Anniversary Party Celebrates 20 Years of Excellence

By Gloria Kleiman

At A.L.L.’s origin in 1992, who would have dreamed that we could receive an invitation to attend a party by reading mail on our computers? Most of us didn’t have computers, and those who did barely knew what to do with them. The beautiful email announcement of this event came to us through space (as we instinctively think it is) and pictured a festive party.

None were disappointed. Perhaps the wine had a bit of an influence, but it was mainly enthusiasm and camaraderie on display at the Pittsburgh Golf Club on October 2 for Osher’s twentieth anniversary. In 2002, the Academy for Lifelong Learning (A.L.L.) celebrated “A Decade of Excellence,” so it was only fitting for that title to be slightly plagiarized to reflect Osher’s status today.

Joining in the celebration were 165 members, many “old timers,” but others who were not familiar with our beginnings and who could not visualize what it was like way back then.

Joe Shirk produced a marvelous video with photos from the archives, along with more-recent glimpses of classes, field trips, and events. There was a snapshot of the plaque that was hung on the outside of the Alumni House, where our “first home” was located in the basement. OSHA would have been horrified to let us work and breathe in that environment; yet we did, and established the groundwork for the organization that exists today.

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Welcome to the Promised Land

By Mary Cay Burke-Hamill

Have you ever wanted to be in pictures? Well, I always wanted to be in a movie, and I began my search the day after I retired from Osher. That Saturday I begged my friend to go with me to Braddock, where they were looking for extras in a movie. We went to the Elks in Braddock and walked right in. We signed up, and I gave them a copy of my picture and resume. (It wasn’t long, but I had had leads in college and I directed many shows as a teacher.) Anyway, I didn’t get a part, but I was on WTAE when they gave a report of the auditions!

Then the next Saturday I bravely went by myself to a Downtown hotel to sign up for another movie. This was a very different process. There were so many people there that I was in line for over an hour. We filled out forms, had pictures taken, and met the casting director. I kept telling myself to make a good impression. Smile and act confident and excited to be in a movie.

It worked! They called the following Monday. I was really excited, but since I didn’t have a partner, I was not called for that scene. It was scheduled for the same day as the Osher Annual Meeting, so I’m glad it wasn’t that day.

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From the President

By Jan Davis

The Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and other members have been hard at work since my last president’s article in It’s All Talk. A Strategic Plan and Vision Statement has been approved by our Board of Directors and submitted to the Osher Foundation and the university.

A special thank-you to the members of the Strategic Planning Committee: Gloriana St. Clair, Yvonne Campos, Sally Cohen, Julian Eligator, Betsy Martin, Don Moritz, Rege Murrin, Helen Faye Rosenblum, Joe Shirk, and Sandra Williamson. Julian Eligator served as chairman. The committee met several times over the summer and formulated a two-to-five-year plan to submit to the Board of Directors and the Osher Foundation. Among the highlights of the Strategic Plan are the Action Plan and the Vision Statement. I would like to share both with you.

Action Plan

- Ensure continued support of Carnegie Mellon University.
- Identify and implement technology to assist administrative efficiency and better serve members.
- Build financial security and organizational sustainability.

A Vision Statement was drafted and approved by the Board of Directors. In 2017, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Carnegie Mellon University will celebrate 25 years on campus. At that time, we envision:

- Office, conference/meeting room and classroom locations are consolidated in one area.
- Program has acquired two additional classrooms in a flexible space.
- Total space is increased to 4,000+ square feet.
- Program space is fully accessible, convenient to parking, and near public transportation stops.
- Program offerings, membership, and study leaders reflect urban diversity.
- Attractive program environment encourages enthusiastic participation by members, volunteers, study leaders, and staff.
- Access to common gathering areas allows members to interact in social environment and encourages mingling with the university community.
- Program quality is enhanced by continued strong participation of volunteer study leaders from CMU and the community.
- Additional paid staff accommodate membership growth and support program efficiency.
- Successful, member-driven capital campaign achieves agreed-upon donation to the university for program space.

This Vision Statement was presented to the Provost Mark Kamlet to request our needs for continued support by the university. Thanks again to the Strategic Planning Committee.

Congratulations to our hard working Curriculum Committee. Their efforts have produced the largest number of course offerings to date. And you, our members, responded with much enthusiasm. More members signed up for courses than ever before! It was quite a challenge to find rooms for all these courses, but Lyn did a terrific job! Phyllis is busy helping the board research online registration software. We hope to have the registration software available to our members sometime in the spring of 2013. We look forward to all the changes in office procedures that will streamline member communication and registration.

We are sending two representatives to the National Osher Conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado, this November. We’ll report on the conference in the next It’s All Talk.

See you in class!
Jan Davis
Eating Well at CMU

When it comes to dining on the CMU campus, the world’s at your feet. Choices go from A to Z, Asiana to Zebra Lounge. There are no dining halls for students in the traditional sense. Located in 14 buildings, they can find 30-plus “dining concepts,” anything from a snack to a whole meal, from a coffee cart from La Prima Espresso at Wean Hall or Tazza D’Oro at Gates Center to a whole meal at Asiana at Newell-Simon Hall, supplied by LuLu’s Noodles in Oakland.

Most universities have a single dining vendor, according to Kim Abel, director of Housing and Dining Services. Bringing in outside vendors creates greater variety and authenticity and a welcoming connection with the Pittsburgh community. “It’s a Pittsburgh thing,” she says. Keeping up with the culinary desires of students, faculty, and staff is Ms. Abel’s primary goal. Other priorities are health, nutrition, and sustainable initiative, which includes composting, recycling, and local purchasing.

In the Marketplace on the second floor of the University Center, the very names of City Grill, Pasta Villaggio, Take Comfort, Creperie, Downtown Deli, Spinning Salads, and Evgefstos, more than hint at the variety of choices, sophisticated and simple. Fortunate vegans and vegetarians have a wide choice. On the first floor is Entropy, a convenience store. According to one definition, the word means “a doctrine of inevitable social decline and degeneration,” titled with tongue in cheek, I assume.

Osher Celebrates 20th

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True to the accustomed behavior of our members, some arrived early and could hardly wait for the hors d’oeuvres to appear and the goblets filled. A very pleasant hour of socializing, eating, and sipping wine ensued. I can’t remember any other recent A.L.L./Osher event that provided a warmer ambience.

Next came the program. As chairperson, I opened with remarks about what A.L.L. was like 10 years ago and the changes that have occurred, both in us and in the world around us since our last anniversary celebration. There was a gasp (or maybe a groan) of disbelief as gasoline prices were quoted at $1.40-$1.50 a gallon and that in A.L.L.’s first term, six study groups (that’s what they were then called) were offered.

President Jan Davis then took the podium, acknowledging past presidents and the six founding members in attendance: Marcia and Bob Frumerman, Ed Landerman, Sylvia Sachs, Helen-Faye Rosenblum, and Dr. Steven Calvert, our “big daddy,” for really putting us on the map. Jan spoke of her vision for the future and the strategic plan, recently endorsed by the board, to lead us on that path to continued success.

Helen-Faye Rosenblum, program chair, introduced Dr. Steven Calvert, who had flown in from Vermont that morning. Before our inception, Steve was CMU’s director of alumni relations, and as luck would have it, he was seated next to Gretchen Lankford at a dinner party where the first seeds of A.L.L. were sown.

Steve explained how strongly they shared the belief that lifelong learning was essential to a fulfilling existence, and that CMU was the perfect venue for it to occur. He spoke about Ted Fenton, another founder, history professor at CMU and editor of the tenth anniversary book, who also felt that both “oldsters and youngsters” have to be on campus. Steve made certain that this vision of learning for seniors as an important facet of life became a reality.

A.L.L/Osher is deeply grateful for the early founders who created an institution worthy of a celebration for its 20 years of excellence.
Ruth Drescher’s Unconventional Course “Inspires a Frenzy of Writing!”

Remember those English classes on how to write essays by endless revision? How you had to write for an unseen and presumed critical audience? Well, that’s not Ruth Drescher’s approach in her course “Writing is Fun, Exercising the Brain.” What happens instead during this 90-minute class? A whole lot of writing. Students gather around a conference table with their pens and notebooks. Soon thereafter, individual writing begins—in 5-, 10-, 15-, or 20-minute sprints.

The room is silent, as eyes and pens focus on longhand. There is a sense of taping in a TV studio: that anticipation of “the reveal.” Like Bob Eubanks on The Newlywed Show, the secret is great prompts.

“I just aim to bypass the inner critic,” Ruth explains, “the mental roadblocks that get in the way of self-expression. This tends to free up creative and imaginative thinking.”

Sample prompts:

1. Ruth passes around an assortment of small household objects—dice, a bottle opener, key rings. “Describe your object to someone in the past or future who would have no idea what it is.” After solo writing, descriptions are read aloud to see who makes the first correct match.

2. “Write a short story about your trinket.” This narrative exercise brought the creative imaginations. For example, a key ring traveled all over the globe, passing from one owner to another, and unlocked some interesting doors!

3. Ruth distributes a list of 20 unrelated words. “Pick five words and write a poem with them.” “Beer, troll, trolley, tables, and trundle” produced a double haiku about Munich Oktoberfest. No time for forethought: the poem seemed to write itself. Others wrote limericks, prose poems, or impressions.

4. Collaborative writing brought the group together. “Everyone take out a piece of paper and start a story.” These were passed around the table, giving a minute or two for each student to add the next line. When everyone had one shot at each story, they were read aloud.

These writing sprints seem to be the heart of the course. But then there’s the discovery that reading uncensored, unedited passages to the group elicits natural, spontaneous reactions. Students report looking forward to the next week, to these particular writers, their ability to make us laugh, or choke up, their way with words, their honesty. Revelation: the writer emerges in the desire to strengthen the bonds born of sharing different perceptions and creative thoughts with one another. Financial success long since established, is this not what motivates a Steven King or a JK Rowling to keep writing?

Ruth Drescher has written and inspired writers in Pittsburgh for more than 50 years. Her art reviews were featured in the underground paper The Pittsburgh Point; she has co-authored a book and led numerous writing circles and classes. She has been coaching this course since the 1980s and has offered it at Osher for the past decade. (Credit to Mary Kinsel for the quote in the title.)

Diana Yankes
A Very Special Inside Look at the Pittsburgh Symphony

Kresge Theater on the CMU campus seats 250 people. On Thursday evenings from September 6 to October 11, it was close to capacity. The audience for Monique Mead’s “A Pittsburgh Symphony Exclusive: An Inside Look at Music, Musicians and Maestros” had some youngsters, but was overwhelmingly Osher members. The class featured a variety of musical experiences.

The first and last sessions brought the C-Street Brass, CMU’s resident ensemble. Intervening were individual sessions with PSO musicians William Caballero, french hornist; Monique Mead, violinist, with her husband Andres Cardenes, former concertmaster; Noah Bendix-Balgley, the present concertmaster; Lorna Maghee, principle flute; and others. Rodrigo Ojeda, PSO pianist, accompanied. The sessions provided not only an opportunity to listen to beautiful music beautifully played, but also an introduction to the musicians, their backgrounds, and their feelings about their instruments.

This was Monique Mead’s third course for Osher. Her first was a mini version of “Inside Look at Music.” Twenty Osher students in Andres Cardenes’s studio on campus were treated to an introduction to and performance by PSO musicians. Her second was a musically sophisticated course on Leonard Bernstein’s Harvard Lectures, enhanced by her live violin. Bernstein was a mentor during Mead’s time of performing and teaching in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. This most-recent course almost didn’t happen. The difficulty of arranging artists for the class and the need for concert space necessitated 150 registrants. Once the course was announced, it happened.

Mead’s role as educator in addition to musician began when she graduated from Indiana University’s School of Music and became aware of the lack of audience for all the talent that was coming forward. After working with Bernstein’s teaching methods, she realized the possibility of educating to create audiences.

She does that now, through her relationship with Osher, and with in-school and concert programs for grade schoolers. She has always enjoyed working with kids and appreciates older people. She has found her Osher students to be “nice and incredibly generous.” A Bethel Park school class was short funds for its final reception. Her first class opened their pocketbooks. The C-Street Brass Quintet arrived on stage September 6 looking rather scruffy. The class voted money from its fees to spruce them up. It did and they did.

In addition to performing, Mead now teaches violin in CMU’s Music Preparatory School and holds a position with the Pittsburgh Symphony. In the future? She would like to coach the C-Street Brass and then possibly have them give an Osher class next year.

Will this fall’s class repeat? Not in the next term. Osher’s class schedule was full. Otherwise, “If this is what they like, and ask me to do it. . . .”

A $20 fee was required for the course. Some wondered why. At the end, we realized we had caught the bargain of the cultural year. If you missed it, you can get a taste through Joe Shirk’s video on YouTube, reachable as: Osher at CMU - Behind the PSO

Photos Wanted
Help us collect remembrances of classes, events, or trips by taking photos. Let’s show other members what they’re missing! Of course, when taking photos, respect the wishes of those who don’t want their pictures taken.

Email photos to OsherPhotos@gmail.com

Joan Gaul

Monique Mead and Noah Bendix-Balgley

5
Ad Lib

By Sylvia Sachs

I have always thought that 20 years marked the span of a generation, and I am going to continue to think of it that way in this, my last “Ad Lib” column, despite the dictionary’s claim of its being 25 to 30 years in length, because I feel that our recent celebration of Osher’s 20th anniversary did mark a turning point in the life of our great Osher operation.

We’ve come a long way, folks, from those early days in the basement of Alumni House when office volunteers sat around on odd chairs and upturned boxes while trying to protect their work from intermittent ceiling drips coming from the floor above. Our current spiffy headquarters in the CMU Hunt Library, however, are a reflection of our more formal status in the academic world.

Another bit of history, and a warm and cozy one, is the start in the summer term of 1994 of Helen Faye Rosenblum’s consistently popular “Short Stories” class. Many of Helen Faye’s fans just automatically sign up as soon as the class appears in the catalog. This popularity always requires this dedicated study leader to schedule two sessions of each class, for which lots of research and copious advance preparation are required; just do the math. Helen Faye closed the book on her 60th series of “Short Stories” in mid-October. More to come.

Almost as long-lived and equally popular is the class “Great and Notable Novels Read and Revisited,” that is generally referred to by its many fans as “the novels class.” According to Audrey Catrow, who has kept a history of the class, the current session is the 56th. So far, the class has read approximately 336 books, a few of which have been repeats when requested. A committee of five members is in charge of choosing the books to be read. The novels class was the inspiration of Osher founder Gretchen Lankford, a true lover of literature. Gretchen never missed a class until a change of residence made attendance inconvenient.

Apologies to Helen Wilson, who was listed in the Summer 2012 “Ad Lib” as president of the Squirrel Hill Historical Society. Helen wrote, “I am vice-president, not president. Our president is Michael Ehrmann. I am also a member of the Turner Cemetery/Mary S. Brown-Ames Historical Committee. I am in the process of creating a website with information about the history and genealogy of the cemetery and church. The site is important because it is a focal point for the earliest settlement of Squirrel Hill.”

Phyllis Davidson, longtime Osher member and current database administrator in the Osher office, is the most self-effacing of women. But when it comes to her son, Warren, a well-known participant in the area’s musical community, Phyllis speaks out proudly. Warren, who teaches viola at Slippery Rock University, is the conductor of the Pittsburgh City Orchestra, as well as a frequent concert violinist. His most-recent public appearance was in mid-October when he and pianist Donna Amatoe played well-received concerts at St. James Church in Sewickley and at the Frick Fine Arts building across from the Carnegie Library in Oakland.

Board member Brian Weller is proud of his partner, poet Toi Derricotte, who won the PEN/Voelker Prize for Poetry “for a poet whose distinguished and growing body of work represents a notable presence in American Literature.”

Former Osher President Joe Scorpion has kept this column advised of the advances in the sports world of his grandson Steve Scorpion. Steve’s latest advancement is to assistant basketball coach at Kiskie Prep, which brings the young man nearer to home. His previous jobs on the way up were in Florida and Massachusetts. He also serves as director of operations for the Basketball Stars of America in the Southwestern Pennsylvania area.

All the athletes connected with Osher are not someone’s grandchild, however. We can point to Leslie Evans, who has participated in the Senior Olympics in the past and is gearing up for the games next year.

I found the following newspaper clippings in my slot in the Osher office, saved there by Mary Cay and Millie some time ago:

The North Side home of David and Laurie Charlton, Osher members, was featured in a column in the August/September AARP Magazine. A column in the August 14 Post-Gazette by study leader Kamana Mathur was a plea for deferred action on the possible deportation of young

Continued on page 7
immigrants,

Bill Caldwell, Osher member, was pictured admiring the art at the summer Shadyside arts festival in the August 26 P-G. Memories of many happy summers at the beach were well-told by Jean Peterson in the August 24 P-G. In the August 18 Letters to the P-G editors, Bob Frumerman got a headline for his suggestion that cyclists on public roadways should be licensed. A September letter from study leader Alfred Mann joined the many calls over the years for a public statue honoring Pittsburgh native Gene Kelly. I’ve heard that his widow has not been willing to cooperate. Ray Werner wrote a thoughtful column about his desire to leave his grandchildren some written memories of his own life. Politics was the subject of Doug Webster’s rebuttal of a previous September article.

Just to prove that I, too, check the Letters column, here’s an October letter I spotted from Ruth Stone Lasday complaining about the new parking meters on Frew Street. Now that is really a pertinent subject for Osher members!

A last piece of Osher history: This “Ad Libs” column originally got its name as a play on the name of the writer of the first columns, the much-loved, multi-talented Libby Crow—get it—Libby. Unfortunately, Libby’s eyesight began failing, and she had to give up many of her favorite activities. She moved to Canterbury Place, where she is still gracious as ever, still charming everyone around her.

A little gift-time reminder: there are still some copies of the Osher-published cookbook available in the office. Lots of good, easy recipes.

Many thanks to Sylvia Sachs for her great years of “Ad Lib!”

Signatures 2013

Signatures, the Osher literary magazine, is accepting submissions for its forthcoming 2013 issue. We welcome contributions of poetry and prose fiction or non-fiction, including memoir, of no more than 2,000 words. We also welcome photography and original art work sized to a page or suitable for reduction.

Writers may submit as many pieces as they wish, but only one prose piece per person will be published. The editors may publish more than one poem per person. The deadline is May 13, 2013.

A submission can be placed in the file pocket on the wall at the right end of the Osher office or mailed to “Signatures” c/o Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Carnegie Mellon University Hunt Library 4909 Frew St. Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

Or you can submit it electronically by email to osher@cmu.edu (with “Signatures” in the subject line) or to Helen-Faye Rosenblum at hfrosenblum@gmail.com

Would you like to be the “Ad Lib” columnist? It’s All Talk would like to hear from you. Tell us about your interest at itsalltalkcmu@gmail.com

For future newsletters, we welcome information about members’ accomplishments, community doings, brags about family.

Send your information to itsalltalkcmu@gmail.com

In Memoriam

Mary Lane Salsbury

Mary Lane Salsbury, an early member and past president of A.L.L. (Osher), died October 6. She was devoted to the arts and literature. Helen-Faye Rosenblum remembers that she “was in my [short story] classes from the very first one, never missing a term until she was too weak to attend even with the aid of a caregiver and a walker.” Andrew Miller, retired study leader of many classes on classical literature, remembered that she joined his classes in the early 90s and continued attending until she could no longer walk to Wean Hall. Helen-Faye says of her: “She had an entire rich professional life before she came to A.L.L., as well. She was quite a woman. She always sat to my immediate left. I still look for her.”

Joseph Eaton

Joseph Eaton, a study leader for Osher classes into his nineties, died October 15 at 93. He was professor emeritus of economic and social development in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Eaton taught a wide range of courses for Osher, many related to public policy and to the Middle East. Among his activities in the community was as advisor to the National Council of Jewish Women’s major project, an Oral History of the Pittsburgh Jewish Community, which was the basis for an Osher course “In Their Own Words: Voices and Choices of Pittsburgh Jewry 1850s-Today.”
Using Technology in the Osher Classroom

Sharon Lippincott, a longtime Osher instructor popular for her memoir writing workshops, is Osher’s queen of instructional technology. For years her Osher students have followed her blogs about memoir writing, “Writing for the Health of It” and ”The Heart and Craft of Lifestory Writing.” Sharon even records her own stories on her MP3 player so that she can hear errors or awkwardness and make corrections.

An author of three books and over 700 stories and essays, Sharon is also the co-founder and co-host of the Life Writers Forum on Yahoo! Groups, the Memoir subgroup of Writing Maria on LinkedIn, and is a member of the Advisory Board of the National Association of Memoir Writers.

Sharon Lippincott is at it again. Recently in her new CMU Osher class “How to Read Like a Writer,” Sharon used Skype to interview two writers and afterwards to hold a Q and A session with the Wean audience. One writer was in his office in England, and the other writer outside an Austin, Texas, Starbucks.

Using Skype, Ian Mathie, whose memoir Man in a Mud Hut is in the process of being printed, explained to Osher students how he uses runic script for privacy in his multi-colored notebooks: green marks indicating essential material, yellow for not absolutely essential, and red marks for detailed elaboration. Osher students asked the author questions about his “paintbrush” method of writing. Skype, which allows online face-to-face communication, instant messaging, and real-time video conferencing, could bring an artist’s technique to a classroom without the difficulties of transporting easels, paints, brushes, and canvases. Imagine practicing conversational foreign languages with native speakers via Skype without leaving your classroom.

Sharon also introduced this class to “Google Hangout,” an option under Google Plus Groups, which allows a discussion with video images of up to 10 participants from their own laptops or home computers. Although video chatting isn’t new, this concept of a hangout is a giant leap forward. A hangout is, essentially, a free video chat room for up 10 people. Hangout technology recognizes who is speaking during a session, and that person’s image takes the “big screen” while other participants appear in small tiles below. There’s no squinting to try to figure out where the voice in the video conference is coming from.

To start a hangout, you choose a circle of friends or students. Hangout then opens the room and allows up to 10 people at once from the group to join in the hangout. As long as there are 2 people in the hangout, it will remain open.

The possibilities for Osher Lifetime Learning are interesting—more courses without more physical classrooms. Students could download handouts or upload an assignment to a dropbox, post a question or a discussion response, email the instructor without using precious paper. Instructors could schedule hangouts to hold a discussion or debate about their course material.

Leslie Evans

Alex Kramer: An Outstanding Study Leader

It all began on a sunny October morning in 1998 when 25 members of the Academy for Lifelong Learning (A.L.L.) gathered in the old and cramped Student Center to attend Alex Kramer’s first class, “The Great War 1914-1918.” Little did they know what a grand experience awaited them.

From the incident at Sarajevo to the Armistice in November 1918, he addressed the causes, conflicts, and consequences of the war and its impact and influence on the twentieth century. Over the Continued on page 10
Speaking of Books
By Helen-Faye Rosenblum

The Round House by Louise Erdrich

On a hot summer afternoon in 1988, Judge Antone Bazil Coutts and 13-year-old Joe, father and son, labor diligently to dislodge the invasive saplings, tiny but tenacious, that have invaded the foundations of their comfortable home on the Ojibwe reservation in North Dakota. These precincts are familiar territory to readers of Louise Erdrich’s award-winning novels and short stories. The characters themselves descend from fictional forebears whose circumstances and misadventures, mythologies and moralities, romances, acts of vengeance, comedies and dramas have populated her numerous published volumes. The Round House brings its own uniqueness, beginning with the metaphor of father and son working intently to keep the foundation of home and family intact.

With deliberate pace and intonation, Erdrich allows young Joe, who will be the reflective narrator of this tale, to realize that something besides stubborn saplings will befoul the scene.

“Where is your mother?” the judge will demand to know.

Joe assumes that his father has had the answer. Geraldine, the beautiful and compassionate wife and mother, is a “tribal enrollment specialist.” She regularly handles difficult and confidential information regarding such matters as custody, identity, and claims, material and rhetorical, that have serious impact on the tribal community. Earlier that day, she had answered a telephone call and gone out to her office to “pick up a folder or two.” But she should be home by now.

Even if she’d gone to her sister Clemence’s house to visit afterward, Mom would have returned by now to start dinner. We both know that. Women don’t realize how much store men set on the regularity of their habits. We absorb their comings and goings into our bodies, their rhythms into our bones. Our pulse is set to theirs. . . .

And so, you see, her absence stopped time. . . .

Let’s go find her, [the judge] said. And even then, as I threw on my jacket, I was glad that he was so definite ----find her, not just look for her, not search. We would go out and find her.

So, with the novel barely three pages gone, Louise Erdrich establishes a number of things. First, the reader is going to be inhabiting a world of solid familial foundation, unity, and the attempt to defend against invasion. Second, something has certainly gone awry. Third, as Erdrich describes, even briefly, an environment insulated by legal texts and tribal precedent, which she deftly introduces in Joe’s foray into his father’s library. Complexities of law and custom will surely come into play. Fourth, by bringing in that tiny phrase, “you see,” the narrator is going to draw us, the readers, into the unfolding tale in an especially intimate, personal manner.

In previous novels, Erdrich has often depicted a single central event from a variety of viewpoints, inviting us to broaden, even universalize, perspective. Not this time: As the novel spools to its conclusion, its inevitability is unequivocal, at least in the mind of the narrator. And he will draw us right along with him.

And what will lead us there?

Almost before Joe and the judge begin their search for Geraldine, they will encounter her, driving dazedly and bloodily toward them, on her agonized way home. Their first vestiges of relief are shattered by the realization that she has been savagely assaulted—beaten and raped. Her shock is palpable. She is mute. Clearly she lives in the terror that she is not out of the danger of her attacker, but she cannot, or will not, reveal what she knows of the person, his motive, or even the precise location of the horrendous event. Each of
these elements is deeply significant because of the tangled jurisdictional relationships among tribal, local, state, and federal law. (In an endnote to the novel, Erdrich reports that the circumstances making legal protections complex and elusive for Native American women exist to this day.)

What becomes clear is that the assault has taken place in the environs of the Round House, a ceremonial structure sacred to the Ojibwe, still used for traditional purifying rituals. It is deeply ironic that a shelter designed metaphorically to protect people and give them succor has now become the ground for an outrage. Less clear is who has committed so heinous an act, and why. And, for justice to be served, what parts of the surrounding lands have been entailed.

Joe, on the cusp of a new school year, perceives the road to justice as unfolding far too slowly. In his quest for the truth about, and perhaps vengeance for, what happened to his mother, he enlists the camaraderie of his three closest friends. He also meanders, more and less purposefully through the extended familial intricacies of various households on the reservation. Through these connections, and the partly historic, partly mythic insights delivered to him on his peregrinations, Joe will ultimately understand the sprawling implications of what befell his mother. He will then decide what he must do to put the world back in balance.

Joe, a diligent, sensitive, loving, likable boy, ultimately follows a tangled skein of happenstance to a place where his road to the future will be inflected by a combination of contemporary reality counterpoised to ancient belief.

In the end, he and his parents are somehow recovered, but irrevocably changed; yet, we know because he has told us quite early on, that Joe will move through life, succeed to his father’s profession, and “keep going.” In crafting this tale, and once again bringing her own particular geography to vivid and violent and loving life, Louise Erdrich has created a brilliant and inevitable tale. Familiarity with her earlier novels will enrich the experience of reading this one, in the sense of “knowing the family.” The Round House stands on its own, however, as a compelling morality tale, family drama, coming-of-age story, and, yes, literary mystery novel, combined into one powerhouse of a book.

**Alex Kramer**

Continued from page 8

following years he has presented a variety of courses including “Sports and Pittsburgh,” “Winston Churchill,” “Britain's Finest Hour,” “Abraham Lincoln,” “Allied Code Breaking,” “FDR,” “Women in Time of War,” “American Submarine Warfare,” and many others. Even now, 14 years later, he is still going strong, having just completed a course on Nazi Germany’s assault on the Soviet Union in World War II.

He is a member of several associations and societies, including the Organization of American Historians, International Churchill Society, Society for Military History, Society of Civil War Historians, and the Western Front Association.

Alex is a native Pittsburgher, having attended Colfax school and the University of Pittsburgh, where he received B.A. and M.A. degrees in history and was a member of the National History Honors Society. He served in the United States Air Force from 1952-1956 and for the following 22 years was a faculty member in the Moon Area school system, where he served as a history teacher, department chairman, and administrator.

There is, however, another side to him—his love for the Pitt football program, where he was director of football operations from 1978-1995 as well as a friend and mentor to many of the players.

He sums up his experience at Carnegie Mellon this way: “I am gratified and appreciative of the opportunity the Osher Institute has given me to teach and be associated with the interested, interesting, and delightful people whom I have been fortunate to have in my history classes. I am a lucky man.”

We are truly grateful to Alex for his many years of service and for his contribution to our reputation and renown. May he enjoy good fortune and continued success.

Joe Scorpion
The Promised Land
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I hadn’t heard for a month, so I thought it was another “no go.” However, I was finally called. 

Promised Land (the name of the movie) wanted me! Just show up in Apollo (wherever that was) at 7:00 a.m. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday morning, and plan to stay until 7:00 p.m.

So I left home at 6:00 a.m. Monday morning with a suitcase. Inside were three changes of clothes, snacks, books, and identity information. School buses were waiting for us at the old Apollo football field, and so was Leola. Leola and I became bosom buddies. We had a lot in common. Most people thought we were old friends after a couple of hours. We were always together, and as the grandmother that she is, she was always taking care of me.

We arrived at the old Apollo High. There were about 300 of us who signed up to be paid, were fed a delicious breakfast, then were sent to wardrobe, hair, and make-up. We were stars! (Hardly, but it sounds impressive.)

Then we reported to the auditorium to wait, and wait, and wait. Finally we were called to the gym to film the scene of a town council meeting that was discussing fracking in the local town.

The council members are sitting in chairs on the gym floor. We are in the bleachers. The meeting begins, and as the discussion is announced by the president of the council, a man stands up to add his concerns. Who is the man? Hal Holbrook. Yes, the Hal Holbrook.

He was playing a science teacher at the local middle school (although I questioned his teaching in junior high at the age of 87. He could have played a retired teacher.) His concern was how fracking would affect the town, especially the drinking water. Since we listened to this speech for a day and a half for all of the takes and retakes and the movement of the cameras for the various angles of the scene, I felt that I knew the lines. When you see the picture, you will see me in the front row.

To explain how the company is going to help the town, enter Matt Damon. Yes, the Matt Damon. He tries to convince us to choose his company to help the town. Hal, however, exposes his untruth in telling the council how much money the company will make. This is a surprise to the council president, so a meeting is proposed for three weeks later, when more members of the town can come and vote. When the vote is taken, those of us on Hal’s side (that’s me) stand in favor of another meeting.

You have to see the movie to hear the decision because Leola and I and others not chosen for the final scene spent Wednesday reading, talking, eating, and sleeping. That one is not always needed is something I found out in my first adventure into the world of film.

If you want to be in pictures, be prepared for an adventure, and you may be able to say something like:

Welcome to Promised Land
Starring Matt Damon and Mary Cay Burke-Hamill
Opening on December 28, 2012 at your local theater.

Step Up and Face It!

If you are on Facebook a lot, Osher needs your expertise. Wouldn’t it be nice to have a CMU Osher Group on Facebook? Osher groups all over the country already use Facebook to connect and communicate.

On Facebook, Osher members share their interests with other members outside the classroom. They post trips, events, and publications. They sign up for events and spread the word to other Osher members. They post videos and interviews. CMU Osher members could share or “like” something with the entire group on Facebook.

But we need a Facebook-savvy person who can start the group and establish our privacy settings so that only CMU Osher members can see and participate in the postings. We need an enthusiastic person to monitor members’ contributions, gently guiding us about what is helpful to share. Maybe this person would like to explore whether we should be a Facebook Group or a Google+ Group?

Please face the music and your computer and contact us at the Osher office, 412 268-7489 or send email to ldecker@andrew.cmu.edu, if you’d like to lead us into the future of social technology.
It’s All Talk

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Carnegie Mellon

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Special Events

December 4, 2012
Day Trip to Oglebay Park “Festival of Lights”

December 19, 2012 7:30 p.m.
Lecture Series presents Ed Reis as George Westinghouse

2013 Multi-Day Trips

April 5-7 Cultural Washington DC at Cherry Blossom Time

May: 19-24 Ottawa Tulip Festival and 1000 Islands

June: 6-9 Historic Bardstown & Louisville, KY
17-21 Mackinac Island at Lilac Time

July 16-19 Shaw Festival at Niagara on the Lake, Ontario