exhibited in the museum’s reception area.

Admission to the Plumbing Museum is free but by appointment only. To visit, call 617-926-2111 or send an email to: info@theplumbingmuseum.org.

The museum is also host to numerous private events, including business meetings, bridal showers, and even weddings. So if you’re in the market for an unusual setting for your next function, why not take the plunge and invite your guests to Watertown for an event they’ll never forget?

CAST’s Return Engagement: Thursday, Dec. 6 at 12:45 p.m.

On Thursday, December 6 at 12:45, join BOLLI’s CAST (Creative Acting, Storytelling, and Theatre) troupe for More Carrying On. This sequel to last year’s Carrying On consists of short scenes and monologues set at the upscale senior living residence, Carey Village, located on the campus of Carey College in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

From left, Rachel Seliber, Sandy Clifford, Eileen Mitchell, Donna Johns, Bette Winer, Becki Norman, and Mark Seliber rehearse One to Grow On.

Museum Coordinator Linda Veiking with a vintage Maytag washer (photo by Phil Radoff) as well as a wall of sinks and other plumbing items (photo online).
The BOLLI calendar does not include a hibernation period. In fact, this year's calendar is filled with more Turner Street opportunities than ever. Winter Faculty Seminars will feature the return of BOLLI favorites Billy Flesch and Georgia Luikens. Two lecture series will take place as well. One will be provided by Laura Laranjo, a Brandeis Ph.D. candidate in Molecular and Cell Biology, and the other will be presented by poet, social critic, and photographer Patrick Sylvain who teaches in the Africana Studies Department at Brown University and also lectures at Brandeis.

Billy Flesch will lead two sections of the first winter seminar (December 17-21), *Sex, Lies, and Literature: Measure for Measure*. The morning section is sold out, but space remains available in the afternoon. In his description of the seminar, Billy says that, in *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare “provides some of his greatest poetry while raising questions about political power and sexual morality and exploring the nature of justice”—certainly issues that continue to concern us today.

The second seminar (January 7-11), *Barber and Beyond: The Poetic Muse in 20th Century American Music*, features the return of Georgia Luikens. She says that “the great American composers have a long tradition of responding to great American poetry, which prompts us to consider whether the composers have uncovered new poetic depths in their works or have distorted the original text beyond recognition.”

Laura Laranjo, who taught a genetics course at BOLLI during the 2017-2018 year, follows in 2019 (January 16, 23, 30 and February 6) with *In the Face of a Revolution: Scientific and Ethical Perspectives on Genetics*. Laura will be focusing on the revolutionary genetic advances made since the mid-twentieth century that have turned our perspectives on the human being upside down. This series is being sponsored by Benchmark Senior Living.

Finally, Patrick Sylvain will present *Reading Haiti through History, Literature, and Film* (January 17 and 24 from 10:30 to 12:00 plus January 31 and February 7 from 10:30 to 12:30). Sylvain will offer an in-depth multidisciplinary exploration of Haiti, the first nation of Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve freedom from colonial rule, the first republic to be established by people of color, and the only nation ever established as a result of a slave revolt. Sylvain has been published widely, including in *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Verse* in 2009, and has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize in poetry.

Contact Lily Gardner at 781-736-2992 or email at lgardner@brandeis.edu for more information.

Seminar leaders and lecturers for BOLLI's 2018-2019 Winter Term (clockwise from upper left) Billy Flesch, Georgia Luikens, Patrick Sylvain, and Laura Laranjo. (Photos courtesy of Brandeis University and online.)
2018 Osher National Conference

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if you want the healthiest telomeres, and thus your best odds on longevity, you should choose your genes wisely; grow up in a safe, unpolluted neighborhood; reduce stress; avoid smoking; and have strong social ties. For my part, I think we already knew that these factors were likely to help in longevity, even without the evidence from measuring telomere length.

I attended presentations on distance learning, which can be valuable for people who are unable to attend classes in person. On the negative side, distance learners lose the community and social connectedness that coming together provides, and there is also a question of whether the need for distance learning is already satisfied by online sites such as EdX, Coursera, and Khan Academy.

I came away from the conference thinking that we might get more input from our membership on what they would like to see at BOLLI. Overall, despite the great differences among the programs, I found that people I met from around the country all had similar goals and formed an interesting and pleasant community for the 48 hours we spent at this Scottsdale event.

BOLLI Annual Report: Where We Are/Where We’re Going

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• **Discover how BOLLI has innovated** in the area of creative retirement programming, and uncover the distinctive educational values that characterize a BOLLI classroom.

• **Review our core activities.** Some may not realize that we are now on a quarter system with robust winter and summer programming and that our now 14 Special Interest Groups operate year-round.

I believe that, in the coming half decade, BOLLI will only grow in its character as a small liberal arts college for older adults. As a community, we will continue to become more diverse and inclusive, a trend in much of American liberal education over the course of the past 50 years.

Have an incisive thought to share or a question to add to the dialogue? I invite you to contact me at abernstein@brandeis.edu. In our very special and rapidly evolving academy, you have a place at the table.
**Current and Upcoming Campus Events**

*Compiled by Ellen Moskowitz*

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**SLOSBERG MUSIC CENTER**

*Fafali: Music and Dance from Ghana. Wednesday, December 5, 7-8:30 p.m.*

The Brandeis Music Department’s Ghanaian drum and dance ensemble studies and performs the music, song, and dance of Ghana. The group has performed on campus for Night for Africa, the Global Bazaar, and even the President of Ghana. Get lost in the rhythms of Ghana with this talented student ensemble, Ben Paulding, director. Free and open to the public.

*Mark Berger, Viola, with Robyn Bollinger, Violin. Saturday, December 8, 8-9:30 p.m.*

Lydian String Quartet violist Mark Berger performs duos by Mozart, Kurt Rohde, and more with special guest Robyn Bollinger. General Public: $20, Brandeis Community and Seniors (55+): $15, Students: $5.

*New Music Brandeis: Lydian String Quartet. Saturday, December 15, 8-9:30 p.m.*

New Music Brandeis, a contemporary music series programmed and managed by graduate student composers in the university’s illustrious composition program, presents an evening of new works for string quartet performed by Brandeis’s renowned resident Lydian String Quartet. Free and open to the public.

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**OTHER CAMPUS VENUES**

**THE ROSE ART MUSEUM. Mark Dion: The Undisciplined Collector. Through December 9.** Wood paneled and furnished with the trappings of a 1961 collector’s den, *The Undisciplined Collector* evokes the year of the Rose Art Museum’s founding and serves as an introduction to the rich history of collecting at Brandeis.

**SHAPIRO CAMPUS CENTER. Messiah Sing. Wednesday, December 12, 4-6 p.m.*

The beloved Brandeis tradition returns to the Shapiro Campus Center atrium. The Brandeis community—including family and friends—is invited to celebrate the holiday season with a sing-along concert of selections from Handel’s masterwork “Messiah.” Scores will be provided. Stay for the annual tree lighting at 5 p.m. with caroling and kosher cookies. Free and open to the public.

**THE WOMEN’S STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER, KNIZNICK GALLERY. Anne Lilly & Karin Rosenthal “Half-Silvered.” Through Friday, February 15, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.*

Lilly’s kinetic sculptures, made of stainless steel, use precision to establish their own kinespheres of motion. The furniture in her work invites viewers to participate in looking, while other works utilize touch to set them in motion. Rosenthal’s photographs are careful compositions of figures distorted and disguised by their own idyllic surroundings.