



# OLLI

at American University Washington DC



## Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Newsletter

### March 2010

#### Calendar

##### March

1: Classes Begin

5: Board Meeting

19: Curriculum Committee Meeting

23: Town Meeting-12:15 pm

#### First Lecture: Tomorrow

**Don't miss the first lecture in our terrific [Tuesday Spring Lecture Series](#)**

12:15-1:15 pm Room 6/  
Lecture Hall: Temple Baptist Church

##### Howard

##### Jacobson

##### British Novelist

Howard Jacobson, the prize-winning English novelist, will be talking about growing up Jewish in England -- especially Manchester -- and about "Why Jewish People Play Table Tennis." One critic describes him as "a very literary man, a very funny, very literary man..." His comic vision joins an easy manner, deep learning, and an impressive list of novels published to great acclaim

#### Letter from the Chair

Twenty-five OLLI authors of published books exhibited their wares at a reception in their honor after the Open House on February 24th.

The committee which planned and designed the Exhibit included Ruth Darmstadter, Barbara Rollinson, Hope Bogorad, Therese Rousseau, and Phyllis Homes.

We have completed another successful training session of "Re/newed Study Group Leaders" thanks to the leadership of Will Blacklow and his team.



There are 558 members this spring, and about a third of you were in the lottery!

since 1983. Much more than an ethnic writer, Jacobson draws a bead on sex, comedy, jealousy, and other universal human frailties. In addition to his novels, he has created TV series and travel books. Susan Willens will introduce him.

## Condolences

To the families and friends of longtime OLLI members Hilda Mintzes and Judith Eckman who passed away recently.

## MANY THANKS

Thanks to Barbara Johnson-our diligent, careful, witty, and observant catalog and newsletter editor. And thanks to Gloria Kreisman for her hard work assembling the many Spring classes in the catalog and editing the catalog, as well.

## THANKS TO OUR HEARTY VOLUNTEERS



With snow on the ground and more in the forecast, the office was forced to do a very rare Saturday mailing of the registration letters.

Thanks to Jack

We are excited to begin our new semester, and I think we are all truly looking forward to Spring.

--Don Quayle

## The People of OLLI: Susan Willens

A literature class with Susan Willens is like the ideal dinner party: the conversation is substantive but witty, and the genial atmosphere is punctuated by bursts of laughter - even when the literature under discussion deals with contentious topics.



Teaching English - from composition to literary analysis - to students ranging from high school to college age to lawyers, to students overseas, and to OLLI seniors, has been the key to a deeply rewarding life, says Susan, Professor Emerita of [George Washington University](#). The daughter of a teacher, she had always wanted to teach. After graduating from the [University of Michigan](#) with a BA in teaching and English, Susan taught for a year, then enrolled in the [Yale University](#) MA in Teaching program where she studied under Cleanth Brooks, author of *Understanding Poetry*, the fundamental text of the New Criticism school which emphasizes close reading and formal analysis, an approach she still values.

Then, only 23 years old, Susan secured her first university appointment at The College of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. By the 60s she was living in Washington, married with four children, and lecturing at the American University English Department while pursuing her PhD at Catholic University.

Susan believes that a school's atmosphere is the most significant factor in learning. Even in a composition course, she believes, "students really need to be thinking and talking, debating and exploring while they are together in a class." In 1970 she found that feeling at the liberal Edmund Burke School where she worked for 12 years, heading the English Department and serving on the Board of Directors.

From 1986 to 2005, Susan found another stimulating niche as Professor of English at George Washington University, which was her "primary

Chamberlain, Ruth  
Darmstadter, Tessa  
Dinsmoor, Ed Goldin,  
Jacqui Gallagher, Earl Hall,  
Kate Headline, Tina Fried  
Heller, Jaleh Labib, Barbara  
Lennhoff, Larry McCarthy,  
Don and Vonn Quayle,  
Barbara Rollinson, Selma  
Rosenthal, Therese  
Rousseau, Barry Smoler,  
and Tina Tate for their  
gracious and much  
appreciated assistance.

## Piano Recital

Please Come Hear **Samuel  
Oram**  
(Grace and Irwin Lebow's  
grandson)  
and **Shou Ping Liu**  
(his bride)  
in Selected Works for Four  
Hands

**Saturday , March 13**

3 to 5 pm at  
St Columba's Episcopal  
Church  
4201 Albemarle St. NW

We hope you can attend.  
Questions? Contact:

[Grace and Irwin](#)

### Quick Links

[OLLI Website](#)

[American University Website](#)

[AU Library Classes Website](#)

[AU Community Relations  
Website](#)

interest and pride for 20 years". GWU honored her with the Robert  
Kenny Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1996.

When her marriage ended, Susan had a life-changing revelation: if she  
could teach English here, she could teach it anywhere in the world. Her  
adventures included chairing the English Department at the International  
School in Kfar Shmaryahu, Israel; being a Fullbright lecturer at Safarik  
University in Presov, Slovakia; a Visiting Professor of American  
Literature and American Studies at Bogazici University in Istanbul,  
Turkey; and, just recently, participating in a teachers' workshop in  
Yakutsk, Siberia. But she has always thought of herself as "a GWU  
professor who had a lot of fascinating side-trips."

This natural teacher has also pursued her favorite activity outside the  
halls of academia, teaching at the Smithsonian Resident Associate  
Program and Politics and Prose and lecturing for Smithsonian study  
tours and at the Foreign Service Institute. At OLLI, Susan says, the  
students themselves are experts, and the students recognize the  
individual sense of themselves and their fellow classmates in the  
intimacy of the class discussion. Such teaching is "like playing the  
piano with all 88 keys."

For 12 years her life was enriched by her loving relationship with  
philanthropist and writer Philip M. Stern, author of *The Best Congress  
Money Can Buy* and *The Shame of a Nation* (about poverty in the US).  
His philanthropic work endorsed governmental responsibility, journalistic  
freedom, and individual rights. The two lived together until his death.

Grandmother of eight, Susan is an active member of the DC community.  
She worked to elect President Obama and serves as a board member of  
the Higher Achievement Program that tutors and mentors disadvantaged  
high school students. But she is most proud of helping to start the  
Jenny McKean Moore Fund for Writers. When her friend Jenny Moore  
died prematurely, she left a fund for small creative writing workshops at  
GWU for GW students and for metropolitan Washington residents, to be  
taught by a visiting writer each semester. Susan and the other trustees  
helped design the program that is now administered by GWU. She  
considers this effort "my idea of immortality."

For leisure, she reads, attends the theater, entertains friends, walks 45  
minutes a day with old neighbors, and spends her vacations with Global

Volunteers, where she has helped build a school and taught in Tanzania, then taught in Xi'an, China, and worked on handicrafts in a women-run shelter in Costa Rica and in a Northern Ireland kitchen. In 2009, Susan's adventure was moving from her Cleveland Park house into an apartment on Connecticut Avenue.

Susan Willens is back at OLLI this spring teaching a course in minority American stories since World War II. Susan's frequent student Linda Miller predicts the class will "be a walking invitation to think, learn, and laugh."

--*Jacqui Gallagher*

## Nomination Committee

The Board of Directors has appointed the following members to the Nomination and Elections Committee:

**Marcia Crandall, Ray Rasenberger, Phillip Schwartz, Ed Stelzer, Beverly Zweiben.**

This Committee will select six nominees for four vacancies on the Board for the 2010 election. The Board consists of 12 members elected for three-year terms, four members being elected each year.

The Committee will make its selection in accordance with the OLLI Policies and Procedures, completely independent of the current Board, in consultation with one another and with emphasis on the background and experience of each potential nominee.

Members who would like to volunteer either themselves or a colleague as a possible candidate may submit a special form to the Committee. Forms will be posted on the bulletin board, and copies are available in the office.

The elections will be held at the Annual Meeting in May. Photos and biographical data of all candidates will be posted in early April and mailed to every member prior to the election.

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**Don Quayle, Board Chair/ Anne Wallace, Exec. Director/**

