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.

An Honor for Presenter, Member and Friend of OLLI,
Phil Benevento

By Mary Fitzpatrick Peitler

Next time you see Phil Benevento in the halls of UConn Waterbury, or the Mattatuck Museum, or for that matter, most places in Waterbury, be sure to congratulate him on an honor he recently received.

The Mattatuck Museum has announced the creation of the Philip Benevento History Internship. This position will allow a summer intern to work with the museum’s archivist, Michael Dooling, and its collection of manuscripts, and printed and photographic material dating from the 17th century to the 21st. This position was created with the goal of having a student produce a work of scholarship during a six-week timeframe. The intern will be paid a stipend of $1,000 upon completion of his or her work. Students majoring in history, urban studies, American Studies or library science, both undergraduate and graduate, are encouraged to apply by May 12th to Michael@mattmuseum.org for application requirements.

Phil Benevento’s OLLI course on the plays of Tennessee Williams was the very first one I took at OLLI. I was still working at the time and usually arrived breathless, ten minutes late, having been held up at work by this or that crisis, and he was always welcoming and understanding of people’s schedules. I was so impressed by the depth of his knowledge and teaching experience, but even more by his classroom technique of soliciting student input and thoughts. He could always find a way to affirm differing opinions. Phil’s class was a terrific introduction to OLLI for me, and I know it was what kept me coming back for more classroom experiences. Thank you, and congratulations, Professor Benevento!

Regarding Course Make-ups:
Contrary to what one may believe, OLLI classes canceled due to inclement weather are NOT automatically offered a make-up session. Make-up classes are scheduled on an individual basis and the decision to offer a make-up is dependant upon presenter choice, and availability of campus space. Many course presenters opt to condense course material into the remaining class sessions. If a presenter would like to make up that class he/she should survey the class for interest, and a date and time that works best, and then check with OLLI staff for room availability. If the campus is able to accommodate, a make-up class will be schedule at that time. Students will be notified if this is the case.

Regarding the 10th Anniversary Celebration:
The 10th Anniversary Celebration is being held on Friday April 28, 2017 from 12:30-2:00 PM in the MPR, and will feature live entertainment, food, ample refreshements, and a look back at OLLI through the years. In an effort to allow all members the option to attend, all classes that start at 12:15 PM or later will not meet on this day and will instead have their final class meeting on Friday May 5, 2017. We would like all those planning to attend to please RSVP to the OLLI office ASAP. You may register online (under Special Events) or call the OLLI office at 203-236-9924/9925 to reserve your space. A $10 donation is requested to support event and program costs, but certainly not required.
Twenty years ago, in Nashville, Tennessee, during the first week of January, 1996, more than 4,000 baseball coaches descended upon the Opryland Hotel for the 52nd annual ABCA's convention. While I waited in line to register with the hotel staff, I heard other more veteran coaches ruminating about the lineup of speakers scheduled to present during the weekend. One name, in particular, kept resurfacing, always with the same sentiment — “John Scolinos is here? Oh, man, worth every penny of my airfare.”

Who is John Scolinos, I wondered. No matter; I was just happy to be there.

In 1996, Coach Scolinos was 78 years old and five years retired from a college coaching career that began in 1948. He shuffled to the stage to an impressive standing ovation, wearing dark polyester pants, a light blue shirt, and a string around his neck from which home plate hung — a full-sized, stark-white home plate.

Seriously, I wondered, who is this guy?

After speaking for twenty-five minutes, not once mentioning the prop hanging around his neck, Coach Scolinos appeared to notice the snickering among some of the coaches. Even those who knew Coach Scolinos had to wonder exactly where he was going with this, or if he had simply forgotten about home plate since he’d gotten on stage. Then, finally …

“You’re probably all wondering why I’m wearing home plate around my neck,” he said, his voice growing irascible. I laughed along with the others, acknowledging the possibility. “I may be old, but I’m not crazy. The reason I stand before you today is to share with you baseball people what I’ve learned in my life, what I’ve learned about home plate in my 78 years.”

Several hands went up when Scolinos asked how many Little League coaches were in the room. “Do you know how wide home plate is in Little League?”

After a pause, someone offered, “Seventeen inches?”

“Right! And in the Major Leagues, how wide home plate is in the Major Leagues?”

Seventeen inches!” They said, sounding more confident.

“Seventeen inches?” a guess from another reluctant coach.

“That’s right,” said Scolinos. “Now, how many high school coaches do we have in the room?” Hundreds of hands shot up, as the pattern began to appear. “How wide is home plate in high school baseball?”

“Seventeen inches,” they said, sounding more confident. “You’re right!” Scolinos barked. “And you college coaches, how wide is home plate in college?”

“Seventeen inches!” we said, in unison.

“Any Minor League coaches here? How wide is home plate in pro ball?” ………. “Seventeen inches!”

“RIGHT! And in the Major Leagues, how wide home plate is in the Major Leagues?”

“Seventeen inches!”

“SEV-EN-TEEN INCHES!” he confirmed, his voice bellowing off the walls. “And what do they do with a Big League pitcher who can’t throw the ball over seventeen inches?” Pause. “They send him to Pocatello!” he hollered, drawing raucous laughter. “What they don’t do is this: they don’t say, ‘Ah, that’s okay, Jimmy. If you can’t hit a seventeen-inch target? We’ll make it eighteen inches or nineteen inches. We’ll make it twenty inches so you have a better chance of hitting it. If you can’t hit that, let us know so we can make it wider still, say twenty-five inches.” Pause. “Coaches… what do we do when your best player shows up late to practice? or when our team rules forbid facial hair and a guy shows up unshaven? What if he gets caught drinking? Do we hold him accountable? Or do we change the rules to fit him? Do we widen home plate? “

The chuckles gradually faded as four thousand coaches grew quiet, the fog lifting as the old coach’s message began to unfold. He turned the plate toward himself and, using a Sharpie, began to draw something. When he turned it toward the crowd, point up, a house was revealed, complete with a freshly drawn door and two windows. “This is the problem in our homes today. With our marriages, with the way we parent our kids. With our discipline. We don’t teach accountability to our kids, and there is no consequence for failing to meet standards. We just widen the plate!”

Pause. Then, to the point at the top of the house he added a small American flag. “This is the problem in our schools today. The quality of our education is going downhill fast and teachers have been stripped of the tools they need to be successful, and to educate and discipline our young people. We are allowing others to widen home plate! Where is that getting us?.. Silence. He replaced the flag with a Cross. “And this is the problem in the Church, where powerful people in positions of authority have taken advantage of young children, only to have such an atrocity swept under the rug for years. Our church leaders are widening home plate for themselves! And we allow it.”

“And the same is true with our government. Our so called representatives make rules for us that don’t apply to themselves. They take bribes from lobbyists and foreign countries. They no longer serve us. And we allow them to widen home plate! We see our country falling into a dark abyss while we just watch.”

I was amazed. At a baseball convention where I expected to learn something about curve balls and bunting and how to run better practices, I had learned something far more valuable. From an old man with home plate strung around his neck, I had learned something about life, about myself, about my own weaknesses and about my responsibilities as a leader. I had to hold myself and others accountable to that which I knew to be right, lest our families, our faith, and our society continue down an undesirable path.

“If I am lucky,” Coach Scolinos concluded, “you will remember one thing from this old coach today. It is this: “If we fail to hold ourselves to a higher standard, a standard of what we know to be right; if we fail to hold our spouses and our children to the same standards, if we are unwilling or unable to provide a consequence when they do not meet the standard; and if our schools & churches & our government fail to hold themselves accountable to those they serve, there is but one thing to look forward to …”

With that, he held home plate in front of his chest, turned it around, and revealed its dark black backside, “…We have dark days ahead!.”

Note: Coach Scolinos died in 2009 at the age of 91, but not before touching the lives of hundreds of players and coaches, including mine. Meeting him at my first ABCA convention kept me returning year after year, looking for similar wisdom and inspiration from other coaches. He is the best clinic speaker the ABCA has ever known because he was so much more than a baseball coach. His message was clear: “Coaches, keep your schools & churches & our government accountable to the standards to which they serve, there is but one thing to look forward to …”

And this my friends is what our country has become and what is wrong with it today, and now go out there and fix it!

“Don’t widen the plate.”

from Google “17 inches”

(How true!)
April 21
Waterbury Interactive: Our City, Our Neighborhoods
Shakesperience Productions
An interactive, multigenerational, live performance featuring professional actors and OLLI members!

April 28
OLLI at UConn 10th Anniversary Celebration!

So Many things to Take In on a Trip to Lake George and Saratoga Springs
Sept. 22nd – 24th, 2017, Member Price- $463pp – double/triple

Celebrate the first day of Fall (Sept 22nd) by traveling north with OLLI on an overnight trip to upper NY state. Venture into the heart of the Adirondack Mountains to enjoy a plethora of activities, scenery, and history on land and water – and an excellent chance of seeing it during peak foliage season for the area.

On our way to Lake George, we will make a stop in Albany, the state capital, to visit the NY STATE MUSEUM. Originally the museum, founded in 1836, was started by Governor William Marcy for the purpose of conducting “a grand and comprehensive collection of the natural productions of the State of New York to exhibit under one roof its animal, mineral and vegetable wealth”. It has morphed into a major research and educational institution with collections dedicated to preserving New York State's rich artistic, social, historical, and environmental legacies under the leadership of the New York State Education Department. It houses exhibits on Native Americans of the area, animal life, Paleontology, Archaeology, and more modern exhibits on various aspects of the World Trade Center Disaster of 9/11 to name only a few.

Our trip continues to Lake George where we stay for 2 nights at the Comfort Suites Hotel with a Welcome Dinner on our first night. The next day we rise bright and early to take in the 6:30am launch of 90+ colorful hot air balloons at the ADIRONDACK HOT AIR BALLOON FESTIVAL. Make sure to have your cameras ready! At the field there will be various vendors from which to choose your breakfast fare while you are watching the breathtaking site. As afternoon arrives, enjoy lunch and shopping in quaint Lake George Village and join our local guide for a TOUR OF LAKE GEORGE learning about its history, geology, and French Indian War. In the evening we will enjoy a leisurely cruise on the steamboat LAC DU SAINT SACREMENT for a view of Lake George and the Adirondacks from the water all while having a hearty dinner and entertainment onboard.

On Day 3, on our southbound trip home, we will stop at Saratoga Springs where we will have a HEALTH, HISTORY & HOUSES CITY TOUR OF SARATOGA SPRINGS by a local guide. Our guide will highlight the famous sites of the Saratoga Race Track, Congress Park and Broadway. Learn the history of these sites and of the “Great Ladies” (the original name for Victorian Houses) and the families that built them. Taste test two world-famous mineral springs. Enjoy time on own to explore downtown Saratoga for lunch and shopping before we head for home with memories of our colorful weekend.

For more information on this trip, flyers are available at the OLLI Information Table. For reservations, call Friendship Tours at 1-800-243-1630 and ask about OLLI at Waterbury UCONN’s overnight trips. Non-members are also invited at an added charge of $20pp. Hope to see you there!
SOUTHERN VIEWPOINTS
A senior citizen in Louisiana was overheard saying, “When the end of the world comes, I hope to be in Louisiana.”

When asked why, he replied, “I’d rather be in Louisiana ‘cause everthang happens in Louisiana 20 years later than in the rest of the world.”

The young man from Mississippi came running into the store and said to his buddy, “Bubba, somebody just stole your pickup truck from the parking lot!”

Bubba replied, “Did y’all see who it was?”

The young man answered, “I couldn’t tell, but I got the license plate number.”

A man in North Carolina had a flat tire, pulled off on the side of the road, and proceeded to put a bouquet of flowers in front of the car and one behind it. Then he got back in the car to wait.

A passerby studied the scene as he drove by, and was so curious he turned around and went back. He asked the fellow what the problem was.

The man replied, “I got a flat tahr.”

The passerby asked, “But what’s with the flowers?”

The man responded, “When you break down they tell you to put flares in the front and flares in the back. I never did understand it neither.”

The Sheriff pulled up next to the guy unloading garbage out of his pick-up into the ditch. The Sheriff asked, “Why are you dumping garbage in the ditch? Don’t you see that sign right over your head.”

“Yep,” he replied. “That’s why I’m dumpin’ it here, ‘cause it says: ‘Fine For Dumping Garbage.’”

A Florida senior citizen drove his brand new Corvette convertible out of the dealership. Taking off down the road, he pushed it to 80 mph, enjoying the wind blowing through what little hair he had left.

“Amazing,” he thought as he flew down I-95, pushing the pedal even more.

Looking in his rear view mirror, he saw a Florida State Trooper, blue lights flashing and siren blaring. He floored it to 100 mph, then 110, then 120. Suddenly he thought, “What am I doing? I’m too old for this!” and pulled over to await the trooper’s arrival.

Pulling in behind him, the trooper got out of his vehicle and walked up to the Corvette. He looked at his watch, then said, “Sir, my shift ends in 30 minutes. Today is Friday. If you can give me a new reason for speeding – a reason I’ve never before heard – I’ll let you go.”

The old gentleman paused then said, “Three years ago, my wife ran off with a Florida State Trooper. I thought you were bringing her back.”

“Have a good day, Sir,” replied the trooper.
**OLLI artBeat**

*An Heroic Evening*

**By Mary Fitzpatrick Peitler**

Spring has definitely arrived, and members of the community concert band known as *The Connecticut Pops* are hard at work every Tuesday night preparing for their upcoming Spring Concert. It will take place on the evening of **Friday, May 12th at 7:30 p.m.** Venue will be the **Mainstage Theater at Naugatuck Valley Community College**, the same auditorium where so many of us enjoy the offerings of the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra.

The theme of this concert is **“Heroes.”** The group has chosen a number of pieces that might seem obviously heroic, such as a medley of marches by the film composer John Williams, selections from “*Star Trek,*” and some pieces honoring members of the armed forces. They have also included some pieces that expand on the premise of heroism, including a touching, lyrical work by the composer Larry Daehn that honors his mother’s struggle with cancer, and some pieces by musical heroes including J.S. Bach, Percy Grainger, and Gustav Holst. The theme was suggested by one of the member of the group, and according to Director Andrew Ardizzoia, “was broad enough that it would allow us the latitude to build such an eclectic program.”

In addition to the band, the audience will be treated to members of the college’s theater program performing short vignettes (short scenes and monologues) from their Spring plays “Hearts Like Fists” and “Golden Boy.” The group always endeavors to include Naugatuck students from different artistic disciplines and groups in the concert. It is multi-generational and appeals to an audience of all ages as well.

A little history - The Connecticut Pops are a fifty plus member group of musicians primarily from Western Connecticut who come together for the sheer joy of making music. The group has been in existence for thirty years and many members have been involved for two decades or more. **Andrew Ardizzoia, Director of the Band and faculty member at Naugatuck**, recently told me that it always amazes him how veteran members of the group can relearn a piece they haven’t played in a while simply by reading through it. He said, “I’m so proud of the hard work the band does to make our concerts such a success, and it’s an honor to be associated with them. We work hard, but I like to think we also have a good time!”

The concert is **free** and music lovers of all ages are encouraged to attend. You may want to bring a few dollars as they usually hold a fund-raising raffle of a prize or basket to raise necessary funds for sheet music, printing, etc. I have been to many of their concerts and always enjoy them. The musicianship is top notch. By attending, you can encourage Naugatuck to keep supporting a wonderful group of community members who want to make music and keep a tradition going! Hope to see you there on May 12th!
MEET YOUR COUNCIL MEMBERS

Ann Rompre has always enjoyed the outdoors but never dreamed that one day she would find herself taking a snowmobile to get home.

Ann chuckles when she remembers the days when she and her husband Earl would go in the winter to their “camp” in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont in the area of Newark, VT, not too far from the Canadian border.

In the winter, the old logging road leading to their camp isn’t maintained. To get to their place, Ann and her husband Earl got on their snowmobiles and headed up the last few miles from where they had to leave their regular transportation.

The retired art educator enjoyed snowmobiling immensely but had to give it up on doctor’s orders following a heart attack. Now Ann travels with Earl to the “camp” in warmer months. She rejoices in the beauty of the mountains and woods as well as seeing resident animals, who inhabit the area.

“I find the stars (appear to be) larger there” without light pollution from the city. She loves gardening in Vermont; she and Earl go canoeing on the Connecticut River which is about an hour away.

“It’s nice to see wildlife” such as bears, moose, foxes and coyotes, who are abundant. Partridges nest on their property. She hastens to explain that the camp building isn’t a rustic cabin in the woods but is a three-bedroom contemporary house with a cathedral ceiling over the living room.

She explains those who have homes in this remote section of Vermont refer to them as camps, but the word doesn’t mean quite the same thing to people unfamiliar with that area. The house actually is bigger than the one they live in in Waterbury, Ann confided.

Earl bought the land before their marriage and “had the foundation in.” He built the home himself with friends giving help. Ann used her artistic gifts to design the interior.

Ann’s interest in nature stemmed, she says, from following her two older brothers around in the woods in the back of the family house in Naugatuck where they played and built a tree fort.

As a pupil in St. Francis School, Naugatuck, Ann found she really enjoyed drawing. She remembers, “Luckily, one nun recognized art talent and would give us (students with artistic gifts) stuff to draw.”

While Ann loved art, her mother urged her to become a teacher so she elected to major in elementary education at Southern Connecticut State University.

Soon, she switched over to art education and, “I’m glad I did.” She earned her master’s degree at Southern and began her teaching career in Bridgeport, where she taught one year.

Ann eventually took a position teaching art in Naugatuck’s elementary schools. Thirty-two years later, she retired after having many great experiences with her pupils.

She liked to stimulate children’s imaginations by bringing in picture books such as Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak. After presenting that story to very young children, Ann asked them to draw something they would like to be and tell why. They weren’t allowed to choose a person: no firemen or policemen. She wanted the youngsters to let their imaginations flourish beyond people they knew.

One child wanted to be a squirrel because he liked the “big bushy tail.” Others chose being birds so they could fly. Ann once gave first graders pre-made tags saying “I wish I were ______.” Some chose being stars so they could “shine.”

Ann’s life continues to be full of rewarding experiences. At OLLI, she is a member of the Leadership Council and is co-chair of the Travel Committee.

-Mary Ann Martin