PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

40

That’s an impressive number. There is so much in that number. I am told that it all began in 1971 when Joseph and Irene Rubinger met with Dean Martin Chamberlain and Associate Dean Mary Walshok. The birth of the Institute of Retired Professionals (IRP) in 1974 resulted from this meeting. In 1975 the name was changed to the Institute for Continued Learning (ICL). From 2003-2005 the Institute was expanded and curriculum improved through donations amounting to $1,350,000 from the Bernard Osher Foundation: We have now emerged as the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UC San Diego. We enjoy outstanding presentations by some of the top leaders in their fields and wonderful seminar classes, AND a membership with vast experiences that asks intelligent and intriguing questions. This has led our lecturers to say they are glad to present at Osher because of the quality of the Q&A following the lecture. One speaker said that he started a whole new area of research because of the questions he was asked.

We have a lot to celebrate! Beyond the name changes however, stand so many people who have contributed to this organization, those who have led and continue to lead seminars and have shared their learning in lectures or asked those probing questions. I recently met some of the past “nobility” of Osher when there was filming for a short video to share at the 40th Anniversary celebration and to go on our web site. I thought of all of the lives that have contributed to this community over the past 40 years. I also thought of those working now to build the future and continue the depth of experience that exemplifies Osher at UC San Diego.

This quarter has been difficult. I thank you all for bearing with us. We thought that installing the video recording system would be a simple project to be completed before the quarter began. Instead, it has been a difficult process but seems to now work well. Then, to make things even more frustrating, our audio system started to lose the signal because of poor reception after moving the audio equipment cabinet just 10 inches. That has been solved by the installation of two very strong RF antennas in the drop ceiling.

Now we are ready for the future. We will be recording many of our lectures and making them available in our Osher Online Video Library to our members who miss a lecture or would like to review it. We also have activated the Affiliate Membership category that will allow people to join Osher for the purpose of viewing lectures in our Online Video Library for an annual membership fee of $25. This will expand our outreach beyond our facilities to many people unable to come to our building.

We have another great 40 years ahead of us. We really have much to celebrate!
Our campus has undergone a fabulous transformation!

Mike Ryan, the Operations Manager for International Student Services, has donated his time, energy, and most of the plants, to replace the bedraggled and uncared-for old plots with these beautiful and water-efficient succulent gardens. Mike and the front desk staff still hand-water them occasionally, but they are pretty self-sufficient.

The UCSD ground crews have little time to maintain the grounds at Extension. Mike, who wanted to make “a better place to come to work,” decided, with James Forcier’s permission, to create these lovely spaces.

Mike has also done succulent gardens around La Jolla and Pacific Beach—he is at mcryan619@gmail.com if you’d like to discuss replacing your water-guzzling landscaping with these inspiring and beautiful gardens.
Many of you have seen Beverly Bica and her service dog, Branson, at Osher. Did you know that they are both real heroes, having recently saved a little girl who was struggling in the surf at La Jolla Shores Beach very early one morning?

On October 9, 2013, at around 6 a.m., Beverly and Branson were walking on the beach. When they got close to the Beach and Tennis Club, Beverly saw what appeared to be a young diver struggling in the water. A storm was kicking up the wind and surf that day, and the child had two 40 pound tanks on her back. Beverly didn’t think the child—it turned out to be a young girl—weighed 80 pounds herself! The dive vest also has some weights, and the child was wearing flippers. Every time the little girl would get up, the waves wound knock her over.

Despite her own medical problems, Beverly, together with Branson, ran into the cold and choppy surf, Bev wearing her boots, down jacket, and corduroy pants. Beverly has lung problems, so getting wet and cold is risky at the very least, but she saw that the child was not making it. Bev and Branson swam and dived to the child, got her fins and vest off, and, with Branson’s help, pulled everything to shore! With the help of another passer-by, Bev was able to get the child, blue & cold, but breathing well, Bev says, up to the family’s car where the keys were hidden in the bushes. Bev brought her hot tea, food and towels, and the passer-by remained with the child while she called her mother to pick her up. The child said her father and brother were diving with her, but they never appeared while all this was happening.

This story appeared in the November 7, 2013 issue of the La Jolla Light Newspaper. Beverly was awarded a Rotary Club Governor’s Distinguish Service Citation.

NEW AND REVISED
A newly revitalized version of "The Vagina Monologues," including fresh material by Eve Ensler, is coming to Osher on Wednesday, March 12th. Don’t miss the opportunity to be provoked, inspired, and emotionally moved.

Give a Gift of Learning to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
For More Information on Making a Donation or Estate Planning.
Contact the Osher Office at 858-534-3409
OSHER SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

As a relatively new member of Osher, one of the things that I enjoy is the vast experiences and knowledge of its membership. This often comes across in the intelligent and intriguing questions that get asked to our speakers.

I was given the opportunity to tabulate the results from last year’s online Osher survey from data collected by Neil Perl and learned some fascinating facts about the organization that I will share with you:

Our membership represents 17 countries leading with the US and then followed by Canada;
The top three US states that the membership comes from are California, New York and Illinois;
The top educational backgrounds are law, followed by business and education and then history. Over 100 different educational backgrounds were identified;
Besides taking classes, many members volunteer their time to over 140 organizations and groups;
The top three reasons for attending Osher (not surprising): continuing education, intellectual stimulation, and the variety of courses and lecturers. Many people also commented on the social interactions with other members;
When asked why Osher is important to you, Theatre World was a common answer;
The variety and quality of classes, courses, topics and speakers is the most often answered set of responses when asked what is liked best about Osher;
Many valuable suggestions were made for improvements to Osher that include changes to the catalog, registration process, facilities (including classroom, audio and visual tools), and new courses. A large number of respondents indicated that they were happy with what is being provided and requested no change.

The survey provides valuable information to the curriculum committee and the executive leadership for them in their continual search for ways to make improvements. Conducting annual surveys helps insure that the program continues to reflect and address what the members of Osher would like to see.

—Mark James

VAGINA MONOLOGUES

Interview with Marcia Wyrtzen, co-directing and performing The Vagina Monologues; Updated with Marsha Janger, and narration by Charlotte Mamorsky. At Osher on March 12th, at 1 p.m.

How many times in life does one get a chance to do something that you didn’t do a long time ago, and always regretted not having done? For Osher member Marcia Wyrtzen, that chance came with the play The Vagina Monologues by Eve Ensler.

An unfortunate decision came in junior high school, when Marcia was offered a big part in a play, but she turned it down because she was afraid. A lifetime of regret later, Marcia found herself on the west coast, here in Southern California, where she felt disoriented and lonely. When the Wyrtzens discovered Osher, she says, she began to find a community. Then she found Theater World!

In the late 1990’s, Marcia had taken part in a community college production of The Vagina Monologues, and again after moving here, when that show was playing in Carlsbad. When Marsha Janger suggested doing that show at Osher, she was at first hesitant, but they decided to do it. Upon hearing that author Eve Ensler had written new material, they decided to revise their original performance, and jumped into the void when illness forced a cancellation of the initially scheduled 3/12 production here this spring.

This time, she and Marsha are taking on the show from inception to completion. Marcia feels so proud, happy in the camaraderie and

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collaboration, not afraid to risk failure, and happy to have achieved her opportunity at a "second chance."

**NEW KNEES: 0, 1 OR 2?**

By Faye Girsh

For at least ten years, off and on, my knees have been giving me problems, especially on trips with a lot of walking. My solution was to do what was available, short of surgery: NSAIDS (till I found out they were bad for the tummy), then Tylenol, cortisone shots, Synquist injections, and physical therapy. X rays over the past few years have shown bone on bone. But not until my trip to Burma in December 2012, with all the temple steps, did I come home barely able to crawl. I had to buy a cane to prop myself up. OK, that was it. Get them replaced and don’t repeat this agony. As soon as I got back I went to see the rheumatologist who withdrew bloody fluid from my knees, replaced it with clear fluid and cortisone, and I was ambulatory again. But, to be sure another trip would not be messed up by defective knee joints, I made the first appointment with a surgeon I could get. I didn’t like him, as it turned out, so waited five months to see the guy my friends raved about — Dr. Steven Copp. With confidence he said to get both knees replaced together. When I discussed it earlier with my internist he said only do one. One friend had both knees done and is playing tennis, another had both knees done and has been in misery over the past four years. Other people have been doing one knee at a time which seemed to work, with varying degrees of difficulty. Through the inefficiencies of Scripps Clinic my internist never returned my call when I put in a panicked request to discuss this with him again. Meanwhile my pre-op physical was scheduled which was a whirlwind diagnostic tour which I apparently passed.

So, on August 29 I showed up at Scripps Green Hospital admitting room where I got accolades from the nurses for having both knees replaced at the same time. Nice Dr. Kopp came by to say a few reassuring words and I woke up four hours later with new knees and being wheeled to my hospital room feeling pretty good. My son showed up the next day and helped me on my maiden walking voyage on my walker. The hardest part was supporting myself to get up on the walker. That moment was the most painful — and getting up from low seats (especially toilets) is still hard. But, once I was up, walking was not that hard and I exceeded my quota during the three days in the hospital.

On Day 2, as my son and I were talking in the late afternoon after quite a bit of activity, I suddenly felt like I was too weak to move or even talk. It happened that my blood pressure dropped to 60/40. All I could do was think that I was a breath away from being dead. No pain, no anxiety, just lying there immobilized, thinking that there must be a thin line between being alive or not. This was Labor Day weekend when there aren’t too many staff around. I don’t know what happened except that things got better. In the middle of the night they whisked me off somewhere for some test. It never happened again.

Medicare requires three hospital nights before being transferred to a skilled nursing facility (SNF), which, by careful design, was at the Vi where I had moved to a month before. There was physical therapy every day and “occupational therapy” where the main concern was whether my apartment was fitted to make it navigable and safe. I bought a higher toilet and had grab bars installed and put two sided tape on some of the rugs which were permitted to stay.

I was walking well, took myself to the bathroom and the shower, walked with the therapists to my apartment next door, went on the outings and the lectures there and at the Vi, looked forward to meals with other bionic women, and generally enjoyed the three week SNF experience. I ditched the narcotic painkillers after the 2nd day and took an occasional Tylenol. The walker was substituted for a cane in a week and the cane for nothing in a month. I was not using it when I had a doctors’ visit a month later when he said I could drive and resume all normal activities. I had another visit a month later, after I had completed the course of physical therapy that insurance paid for, and got a clean bill of health, good

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You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown.

Photography by Marsha Korobkin.
Your volunteer Curriculum Committee has assembled another rich and exciting schedule of classes for our spring quarter, highlighted by our two Master Classes. UC San Diego's renowned pianist and educator, Cecil Lytle, returns for a five-part lecture and performance series, “Jazz in the French World”, that compares jazz in Harlem versus Montmartre in Paris; and reviews early jazz in New Orleans.

Our second Master Class, on African literature, by Robert Cancel, will present a unique survey of literary production from several regions of Africa from the late 1950s to the present. The contemporary literature of Africa has sprung from many countries in various languages and has produced four Nobel laureates.

Registration for our two spring Master Classes begins the morning of March 26th.

The spring quarter also features a five-lecture Premier Class on cancer: from its discussion in narrative media to a look at 20th-century breakthroughs in cancer biology and personalized treatment and prevention based on molecular markers. Additionally, Glenn Smith returns to present a series on the “protection clauses” of U.S. Constitution.

Our regular lecture series – Social Sciences, Science and Medicine, International Relations, Humanities, and Law and Society again will feature a wide range of interesting topics including a look at Russian-U.S. relations, the oceans, and the conundrum of the honey bee. We introduce a new seminar this quarter on current legal issues moderated by Osher’s own Mark Evans.

We bid a fond farewell to our Osher snowbirds until next year – their conviviality and engagement contribute much to our informed dialogue. Finally, a special thanks to retiring Barbara Leondar, who brought her intellectual breadth and dedication to structuring the stimulating and informative Osher program that we have all grown to treasure and enjoy.

The newly formatted spring catalog explains our comprehensive program in detail. Come join us as Osher approaches its 40th anniversary at UC San Diego.
ON DOING EVERYTHING BADLY

By Martha Kaplan, editor

Ever since I can remember, I’ve tried to do everything I do as perfectly as possible. Of course, that’s, by definition, as perfectly as possible for me, given my own limitations and the context of the actual situation. As a corollary, with the wisdom of increasing age (age increasing, alas, faster than wisdom, but still…) I am willing to give everyone else the benefit of assuming that they are also doing the best they can, given their own limitations and the context of whatever situation they find themselves in.

Now comes the next onset of wisdom: I have to come to terms with the idea of doing things badly. “Just do it,” the Nike slogan, modified to “just do it badly.” It won’t be the best pie anyone ever made—or even I ever made—but I’ll make a pie, or do the Osher Observer, or tell jokes in the vaudeville show, and try not to let that most exacting critic in my head say “not good enough, try harder, work harder, you could do it better if you worked harder.” Just do it badly—my motto for 2014. Because otherwise, I wouldn’t do it at all.

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straight leg bones on X-ray and told to come back in a year.

Now, about six months later, my knees are stiff and sore after sitting—which I do most of the day. They feel better after walking and/or 10-15 minutes on a stationery bike. I have other problems, like bad feet and hip bursitis, that keep me from walking easily. But it’s not my knees any more, though they feel a little weak—but not painful. They’d be much better if I were more physical and did exercises.

I was very lucky to recover quickly and to have had little or no pain. I am planning more trips, not without trepidation since I’m not sure how the knees will behave. No regrets about having them both done at once. Though the whole process was not terrible I am glad not to have to do it twice. Also I think my balance is better since both knees are in the same boat. Also glad to have finally have the surgery before I get too old and the knees get too deteriorated. I had a good surgeon and was lucky—so far anyway.

News Flash:

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UC San Diego will celebrate its 40th anniversary on Wednesday, April 30, from 4 pm to 7 pm, with a by-invitation gala for members and guests. Expected to attract more than 200 members, along with instructors and prominent supporters, the 40th anniversary event will be held in the Great Hall at UC San Diego’s International Center.

“This is a milestone that deserves to be recognized beyond our doors,” said President Jim Wyrtzen. “We’ve never been more proud of the high level of intellectually stimulating programs, topics and events we provide for our members.”

Mary Walshok, Associate Vice Chancellor of Public Programs, and Dean of UC San Diego Extension, will offer welcoming remarks. Walshok was among the university’s leaders who helped establish a campus-sanctioned learning center for retirees and semi-retirees over age 50, an on-going mission that still prevails.

Keynote speaker will be Mary Bitterman, president of The Bernard Osher Foundation. Mr. Osher, the San Francisco-based philanthropist who has supported the 117 campus-based learning institutes around the country that bear his name, is also expected to attend the 40th anniversary event.

The program will begin with wine and hors d’oeuvres while the Osher dedicated carillon at the Geisel Library is played. That will be followed by a chamber trio who will play through until the end of dinner.