EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Gary Aten

It's been an amazing year for OLLI @ Furman. We passed 2150 members for the year, which seems amazing for those of us who remember how exciting it was to reach 500.

The growth in participation and number of classes has been outstanding. For example, the Great Decisions course was moved to our largest classroom. Some were nervous about that move as they feared the discussion, which is an integral part of the class, might suffer. Things went well, however, and many more people could attend the class. On the downside, popular and smaller classes tend to fill early, and not all who would like a specific class can attend. On the whole, I suppose, it is better than having great classes that are poorly attended.

We also tried something new this year: Read and Explore with OLLI. That was a success beyond all expectations, and there is a complete report about it on pages 6 and 7. Many other events and trips were planned and carried out, giving plenty of opportunity for continuing to learn and socialize.

It's not over, of course. The coming academic year leads us into 2018, and our OLLI @ Furman 25th anniversary. When OLLI's predecessor, Furman University Learning In Retirement (FULIR) started 24 years ago, no one saw for the future what we have become. As good as this year was, the next one promises to be even better.

If you are reading a hard copy, remember Gray Matters is on the OLLI website. By reading online you can see the issue in full color and expand the type size and images if you wish. Just click on “Member Resources” and then “Gray Matters” to view this issue and past editions.

Carole Eisen, Judy Aten, and Nancy Kennedy proofed this issue. Heidi Wright puts the issues on the website and arranges for the printing. The rest of the OLLI staff and Brad Bechtold also check the content. Special thanks to all our contributors. Thanks also to our new cyber security and password analyst, Donatella Nobody.
This will be my last issue. I have been the editor of Gray Matters for 9 years now, and it is time to turn the reins over to someone new. I have really enjoyed my time as editor. It has increased my knowledge of the workings of Furman University and OLLI @ Furman and increased my involvement. Let me tell you how I have been affected.

First, as the newsletter editor, I have been an OLLI Council member. Many OLLI members have little knowledge of how OLLI @ Furman works. Sure, we hear it is an organization that is run by the members, but how is that done? There are several committees that perform the business of the program. Some are highly visible, such as the Curriculum Committee. Some, however, are not generally known. The Instructor Support Committee, Finance Committee, and others don't get a lot of press, but they help ensure the program performs at the high level it does. Being on the Council gave me a deep appreciation of all the expertise and hard work required by those committees. I was proud to be a member.

Next, I attended as many OLLI events as I could. Council members are asked to attend many of the events if they can, but I felt compelled to attend to take a picture or two and report on some of them in the next issue. Most of the time I was very happy to be attending. Events such as Fall for OLLI, REO Celebration, and the Welcome Receptions are always fun events where you can see old friends, meet new members, and do new things. In a couple of cases, I was not enthusiastic about going, but once I got there, inevitably I found it fun and/or interesting. By going to those events I got to know many more members that I otherwise would have. I do have to admit that if you come up to me without your name tag on I may get that “deer in the headlights” look on occasion.

Inside Furman is a continuing feature in the newsletter. My wife Judy and I have conducted most of those interviews. By the way, I usually ask more of the questions, but Judy ends up doing most of the writing. They have included a wide range of Furman University people in their various positions, from the Printing and Post Office manager to the new Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost. Those interviews gave us a better understanding of how Furman University operates. I hope they have also given you some of that knowledge as you read the articles.

In any position there are highs and lows. The biggest high I had was assembling the World War II edition, in which we highlighted the WWII service of eight OLLI @ Furman veterans. We even had a couple of people give their experience on the home front. A couple of years later, we did the same thing with Korean War veterans. All of them were very welcoming and humble. Since the interviews, I count them among my friends, and I hope they do likewise. If you have not read their stories in these editions, you should. Go to the OLLI @ Furman website and find Gray Matters. There you can look at the WWII and Korean War issues and other previous editions.

There have been many more highs. Working with the OLLI staff members is definitely one of those. They have been extremely helpful every time I have a problem or question. When the staff started having Gray Matters printed in magazine format that allowed me to use different OLLI members' work for cover art and photographs. I am always pleased when the issue goes onto the web and see how beautiful it is because of those covers. Highs have to include all the OLLI member interviews Judy and I have done. Of all those, Richard Wagner’s story stands out. It was in the March 2012 edition and is worth a read.

There have not been many lows. The one low point I have had is the lack of response when asking for input from the members about a topic, such as Your First Time Seeing TV or the Best Advice You Ever Got. Only receiving one response each for these topics was disappointing. If the new editor asks for your input, consider responding. Everyone’s experience is interesting; it doesn’t have to be earth shattering.

It is time to turn the page, both figuratively and literally. Join me in welcoming the new editor. Please give her the same support, and even more, you have given me. Now, if you are reading a hard copy, turn the paper page, and if you are reading online, turn the virtual page to meet her.
MEET THE NEW GRAY MATTERS EDITOR

Sue Renault is our new editor. She has a background equipping her to lead Gray Matters into our 25th anniversary year, making it a publication you can be proud of. As she tells it:

“I am all about content and see every activity at OLLI as a wonderful chance to tell a story. Nothing gets my creative juices energized more than a news deadline. I was a "co-op" student years ago at Northeastern University in Boston. This means for five years I alternated school terms and journalism classes with work terms at the Beverly Times. Over the years, I've taught school, written feature stories for the Chicago Tribune, contributed to professional fundraising publications, and edited a variety of newsletters. Prior to my retirement in 2006, I was director of communications for an international medical mission, responsible for all print materials used in our fundraising campaigns. I also create poetry while riding my bicycle on the Swamp Rabbit Trail. You may reach me at sue.renault@gmail.com.”

As Sue takes over her duties, please be responsive to her requests for input. If you have contributions in the form of articles, poems, reports, artwork, and the like, you can contact her at the email address shown above. As you see Sue at the Herring Center with pen, notepad, laptop, or camera in hand, welcome her to her new assignment.

FURMAN INTERGENERATIONAL CLASS MEETS WITH OLLI MEMBERS

Several OLLI @ Furman members participated in Dr. Lorraine DeJong’s class, EDU 234, Intergenerational Learning with Senior Citizens. The Furman students studied a wide variety of issues related to aging and adult development. OLLI members were included in the class discussions and trips to give the Furman students their perspective on the topics from an older point of view.

At right in front, Austin Powell; in the middle Lizzie Wakeley, and Claudia Carpenter; in the back row Josiah Baker, Dr. DeJong, Jack McKenney, Alex Atkins, and Camilla Bellows appear after taking part in Mei Li Trapasso’s Healthy Authentic Chinese Cooking class.
PHOTOGRAPHY SUBCOMMITTEE COORDINATES DISPLAY

The Photo Curriculum Subcommittee organized a display of cellphone photos taken by OLLI @ Furman members. The 106 photos submitted ran the gamut of subjects. Greg Efner fabricated the two large panels used to display the photos in the Crabtree Room. Below, on the left, is one of the two panels. In the other picture, from left to right, Alan Weinberg, Ian Clark, and Greg Efner arrange the photos on the panels. Photo by Greg Peters.

DINNER THEATER A BIG SUCCESS

The dinner theater event held on March 24 was the success people expected. That OLLI members were anxious to attend was apparent when the tickets to the night were sold out the day after they went on sale. The original play, titled Death By Diamonds, was presented by students of North Greenville University for the benefit of the theatre program at NGU. The play was witty, the meal was excellent, the service was fine, and, all in all, it was a great evening... just another in a series of outstanding events organized by the Social Committee.

On the left, OLLI members socialize before the evening’s official start. On the right, the actors from North Greenville College present the murder mystery. After the play, the audience was invited to fill out sheets giving their guess about the solution. They were then compared to the actual solution. Prizes were given for the most accurate and the funniest solution.
Shortly after the Second World War, a British war bride named Jimmie McQueen arrived in Greenville and began to serve as personal assistant to the president of Furman University. She quickly embraced her new hometown and, among other endeavors, launched what later became known as the Jimmie McQueen Society, a YWCA group dedicated to reading and engaging with socially-significant books.

Fast forward to 2015 when OLLI @ Furman received a grant in honor of that society to be earmarked for something related to that group’s decades-long good works. OLLI director Nancy Kennedy’s vision was for a “One Read” program such as dozens of cities have sponsored since the Seattle Public Library came up with the idea in 1998: Invite everyone in a community to read the same book and participate in events suggested by the book.

Thus it came about that, during winter term 2017, hundreds of OLLI members enjoyed reading, exploring, listening, chatting, partying, and touring with the first ever Read & Explore with OLLI (REO) program.

REO’s first selection, North Carolina author Ron Rash’s *One Foot in Eden*, is a page-turner murder mystery set in 1950’s to 1970’s South Carolina as Lake Jocassee is being created to bring electric power to the area. It suggests issues of ecology and progress, cohesion and destruction of communities, and mountain language, landscape, and lore. It proved to be a great hit among its more than 400 OLLI readers.

Setting the stage for the book’s issues, Furman’s Upcountry History Museum hosted the first event, a showing of the 1960 classic Elia Kazan movie, *Wild River*. Judy and Gary Aten added historical and cinematic commentary for the SRO crowd of 80. A by-popular-demand second showing drew another crowd of 80.

Participants excitedly looked forward to a visit by Ron Rash, who spoke to a full-house of 300 at the Younts Center. The author told of teenage summers spent with his storytelling mountain grandmother, the influence of Shakespeare on his writing, and the warm reception his Piedmont tales receive among European audiences. He also conducted a writing class for Furman English majors while he was on campus.

During the course of the January to March program, 50 OLLI members shared their thoughts and questions about *One Foot in Eden* in book chat groups. Another 50 enjoyed local mountain expert Scott Withrow’s presentation on the history surrounding the rare Oconee Bell, a wildflower that grows nowhere in the world but a few locations in Georgia and the Carolinas.
Furman history professor Dr. Steve O'Neill, who has taught *One Foot in Eden* in his South Carolina history course, intrigued an audience of 80 on an icy March afternoon with the history of the politics of South Carolina that led to events like the depopulation of the Jocassee Valley. All but two of South Carolina’s lakes, the audience learned, are man-made and the result of sometimes questionable public policy.

Scott Withrow’s day-long tour of mountain areas connected with the book, including Cherokee Indian sites, was so quickly over-subscribed that a second tour (for a total of 50 participants) had to be arranged. Happily, the timing allowed tour members to view Oconee Bells in bloom. Below right, the tour group listens to a talk about the area lakes.

Since OLLI members famously love parties as much as they love learning, the finale of Read & Explore with OLLI was an Appalachian Mountain Festival, complete with foods encountered in the book, including delicious berry-topped pound cake and Cheerwine. The Nickpickers provided mountain music and storytelling. OLLI wood carvers, spinners, weavers, and quilters displayed their handiwork and demonstrated their techniques. And nearly 200 happy readers chatted about their REO experience and their suggestions for next year’s book.
Two modest buildings sit side by side behind McAlister Auditorium’s parking lot. One occupies the site where OLLI @ Furman was once housed. Next to it sits the Furman Playhouse, which has been there since 1969. Squeezed into these two buildings is one of the finest theatre arts programs in the region. A 1978 Furman graduate, Jay Oney, has been chairing the theatre arts program since 2006. His master’s degree from Penn State and doctorate from Ohio State are in theatre history, although he took as many acting and directing classes as he could during those studies. Immediately after he graduated from Furman, Jay traveled all over the country, working as a part-time waiter and actor until he reached 30 and decided it was time to enter grad school. During his last year at Ohio State, Jay married, and, after his graduation, he and his wife Carol headed to Japan, where they taught English as a second language for a year. At the end of that year, Jay was at a crossroads for he owed Ohio State a dissertation to complete his PhD. An adjunct professor position had opened at Furman, and Rhett Bryson offered his former student an empty room in the Playhouse where he could work on his dissertation while teaching. For 6 months, Jay worked on his paper, taught classes, and worked at a Japanese restaurant. Not long after he earned his PhD, a full professorship opened at Furman and Jay filled it. In 2006, the department chair retired, and Jay assumed his position. His wife, Carol Sutton, teaches drama at JF Byrnes high school and helped with his last production, both as an actor and assistant director. Jay said that working together they make a “pretty good director.”

The challenging curriculum is taught by a dedicated staff of four, including Jay and a part-time technical director. Their “departmental meetings” are laid-back affairs held each day during friendly dart games. As they toss darts and drink espresso, the faculty manages all issues with a warmth and ease that only comes with respect, not just for each other, but also for the students they will be instructing. Funds from the Furman Arts Initiative, funded by the Duke Endowment, have permitted Jay to rent expensive microphones to use in the musicals as well as to augment his faculty with guest artists, who have taught a variety of specialty subjects. The faculty is appreciated by Furman. They teach as well as direct the Playhouse productions, which require an intense amount of time and effort each semester. To assure they can give the necessary attention to a production, those who direct or design for a production are given what is known as release time, allowing them to reduce their course load. Jay says that reduction is greatly appreciated. Take, for example, the month he spent working 16 hours a day on his recent production, Kappa Kappa Scream.
Jay describes their curriculum as generalist, giving their students solid experiences in every aspect of the craft, utilizing lectures and lab experiences that give them hands-on knowledge of the curriculum. Unlike large departments that rely on graduate students to manage advanced work in productions, Jay’s juniors and seniors assume those duties; supervising crews; managing the box office and “house”; and designing costumes, sets, sound, and lighting. When they graduate, they have chosen their specialty and understand the basics of all facets of play production. Newly enrolled students learn the basics in 100 level courses, which include acting, stage craft, and costume crafts. The next 200 level courses include theatre history and playwriting. The 300 level design classes put them to work in scene, lighting, and costume design, as well as advanced acting, utilizing their acquired knowledge in Playhouse productions.

In order to earn a theatre arts degree, students must have taken 12 theatre classes. In addition, students can participate in Furman’s Study Away program in the UK, which offers a unique chance to explore another country and attend an extraordinary number of plays. In 2016, those students in the Study Away program attended about 40 plays as a group, and others saw even more productions on their own. Jay says one of the more popular, and expensive, choices was the Harry Potter and the Cursed Child production running in London. Theatre arts students are also encouraged to audition at the big Southeastern Theatre Conference, where they may find summer work as well as technical positions and internships with professional companies.

Presently there are 28 declared theatre arts majors, but 4 or 5 more students could declare the major within a year, and there will be more when next year’s scholarship students are announced. In addition, other students who are not theatre arts majors work with them on a regular basis. Scott Simon, one of those non-theatre majors, has worked with them for the past 4 years, helping build sets and designing and running sound for productions because he simply wanted to. The theatre was happy to give Scott its Most Valuable Player Award at the recent university awards banquet. It seems that chemistry students are very good actors, possibly because it allows release from their intense studies. This year, 9 theatre arts majors, a third of the department’s students, will graduate, and, as they do every fall, the faculty will determine which members of the company will take over the duties those graduates had handled.

(Continued Next Page)
The Theatre Arts Department offers a variety of plays each year, intentionally giving their students a chance to work on productions that might not be offered by professional companies, which require steady box office returns to remain operational. Planning the future productions can be difficult as involvement in a present production can be too intense to consider what productions should be considered for next year. Decisions are usually made before Study Day, since the department always tries to announce next year’s season at the theatre arts annual picnic held on that day. Complicated productions press their design and technical staff hard, and they may ease off a bit next season with something less demanding, always basing their choices on which students are ready to take on advanced duties. Big productions with large casts are challenging. There are times when students who are appearing in the current production are also rehearsing or doing backstage work for the one that will open next.

What do these theatre arts students do when they graduate? As part of the thriving entertainment industry, there are numerous opportunities for them. A third of the students carry double majors, which sometimes include history, art, or computer courses. Graduates can easily go into marketing, management, or fund raising for theatres, or apply their high-tech design skills not only in theatre but film as well. A few have their second major in neuroscience and intend to use their theatre skills in therapy. Some graduates have become academics or have gone into year-long apprenticeships with big regional theatre companies. There are also those whose life encounters take them into satisfying careers that have nothing to do with theatre arts. Large corporations seek employees who can collaborate, lead, meet deadlines, articulate well in front of others, or make great sales pitches - all skills theatre arts students have acquired.

Unfortunately, small departments that offer what some consider “frivolous degrees” are often forgotten in the push for more facilities and funds. Although the Furman Theatre Arts Department has not been completely ignored, its outdated facilities pose a problem that sometimes becomes clear when prospective students get their first look at the theatre arts facilities. Until that moment, they are certain Furman is their best choice, but often their faces fall and they opt for a large university - ignoring an excellent reputation for flashier facilities that can offer fewer learning experiences. In 2008, theater arts was high on Furman’s list of improvements, and a nearly completed design for a new teaching facility was in the works. Furman had committed the lion’s share of funding for it, but the stock market crash made raising those funds a daunting task, and the theatre arts expansion was put on the back burner. Additionally, the cost of the new facilities rises with each passing year. As a fun project to make the general public aware of their situation, theatre arts printed and sold “trailer trash” shirts, hoping that it may spark interest in supporting and funding their new teaching facilities.

A lot of OLLI members attend the Playhouse productions. Those of us who recognize and support Furman’s theatre arts are certain that those funds will be raised and the program will grow as it should. Until then, theatre arts will continue as they have, producing skilled graduates who will enhance all facets of the entertainment industry. And we have the joy of attending productions that showcase the talent and dedication of the staff and students who regale us with their labors of love.
Two events held in the Herring Center on Friday, March 31, continued efforts to make OLLI members aware of drug problems among seniors and what they can do about it.

First was the collection of unused medications. It was successful in reducing the chances for using meds that were past their useful life and the chances that they might be used by the wrong people. Although a count of the people that brought in medications was not available, 116 pounds of unused medications were collected. At right, medications were collected and information provided about the problem.

The same day, the bonus event *Seniors and Opiods* included talks by authorities on the problem. James Campbell (below, left) of the Phoenix Center spoke about how addiction develops. Dr. Edwin Leap (below, right) from Stephens Hospital in Toccoa, Georgia gave his perspective as an emergency room physician.

In two of Patty Roy’s *Synapse* columns she focused on this issue. To read them you can go to the OLLI @ Furman website, click on *Member Services*, and then *Gray Matters*.

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**SWAMP RABBIT TRAIL: WINNER!**

Susan S. Renault

Sorry, gazelle squirrel, you cheeky show-off,
Sorry, white-tipped mockingbird (honorable mention),
And flashy cardinal — a strong second-place.
Blue Heron, I never thought I’d say:
You were a trifle boring today,
Standing like a statue
on your skinny sticks. You’ll have to learn
New tricks.
Robins, your chirpy spring racket was not enough.

Sorry, turtle on a log, mouthy woodchuck,
And glossy-headed Mallard, never far
From the Missus.
The prize goes to Blue Bird.
Your rosy cap, soft as a blush,
Your sequin-blue cape out-bluing the sky…
You flash toward a limb that has just caught your eye,
While I
Still hold
My breath.
STUDENT WORKERS DOUBLE AS INSTRUCTORS

Our young student workers’ proficiency with technology is being put to good use at OLLI. Laken Weaver and Sam Kolls have been giving instruction in iPhone use. Laken, on the left, taught in the winter term, and Sam, on the right, taught in the spring.

HELP WITH DISABILITIES

Elaine Brummett

The South Carolina Assistive Technology Program (SCATP) is a federally funded program concerned with getting technology into the hands of people with disabilities so that they might live, work, learn, and be a more independent part of the community. As part of a national network of technology-related assistance programs, its goal is to enhance independence, productivity, and quality of life for all South Carolinians through access to assistive technology devices and services. It provides a device loan and demonstration program, an on-line equipment exchange program, training, technical assistance, publications, an information listserv, and work with various state committees that affect AT acquisition and IT accessibility. The program links people with technology and work with consumers, service providers, state agencies and policy makers. Included are aids for computer, kitchen, and etc. To learn more, visit the website at http://scatp.med.sc.edu

GOSSETT VISIT

OLLI members pause to inspect the finished product during a visit to the Gossett Concrete Pipe Company during a Friday Bonus Event in April. Automated pipe fabrication machines were the highlight of the tour.
The OLLI on Stage SIG presented an offering of staged readings in the Herring Center on March 6. Five comedy sketches from Silver Linings by Ted Tally were directed by Annette Garver. Sixteen OLLI @ Furman members were involved in the production, and Heidi Wright lent staff support. OLLI on Stage is planning for the 2017 / 2018 academic year. If you are interested in this SIG, contact Diane Teare at (864) 263-7216.

ENHANCEMENT GRANTS ANNOUNCED

David Johnson

The OLLI Curriculum Enhancement Grants Committee is pleased to announce the recipients of seven new grants. OLLI members receiving grants include: Kathleen Abbate, Michael Broder, Gail Jones, Matthew Hermes, Bob McGrath and Cheryl Garrison (joint application), Marcia Moston, and Arthur McMaster.

All new recipients were announced at the May 23 OLLI luncheon. The committee, consisting of OLLI members David Johnson (chair), Tim Henry, Geraldine Weyermann, Pat Booker-Christy, and Judy Vick, reviewed a number of excellent applications. Recipients must be OLLI members for at least six terms and pledge to use the grant to help develop or enhance a future learning experience for delivery to OLLI members. The committee thanks everyone who submitted an application for their interest in the program.

To help encourage additional grant requests, the committee will now accept and review applications in both the fall and the spring. Applications will be accepted twice a year, with a fall deadline of October 1, 2017 and a spring deadline of March 1, 2018. Application forms are available on the OLLI website or can be picked up in the OLLI Office.

The committee is grateful for the 4 years Geraldine Weyermann actively served and would like to welcome Anne Garrett as a new member for a 3-year term.
THE POWER OF LAUGHTER: WRINKLES OR SMILE LINES: IT’S YOUR CHOICE

Before you start reading this article, please take a moment and think about how you feel right now: more positive or more negative? Now read the following classics:

I felt like my body had gotten totally out of shape, so my doctor gave me permission to join a fitness club and start exercising. I decided to take a seniors aerobics class. I bent, twisted, gyrated, hopped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But, by the time I got my leotards on, the class was over.

A little old lady was scampering up and down the halls in a nursing home. As she passed by the guys, she would flip up the hem of her nightgown and say, “SuperSex.” She sauntered up to an elderly man in a wheelchair. Flipping her gown at him, she laughed and said with a wink, “SuperSex.” He looked at her, silently thinking for a moment… then finally answered, “I’ll take the soup.”

My friend is a non-conformist. Instead of calling the bathroom “the John,” he calls the bathroom “the Jim.” He claims it sounds better when he says he goes to the Jim first thing every morning.

So now how do you feel? More positive or more negative?

What do Shakespeare and contemporary writers have in common? With few exceptions, consider the portrayal of old people. Angry and frustrated men are often quirky as in Grand Torino, but in a charming way. Old women, however, have a movie genre all their own: “psycho-biddy” as in Sunset Boulevard or What Ever Happened to Baby Jane? Where’s the depth, the wisdom, the humor? The questions are: Does art imitate life? Why are old people portrayed this way?

Is it because too many old people exhibit a lack of humor? Is it because they focus on the negatives in their lives? Do those negatives throw shade on the good in their lives? “Throw shade” is a contemporary term meaning to show disgust for someone. Grumpy old men or the women of hagsplotation (think Macbeth’s witches) may sell theater tickets, but they are miserable to live near. Remember the adage: You don’t stop laughing because you grow old, you grow old because you stop laughing.

Why should a person laugh? According to legend, the mythic character Pecos Bill did laugh himself to death when he saw a city-slicker in cowboy gear, but, in the real world and for more people, laughter seems to have positive benefits. Current research focus is on the positive power of laughter. Dr. Lee Berk, psychoneuroimmunology researcher from Loma Linda University, suggests the benefits of “laughercise.” According to the Mayo Clinic, research data suggests laughter can offer short-term benefits, such as increasing endorphins, promoting a relaxed feeling, and reducing stress physical symptoms, plus long-term effects that may occur are pain relief, mood improvement and an improved immune system.
No pills are required. Creativity and perspective do not cost anything except letting go of anger, of fear, of regret, and of opening the mind to welcome joy and gratitude. Most people know someone with no sense of humor and also someone else with a great sense of humor, and most people fall somewhere in between. Can a person’s humor skill level be measured?

One of the humor experts, Paul McGhee, PhD, considers humor to be intellectual play. The eight subscales of his Sense of Humor scale are enjoyment of humor, seriousness and negative mood, playfulness and positive mood, laughter, verbal humor, and finding humor in everyday life. These last two have higher values in the overall measurement: laughing at yourself and humor under stress. Research is viewing humor as a positive skill set that seems associated with resiliency and believes it can not only be measured, but taught and developed.

If you can’t laugh or can’t see the funny side of life, think about humor therapy. Is humor therapy real?

The National Cancer Institute defines humor therapy as:

A type of therapy that uses humor to help relieve pain and stress and improve a person’s sense of well-being. It may be used to help people cope with a serious disease, such as cancer. Humor therapy may include laughter exercises, clowns, and comedy movies, books, games, and puzzles. It is a type of complementary therapy. Also called laughter therapy.

Let’s conclude with the Senility Prayer:

Lord, grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway.
The good fortune to run into the ones I do,And the eyesight to know the difference.

Open your heart and mind, relax, reduce your stress, and learn to appreciate the humor in life around you and in yourself. For positive inspiration, see Dr. McGhee’s webpage, http://www.laughterremedy.com.

Please remember, I am no medical expert, but I love to read and research medical issues. Patty Roy

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WHERE IN FURMAN ARE WE?

The picture at right was taken on the Furman campus. Can you figure out where? A few clues are below, and the answer follows in the box.

1 North of the mall.
2 South of North Village.
3 Within sight of the lake.
4 Near the Japanese Garden.

Plane, South and across the road.

construction detail at the Place of Peace.
OLLliver Presents

MASCOT TO MASCOT

OLLliver, the OLLI@Furman mascot, decided to meet Victor E. Furman, his Furman counterpart. Victor E. Furman is not the paladin in full armor who rides into the Furman stadium prior to a football game on his magnificent white steed. Victor E. Furman emulates that paladin, which means he’s a mascot. He stays on Furman’s campus, traveling only to SOCON with the basketball team to participate in various mascot activities and cheer the Paladins on. Since the identity of the student wearing Victor’s costume is always a secret, OLLliver has sworn never to reveal their identity. Those who become Furman’s mascot do so for one academic year, with the option of continuing each year until they graduate. If they have been Victor E. Furman for 4 years, they may reveal their identity at their graduation ceremony by wearing Victor’s boots.

At the beginning of each academic year, announcements are posted campus wide inviting students to try out to be Furman’s mascot. The student OLLliver interviewed said they filled out a form, answered some questions, and were accepted. Two people portray Victor E. Furman, a necessity to accommodate the homework assignments, exams, and various other expectations of Furman students, so that the mascot will appear at all the local football and basketball games. There are no athletic expectations of the mascot; the only requirement is that they have fun and observe one strictly enforced rule: Victor never speaks. Those portraying the intrepid mascot don their costume at Timmons Arena in Victor’s “room,” where they are never seen. For football games, Victor may join the cheerleaders and band as they parade through the tailgate section before entering the stadium or opt to ride on the golf cart that brings the bell into the stadium. For basketball games, Victor joins the cheerleaders as they run onto the court. Victor never really runs, for it’s not easy to keep one’s footing in the heavy foam costume.

Experienced Victors can don the mascot’s gear in about 5 minutes. Novices can take up to 20 minutes to complete the multi-step process. After donning a thin, body-hugging undersuit, the oversuit, a multi-piece adjustable foam costume, is put on using Velcro and click snaps to adjust it to accommodate the height and weight of the student inside. A foam sword and stick horse allow Victor to emulate a real paladin. That foam suit is very hot, and Victor has a “break room” for use during games where he can cool down and not be seen. The mascot’s suit is showing the wear and tear from years of use, and it is hoped funds for a new one will be available soon.
Victor is not required to make the athletic moves required by some of his counterparts at other universities. He has 2 jobs. He is to get the fans excited and on their feet, and he is to “mess with them.” Victor’s favorite way to mess with the fans is to toss popcorn at unsuspecting students, then palm off the popcorn container to a student who becomes the unsuspecting stooge to whom Victor vigorously points when victims of the popcorn assault seek out the perpetrator. Victor admits that wisdom dictates he never taunts the fans if the game isn’t going well.

It’s a good thing that the students inside Victor like having their picture taken, for the mascot is a picture magnet. The toughest part of being the mascot is the vision limitations. It’s like “wearing blinders,” for one can only see straight ahead and not down or side to side. When short little children stand directly in front of the mascot for a hug or picture, he can’t see them, nor can he see any student who jostles to his side for a photo. Children are often “dangerous” for, in addition to wanting to give unexpected and unbalancing hugs, they also like to punch the mascot. Maneuvering at football games often requires someone to guide him through the crowds.

On days when the student portrayer isn’t feeling “up,” and finds it hard to get excited about putting on the foam hothouse, that gloomy feeling vanishes with the fans’ laughter and encouragement of Victor’s antics or the open adoration of little children who surround him. It’s funny when friends who don’t know who’s inside the suit jostle to have a picture taken with Victor, then show it to the student or post it on the internet declaring they should have been there. It’s also hard to listen attentively to blow-by-blow descriptions of supposedly missed games that were seen incognito. Over the course of the football and basketball seasons, it’s challenging to come up with a variety of plausible excuses for turning down invitations to a game the day they’re Victor E.

Victor’s favorite story involves the mascots game at the SOCON tourney. There were two games for the mascots. Victor lost the first game because he had not been briefed when it was to start and was not in place when the game began. When the second game started, Victor became the butt of the announcer’s jokes as he described his “little steps.” The game required the mascots to hurry back and forth on the basketball court putting items in a basket on the far end of the court that they had picked up on the other end. At the end of a set amount of time, the mascot with the most items in their basket was the winner. Those little steps worked, for he won that game! Victor E. Furman (and the student inside him) are winners with us, too, and we thank him for sharing.

TRIBUTE

Barbara Leimseider

Tributes Editor

Sam Littlejohn

by Cam Ferguson

Sam Littlejohn, who died on March 17, 2017 at the age of 72, was a member of OLLI since 2014 and enjoyed every course in which he was involved. He especially enjoyed courses in history, particularly those taught by Bob Dwyer and Dr. A. V. Huff. His other big interest was the game of bridge, which was led by Hugh Hughes and assistant Jim Nichols. Sam was a “knockout” bridge player. He was warm hearted, witty, a gardener, and a traveler to many interesting locales. An especially fond memory was to see Sam emerging from a class at the Herring Center and that great big friendly smile of his. He will be seriously missed by those at OLLI.
In April, OLLI Council president Margaret Clark and I had the privilege of attending the Osher Institutes National Conference, held this year in Irving, Texas. The Osher National Resource Center presents this conference every 18 months, and it is paid for by the Osher Foundation. Two representatives from each of the 120 OLLIs are invited to attend, typically a staff member and a key volunteer.

Margaret and I enjoyed meeting staff and volunteers from OLLIs across the country and came home with pages of ideas to use to improve or refine what we are doing here at OLLI@Furman. We attended sessions about volunteers, diversity and inclusion, Facebook, milestone anniversaries (our 25\textsuperscript{th} is coming up!), and more. Perhaps the most informative times were the informal discussions with other OLLI leaders. It is so interesting to hear about what is going on at their programs!

We learned over and over at the conference that volunteers are key to the success of all lifelong learning programs, and our program is no different. While it is hard to single out one volunteer for recognition, I do have to thank Gary Aten for his work with this publication. This is his last issue of \textit{Gray Matters}. We have all enjoyed the fruits of his efforts on this publication and I’d like to thank him and his wife Judy for all of the time and creativity they have put into \textit{Gray Matters} over the last several years. We will welcome our new editor next fall, and I know she will do a super job as well.

I hope you all enjoy a wonderful summer with friends, family, travel, and a good book or two. If you’re coming to class in June, I’ll see you then. If not, I look forward to seeing you back at OLLI in September!
Above: Class Change in the Lobby
Below: Spring in the Entry Urns

Above: Two Directors and a Past President
Below: The Refueling Line at the Coffee Area

Martin’s Hiking group stops for a break on the overlook platform at Lake Conestee Nature Park
thank |THaNGk|

verb [ with obj. ]
express gratitude to (someone), especially by saying “Thank you”: Mac thanked her for the meal and left.
• used ironically to assign blame or responsibility for something: you have only yourself to thank for the plight you are in.

ORIGIN Old English thancian, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch and German danken; compare with thanks.

Well, this is pretty predictable, isn’t it? I have a lot of people to thank for helping me over the last 9 years. I’m sure I will leave someone out, but I have to make a try, so here goes.

First, the proofreaders have made sure this mechanical engineer looked better on paper than he was. We have had several proofers (now, is that a word?) over the years, but Carole Eisen deserves special credit because she has been through this with me all the way. She found so many things I realized needed correcting, AFTER they were pointed out. I know I am improving. She told me the other day I was getting better - how much better, she didn’t say.

Thank you all who who have contributed content to Gray Matters. This newsletter is not written for you as much as it is by you. Others have made suggestions that helped give me direction. Special thanks to those that allowed me to use their photographs or artwork for the covers. Even though the artwork may have suffered some by the necessary cropping, it made the covers eye catching and beautiful.

I appreciate all of you that have participated in interviews. Everybody has a story, and hearing them makes us feel like part of the OLLI community. Thank you for being willing to share. Thanks also to the readers. I am grateful for all of the kind comments over the years.

The OLLI staff, both present and past, deserve a lot of credit. They aided in the proofing, helped with getting pictures and other information, made sure I didn’t make a major faux pas, and contributed in many other ways. They took the final product, massaged it in ways I don’t understand, and, a few days later, there it was on the website and in print.

Last, but definitely not least, is my wife Judy. As I mentioned earlier, she has participated in most of the interviews and did much of the writing on many of them. She also looks it over and gives me her input. Having an English major in the family is a big help. She is also to blame, because she was the editor just before me.

A TIP OF THE HAT TO YOU ALL!

GARY