Ever Been Chased by a Bull Elephant? Osher Volunteer Peggy Skinner Has!

By Millie Lynch

Margaret (Peggy) Skinner has been a volunteer in the Osher Office for nearly 12 years, practically from the time she became a member. She is a front-desk veteran with duties of answering the phone, filing, copying, organizing, and helping Mary Cay, our registrar, with various jobs. Behind the quiet demeanor of this petite woman, you will find an accomplished equestrian and a dedicated volunteer for several organizations.

Peggy taught English at the middle-school level in Butler and in Fox Chapel. Over the years, Peggy helped Global Volunteers and spent time in both Hungary (twice) and Poland (five times) teaching English for a stay of two-to-three weeks at a time. She happened to be in Hungary when it joined the European Union. Peggy corresponded with some of her students over the years and one of her Polish students came to visit Peggy in the U.S. Ironically, this student, Anna, is now teaching English in the same school in Poland where Peggy taught her.

In addition to volunteering for Global Volunteers, Peggy was continued on page 11

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Rev. Johnson Issues a Call to Educate the Urban Poor

By Filomena Conti

“Ignorance kills our spirit!” That’s how the Rev. Thomas E. Johnson, Jr., a minister in the Church of Christ and a co-founder of the Neighborhood Academy, began his lecture on September 28 that started the 2010-11 lecture season of Osher at Carnegie Mellon. Reverend Johnson’s quarrel is with urban poverty. He doesn’t merely complain about it, he has taken action by forming a school of faith, giving young people an opportunity to receive a meaningful education. He believes that success can best be achieved when the home functions and has moral authority, when school structures a child’s life and takes the time to do so. To Rev. Johnson, education is important because it gives opportunity, self-worth, meaning and purpose to life, and because democracy depends upon it. We need to pass on a value system from one generation to the next.

Education is more than technical information; education is at continued on page 4

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Fall 2010
From the President
By Betsy Martin

Do you ever wonder what your Osher board does at its ten meetings each year, other than receive the secretary’s minutes, the treasurer’s financial update, and a report from our Administrative Coordinator Millie Lynch about our activities? There are eight standing committees at work—planning and executing our varied curriculum, writing this newsletter, mailing notices, invitations, etc., arranging ice cream socials, lectures, luncheons and trips, preparing the budget, scheduling volunteers at the desk, dealing with our small paid staff, and helping our members. There is a new ad-hoc committee trying to find ways to enhance the diversity of our membership. If you are interested in serving on a committee, please call the office at 412 268-7489 for information on reaching the committee chair.

Several board members have recently organized and chaired a board retreat, secured tax-free status for us from the PA Department of Revenue, and met with various members of Carnegie Mellon University regarding our endowment, our needs for more space, and our relationship with the administration.

The Osher Foundation has offered us a grant of $50,000 providing we do some fund-raising. This grant, available only to Osher institutes having more than 1,000 members, is offered instead of a larger grant for which we would be eligible, but, due to uncertain times, is not being awarded this year. The Finance Committee has recommended, and the board approved, accepting the grant and sending letters to our membership before the end of the year asking for tax-deductible donations to supplement our income. Donations will enable us to balance our budget and preserve our current moderate fees and dues and not tap into our capital. Please give what you can to an organization that means so much to all of us.

Exciting Discoveries: Osher Explores Meadowcroft
By Joan Morse Gordon

A comfortable, Mercedes-powered yellow school bus carted a full load of Osher adventurers 34 miles southwest of Pittsburgh to Avella in Washington County to explore the Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Museum of Rural Life on Saturday, September 11, another well-organized day trip by Bob Dickman.

The story of the Meadowcroft Rockshelter starts in 1955, when a farmer named Albert Miller, whose family owned the land for generations, stumbled upon a groundhog hole on his property. As he used his shovel to enlarge the hole, he came across evidence of ancient tools. Miller, who had always been interested in archaeology, had suspected that the site—in which large rocks provide an overhang—was a place where ancient hunters would have gathered and camped. He was right. In order to discourage unwanted invaders he kept his discovery under wraps until 1973, when J.M. Adovasio, who was looking for a training site for his archaeology students at the University of Pittsburgh, saw the site and recognized it as a prime place for digging. The findings were so much greater than anticipated that Adovasio and his students worked every summer from 1973 through 1978, excavating layer after layer, revealing stone tools and other artifacts dating back as far as 16,000 years ago. It was easy to see why ice-age hunters and gatherers sought refuge continued on page 11
Osher Seniors Are Alive and Well
By Sally Cohen, Curriculum Chair

Those who wonder what seniors do with their lives need to take a look at the Osher program at Carnegie Mellon. Our program proves that Seniors Are Alive and Well! In fact, they are more than that: they are active, energetic, invigorated and invigorating; they thrive on productive personal schedules and activities that keep them thinking.

In an Osher class, whether discussing Greek mythology or learning to play the ukulele, the students’ exhilaration is palpable. They find fascination in learning something new or relearning something they hadn’t thought about in years. As they ask questions or offer pertinent information about a topic, it becomes obvious that they want to be in the classroom—that they want to hear and learn the information that is being shared there.

Occasionally prospective study leaders will ask me about the Osher students. How complex a topic will students understand and be interested in? Should the instructors ask for students’ input about a subject? What personal backgrounds might the students have? My first response is: “You’re in for a surprise!” I go on to describe the Osher population with great enthusiasm, stating that members are extremely bright and inquisitive, and many are study leaders themselves. I relate a variety of professional and personal backgrounds, current interests that have evolved post-retirement, members’ strong desire for lifelong learning, and their eagerness to interact in class. I add that study leaders frequently tell us that students have provided new content or a new slant that instructors can use in the future.

This conversation aims to dispel the notion that seniors in Osher will be passive and not really interested in course content! All it takes, however, is for new study leaders to teach one course, and then they see that students bring knowledge and curiosity that keep teachers on their toes, and that the Osher classroom is an ideal teaching situation.

As people look at our variety of courses, they realize that our members have a wide span of interests and are attracted to courses from nanotechnology to French conversation to studying and enjoying classical music. They also note the high-level qualifications of the teachers.

Furthermore, members soon come to realize that this program is rejuvenating! It puts us back in the classroom, and many of us find that we are different students now than we were years ago. We are more assertive and ask questions more easily; we can eagerly risk attending a class where we’re learning something new; and we generally feel more confident and find learning enjoyable rather than stressful. For the most part our attendance is good, because we like the school experience—the thinking it stimulates—the pleasures that it presents. In addition, as classes in our earlier years introduced us to new people, Osher classes do the same, and we find that new classmates can become interesting friends.

So our message to newcomers is: don’t sell us short. Although most members are retired and their ages are advancing (though the age span is widening), the program is anything but static. Many of us may look like grandparents and some of our parts may not work as well as others, but we are competitive intellectually, and our skill levels are very much intact. We seniors are not only alive and well—we have a lot to look forward to!
Looking at Campus Art with John Carson
By Jeanne Hanchett

On October 13, John Carson, head of the School of Art at Carnegie Mellon, gave a lively and informative talk on campus art. We learned that the “Walking to the Sky” sculpture is 100 feet high and weighs 7 tons, and that the commemorative statue of Mao Yisheng near Porter Hall honors the architect who designed two famous bridges in China and was the first person granted a Ph.D. from the Carnegie Institute of Technology (in 1919).

The evening began with a tour of the Pittsburgh mural on the second floor of the University Center. It was done by W. Douglas Cooper, a CMU graduate, and was described as a “labor of love” for the campus and the City of Pittsburgh.

Several works were described that most of us hadn’t noticed. “University Center Tiles” surround the upper part of the Center, each a model of a hand doing something that symbolizes an activity of the building. The hands are actual casts of hands of people associated with the university. Across the top of the facade of the Purnell Center are bronze curtains extending out from small windows. We have probably walked by the bright “Snowmen” near a walkway on campus—three spheres of blue and white.

This was another delightful evening lecture.

A Call to Educate the Urban Poor
Continued from page 1

its best when shaping character. It is being able to discern what is or is not more or less important. It is the development of a value system incorporating heart, mind, and behavior. Education is the silver bullet that slays dragons.

This is why the Rev. Johnson so strongly and adamantly believes in the importance of educating the poor. “Enlightened self-interest,” he stated, “compels us to address this problem.” He said statistics show the high cost to taxpayers when decent education is denied to the poor. Statistics also show that earning a college degree favorably impacts future earnings. Before describing the academy he has co-founded, he pointed out the relevance of culture: “Culture matters—to be well-spoken, to be well-read, to be white!” Strong words.

He gave examples of the need for a quality education: a 12-year-old girl who had no idea what the word “seasonal” meant. He had to explain spring, summer, fall, and winter to her. He talked to children who could not name the first president of our country. One child said, “I know what I want to say, but I do not have the words.”

The neighborhood academy, with a complement of 65 to 110, is like a boot camp. The student must take an admission test and be interviewed. The parents are also interviewed. There is a sliding scale for tuition. The school teaches mathematics and language skills as well as social skills. The student’s day begins at 7:45 a.m. with breakfast and morning service; 8:30 to 3:15 are spent with academics; students spend from 3:15 to 5:15 with sports/arts; at 5:30, there are studies; dinner is at 7, and students go home at 7:30. Dress shirts, ties, and jackets are worn. There is zero tolerance for fighting. The students are able to visit various college campuses. One of the goals of the school is for the students to be qualified for college admission. Proudly, the Rev. Johnson ended his talk by proclaiming that 100% were college eligible.
Member Robert Resnick Has Earned Many Honors
By Sylvia Sachs

Another honor has recently been added to the long list of awards that Osher member Robert Resnick has received over the years for his many accomplishments in the field of physics.

In September he received an Outstanding Alumnus Award from his alma mater, Johns Hopkins University. The honor established an annual Robert Resnick Lecture-ship in Physics at the university. For the first lecture, the speaker was the world-renowned physicist Sir John Pendry, whose talk had the intriguing title “A Practical Invisi-bility Cloak.” Of course, Dr. Resnick and his family were present, and at the university-wide reception which followed he was able to acknowledge his appreciation and his professional debt to Johns Hopkins.

For such a noted academic, Resnick is remarkably low-key and self-effacing. He speaks softly (and there isn’t a big stick anywhere in view). He quickly mentions another very different accomplishment: his fascination with limericks, which he both recites and writes. And which he admits with a smile he occasionally worked into a question on a physics exam. He is also a recognized authority on fellow scientist Albert Einstein, as his 2008 lecture on Einstein for a large Osher audience revealed. Adding to his well-rounded lifestyle are his years of worldwide traveling and his continued interest in sports, although he no longer is as active as he was when he was younger.

So, how did he land in Pittsburgh and, eventually, Osher membership?

“I actually was a professor of physics at Pitt from 1949 to 1956,” Dr. Resnick says, “but most of my career was at Rensselaer Polytech-nic Institute, except for sabbatical years at Harvard. In 1993, my wife, Mildred, and I retired to Boca Rat-on, Florida. We spent 10 years there, then came back to Pittsburgh, where our daughter Abby Resnick, our son-in-law Roger Day, and our three grandchildren live. Our other daughter, Regina Resnick, is not far away. She lives in New York and is an associate dean at Columbia University.”

Sifted from several pages listing Resnick’s professional achievements are receipt of the Esso Foundation Award for Outstanding Teaching and General Merit at Pitt and the Oersted Medal awarded by the American Association of Physics Teachers. He was president of the American Association of Physicists and honorary research fellow and professor at Harvard. He is author or co-author of seven textbooks on physics, which have been translated into 30 languages and used worldwide by more than 10 million students since 1960.

As he recalls some of the details of his career, Dr. Resnick remarks on the chance decision that put him on this particular road. He was drafted and went into the army after graduation in 1944. He was assigned to do secret research on supersonic flight and was stationed in Cleveland. As an alternative, he was offered the chance to work at another secret project in Los Alamos. That assignment would have dictated an entirely different career road, he remarks. “But I didn’t know anything about nuclear physics. Of course, I didn’t know anything about supersonic flight either at the time.”

Flip Conti, teacher Sarah Brim, Annette Felser, and Anne Windish in the wire-wrapping jewelry class.
My Summer of Great Music
By Harvey Meieran

How does one get to Carnegie Hall in New York? In addition to going up 7th Avenue to 57th Street, one practices, practices, practices. That’s what I did, and then after getting there, it was more practice, practice, practice. In fact it was up to eight hours per day for four days before the concert this June 20. I was fortunate to join the World Civic Orchestra as a violist for their inaugural concert at Carnegie Hall, where we performed Beethoven’s Ninth (Choral) Symphony, Samuel Barber’s Adagio for Strings, George Gershwin’s “Summertime” from Porgy and Bess, and the world premiere of Davidson’s We Shall Prevail.

There were 85 musicians in the orchestra from 15 countries; the 120-member choir included 7 members of Pittsburgh’s Mendelssohn Choir whom I recruited. The World Civic Orchestra is a gathering of professional and amateur musicians from around the world who have come together to celebrate the world in its differences and similarities through the platform of music. A nonprofit organization, it was incorporated in November 2008 in New York State. Its founding musical director is Vincent Koh, a physician from upstate New York. He is also a founding member of the Doctor’s Civic Orchestra. A second concert is scheduled to be performed in Kobe, Japan, in November.

Then on June 22 after two more days of practice, practice, practice,

Harvey Meieran at Carnegie Hall

I performed with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra for the ninth time in their Community Side-by-Side Concert at Heinz Hall. The music in this concert was the Fourth Movement of Brahms’ Second Symphony, the overture from Rossini’s Barber of Seville, and von Suppé’s Poet and Peasant Overture. The summer of music was finished when I played with the Pittsburgh Civic Orchestra at the Bach, Beethoven, and Brunch concert series held in Mellon Park on August 15.

And what does one do after the summer? Why, continue to fiddle along with concerts given by the Pittsburgh Civic Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Savoyards (performing Gilbert & Sullivan operettas), and the Tuesday Musical Club.

Seventeenth Annual Food Drive—Nov.1-12
By Joe Scorpion

Carnegie Mellon University will launch its seventeenth annual Food Drive on November 1 and continuing through November 12. This is one of the largest private food drives in the area. Last year a total of 7,896 pounds of food items and $1,702.10 in cash was contributed to the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

Over the past several years our Osher program has participated in this drive with our members generously donating nonperishable food items, paper products, toiletries, etc., as well as cash.

Members can drop off their donations at three collection sites: the Osher office in the basement of the Hunt Library and classrooms 4707 and 4708 in Wean Hall. Cardboard cartons will be set up for collection at these sites. Watch for notices! Further, on November 3, members can participate in the One Day-One-Can drive by dropping off their donations at the University Center and receiving a raffle ticket for a prize drawing.

Hopefully, with the help of our Osher members, the university can exceed last year’s totals.

Corrections: In “Ad Lib” in the summer issue, we referred to Enid Miller as Edith. We regret the error. The picture caption on page 1 described Bob Dickman as ringing the Salvation Army bell at the holiday party. He did indeed collect for the Salvation Army at the party, but the picture actually shows him doing that in the lobby of the Manor Theater in Squirrel Hill.
A Journey in Life and Poetry
By Rosalyn Treger

The just-released third edition of Signatures, our Osher publication featuring members’ writing and photography, includes a single-sentence biography of each contributor. One reads “Madalon Amenta is a retired hospice nurse enjoying a second career as a poet.”

Madalon’s poetry chapbook, Kandinsky and the Stars, published in June by Finishing Line Press, caps a love of the arts—drama, but especially poetry and writing, that began well before her nursing career. She was poetry editor of her high school magazine in the Boston neighborhood of Dorchester, and edited the Tufts literary magazine. After college, she pursued acting in New York, appearing off-Broadway at the Provincetown Playhouse and Circle in the Square, paying the bills by part-time hat-checking, waitressing, and temp typing.

When she realized a career in the theater was too much of a long shot, she settled on nursing as a reasonable alternative. Nursing, she felt, offered first-hand purposeful involvement in fundamental life experiences like birth and death and hosts of life-altering events in between. Like art, in its daily practice it pursues the essence of the central questions of meaning: “Who am I?” “Who is my neighbor?” “Who or what is God?” “How do we balance these relationships?”

Nursing had practical appeal too. The nurses’ residence provided housing and meals, and uniforms solved the problem of a clothing budget. Madalon’s first experience working on a health care publication came when she helped a nursing school professor organize a book.

During her senior year of nursing school, Madalon married a medical student and soon was raising three children. When she thought about working again outside the home, her interest turned to public health nursing. The nurse in the community has more autonomy than nurses working in other settings, and Madalon was attracted to the political and social aspects of community health work. She earned a master’s degree in public health and a doctorate in health care planning, research, and administration from the School of Public Health at Pitt and subsequently took on a variety of roles in teaching, research, organizing, and writing.

A research project on the relationship between the health care system and hospice care led Madalon to become a leader in that field. She has taught and written extensively and is especially proud of the first comprehensive hospice nursing text of which she is first author, Nursing Care of the Terminally Ill, published by Little, Brown in 1986. She worked extensively with local and national associations of nurses in the field, retiring at 68 as founding executive director of the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association.

But she didn’t stop writing. She started with memoir but recalls the excitement that began appearing to her when she was awaiting her first grandchild’s birth. Joining poetry groups and reading and thinking about poetry felt like a welcome return to creative activity. She has taken several Osher classes on poetry with Judy Robinson, and participated in Carlow University’s Madwoman in the Attic writing workshops, which led to the publication of the chapbook.

Madalon sees her revived interest in poetry as confirmation of her sense that the artistic and the caregiving impulses share the same spiritual root. She thinks about poetry every day. “It fills up my life and my time. It is the closest thing I know of God.”

The Efrat Uke Band. Heather Stein enjoyed the Osher ukulele class so much, she bought instruments and taught her grandchildren, visiting from Efrat, Israel, to play.
Many unexpected plots evolve in Helen-Faye Rosenblum’s Short Stories class, and they’re not always “on the page.” A recent one developed between Laura Vondas and Mary Kinsel, who happened to be sitting opposite each other at a class. Mary was telling the person next to her that she had family in a small town in Tuscany. Laura overheard the remark. She, too, had family in a Tuscan village, she told Mary.

“This place is so tiny you would never have heard of it. It’s in the province of Lucca,” Mary said.

“Try me,” said Laura, who knew there were quite a number of Pittsburghers with roots in her town, which was also in Lucca.

Yep, it was the same village—S. Alessio—from which both their fathers had emigrated, and which both Mary and Laura had visited over the years. Laura had even made a video of S. Alessio. Of course the two paisans quickly made plans to meet and share their experiences in S. Alessio, and a new friendship is developing between them. Just one more extra gift from Osher membership.

You might say that the Squirrel Hill business section is an extended part of the CMU campus since it is so close and so often used by Osher members. One member, Beatrice (Bicky) Goldszer, spends many hours as a community activist working to keep the commercial spine of Squirrel Hill vibrant.

Bicky is a longtime member and the current coordinator of the Squirrel Hill Litter Patrol, an ongoing volunteer effort to keep the area’s streets clean and attractive. The most recent public cleanup action was held on Sunday, October 17. You may have seen the colorful setup next to the entrance to the Squirrel Hill Library. As coordinator, Bicky is always there on cleanup days rallying the volunteers who will be sent with trash bags and pointed sticks to pick up whatever mess may have collected on their assigned sidewalks and streets. Passersby are always attracted to the activity and are encouraged by the volunteers to stop to take literature and get the message about keeping the area clean.

Bicky knows how to rally citizens to work for their community’s benefit. She knows how to enlist government aid to help worthy community projects. With the help of State Senator Jay Costa, the Litter Patrol recently received a $5,000 grant to assist in its work. Even volunteer projects need a little monetary support.

While two examples hardly can be described as a trend, the move back into the heart of the city by former suburbanites Mary Lane Salsbury and Diane Goldman does bode well for their participation in Osher and other center-city activities. That important real-estate term location comes into play when folks decide whether they are still going be able to enjoy a group’s activities when getting back and forth is not as easy as it once was. Mary Lane is enthusiastic about her new residence in Squirrel Hill. She says that unlike when she lived in Oakmont, she can reach almost every place she wants to or needs to go on foot or by convenient public transportation. She hardly misses that cute little Mini Cooper she gave up. Diane Goldman, who moved from a Fox Chapel townhouse, is finally unpacked in her Shadyside apartment. She notices something different in her life: “I’m early everywhere now.” Another suburbanite who is considering moving back into the city worries that she’s forgotten how to parallel park.

Sibby McCready recently returned from a trip to Turkey with a Chatham College group. She described the country as the “most
The Blue Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey

exotic” she had ever visited. The group visited many sites, some rather rugged and hard to reach. The experience made her aware of how it feels to be part of a minority. In Turkey 98% of the population is Muslim, and that was apparent in the dress and buildings that surrounded them. It was a good trip, she said; her only bad experience was getting locked in a second-floor bathroom in a remote building because of a malfunctioning plastic door opener. Obviously, she made it out, but she skipped the explanation of how she achieved it.

Joe Scorpion took an unusual trip, but what was unusual wasn’t the place but the reason. Twenty-two members of the Waterbury, Connecticut, Crosby High School class of 1947 met for a 63rd class reunion. They must have so enjoyed their 60th reunion that they couldn’t wait the usual five years between formal events. The school friends were aware that attendance was lower as the years went by, so they decided on this in-between meeting while planning the 65th. Since 22 made this extra effort to get together, it certainly must have been a pretty tight group back in the 1940s.

As usual, a great many of Osher’s articulate, civic-minded members have expressed their thoughts in the printed media, and their names have been spied by Millie and Mary Cay, who save copies of the articles. During the summer Gerst Gibbon wrote a letter to the editor in the Post-Gazette about fossil fuel and the Marcellus Shale controversy. The Tribune Review on July 11 had on one page a big profile of Osher’s past and much-missed study leader Don Marinelli and an article on commuter trains with comments from Osher member Richard Goldman. Also in the Trib, a Newsmaker article on Ed Reis, a study leader. Study leader Lincoln Wolfenstein wrote a letter to the P-G editor about an Army whistleblower in June. An excellent food story in an August Post-Gazette featured the cooking of Elsa DeChellis DiCicco, mother of our very busy Luncheon Committee chairman, Jayne Keffer. Study leader Bruce Antonoff’s letter on Zionism was featured in a July P-G. Study Leader Donald Butler was part of a story on the return of recreational use of Pittsburgh rivers in an August P-G. Flip Conti expressed her opinion on the use of the Civic Arena in a September P-G. Joan Gaul and Norma Dubin each wrote a short letter describing a past event that was memorable to them, also in a September issue. Study leader Susan Lieber of Fox Chapel was profiled in the Tempo section of the Herald in September. Patricia DeMarco of the Rachel Carson Homestead (and study leader) wrote an informed letter on DDT in the September 19 Post-Gazette. And Rhoda Sikov was one of the many who shared their memories of that unforgettable 1960 World Series game on the P-G’s page two.

People Are Saying:

Move It or Lose It, Elsa Limbach
“What this class should be patented, it’s so good! Elsa (teacher extraordinaire!) leads us through movements designed to keep us moving as our bodies age. I feel energized after each class, and having been a student of Elsa’s for many sessions, I can notice increased flexibility, stamina, and articulation. Just as important, my balance is better. “Move It or Lose It” is a super class!”

Creative Writing—the Short Story, Ruth Schrag and Mary Kinsel
“One of the outstanding aspects of this course is the relationships, care for one another’s work, that Ruth Schrag and Mary Kinsel have developed over the years. Over this time the writing crafts of the members have developed enormously. Though the work is serious, humor erupts spontaneously in this environment. Ruth and Mary are among the best.”

Legends of Broadway, Sandy Baskind
“Really great class—everyone leaves with a smile on their face. Well done.”
Surfing on Marbles: A Granddaughter Travels with Osher

By Casey Arn

On the morning of Saturday, August 14, I set off with my grandmother, Linda Bloom, to embark from the CMU campus on a bus tour to Cleveland, Ohio, and Chautauqua, New York. Being 16 years old and the youngest attendee, I quickly volunteered my help on the bus in passing out name tags, etc. This was rather like surfing on marbles at first, but thankfully our bus driver, Jerry, drove smoothly, and I got the hang of it.

Good karma proved true yet again in that, as a result of traveling up and down the bus aisle, I met some really amazing people and made some awesome new friends.

After about a three-hour bus ride, we arrived at the Cleveland Museum of Art. From the time I was two years old, my grandmother has been taking me to the Carnegie Museum of Art and Natural History in Pittsburgh, and it has one of the most beautiful art galleries I have ever seen. However, the galleries at the Cleveland Museum (forgive me, Pittsburgh) put the familiar Carnegie galleries to utter shame. Aside from the massive and awe-inspiring collections of artwork by Pablo Picasso, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Vincent Van Gogh, and many other famous artists, modern and past, there were also other galleries displaying ancient, exquisite, world-renowned objects from Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Early Christianity.

Dinner that night was just as wonderful. Most of our party dined in a pleasant little restaurant called Sergio’s in their lovely little indoor area. Due to limited space inside, a small number of us (including me) went to eat at a little, seldom-used pub owned by the restaurant in the basement of the Glidden House. Walking down the little stone stairway and through the old wooden door of the pub, I felt as though we were walking onto the set of “Cheers.” There was an old-style bar, a tempting upright piano, little lamps on the walls, and an overall atmosphere of warmth and merriment as a raging storm outside completed the novel-like scene.

After stopping at the hotel (where our fearless leader, RoseMarie DeRiso showed off her skills to tackle any situation), we departed for the Blossom Festival at the Blossom Music Center in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. Here all of our exhaustion melted away, and the spirit of music gripped us and took us for a wild flight. Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble captivated our ears and souls with their unique music and style of performance.

The next day we set off on the final step of our journey to Chautauqua. Here we took a guided tour around the Chautauqua Institution with a historian. My favorite story involved the Athenaeum Hotel (where we ate lunch), where Thomas Edison (responsible for the electrical wiring in the hotel) sat at his own table by one of the great windows in the Grand Ballroom and, being a shy man, would climb out of this window upon occasion to escape the onslaught of his numerous avid admirers.

Chautauqua is a truly amazing little town with beautiful old houses and rich cultural interests. Such interests were displayed in the amphitheater at the performance we attended of Chautauqua’s School of Dance Student Gala, where select young choreographers and dancers from across the country (some even younger than I!) put on a thrilling spectacle. Seeing this program that is recognized as one of the finest summer dance programs in the U.S. was a spectacular way to wrap up our fantastic trip. This entire trip was an exciting adventure that I shall never forget as long as I live. When’s the next one?
Volunteer Peggy Skinner

Continued from page 1
also active with Contact Pittsburgh, whose mission was to answer phone calls from troubled souls. After 9/11, Contact Pittsburgh handled many phone calls from people worried about the terrorist attacks, and Allegheny County relied upon the service for getting out the truth and quelling the rumors about the attacks.

Peggy began to ride horses seriously around 1946. You might be surprised to know that Peggy rode cross-country in Hungary while it was a Communist state. Her love of horses continues as she volunteers for Riding for the Handicapped. For over 30 years, she has spent two afternoons a week on a local farm helping handicapped children ride horses. The students begin their riding class around the lunch hour and stay until 7 or 8 p.m. Three volunteers are needed per student, one to lead, and two to side-walk on each flank of the horse.

Speaking of traveling, Peggy’s greatest adventure occurred around 1972 on a three-week trip with a group from Kent State to Kenya. Talk about excitement—the group enjoyed a safari and was nearly chased by a bull elephant!

In addition to her volunteer work for Osher and Riding for the Handicapped, Peggy enjoys walking her Humane Society rescue dog named “Chance” in Allison Park and at Hartwood Acres.

Peggy would encourage all members to volunteer. As people get older, Peggy says, they need to keep in touch with the world and get out and do whatever they love to do. Using Peggy as an example, you can see the rewards are many.

Osher Explores Meadowcroft

Continued from page 2
under the massive rock overhang. We were fortunate to have the privilege of being conducted on our tour by Dr. Adovasio, who now serves as director of the Mercyhurst Archaeological Institute in Erie, Pa. He leads tours once a month. An exciting discovery of our own was that one of our group, Esther Skiboll, had been one of the students of Dr. Adovasio who worked with him on the site. It was her first visit back in 30 years. Her professor highlighted the actual area where Esther had been digging. Esther’s work had all been beneath the rock-shelter where the soils were protected from the weather, and the strata were able to be clearly delineated. The delicate strata have all been carefully preserved. This was a delight for Esther, who remembered with joy the summer spent uncovering layers of the past.

After our tour of the rock-shelter, we picnicked and were free to stroll through an old covered bridge to Meadowcroft Village, a re-creation of an Upper Ohio Valley mid-nineteenth century village composed of old buildings that were removed to the site. We watched a blacksmith forging red-hot iron, toured a one-room log house, rope bed and all, and had our knuckles rapped if we misread from a McGuffey reader by a costumed schoolmarm.

All agreed it was a wonderful fulfilling day. Bob provided muffins to begin the trip, and wine and cheese on our way home. And we had clear bright weather on our side.

For information, call Meadowcroft at 724 587-3412.
Speaking of Books
By Helen-Faye Rosenblum

Freedom by Jonathan Franzen

So many levels of personal, social, political, and global urgency exist in Jonathan Franzen’s provocative new novel that it’s easy to understand why many readers are touting it as a masterpiece. Freedom, a bold-enough title, examines its own concept in panoramic detail from the ominously global to the ridiculously domestic: What does it mean to impose our notions of freedom upon nations and peoples who might approach governance and ethics from different perspectives than our own? What ironies are entailed when we raise our children to cherish freedom, and then they have the effrontery to exercise it? What is the price that a domestic pussycat must pay for the privilege of wandering a neighborhood freely? Which claim to a habitat is more valid, that of a migrating Cerulean Warbler or of a West Virginia coal miner? Who decides?

Jonathan Franzen is a masterful storyteller with a maximum-fidelity ear for the way people actually talk. He couches the philosophically and morally laden questions within a deftly plotted, page-turning saga that centers upon Patty and Walter Berglund and the evolution of their relationship from college days to the fraught present, where the book begins. In the first few pages, the author launches a verbal establishing-shot that immediately conveys the paradoxes within the Berglund family, the mysteries that are to be unraveled in the 500+ pages to come, and a spot-on portrait of the prevailing zeitgeist in the Berglund’s gentrifying St. Paul neighborhood during the time of the novel.

Sentence one: “The news about Walter Berglund wasn’t picked up locally—he and Patty had moved away to Washington two years earlier and meant nothing to St. Paul— but the urban gentry of St. Paul were not so loyal to their city as not to read The New York Times.” (Anybody squirming?) Promptly we learn that Walter, “who was greener than Greenpeace and whose own roots were rural, [was] in trouble now for conniving with the local coal industry and mistreating country people.” Then comes the Alice Roosevelt Longworth voice: “Then again, there had always been something not quite right about the Berglunds.” (O tempora, o mores.)

That not-quite-rightness was no early impediment to their beginning married life as the quintessential, earnest, diligent, golden, neighborhood couple, raising two children and upholding their liberal ideals with the paradoxes thereunto appertaining.

Walter is a mild-mannered environmental lawyer, who begins his career at 3M but quickly gravitates to the Nature Conservancy. Patty is Mom to her two children and the perfect neighbor—until everything changes. Why does Patty’s most-favored-child, son Joey, end up moving in with the politically antagonistic family next door? How do heredity, environment, and the element of choice—freedom—create two such different children out of one bolt of parental cloth? Why is Walter’s talented, unfocused college buddy, semi-failed avant garde rock musician Richard Katz, still so much a part of the Berglund family psyche? What is the nature of durable married love anyway? (Franzen subtly provides perhaps the broadest range of examples of marital possibility in modern fiction.) How does adultery really happen? How many stressors, internal and external, does a family bear before it crumbles? Can it re-assemble itself?

In an audacious literary device, Franzen gives us chunky portions of the narrative in Patty’s third-person “Autobiography,” provocatively entitled “MIS-Continued on next page
TAKES WERE MADE,” and supposedly written “at her therapist’s suggestion.” The very format, a memoir created by a woman uncomfortable with the notion of her own first-person self, introduces volumes of insight that overlie Patty’s complex personal history. Walter’s equally complicated past, revealed rather more directly, alters the vision of the Berglunds from the Golden Couple perhaps to the Odd Couple.

By the time the saga reaches Walter’s involvement with Big Coal and with Lalitha, his assistant and comrade-at-arms in his efforts, it is clear that the ominous beauty of the West Virginia landscape where they labor together portends grief. The shape of that sorrow, and its pervasiveness, inflect the remainder of the book in unexpected fashion. The lyrical beauty of Franzen’s West Virginia interlude is among the most powerful segments of the novel.

Ultimately, Walter and Patty, each somehow bereft, separately face the terrifying freedom to ask what to do with rest of their lives. Whether their solution is a matter of choices or of default, it seems to make sense emotionally, pragmatically, and literarily. The question that remains, in assessing this novel with its sprawling vision of how the destiny of a single family reflects the forces, major and minor, that define our times, is whether Franzen has indeed produced the masterpiece, the Great American Novel that Time magazine editors evidently assumed he did when they placed him on the cover.

It would be churlish to suggest that Freedom isn’t a great and complex work. It covers the bases, speaks in a variety of beautifully realized voices, and presents, in the best sense—a hyper-realistic photograph of a profoundly recognizable America. What’s important to remember, however, is that even the hyper-realistic artist or photographer has the freedom to decide where to direct the focus. Jonathan Franzen has decided to use the Berglunds as the lens through which to view America, and through them he views it with intense perspicacity. However, the Berglunds exemplify something—not everything. Their community activities flow from self-involvement, and not everybody lives that way. They know quiet desperation, but not quiet ecstasy. They appear to live in a world more driven by conscientious objection than by conscientious affirmation. In sum, Freedom is a fine and important novel, a splendid achievement. Ultimately it is not the be-all and end-all, the definitive portrait of contemporary America, its passions and values, but merely a graphic insight into The Way Some of Us Live Now.

Lionel and Me!
By Joe Scorpion

This past summer term I enjoyed a class on Benny Goodman given by Dick Cohen. Benny had an outstanding group, featuring many stellar performers, including vibraphone player Lionel Hampton. After leaving Benny Goodman, Lionel formed his own big band, a very popular organization.

Hearing Lionel’s name mentioned in class brought back memories of a night in the early 1950s when I spent an evening with Lionel and some of his band members. He was playing a weekend engagement in my home town of Waterbury, Connecticut. A friend of mine who owned a night spot called the Melody Lane invited me to stop by after midnight on Saturday when Lionel would be present for a private jam session.

Warm and friendly, Lionel along with several of his talented band members entertained and socialized with the fans. Music, congeniality, and a few libations made for a smooth and wonderful evening, continuing on until the wee hours of the morning. Having become “pals” with Hampton, I mentioned that I’d probably need a note from him before my wife would allow me in the house. He graciously complied, writing the following message on a bar tab: “Best of luck, Maureen. Your husband is a great guy. He love...”
Iceland in June

Iceland is as beautiful a country as I’ve ever seen. On eight days in June when we toured, I would often put my hand to my heart in wonder on reaching yet another gorgeous landscape. Traveling by minibus, we moved east to west along the lower half of the island, from Jokulsarlon to Grundarfjordur and Reykjavik. The sun was on us all the way, day and night, and temperatures were moderate. Iceland is about the size of Kentucky with a population of 300,000 people speaking a language that is allied to Viking, and speaking English, too.

Oh those mountain outcrops, those glacier waters, the parks, the sheep and horses in the fields, the swooping birds! I saw my first eagle spread its wings and drop from a cliff not 50 feet from me, and I saw the pretty bright puffins collect in their nesting places. The Island’s brilliantly constructed Orkuveita Reykjavikur geothermal heating site, the largest in the world, was as interesting as any great museum.

The hotels were comfortable and clean. The restaurants were always pleasant, serving superior cured salmon and excellent quality fish and lamb. Iceland women all seem to knit and there are beautiful handmade things to buy.

Morocco in August

I went to Tangier, Morocco, in August by myself. It wasn’t easy and it wasn’t cheap ($1,500 airfare), but it was wonderful. I have a daughter (Ani) living there with her husband (Brian Horvath), head of the American School, and their two beautiful boys: blue-eyed, blonde-haired charmer Mac, who is two years old, and the new brown-eyed, dark-haired, laughing Jacob, adopted in Morocco when he was seven days old.

My children lead nice lives in a city that is not cosmopolitan and has relatively few tourists. They welcome friends from Pittsburgh, and if you are planning a visit, I suggest you call them. They know where everything is, including the excellent patisseries, modeled after the French, and a few fine restaurants serving authentic and delicious pastilla, tagines, and couscous, my favorite being Le Nabab in the Medina, near where Barbara Hutton, the Woolworth heiress, had her home.

Out on the busy streets most Tangier women are dressed in traditional full-length robes and head coverings, and you wonder how they manage as they scurry along in the heat. Narrow streets and wide boulevards are jammed with cars for which there seem to be no road rules. Merchants dress in Western garb and appear to speak every language under the sun. Bring money to buy yourself an antique. I bought a hand-carved gunpowder horn, wondering how I was going to explain what it was to the customs man. He never asked. 

Lionel and Me!

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you, always. Lionel Hampton.” As the sun was beginning to come up we said goodbye. Lionel and his troupe boarded their bus for New London, Connecticut, where they had a scheduled matinee performance.

For all his many accomplishments in the world of jazz, he was in later life awarded the National Medal of the Arts by President Clinton. He died in August 2002 at the age of 94. President George H.W. Bush was one of the eulogists at his funeral service.
More Tales of Downsizing:
How We Found Helping Hands at Carnegie Mellon
By Joan Gaul

How much mileage is involved in one move of domicile? How much can you get out of it? Some, depending on what you learn.

The learning curve began around March with the 35 cans of paint that sat on a porch that no longer belonged to us. The Smuts Brothers, our very good debris removers, wouldn’t touch it. “Hazardous waste,” they said of our paint of various colors, which we had collected over many years. As it couldn’t stay where it was, I Googled “hazardous waste.” That somehow took me to Carnegie Mellon and to Jeffrey Harris, who said that far from being hazardous, my paint was potentially useful. It could be mixed and donated to worthwhile causes. I had noticed the blue boxes around campus and assumed that CMU recycled everything, but paint was a surprise.

Jeffrey asked if I was the Joan Gaul involved with Osher. I said I was, and he said he would take my paint if I’d deliver it. It took until August, but I did, and he did.

This, much condensed, is what I learned from that: Environmental Health & Safety at CMU is the department responsible for all Hazardous, Radioactive, Biological, and Universal Wastes. Latex paint is considered a Universal Waste (good). When received, the latex is separated into white and all other colors. The white is palletized for donation. Everything else goes into a 55-gallon drum and is blended into a kind of tan-brown color called Snickerdoodle. The finished product, which is useful as house paint and can even be used to cover graffiti, is then primarily donated to Habitat for Humanity and an anti-Graffiti group, although it can go to other nonprofits that can make use of it. A useless and difficult-of-disposal thing becomes useful.

Great to know. Wastes are really collected only from the campus community, but if you would like to learn more, contact Jeffrey at jjharris@andrew.cmu.edu.

We had another problem, minor but perhaps more generally useful. When we moved into our condo, we found that we could not turn on any lamps that stood on heavy chests because the outlets were behind the chests. As over the years we found that our furniture had become heavier, we were operating only with ceiling fixtures. Further, because standing on a ladder while swinging a hammer is now more of an adventure than it used to be, when we moved in, we hung all our paintings on the former owner’s hooks. We lived with that. Younger, stronger, more sure-footed people were needed.

I’d heard of the CMU rowing team’s “Rent a Rower” project. I Googled and found them. The following Saturday, Kyle and Gaby came. In addition to solving our problems, they were good company. Gaby was from Boston, and Kyle’s grandfather had been two years ahead of my husband in law school. Rowers are not bulked up, but they can do many things. Among those they mentioned were painting, moving, catering, raking, gardening, shoveling, and organizing. Last winter they shoveled lots of driveways. As with all good things, there are a few rules: For off-campus jobs, they prefer to send at least two rowers as a personal safety precaution. If your location is more than a 15-20 minute walk from campus, they request a ride. The rate is $14 per rower per hour. It is well worth it. Need help? Want to learn more? fundraising@tartancrew.org
The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation is presenting the 13th International Exhibition of Botanical Art & Illustration. It started on September 24 and continues until December 17, 2010. The exhibition includes 110 watercolors, drawings, and prints representing the work of 72 artists from 15 countries.

**Helianthus, Last sunflower, watercolor on paper by Fiona Strickland (Scotland), 59 x 49 cm, 2008. Hunt Institute collection, gift from the artist.** © 2008 Fiona Strickland All Rights Reserved

**Coming Attractions**

**November 10**
**Cynthia Koledo DeAlmeida**, principal oboe of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra: “The Role of the Oboe in the Symphony”

*To help the food drive, we’ll be asking for a $3 donation at the door.*

**December 8**
**Dr. Kent Moors**, Professor with the Graduate Center for Social and Public Policy and the Department of Political Science at Duquesne University: “The Promise and Perils of the Marcellus Shale”

**December 10**
**Holiday Luncheon at the PAA**

*Mark Your Calendar!*