



OLLI  
*News*

UConn  
WATERBURY

Volume 21: Issue 6

March 29, 2019

## THE BIG BURN

Last June, my brother, my nephew, and I traveled west to Spokane, WA to begin a 3700-mile vacation. We drove I 90 E. to Flathead Lake on the way to Glacier National Park in Montana, then north to Jasper, Alberta, Canada. From there we headed west and south to Seattle, Washington, and Olympic National Park and finally back to Spokane to take the airplane home. It was a magnificent journey filled with great scenery and camaraderie. As we traveled, we could see the effects of climate change in the mountains and forests of that vast area. But that's a story for another time.

Today I would like to tell you about the time when this whole area was on fire. Timothy Egan writes graphically about it in his book "The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and The Fire That Saved America." This is a story of the fledging Forest Service initiated by Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot despite the anti-conservationists in the Senate and the robber barons who took advantage of the lack of regulation in the forest and mining industries.

Imagine that you are back in the Wild West at the beginning of the 20th century. There were few paved roads. Telegraph or telephone was the method of communication, and towns were small and not heavily populated. Horses were the main mode of transportation. Big cities were few and far between. Quite a contrast between now and then. On our trip we missed the big fires of the summer, but they are still a catastrophe when they happen in the sparsely-populated heavily-forested sections of the West. However, we have professional firefighters and equipment that can quickly put out the small fires. Communication is instantaneous and crews can be dispatched to the trouble spots. Aircraft and heavy equipment supplement the men on the front lines. But sometimes the fires get away as they did this summer with terrible consequences. How different it was back then!

August 1910 was the driest month since 1894 and the fledgling Rangers were worried. Egan writes that by August 6 every clap of thunder or lightning strike brought the potential for something horrible on a grand scale. "And by morning, sure enough, the total number of fires had reached 2500. Even after emptying the saloons, trains, jails, and hiring halls of men, Koch, the chief ranger for that area, felt that he was not making progress. The Forest Service had fewer than one man for each fire burning in the northern Rockies. Koch was exasperated: one man per fire!"

The Rangers had been fighting fires for 10 days, and for everyone they put out another one started. According to Egan, most of the Rangers who were leading the fire crews were recent college graduates from the East Coast and had never experienced something like this before. Politics permeated the towns and chaos ruled. Meanwhile, the fires continued, and on August 20 they all came together.

Egan describes that time. "At this altitude, along the spine of the Bitterroots, the wind moved without obstruction, and the fire itself threw brands 10 miles or more ahead of the flame front. The storm found the Montana border and spit flames down into the heavily settled Bitterroot Valley. It found the Lolo forest and crossed over the pass and along the summits, jumping ridgeline to ridgeline. At the peak of its power, it found the Coeur d'Alene forest, leading with a punch of wind that knocked down thousands of trees before the flames took out the rest of the woods. By now, the conscripted air was no longer a Palouser (name for high wind storm), but a firestorm of hurricane force winds, in excess of 80 miles an hour. What had been nearly 3000 small fires throughout a three-state region of the northern Rockies had grown into a single large burn."

The damage to that vast area was catastrophic. However, it did lead to the strengthening of the forest rangers and to the weakening of the robber barons and politicians. Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot had saved the natural land for future descendants. TR said, "Conservation is a great moral issue!"

So, OLLI members, go see for yourself what he has saved.

## EGG, A Movie

by Mary Fitzpatrick Peitler

Forty OLLI members and friends were treated to the presentation of a new movie, "Egg," on Wednesday afternoon. This delightful independent film was the brainchild of screenwriter Risa Mickenberg, daughter of OLLI President, Dr. Ira Mickenberg. Fiona de Merell, OLLI Director, welcomed the group and thanked them for their contributions to OLLI through UConn Gives. Before the presentation people were able to make nominal contributions to OLLI and receive a lunch bag, water bottle, pen or clip as a thank you. She also introduced proud father, Dr. Mickenberg, to say a few words. According to Ira, "Risa's been a bundle of creativity since she was a toddler," and he is grateful and amazed to be the parent of someone with such a passion for what they love - writing and creating.

Fiona then introduced Risa, a screenwriter, director, and songwriter whose persona and work have been featured on NPR, and in The New Yorker, the Village Voice and on The Rosie O'Donnell Show. Risa, indeed, is an extremely accomplished, driven and energetic person. It was interesting to learn how she wrote the "treatment" of this film which she had first conceived as a play fifteen years ago. The "treatment" is basically a layout in words and pictures envisioning how the writer would like it to come to life on the screen. She first described Egg as "A black comedy that blows up the idea of the nuclear family." The movie concerns the sometimes stark, harsh and difficult realities of having children at a time when so much choice is involved. It explores not only the concept of choice - having children or not, but also modern relationships, economics, etc. The 90-minute film has only five characters, two somewhat dysfunctional, or at least complicated couples, and another woman who brings a whole other dimension to the story. I won't say more - you can see it on Amazon! Risa talked about how society has changed and how now there is an entire genre of film which explores the topic of motherhood, like Juno, Citizen Ruth, Bridesmaids, which would have been absolutely taboo just 20 years ago.

After the movie, Risa graciously answered questions. She is very down to earth, funny and patient, and her enthusiasm for her life and work certainly is evident. It was an interesting, entertaining and inspiring way to spend an afternoon.



Photos by Tim Padgett

### Upcoming OLLI Travel

#### Spring/Summer - 2019

**4/06/2019:** Tosca/Metropolitan NYC - member cost \$142

**6/04 - 06/2019:** Fingerlakes - 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. 12:30 - 1:30 pm. 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](mailto: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](mailto:delvilway@aol.com), 860-274-8621) or Barbara Gavin ([bar1005@yahoo.com](mailto:bar1005@yahoo.com), 1-201-506-0288). We hope to see you there!



**OLLI Café**

Today: March 29th, 2019  
12:00 - 1:30pm, Room 113

**Russia: Partner or Adversary?**  
**Dr. Sergei Kambalov**



Dr. Sergei Kambalov was employed at the United Nations from 1989 to 2010. Prior to joining the UN, he was a First Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR. Prior to that, he worked in academic research on international economic relations. Dr. Kambalov will focus his presentation on understanding Putin's policies and actions. He will provide a historical background and set the record straight on certain myths.

**Coming Up Next: April 5th, 2019**

**Aging Happy: How To Make These The Best Years Of Your Life**  
**Raeleen Mautner, Ph.D**

**Missed a newsletter? Find past issues online @**

**<https://olli.uconn.edu/weekly-newsletters/>**

**Just for Laughs**

A man feared his wife wasn't hearing as well as she used to and he thought she might need a hearing aid. Not quite sure how to approach her, he called the family doctor to discuss the problem. The doctor told him there is a simple and formal test the husband could perform to give the doctor a better idea about her hearing loss.

"Here's what you do," said the doctor, "stand about 40 feet away from her, and in a normal conversational speaking tone, see if she hears you. If not, go to 30 feet, then 20 feet, and so on until you get a response."

That evening, the wife is in the kitchen cooking dinner, and he was in the den. He says to himself, "I'm about 40 feet away, let's see what happens." Then in a normal tone he asks, "Honey, what's for dinner?"

No response. So, the husband moves closer to the kitchen, about 30 feet from his wife and repeats, "Honey, what's for dinner?" Still no response.

Next, he moves into the dining room where he is about 20 feet from his wife and as, "Honey, what's for dinner?" Again he gets no response.

So, he walked up to the kitchen door, about 10 feet away. "Honey, what's for dinner?"

Again no response.

So, he walks right up behind her. "Honey, what's for dinner?"

"Clyde, for the fifth time... CHICKEN!"

**Have you read the latest copy of *Voices & Visions*?**

It is available at the front desk or in racks around the campus. Pick one up and enjoy it. *Voices and Visions* is a yearly OLLI publication of prose, poetry, and art work of all kinds created by the OLLI membership.

Who can have their work published in *Voices and Visions*? You can! If you are an OLLI student at any time this year, you are invited to submit your work for review to the Editorial Committee. Who is on the Committee? Your fellow students are.

Check the Info table for guidelines and submission forms.

We accept submissions by email:  
UConnOlliReview@gmail.com AND LizHanahan@aol.com



## OLLI artBeat

by Mary Fitzpatrick Peitler

## A Blast from the Past

Sometimes I forget that the arts aren't limited to just the fine arts or music but can be found in a host of places – theater, dance, crafts, architecture, esoteric museums, libraries, etc., and as was the case this past Saturday evening, in the form of a lecture or first-person presentation. I was fortunate to get tickets for “An Evening with Dick Cavett,” sort of a re-creation of his famous talk show. The interviewee was the delightful American actress, Blythe Danner. After a delicious dinner at the popular Ridgefield restaurant Gallo, my friend and I headed off to The Ridgefield Playhouse.

We arrived at a full house and an audience eager to see the now iconic late-night host of the 70s and 80s. Cavett, 82, really doesn't look all that different from the way he did then – still trim, dapper and very funny. Before the talk, we were treated to a montage of clips from his show. It was fun to go back in time and see a young(ish) Marlon Brando wanting to talk about native American issues. Also shown were Katharine Hepburn, Laurence Olivier and Jack Benny. And to the audience's delight, Cavett's famously asking Bette Davis when she lost her virginity. She took it in her stride and probably answered truthfully! After that, Cavett, now a Ridgefield resident, introduced his old friend, actress Blythe Danner, 76, whose career on stage and screen has spanned five decades.

The evening was billed as “Dick Cavett Interviews Blythe Danner” but was more of a trip down memory lane for the two well-known personalities. They talked about how they had met as young actors at Williamstown, MA summer stock, and many of the people they had acted with during the sixties. While the stories certainly would have been very interesting to true theater buffs and historians, some of the conversation was a bit dated for this audience. Cavett told of asking Bette Davis who her least favorite co-star was, wait for it, wait for it, and the answer was “Miriam Hopkins.” He was expecting a laugh, I think, but as probably very few people in the audience had ever heard of this real old-timer, the story fell flat. Another involved an obscure Russian actor from the thirties whom he and Danner assumed the audience knew. It was more interesting when they talked about their personal lives and families – you have heard of Gwyneth Paltrow, I presume? Yes, Blythe is her mother and it was interesting to learn that young Gwyneth, who has won Academy Awards and Emmys, also got her start as a little girl acting in Williamstown during summer vacations. Danner also told how she herself was a young student in Berlin before the wall was built, encountering German police who were inspecting people's documents to prevent them from leaving East Berlin. It was also touching to hear her talk about her late husband Bruce Paltrow, and she urged people to be vigilant in their preventive cancer checkups. For me one of the best parts of the evening was watching them forget people's names and struggle to come up with them, just like we all do every day! They were both very down to earth and human. After the duet did a little song and soft shoe, the audience was shown clips from Danner's movies, from the 1960s to the present day, as she is very much still a working actress.

All in all, it was an interesting and pleasant evening. I don't usually review things in this column – I prefer to preview something you can still enjoy, but I thought it might just be a good way to remind both me and you that an evening with live entertainers and speakers is a nice alternative to television and movies. It was refreshing, and I'll be looking for more opportunities like this. I'll keep you posted (in advance!) I wholeheartedly recommend The Ridgefield Playhouse – they seem to have everything there – music, movies, standup comedy. An evening with Michael Feinstein is coming up in April – sounds terrific!



## Opera Reminder

A reminder to opera buffs (and all those who might be interested in learning about opera) that Richard Wagner's “Die Walkure” (The Valkyrie) will be live-streamed from the Metropolitan Opera to local theaters this Saturday, March 30 at noon. It is the second of four music dramas that constitute The Ring of the Nibelung, based on Norse mythology, and it is the opera that showcases the famous Brunhilde! Many OLLI members enjoy seeing these performances at the Regal Cinema in Waterbury and at the Warner Theatre in Torrington. In Torrington there will be a pre-performance lecture at 10am. Enjoy! Upcoming will be Francis Poulenc's “Dialogues des Carmelites” on Saturday, May 11 at 12 Noon.

## New Genealogy Club Forms at OLLI by Mary Fitzpatrick Peitler

OLLI's new Genealogy Club, under the guidance of OLLI instructor Diane Lamoureux Ciba, was off to an enthusiastic and organized start at their first meeting on March 19th. Sixteen people gathered to lay out a mission, purpose and prospective plans for the club. First order of business was group introductions. From complete newcomers to the study of genealogy to experts, the group was very congenial and learned quite a bit about each other's ethnic ancestry and some of their genealogical challenges. Some of the members even shared surprises they had learned about themselves after doing genetic testing through Ancestry DNA and other companies.

Unlike Diane's genealogy classes, the club is not an avenue for researching one's own ancestors. Rather, it is hoped that it will be more of a vehicle for community service. Ideas for future projects were discussed, including helping people find loved ones' graves in Connecticut through field trips, doing research on line for OLLI members, and digitizing church records as a volunteer effort. Field trips to genealogical libraries in Hartford and Rhode Island were discussed, as well as a trip closer to home to the Waterbury Public Library to learn microfilm use to access newspaper records.

The group also talked about a fun way to introduce themselves to the wider OLLI community at OLLI Appreciation Day on May 3rd. It will involve an interactive exercise with all attendees who wish to take part, and it should be a lot of fun. A club steering committee was organized. Nick Diorio will be the Chairperson, Mary Peitler will be responsible for publicity, and Ray Lynch will be Clubs & Activities Committee liaison. Sue Linsley will be the travel coordinator, and Marie Delage our research coach, all under the organized facilitating of Diane Ciba.

All interested OLLI members are invited to the next meeting of the club on Tuesday, April 17 at noon in the Computer Lab, Room 317.

### 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!



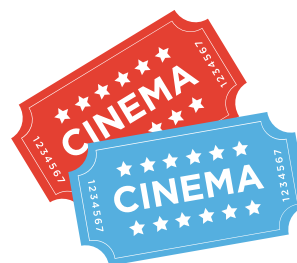
### OLLI FILM CLUB

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 PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB

Meeting TODAY at 2:30pm in Room 119! Stop by! No experience necessary!!!

