When was the last time that you ever thought about the act of writing? Probably not since those early
days in elementary school- (those who went to school in Waterbury may remember those endless drills
in the Palmer method of cursive writing.) You may have noticed that your grandchildren don't seem to
have been taught to write in script. They print their letters and use the computer for most of their writ-
ing. But it is almost impossible to imagine a technology more central than writing to the way we live
and communicate. We use writing every day, and it is all around us all of the time. But precisely be-
cause of its ubiquity, we take writing for granted, as if it has always been there. We should remember,
however, that writing was a human invention. Sometime in the remote past, some inspired individual
or small group first came to the idea of writing.

Marc Zender, PhD., in a course on "Writing and Civilization", from The Great Courses, points
out writing has been around for about 5000 years with some scholars placing one of its origins to Mesop-
ottomania or Egypt about 3100 B.C. He makes the assertion that it is very unlikely that writing was
invented only once and then borrowed by later groups. For example, there is no doubt that Mayan
hieroglyphic writing and other ancient writing systems of Mexico developed independently from those
in the Old World.

Another myth that he questions is that writing was inspired by the use of clay tokens. Tokens
preceded writing in Mesopotamia by almost 5000 years and continued to exist alongside writing for
more than 1500 years. Further, if different shapes of tokens were actually forerunners of pictorial signs,
then we might expect some formal correlations between tokens and earliest signs, but apart from some
coincidental resemblances, there is no strong connection.

He also questions that writing was invented to take care of administrative requirements, pointing
to the use in China of writing to carry on divination and religious ritual. "Given that writing apparently
developed independently several times in different parts of the world and was used for multiple purpos-
es, we are better off discarding administration as prime mover...Writing seems to have grown out of a
need to record proper nouns, but once it was invented, it proved itself the most adaptable of tools,
eminently suited to all kinds of purposes, and an irresistible lure to all who came into contact with it,
borrowing and adapting it to their own languages and purposes." The study of writing leads to the
history of its users and gives a glimpse of the life of those who came before us.

Which is a good time to ask OLLI members to send their writings-poems, memoirs or other
compositions from OLLI courses- to the Newsletter or Voices and Visions to allow present and future
members to realize how talented we are.

RJG
Old Building to Give UConn 6 More Classrooms

According to a recent article in the Waterbury-Republican, the top floors of the Rectory Building, across the street from the UConn campus, will eventually house six 50 student classrooms, a student lounge and a meeting room. The ground floor will become a Starbucks and the coffee house will pay the city $73,500 rent per year.

The Board of Aldermen recently approved a $8.1 million plan to renovate and rent the building to UConn which has been located on East Main Street for the last 10 years and is becoming more in need of additional classroom space.

While the vote to renovate the so-called rectory building was not unanimous, I’m delighted to learn of the pending renovations because to me the building is one of the most handsome in the city. Those of us who have OLLI classes in the 318 classroom area currently have to look at the boarded building now in its 10th year of being an eyesore.

I asked Phil Benevento, an OLLI presenter and the city’s historian, for background on this building and here are some of the things he shared with me.

The first Irish immigrants came to Waterbury escaping the hard life caused by the Irish Potato Famine. In the late 1840s, St. John’s Episcopal Church was located in a wooden building in its current place. Its parishioners wanted to replace their wooden building with a gothic style church and agreed to sell their old building to the Catholic group.

The Irish Catholic newcomers were meeting in homes and decided to buy the old wooden church for the growing parish. Using oxen and wooden planks, the old wooden building was dragged up East Main Street about as far as the Palace Theater is now.

East Main Street was hilly then; more so than now and the church became stuck. The decision was made to buy a lot and modify the church and place it on the lot in 1847. This church was named in honor of St. Peter.

The next church building was constructed in 1848, in the gothic style as the city’s Irish population began to increase. It was originally called St. Patrick’s Hall and used as a meeting hall for the Ancient Order of Hibernians and housed a gym. It was located approximately on the current UConn site and named Immaculate Conception. A rectory for the priest was constructed where the parking lot is now. Then the old church became a Catholic grammar school and eventually a public school before being demolished in 1888.

The current building, usually called The Rectory, is one of the rare buildings in the United States constructed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. It features tall windows, granite and brick facing and high peak dormers. Two other buildings, in this style, are the one across from St. John’s Church on Church Street and another at the corner of North Elm Street and Cherry Avenue.

No date has been set for the work to begin on the Rectory and the proposal now goes to the UConn Board of Trustees for approval.

Evelyn Marshak

“The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the worldview and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible.”

George Orwell 1984

(With the mess in Congress, have we gotten there, yet? RJG)

OLLI Newsletters Go Internet

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

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”.

LOST & FOUND

Small tin pill box left in #119

Anyone find a white umbrella with polka dots?

ANYONE FIND a copy of “Moby Dick”?

If so, please contact the OLLI office, room #103
**Good News**

Do the new Twinkies taste as good as the old ones did? Are you one of those people who thought the substitutes in the supermarkets were just as good as Twinkies? For those of you who saw Twinkies as a waste of empty calories, you are authorized to skip reading the rest of this piece.

Metropoulos and Company joined with Apollo Global Management and spent $410 million to buy Twinkies and other Hostess cakes. Other bakery chains bought Drake’s Cakes, Devil Dogs and Yodels, McKee’s Foods; Wonder Bread is now being baked by Flower Foods.

Hostess Brands filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2012. The closing of the company meant the loss of 15,000 union jobs and a change in how the goodies are delivered. The Wonder Bread truck outside of your favorite grocery store is now a thing of the past. The baked goods now go to warehouses that supply retailers.

Evelyn Marshak
Baltimore and Annapolis May 4-6, 2014

Come join us on a unique educational adventure to history-filled Baltimore and Annapolis. Friendship Tours and the Travel Committee have arranged an excellent 3 day, 2 night package that includes an art deco hotel stay close to the Inner Harbor. The first night includes a dinner theatre.

The second day starts with a trip to Annapolis and a guided tour of the Naval Academy with free time for lunch and exploration of Annapolis before enjoying a guided tour of historic Baltimore. Dinner this evening will be at a famous seafood restaurant.

The following morning we will enjoy a guided tour of Camden Yards, home to the Orioles. We will see this famous park from luxury suites to the dugout. There will be free time to enjoy lunch, and the many attractions, and stores in the Inner Harbor.

The deluxe transportation includes many interesting and entertaining interactions with our tour director, Bob Read. The excellent driver from Peter Pan provides for our comfort and safety.

For details check the colorful flyer or course catalog. For registration, save your seats on the bus. Make your plans early and don’t be left out.

Call Friendship Tours at 860-243-1630. The overnight staff there can make your registration and answer any questions or arrange for any special needs.

Clubs & Activities Committee –

If it’s area museums and theater productions, clubs, and a host of activities you’re looking for, then the newly established OLLI Clubs and Activities Committee events are for you. This committee started with its first activity in March and has been coming up with interesting things and places for our OLLI membership to enjoy.

The responsibilities of this committee include identifying, establishing and coordinating clubs and activities which may be of interest and enjoyment for the OLLI membership.

Listed below are upcoming activities which we hope you will attend. There will be an OLLI host to greet you at each event:

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 15 and 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.
For weeks a six-year old lad kept telling his first-grade teacher about the baby brother or sister that was expected at his house.

One day the mother allowed the boy to feel the movements of the unborn child. The six-year old was obviously impressed, but made no comment. Furthermore, he stopped telling his teacher about the impending event.

The teacher finally sat the boy on her lap and said, “Tommy, whatever has become of that baby brother or sister you were expecting at home?”

Tommy burst into tears and confessed, “I think Mommy ate it!”

"How much is everyone giving, on average?" the driver asks.

Roughly a gallon," the man replies.

There was a Packers fan with a really crappy seat at Lambeau Field. Looking with his binoculars, he spotted an empty seat on the 50-yard line. Thinking to himself "what a waste" he made his way down to the empty seat.

When he arrived at the seat, he asked the man sitting next to it, "Is this seat taken?" The man replied, "This was my wife's seat. She passed away. She was a big Packers fan."

The other man replied,"I'm so sorry to hear of your loss. May I ask why you didn't give the ticket to a friend or a relative?"

The man replied, "They're all at the funeral."

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UCONN, Waterbury

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
The University of Connecticut
99 East Main Street
Waterbury, CT 06702

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.

Our programs are centered around classes developed and taught by members who volunteer their time and talents to share their knowledge, life passions, and interest with other members. The OLLI program also sponsors special events featuring noted authors, scholars, and experts in respected professional fields.

OLLI Leadership Council

Council Members

OLLI officers are part of the Leadership Council, which is the principal representative body of the OLLI membership.

Council Officers

President - Richard Fogg
1st Vice President - Mary Lou Reignier
2nd Vice President - Delma Way
Secretary - Toni Escott
Assistant Secretary - Joyce Conlan

We’re on the web! www.waterbury.uconn.edu/osopher
MEET YOUR PRESENTERS

His thirst for knowledge led **Dr. Arnold Heiser** to study the stars. Learning about the universe continues to be a passion of this Vanderbilt University professor of astronomy (emeritus).

He began studying physics at Indiana University but switched to astronomy. Today, those who would study astronomy often major in astrophysics but at the time the two fields were separate at the undergraduate level. His doctorate from the University of Chicago is in astrophysics.

Astronomy is a field based upon intellectual curiosity and desire to learn more but rarely results in discoveries that benefit daily life, he says. Dr. Heiser credits engineers, who are developing the technology that astronomers need to do their work, with making discoveries that do lead to many useful products.

For examples, radio and computer technology as well as the kind of “detectors” that collect light in cameras were involved in research work done by astronomers. The detectors used in cameras are the same as those used on telescopes.

Dr. Heiser discussed how ancient Egyptians without telescopes studied the skies to calculate when the River Nile would flood. They observed flooding occurred when Sirius, a very bright star, rose early in the morning. “Sirius is probably the brightest star that can be seen in the Northern Hemisphere.” By tracking Sirius, the early Egyptian astronomers knew when it would be best for planting. This discovery led to the development of an early calendar.

When researching at Vanderbilt, he studied binary stars, which are stars in two-star systems that orbit around each other. A small number of these star systems are eclipsing, i.e. one will pass in front of the other and change the observed light much as the way a lunar eclipse occurs when the full moon passes directly behind the earth into its shadow. An observer with “good visual acuity” in a dark location can actually see the change in emitted light “with the naked eye.”

Dr. Heiser liked teaching and doing research at Vanderbilt University from which he retired in 1990. While teaching was often fun at the university, “I didn’t particularly like evaluating students” or doing administrative work.

Over the years, he has often been asked about black holes and whether life exists on other planets. On the black hole issue, Dr. Heiser simply says, “We know black holes exist; we can detect them; they pull things (such as stars in) and then emit X-Rays. Of life on other planets, Dr. Heiser says “we shouldn’t assume it doesn’t, (exist)” adding that “life as we know it” would require certain conditions, such as the right temperature, water and so forth.

He enjoys presenting at OLLI – no student evaluations required - and volunteering at the Leitner Family Observatory and Planetarium at Yale. He also volunteers at the Peabody Museum in New Haven. Often, Peabody sends out vans with suitcases of artifacts such as fossil bones and rocks from various areas to programs for children. Dr. Heiser likes these “road trips” and also helps out in the vertebrae paleontology collections laboratory labeling bones.

Hiking has been a lifelong avocation of Dr. Heiser. When living in Nashville, he liked to see sandhill cranes that both migrate through or winter in the Hiwassee Refuge in Tennessee. He has enjoyed many trips over the years to Wyoming’s Yellowstone National Park. “We’ve got a country with lots of good stuff,” Dr. Heiser reflected, a nation where one can see such creatures as moose, humpback whales, dolphins, bison and turtles and many other animals and plant life unique to different areas. Dr. Heiser’s objective when presenting a class at OLLI, as when he taught at Vanderbilt, is to encourage the love of learning in his students.

Dr. Heiser was born in Brooklyn; he and his wife moved to Connecticut after his retirement in order to be closer to family. –**Mary Ann Martin**
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