



OLLI
News

UConn
WATERBURY

Volume 21, Issue 7

April 5, 2019

WHAT - Me Worry!!

Okay, OLLI members, the Powerball is up to \$500 million and you have the winning ticket! How happy would you be? Giddy at that moment, no doubt. And maybe pretty happy for some time after that. But how about the next year? Studies show that many lottery winners are broke within the first five years. Why is that?

In an article from the March 2019 issue of Discover Magazine, entitled, "The Happiness Dilemma: Why satisfaction in life is never guaranteed – thanks to natural selection," William von Hippel writes, "The sad truth is that when our dreams come true we rarely end up happier than we were before." He contends that evolution is responsible.

"Why did evolution play this dirty trick on us? Why did it give us dreams of lifelong happiness by achieving our goals, then fail to deliver the emotional goods when we actually reach those goals?"

The answer is that evolution doesn't care if we're happy, so long as we are reproductively successful. Happiness is a tool that evolution uses to incentivize us to do what is in our genes' best interest. If we were capable of experiencing lasting happiness, evolution would lose one of its best ways to motivate us."

Von Hippel uses a parable as an example. Two cavemen, Thag and Crag, each kill a mastodon. As expected, both are incredibly happy and the toast of the respective clans. But Thag stays incredibly happy while Crag turns back to baseline within the week. Thag stays home content to wallow in his happiness while Crag feels the need to get another mastodon. He continues to hunt and kills many mastodons. These exploits get him the respect of the clan. Thag, meanwhile, will be of little interest to the group by virtue of his lack of productivity. But he won't particularly care – he is, after all, permanently happy – but he'll suffer the social and reproductive consequences. As a result, there will be fewer baby Thags in the next generation.

"We see a similar pattern today when we examine the motivational effects of happiness over time. Really happy people are rarely high achievers because they simply don't need to be.... The data agree." A study from the University of Virginia examined people's self-reported level of happiness from the mid-1980s. Then, they compared that with their future earnings in the early 2000s. They found that people who were unhappy back then went on to earn less money than their happier compatriots. No surprise here: happy people are more energetic and compelling than sad people and being energetic and compelling helps them to earn more money. "But more important to our point: people who self-identified specifically as moderately happy went on to earn the most money 15 years later, while people who said they were very happy went on to earn only about as much as the unhappy folks.

Clearly some joy is good for success in life, but too much happiness is a financial disaster. This is why evolution designed us to be reasonably happy, with occasional moments of giddiness that soon fade as we return to our individual baseline level of happiness."

The author points out that in his research when our body needs extra energy, one of the places it goes is our immune system because we have an enormous number of immune cells coursing through our body, so a momentary break from production is okay.

"As a result, our immune system evolved to run at peak capacity when we're happy, but to slow down dramatically when we're not. This is why long-term unhappiness can literally kill you... And while loneliness in late adulthood is deadlier than smoking."

So, OLLI members, what is the purpose of happiness? It helps you to survive and reproduce and keeps us healthy. People who don't experience setbacks, failures and despair are severely constrained in learning how to avoid bad people, bad situations and bad ideas. So experience is the best teacher. "Learning from plans gone wrong can far outweigh the benefits of success."

OLLI DAY TRIPS FOR THE FALL 2019 SEMESTER

by Evelyn Marshak

BEAUPORT PRINCESS CRUISE

Happily, you will not need a passport for the Beauport Princess Cruise on Tuesday, September 17 which features a tour around the Gloucester Harbor in Massachusetts. This fun excursion will feature photographic opportunities of the Ten Pound Island Lighthouse, the Fisherman's Statue, and Hammond Castle. It's very likely that the sea air will help you work up an appetite to enjoy the delicious buffet lunch served aboard the ship, and as an additional sensory pleasure there will be live music. After the cruise you will have the afternoon to visit Rockport, one of the oldest artisan colonies in New England. There is plenty of shopping at the art galleries, or you might decide simply to sit and enjoy the views of the harbor.

The cost for OLLI members is \$107 per person. Non-OLLI members can climb aboard the Beauport Princess for \$117 per person. Sounds like a perfect early autumn day! For reservations and questions, call Friendship Tours at 1-800-243-1630.

MURDER ON THE BELLEVUE EXPRESS/TRAIN

British mystery writer Agatha Christie's novel, *Murder on the Orient Express*, became a popular feature movie in 1947, 1974 and 2017. The OLLI Travel Committee invites all to climb aboard the Bellevue Express of the Newport & Narragansett Bay Railroad in Newport, Rhode Island on Tuesday, October 22 for a similar interactive murder mystery presented by the Marley's Bridge Theatre Company. You will have the opportunity to play the part of Hercules Poirot on the scene during this interactive play. Be part of the action with its colorful cast of gangsters, flappers, Hollywood stars, and Newport's elite. It's the cat's pajamas! It's copacetic until someone bites the big one and YOU need to get to the bottom of it. Dinner will be served during the performance. Warning, there is a sense of uneasiness aboard the Bellevue Express very soon after the Newport & Narragansett train departs from the train station! The dining area is set in such a way that you will not need to turn your head as the play unfolds and you try to figure out WHO DONE IT while enjoying a great meal.

After the performance and dinner, you are invited to spend time in beautiful Newport, Rhode Island. You'll find good shopping and an excellent view of this harbor city. Solving a murder requires good detectives to pay close attention to details. Some of your details for the day are these: The coach leaves the Chase Parkway Commuter lot at 8:15 am and returns approximately at 6:30 pm. Cost is \$116 for OLLI members and \$126 for non-members. All costs for the trip including gratuities are included. Make sure you give your luncheon choice when calling to reserve your trip at Friendship Tours, 1-800-243-1630.

Upcoming OLLI Travel

Spring/Summer – 2019

- 4/06/2019:** Tosca/Metropolitan NYC – member cost \$142
6/04 - 06/2019: Fingertakes – member cost \$561 (dbl/triple); \$691 (single)
8/18/2019: Tanglewood/Naumkeag – member cost \$135



Fall – 2019

- 9/17/2019:** Beauport Princess Cruiselines/Gloucester, MA - member cost \$107
10/1-4/2019: Ocean City, MD – member Cost \$585pp (dbl/triple); \$731 (single)
10/22/2019: Murder on the Bellevue Express, Newport/RI – member cost \$116

Flyers available at the OLLI Information Table. All prices are member prices. Non-members are charged a slight surcharge that is listed on all flyers. Call Friendship Tours for information and reservations (1-800-243-1630). Mention OLLI Travel. (Please do not call the OLLI Office.)

RSVP: osher@uconn.edu / 203-236-9924

Please Note – All OLLI Trips will depart from and return to the Chase Parkway DOT Commuter Lot, Waterbury. Maps of this Departure Area are available on the OLLI Information Table.

COMPUTER CLINIC

with Timothy Padgett

EVERY FRIDAY. 1:30 - 2:30pm.
Room 225.

Have questions about navigating your computer? Drop in and see Timothy Padgett, OLLI instructor who teaches *Computers for Beginners: Navigating Windows* with OLLI. No appointment necessary - just drop in to Room 225 (computer lab) with your questions!

The Newsletter is always looking for content from our readers. This may be in the form of original work or items you have found interesting and may wish to pass on to others. We always welcome any suggestions you may have to improve the newsletter or criticisms of it. The Newsletter exists to inform and entertain our readers. Contact Bob Grady at yvoorg@aol.com or any OLLI staff member.

YOU'RE INVITED!!!

OLLI CLUBS & ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

ETHNIC LUNCHEON

MONDAY, APRIL 29 | 12 NOON

MUYURI INDIAN BISTRO
1249 WEST MAIN ST.
WATERBURY, CT 06708

\$15 per person (includes tax & gratuity)



Please Note: Seating is limited to the first **50 people**. Reservations *must* be made to Delma Way (delvilway@aol.com, 860-274-8621) or Barbara Gavin (bar1005@yahoo.com, 1-201-506-0288). We hope to see you there!

OLLI FILM CLUB

Wed. April 10: To Kill A Mockingbird (1962) @ noon in Room 302 of the Rectory building

Spring '19 theme: Loss of Innocence

The purpose of the Film Club is to encourage lively discussions about the films shown. There will be activities both before and after each showing to aid in these discussions. The members of the Film Club committee will present information about the writer, actors and background to each film.

Bring a bag lunch, beverage, and be ready to actively participate in discussion. We'll provide the popcorn.

OLLI BOOK CLUB

Apr. 15: Once We were Brothers by Ronald Balson

May 20: Ruthless Tide by Al Roker

June 17: The invention of Wings by Sue Monk Kidd

July 15: The Ensemble by Aja Gabel

The Book Club meets the third Monday of every month in Room 102 @ 1:00 PM. Come by!

I'll admit I had avoided going to visit the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. The Memorial was dedicated on September 11, 2011 and the Museum opened in May of 2014. The memories of that day, even though the dedication was a decade later, still burned too brightly in my memory. Like all of us Americans, I remember exactly where I was – a Hospice Team meeting at work – and my first impressions – shock, disbelief, then wondering if anyone I knew was there. But a friend and I saw a trip advertised for this past weekend, and I decided the time had come to pay homage to the victims and the survivors and the many first responders who risked and lost their lives that day.

The tour, though not OLLI sponsored, was through Friendship Tours which is always a great way to take a trip. (OLLI Travel Committee had sponsored a 9/11 trip in 2015 which Committee Chair Ann Rompre told me was very successful.) Our driver was Bob (of Bob and Bob) and tour guide Eva was very experienced and well-informed. When we arrived in Battery City Park, we had two hours to spare before our timed tour, so we were able to take advantage of some people-watching and lunch in the beautiful new upscale food and shopping court, Brookfield Place, right across the street from the museum. Families were out in force that day and it was nice to see so many people taking advantage of the good weather – young couples with babies, a plethora of scooters and strollers, and a testimony to New York's multiculturalism.

The museum is a beautiful tribute to all those who were present at this horrific event on that day which began so tranquilly in Manhattan. The skies were blue, the temperature perfect, and a beautiful start to what turned into a terrible day. The museum takes a chronological approach and is so rich in detail, so poignant, and so incredibly sad. The exhibitions not only commemorate the September 11, 2001 attacks which killed 2,977 people, but also the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six.

An incredible amount of research, collecting and curating has gone into this effort. The memorial called "Reflecting Absence" consists of a field of trees interrupted by two large recessed pools on the footprints of the Twin Towers meant to symbolize the loss of life and physical void left by the attacks. The park is at street level, above the Memorial Museum. The names of the victims of the attacks are inscribed on parapets surrounding waterfalls (the largest manmade waterfall in the United States). A very special part of the memorial is the "Survivor Tree" a pear tree which had been recovered from the rubble and which has lived through a few moves, a symbol of the capacity of the human spirit to persevere.

Security is incredibly high with many museum guards and New York City Police on the premises. The museum itself showcases 40,000 images, 14,000 artifacts, over 3,500 oral recordings including those from survivors and emergency personnel, and over 500 hours of video. There is also a special section with videos recounting the rise of Al Qaeda. It is impossible to see everything in one afternoon, and emotionally overwhelming to try to do so, as everything you look at is an individual reminder of the carnage and sadness of the day. To me one of the most moving displays was video footage recorded by a camera that had been set up in Brooklyn a few days before the attack. Another was set up simultaneously in Berlin, with the idea of conveying the unchanging and predictable normalcy in a city at the start of the 21st century. How sad to see that normalcy come to an end, for all of us, in the wake of those attacks.

The museum, of course, shows us how radical and violent fundamentalism can cause so much damage to mankind, but it also clearly demonstrates the incredible braveness and kindness of those who responded that day and in the days months and years following the attacks. One of the displays is devoted to "9/11 Related Illnesses Ongoing Health Impacts," another sad legacy of that day. I wholeheartedly recommend a visit. Be prepared to experience stark reality, a history lesson hopefully learned, and a feeling of gratitude to so many.



MEET YOUR OLLI INSTRUCTORS

by Mary Ann Martin

Gerald O'Connell is a teacher known for bringing wit and merriment to his classrooms. The laughter of his OLLI students echoed down the hall as his first session on *Understanding Islam and the Middle East* came to an end.

That “vibe” is important to him as he has a teaching style that uses wit and laughter to keep the attention of students but “I know my stuff” and students respond to his enthusiasm for sharing knowledge of history.

During his long career teaching at Newington High School, Gerald found using wit can lighten the mood in a class and help “reduce fear among students” who are unsure of themselves.

A successful teacher also must have a firm grasp on the subject matter and be able to answer questions with authority. “Students can spot a phony right away.”

Growing up in a house filled with books, Gerald's interest in history began at an early age. He recalled following his mother “like a little duck” around the house before he could read and seeing and being intrigued by a pictorial book with its title written in gold lettering.

One of the book's photos was of Hadrian's Wall, built by the Romans on the order of Emperor Hadrian in northern England. (Today, the 73-mile wall, often walked by tourists, is managed as a historic site by English Heritage.) Gerald recalled the book with its spectacular photos many years later when working on a project dealing with ancient Rome.

His family's interest in reading encouraged the future teacher to read. His reading spans a wide range of topics. An early favorite was *Cheaper by the Dozen*, written by Frank Gilbreth and Ernestine Gilbreth Carey about their experiences growing up in a large family. The comedic film of that name was based on their book.

Other books that stand out in Gerald's memory include *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom* by James MacGregor Burns, 1940-1945, and *The Haj* by Leon Uris, a novel about the struggle between Israel and Palestine from 1929 to 1956.

A fan of film, Gerald quickly cites his favorite movie: *Lion in Winter*, starring Peter O'Toole as King Henry II and Katherine Hepburn as Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Gerald said he was influenced to teach, in large part, by his two sisters, who were older than he and who both taught.



He graduated from Sacred Heart High School in Waterbury. During his high school years, he worked as a stock boy at the iconic Howland Hughes Department Store, which precluded playing sports.

At Western Connecticut State University, Gerald majored in history with a minor in Asian studies. He also has an MS in history and a sixth year certificate from Central Connecticut State University.

Gerald remembers his days in Newington fondly. He recalled having Congresswoman Barbara Bailey Kennelly speak to his students on what it meant to be a woman in Congress. She served in the U. S. House of Representatives from 1982-1999.

He takes pride in having former students tell him how they developed an interest in history because of his classes and is pleased to see some of them now teaching at Newington High School.

Gerald taught for 38 years at Newington High School including one year as a long-term substitute, before retiring from Newington in 2017. But “I'm a loyal old dog,” who remains devoted to teaching. He is an adjunct professor at Norwalk Community College and also the University of Bridgeport.

One of his sisters suggested he might enjoy teaching at OLLI. Never having taught adults over the age of 50, Gerald didn't know what to expect. He found a “really good vibe” in the classroom during his first class with lots of enthusiasm, knowledge and, of course, laughter. “It is a great gift” to be able to share knowledge and Gerald plans to continue doing so in the classroom “as long as people are interested.”