



OLLI

at American University Washington DC



Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Newsletter

December 2007

Mark Your Calendar

December

7 Last Scheduled Day of Classes
Board Meeting: 1 pm, Church

11 Holiday Party: Kenwood Country Club, noon

January

4 catalogs mailed (expected)
and online registration begins

31 lottery

February

1 registration packets mailed

24 classes start

Letter from the Chair

This month I would like to report to you on two Board committees, one of them brand new.



LECTURE COMMITTEE: This is the new one. If you thought about it at all, you perhaps assumed we've always had a committee produce our 40 lectures a year (eight on Tuesdays during each semester and three each week in January and June). We have not. Rather we have relied on volunteers recruited by the Chair, often with inadequate time, considering the scope of the job: to spare considering the size of the job: find eight, and then twelve more, people who are knowledgeable in their fields on subjects of interest to our members and who are also good speakers for the eight one-hour and twelve two-hour lectures for members and guests. Then do it all over again next semester.

Two Important Announcements

The January Lecture Series

Our exciting January lecture series will be held at the **Katzen Arts Center** Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10-11:45 am. To see the lectures, link to: [January lecture series](#).

Online Registration

We will be unveiling our new online registration system shortly. You will be able to register for classes, review class descriptions, see class availability and schedules. We will let you know when it is up and ready for use!

We have an amazing number of willing volunteers at OLLI, but this is one job that many feel they cannot undertake. I was turned down by 16 people for the fall semester job before our Vice-Chair, Selma Rosenthal (bless her), offered to take on the responsibility (although she had done it at least once before). For the coming semester, I was at the point of locking up the Board until I got a volunteer, when Don Quayle said he and Vonn (bless them) would do it, although they also had done it recently.

The main reason people hesitate to volunteer for the job is that it is really two jobs: 1) identifying possible speakers and; 2) contacting each one and arranging for the appearance (without honorarium).

"The People of OLLI"

JENNY PIERSON

"Poetry comes from the bottom of human suffering and it utilizes mystical skills to express beyond language that suffering."



Jennifer Pierson

In the spring of 1996 the Poetry Workshop of ILR was slated to be discontinued. The five-year-old course had been led by Peggy Miller Wolfson who left the city the year before. The class struggled on its own without a leader for two semesters until, in desperation, we called A.U.'s Fine Arts Department, hoping they could at least recommend guest lecturers to get us to the end of the term. They sent us Jenny Pierson, a recent MFA graduate. She gave an inspiring talk and then, fortunately, she agreed to lead the course for the next semester. Jenny has had a profound effect on the workshop. She has stretched and molded the group's imagination and talents and knowledge of poetry and has made the class into a group of writers who can respectably be called poets. For the past 11 years, the class has grown from seven students to become a lotteried course.

Jenny Pierson has had some significant influences in her life. Born in New York City, she lived with her mother in a Times Square hotel which catered to retired vaudevillians and other show business people. Back in the late 40's and 50's, Times Square was a curious mixture of all kinds of things, and Jenny observed them all. But early on, her mother was unable to care for her and she was sent to a Catholic boarding school run by nuns. It was a difficult and unhappy time for Jenny, but she was comforted by books and her ability to observe. By the time she was in sixth grade, she was living with an aunt and uncle and

The new Lecture Committee will take on the first of these tasks. The hope is that because it is will not be rushed to find speakers, and will be big enough to specialize in different areas of interest, it can provide to those contacting the speakers a long list of certifiably good lecturers on interesting, timely subjects. Those who volunteer to make the contacts can choose from the list as they will.

This new Committee, which I am happy to report will be chaired by Beverly Zweiben, a veteran from this fall semester lecture series, comes along at a good time. With our new access to the Katzen Center for the January (and, we expect, June) lectures, we can offer as attractive a venue as any lecturer could want. The lectures are an important part of OLLI. They offer a marvelous opportunity to attract new members and Study Group Leaders. But, by and large, our lecture series has been one of the best kept secrets in Washington. With our increased emphasis on publicity, with the Katzen Center, and AU now joining with us (as President Kerwin had promised) to help publicize our lectures, the secret will at last be out.

I cannot leave this subject without thanking in fullest measure those who are making this year's Lecture Series possible. I've already mentioned Selma Rosenthal and Don and Vonn Quayle. In addition, thanks go to Beverly Zweiben and Tina Fried Heller for the fall semester program and Jeanne Talpers, Mickey Klein, Joan Aron, Ruth Darmstadter, and Arlene Horelick for putting together the upcoming January series.

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE:

This is one of our most important committees but is not listed in the catalogue as a Standing Committee, presumably because it is not a perennial. It blooms in winter and dies out each year after the annual meeting. An entirely new Committee is approved by the Board each year. The by-laws call for five members, two from the Board. Its nominations, which are not reviewable, must be submitted to the Board by April 1. Information on candidates must be submitted to the membership three weeks in advance of the annual meeting (usually about May 15). Petition candidates may also appear on the ballot if they submit at least 15 signatures of supporters and also make their biographical information available

attending a school for the gifted, a pivotal change. There she started to write poetry. The public library was a haven where she read voraciously, everything from Marx to mysticism. Over the years, Jenny was influenced by the poets William Blake, Walt Whitman, Dylan Thomas, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, among others. Years later, after dropping out of Marymount College, living in upper New York state, marrying and divorcing, she finished college at George Mason. For years she worked with multiple handicapped children and as a human rights advocate in the state of Virginia. She got her MFA at American University and began to publish her poetry.

Jenny's poems reflect the human suffering she has seen and experienced. Her first book was about the culture and harsh life on St. Kilda, a tiny island off the coast of northern Scotland. Her second book *The Sin Eaters*, includes poems of witchcraft and lynching in this country. Not yet published, her new book, *Dispatches from a War Hospital*, is about the wounded soldiers who have been sent to Walter Reed Hospital where she works as a volunteer. One of these poems is reprinted in this newsletter.

On a final note, to dispel any thoughts that Jenny Pierson has become sad and downtrodden, you have only to meet her and discover a positive person who radiates charm and cheerfulness. She delights, enchants and enlightens her devoted students at OLLI. Jenny and her husband Stuart live happily in DC.

--Jeanne Baron

Holiday Party

Our Annual Holiday festivities will be held Tuesday, December 11 at noon at the Kenwood Country Club. Reservation forms are available at the Temple Baptist Church. Or mail in your check for \$30 and indicate your preference of London Broil or Trout Amandine.

WWII Round Table

three weeks before the annual meeting.

Nothing is more important to OLLI's future than a Board of Directors which is energetic, enthusiastic and comprised of members with the skills to lead. If you know anyone who fits that description, or whom you think is otherwise qualified (including yourself), please submit the name to the OLLI office by the first of the year, or speak to one of the Committee members: Bob Goodman, Chair, Pat Johnson, Vonn Quayle, Sid Steinitz and Selma Rosenthal.

-- Ray Rasenberger

SNIPER

Poem by Jennifer Pierson

Propellant
over the silent sliver of
steel

Caught the moonscales the
roof camouflaged

Friended an enemy
house of stillness

Knitting the crucifix
to my unrequitable

sin: killing
killing again and again

poisoned leakage cleaning up

cells begin their replication

bones the lungs
lie frozen

my heart holds in
too much pain

father
sits with

tears
rummelling his skeleton

Calling All WWII Vets

We are considering having a round-table discussion with our WWII vets. Please let us know if you are a vet and would be interested in participating. (If you have already emailed us, no need to do so again.) Email us at: olli@american.edu

In Memoriam: Chris Nolen

"I am writing to let you know that my father, Chris Nolen, has passed away.

As you may know, my dad was trekking in Nepal with friends over the last few weeks. He died while climbing Pokalde Peak in the Khumbu region very close to the Everest base camp. His friend who was right behind him reported that it appeared that he had a sudden attack that caused him to fall backwards into a small gully on a relatively flat portion of the climb. His head struck a rock when he landed. Repeated attempts to revive him failed and we believe his death was instantaneous either from the fall or the attack and that he did not suffer.

One of his friends took his picture minutes before his death and it shows that he was truly enjoying himself. He had just checked his GPS and reported that they were at 18,300 feet. He was beaming.

My family is making plans to have a memorial service in early January and we will let you know when the date is firmed up. I know that my dad greatly enjoyed all that he did at OLLI and was looking forward to coleading the course on Oppenheimer. Can you kindly share this news with others at OLLI?"

Kathy Nolen
KANolen@aol.com

(21 year-old Ranger Sniper with end-stage cancer, Christmas 2006)

Successful Civil War Trip: October 07



Thank you, Ed Bearss!

For the past 20 years our American Civil War course has visited local battlefields and historical sites. In each instance, Mr. Edwin Cole Bearss, Chief Historian Emeritus, National Park Service, has led us on these adventures. Those members who have joined Ed have participated in a transcendental experience. His encyclopedic memory and personal energy are unmatched. At times, as mist drifts across some hallowed ground, his monologues reach Homeric proportions.

--Chris Bradley

OLLI Authors, Authors: Last Call

Many of our members who have published (including self-published) books responded to our request for information about their books. In case you missed the request, there is still time. Tell us the titles of books you have written or edited, and we'll take it from there!

Quick Links

[OLLI Website](#)

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