



The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Connecticut is an academic cooperative that provides older adults with opportunities for intellectual development, cultural stimulation, and social interaction.

SUPERSTITION

The World Series shows us the ways of superstition. Example-the beards of most of the Boston players supposedly bringing them good luck. We shall see in that case. Sports seem to be full of superstitious rituals, from favorite bats or other equipment to strange movements before performing. Knock on wood or not, superstition appears to have played a positive role in evolution and it continues to affect human behavior. Lucky us.

Modern Halloween celebrations focus on fun frights, but superstitions associated with the holiday's predecessor, the Celtic festival of the dead, were no laughing matter. Families left "treats" for departed loved ones to discourage nasty "tricks" from beyond the grave.

Many people have anecdotes telling about their grandparents using a dowser to find water for a well. Dowsers probably believe that the forked rod or pendulum or branch they hold vibrates as they pass over underground water, but there is no science to support the notion. In fact, as early as the 19th century, dowsing doubters such as French chemist, Michel Eugene Chevreul, suggested the vibrations came from unintentional muscle movements. The German government tested 500 dowsers in the 1980s. Six "showed an extraordinarily high rate of success, which can scarcely if at all be explained as due to chance," the study says. However, in further tests they could not replicate their results. Oops!

Evolutionary biologist, Kevin Foster, defines superstitions as incorrect identification of causal links. Foster doesn't consider "superstition" derogatory. You don't need to understand cause to benefit from a behavior. Believing that rustling grass always means a predator is approaching, for example, means that you will hoof it whenever you hear the sound, whether it is caused by the wind or a hungry lion. You will live to share your superstition with your children, they will tell their children and so on, protecting your progeny from grass-rustling. Foster believes that, among early humans, natural selection favored the superstitious.

Superstition can still be a plus-sort of. German researchers reported in 2010 that the more strongly participants believed in their good luck charms, the more confident they were. The study also showed that the more confident superstitious participants were, the better they performed, perhaps due to self-efficacy-the belief in one's ability to succeed at a specific challenge- which has been linked to how willing people are to persist at a given task.

Or maybe brains trump beliefs. In 1974, Georgia researchers found smart high school students were less superstitious than those of average intelligence. OLLI participants surely will find themselves in the former category!

OLLI GOES TO STORRS

On Tuesday, October 16, OLLI members and friends traveled to Storrs to tour the UCONN campus.

The first stop was the UCONN Lodewick Visitor Center where Jacob, a UCONN upper classman, boarded our bus, to give us a guided tour around the entire campus. Besides giving us background information about the area, he also gave us a glimpse of current student life from his point of view. For the many UCONN alumni aboard, this brought back many vivid memories.

Next we went to the Connecticut State Museum and Archaeology Center to meet Dr. Nick Bellantoni, the State Archaeologist. Dr. Bellantoni gave a fascinating talk about the time that he was called in to assist in the investigation of Albert Afraid of Hawk, a Lakota Sioux Indian, who had died while he was performing in Connecticut with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Albert's body was reported to have been buried in an unmarked grave in Danbury. Family members on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation

requested to have his remains moved to the reservation for a traditional Lakota burial. It was Dr. Bellantoni's job to locate Albert's remains, positively identify the body, and to repatriate his remains to the reservation. Dr. Bellantoni explained how he used his forensic training to accomplish this task. It was a very moving experience.

After visiting the bookstore and having lunch at the Student Union, we proceeded to the Dodd Center where we met with an archivist, in the auditorium, to learn about Senator Thomas Dodd's life and his role as a prosecutor during the Nuremberg Trials. Then, we were taken to the stacks where many of the archival materials are stored.

No trip to Storrs would be complete without making a stop for ice cream at the UCONN Dairy Bar. So, that was our final stop. Now we can see why Yankee Magazine voted the UCONN Dairy Bar to be named the 2013 "Best of New England – Editor's Choice".

Submitted by **Peggy Angelicola**

OLLI Newsletters Go Internet

OLLI newsletters are available on our web page at www.waterbury.uconn.edu/osher

Then click on the left-hand index that says "Newsletters". They are available in PDF format, if you don't have the free reader, you can get it at www.adobe.com and click on the box that says "READER".

Penny O'Connell will deliver a lecture on Friday, November 22 on "The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy" – what we know now that we didn't know then... from 10:00 until 11:30 AM in the Multi-Purpose room. Light refreshments will be served. Please RSVP by Friday, November 8 at osher@uconn.edu. Register at 203-236-9924/25.



OLLI Café'

November 1

Home from Home: Commemorating Ireland's Great Hunger in America

Come hear the history of Ireland's Great Hunger – the history of Ireland's Great Hunger Museum at Quinnipiac University and a discussion of the artwork held in the museum and its role in commemorating the tragedy.

Grace Brady is the first Executive Director of Ireland's Great Hunger Museum. She has more than twenty years of museum experience, most recently working as the Assistant Secretary and General Manager of the Office of the Sr. V.P., Secretary and General Counsel at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

November 8

Producing Professional Theatre!

Semina De Laurentis is the Artistic Director of Seven Angels Theatre

“A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.”

– **George Bernard Shaw**

Clubs & Activities Committee –

November 15, all day, at OLLI UConn.
We are hosting our first ever FOOD DRIVE to benefit the Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries food pantry. Please bring non-perishable food items on November 1, 8, and 15 leave them at the OLLI information table.

Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 5, 10:30 a.m. in the conference room, UConn library.. Contact Nancy Via at: nvia@sbcglobal.net for more information.

OLLI WINTER SESSION 2014

See the selection of course offerings and sign up now!

Winter session will be five weeks – Fridays, January 17, 24, 31, February 7, 14 – February 21 will be built in as a winter snow date

Most classes are Fridays from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM unless otherwise noted. Rooms will be posted!

HS-401 The Palace Theater History, Lou Belloisy

HW-412 Yoga Stretch, Strengthen & Breathe, Cynthia Paolino

HW-411 Chair Yoga, Kathleen Greco

CE-007 Tales of Bosnia, Leslie Lebl

CE-004 Today's News – Tomorrow's History, Barry Davis

SP-401 The Official Game, Ned Conlan

MS-419 Basic Astronomy, Part II Gary Ruggeri

AH-419 Beatniks vs. Hippies? Alan Bisbort

VA-421 A Love Affair with Woody Allen Films, Nunzio DeFilippis

(note: this is a 3-hour course)

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

Please provide us with your suggestions, submissions and comments praises and/or critiques.

What do you want to read in the Newsletter ?

Contact or send your ideas to:

BOOK CLUB

Nov. 18 **My Beloved World** by Sonia Sotomayor
Our meetings are from 1:00 to 3:00 in room 102D...UConn/Waterbury—contact **Nancy Via**
e-mail nvia@sbcglobal.net

OLLI POETRY COFFEE HOUSE

2nd Thurs at John Bale Bookshop –10:00am
Contact Denise Whelan (deniseawhelan@yahoo.com)

For more information



Historic Philadelphia – The City of Brotherly Love

Forty of us met at the back parking lot of St. Anthony Church in Prospect where our trip began. We headed toward Philly, which served as the nation's unofficial capital throughout the War of Independence (except from the period of Sept. 1777 and June 1778 when it was held by the British). It was the largest and most important city in America at this time. The city was founded by William Penn as a place of religious tolerance. (1681)

Our first stop was 30 miles west of Philadelphia, at the Longwood Gardens, founded by Pierre S. DuPont. We explored the beautiful 20 outdoor gardens and 4 acre conservatory. There were dazzling displays, majestic musical fountains, flowering trees, shady groves, tulips, wisteria, 80 pound lily pads, topiaries, huge palms and roses galore. Irene, Nancy, Kathy, Linda and Diane were fascinated by the prickly pears. There was so much to see, we could've stayed a couple more hours. But time came for us to continue to our hotel, check in and get ready for dinner at the Chart House.

Day 2 started with a visit to the National Constitution Center, where we were entertained by a 17 minute multimedia presentation of "Freedom Rising". Then we could explore on our own. There were touch screens on individuals who impacted our constitutional history. There were Civil War Era Artifacts and the Signer's Hall, which housed 42 life-sized bronze statues of the delegates who signed the Constitution. This was a great visit to the only museum devoted to the US Constitution with these interactive exhibits and rare artifacts.

We had lunch at the Moshulu Restaurant on a totally renovated cutter dated back to 1904. The manager gave us an in-depth history of the ship including the different names, Kurt and Dreadnaught. President Wilson's wife renamed it Moshulu, which means fearless, in honor of the Seneca Tribe. It had a long history on the seas

working Europe, Mexico, Australia, America and Austria. In 1917 the ship was confiscated by the Americans in WW1, hauling copper ore, nitrate, coal, lumber and grain.

To this date it remains the largest four mast sailing ship in the world that is still afloat. It went through a restoration in Finland in 1968, was towed to Philly in 1974 when it opened in 1975 as a restaurant on Penn's Landing. Fire damaged her in 1984 and was purchased by HMS Ventures in 1994 and was restored like a luxury liner. In 2003 she was sold to the current owners who renovated her again and reopened with a new dining room, outdoor café and entertainment on the waterfront. It was quite a sight and we had a wonderful meal.

The rest of the afternoon was a combination of bus/walking tour of historic Philly, visiting Christ Church, Betsy Ross's home, Alfred Alley. The evening was at our leisure where many went to the Sugar House Casino for fun and food.

Day 3 we checked out and departed at 8:30 am back to Prospect. We did stop at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where we divided into two groups and had a tour of some of the world's finest Impressionist art. After the tour we had time to explore on our own and to have lunch. We then boarded the bus back to Prospect.

Philadelphia is the cradle of America's dream of freedom, home to the Declaration of Independence, the Liberty Bell and a leading cultural center. Many historic sites have been restored or rebuilt. A great trip, a wonderful city and even better weather. Look for the next trip, meet new people and enjoy.

Kathleen Trowbridge

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What do you want to read in the Newsletter ?

Contact or send your ideas to:

Bob Grady 860 274-9389

yvoorg@aol.com

MEET YOUR PRESENTERS

Dr. James Farnham has an innate sense of curiosity that compels him to seek to understand how things work in society.

Upon graduating from Fairfield University with a major in English, the Bridgeport native went to work for General Electric in its lamp division in Cleveland, Ohio. While the position in sales “looked like a fine career,” Dr. Farnham decided it wasn’t fulfilling for him and he elected to go to graduate school.

He earned his doctorate in literature at what is now Case Western Reserve University, which had a good program. Another benefit of earning his Ph.D. in Cleveland was being able to enjoy the exceptional Cleveland Orchestra with its famed music director George Szell.

He became fascinated with William Faulkner’s novels with the stories of the South, its characters and culture. Dr. Farnham did his doctoral dissertation on Faulkner’s philosophy. Later Dr. Farnham was to write an essay about how Southern writer Flannery O’Connor used the grotesque in her work. To his surprise, O’Connor wrote him to say she appreciated people such as he being interested in her work. She then cited areas of disagreement with his essay. This led to an ongoing correspondence and friendship with O’Connor, whose writing dealt with people looking for God. The relationship continued until O’Connor’s death in 1964 despite differing opinions.

One memorable event that Dr. Farnham recalled was visiting O’Connor in Georgia. While sitting on her front porch, O’Connor mused she had read that morning in the paper of someone getting a tattoo of Jesus on his back. Now why would someone do that? Subsequently, a new collection of her short stories came out that included “Parker’s Back” about a man who had such a tattoo done and its impact on his life.

Upon completing graduate work, Dr. Farnham became friends with an excellent sociologist, who “opened my mind” to thinking of things in terms of anthropology and sociology. “I realized I was using literature more and more as a way to look into a given culture.” He held post-doctoral fellowships at Yale in Cognitive Anthropology and another in Judaic Studies. “I came away with a love of Judaism,” after being indifferent earlier.

His curiosity led him to read extensively – including history books and personal narratives – about the Holocaust. He sought to learn about prejudice: how it develops and operates in society. He tried to understand how the Holocaust could happen.

At his wife’s suggestion, Dr. Farnham proposed an elective course about the Holocaust at Fairfield University where he was teaching. The first time it was offered, “I held my breath.” The registrar told him the class filled within 15 minutes. He taught the course as an elective at Fairfield from about 1975 until 1996 when he retired as a full professor. He said he feels an obligation to continue to teach about the Holocaust and presents it from time to time at OLLI.

Eventually, Dr. Farnham decided he was no longer comfortable being a Christian and converted to the Jewish faith, becoming Bar Mitzvah in his mid-50s. He identifies himself today as being Jewish but says he has moved farther away from “theist” beliefs. However, “I would never try to shape a person’s belief.” He observes science continues to find explanations for things once explained by religion, but, “I realize science hasn’t explained everything.”

Dr. Farnham believes it is important to understand the belief systems of a culture to understand other people. “Religion is an important part of humanity and we should be educated about it.” Currently, he is presenting on the writing of Herman Melville, who probes the question: Why do good people suffer?

-Mary Ann Martin

November 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 <i>OLLI</i>	2
3	4	5 Clubs and Activities Comm Library Conference Rm	6 Boston Trip 8:00 am	7	8 <i>OLLI</i>	9
10	11	12	13 Travel Mtg. 10:am	14 Poetry Club John Bale BookStore	15 <i>OLLI</i> Food Drive	16
17	18 Book Club 1:00 rm102d	19	20 Leadership-Council 10:30	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Connecticut Lyric Opera

CONNECTICUT
VIRTUOSI CHAMBER
ORCHESTRA



Adrian Sylveen, Artistic Director

November 2013

Richard Wagner

Der Fliegende Holländer

(The Flying Dutchman)

Steve Fredericks
Jurate Svedaite
Nathan Resika
Daniel Juarez
Heather Petri
Cris Frisco
Stage Director: Andy Ottoson
Artistic Director / conductor: Adrian Sylveen



FRIDAY, NOV. 15
7 PM

PALACE THEATER, WATERBURY, CT

TICKETS: \$65, \$45, \$25
MORE INFO 203.346.2000
WWW.THEVIRTUOSI.ORG

Sponsored in part by:



Maximilian F. & Mario D. Hoffman Foundation, Inc., Sloper Fund-Bank of America, Parker Fund-Bank of America, The Marjorie Moore Foundation

OLLI Travel Reminder -

The Travel Committee would like to remind anyone going on the trip to both the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum on Wednesday, Nov. 6th, that the new departure place for our bus is the St. Anthony Church/DOT Lot in Prospect. Please park at the back of the lot near Dunkin Donuts. Directions to the Lot are at the Information Table in the main entrance hall. The bus will be leaving promptly at 8AM.