Newcomers Share First Impressions  

by Rosalyn Treger

New member Sidney Stark was awarded a master’s degree in English in February 1951. “I had not been in a classroom situation since,” he says. “I was pursuing other cultural things, for example, running a concert series. But I was surrounded by active, satisfied Osher people. They were all blissful over the teaching and the learning. Retirement gave me a bump, so I decided to try it.”

“I wanted to force myself to read fiction, which passed me by in the last 57 years,” Sidney said. He’d been reading three newspapers a day, magazines dealing with business, current events, and culture, but probably had not read more than two novels in that time.

An accomplished musician and serious concertgoer, he has attended twentieth- and twenty-first-century operas and symphonies. It was time to jump into contemporary fiction. “I applied for Helen-Fay Rosenblum’s short-stories course and was accepted as a first timer.” Sidney calls it “wonderful.”

Most of Sidney’s university courses, even in graduate school, were large lectures. Few had students in active discussion around a conference table, as the short-story class does. English students in the 1940s and ’50s were taught the New Criticism. Only the “text” was studied; there was no attention to the social

New study leader Sam Edelmann had been hearing about OLLI for some time from various acquaintances and knew that his neighbor Ruth Westerman was on the Curriculum Committee. Teaching a class would speed his way into membership, and his experience as a former restaurant critic provided a promising topic.

Sam’s course, “Where Do We Want to Eat?” ran in the second session of Summer 2008. He recruited restaurant critics and caterers—high-end and low-end—to talk about their work and their interests—and to hear from participants about the food they like to eat and where they like to eat it.

Election 2008 Course Draws Record Enrollment

In a first for OLLI at Carnegie Mellon, Morton Coleman’s course Election 2008 drew more than 179 participants. Classes were held in the Regent Square Theater. From left, Republican Jim Roddey and Democrat Joe Mistick flank Coleman. Mistick, an advisor to former Mayor Sophie Masloff, is a lawyer, columnist, and professor. Former County Executive Roddey is a businessman and local Republican leader. They debate one another at times on WQED’s Friday evening “On Q Magazine.”
From the President

By Julian Eligator

By the time this newsletter arrives, we will be well into our fall schedule. I find getting back to “school” becomes a little more problematic each year, but here we are! I hope your summer was a good one.

Our program for this term is filled with new and popular courses. We have 109 courses for this term—more than enough to satisfy a myriad of interests.

There are a number of subjects I’d like to share with you:

- Despite our abundance of courses, our large membership requires additional and larger classrooms. With a registration of 179 for the course Election 2008, we were fortunate to obtain the use of the Regent Square Theater. The use of that venue may be only a one-time event, but the need is obvious. Also, more study leaders are asking for classrooms from which they can connect to the Internet. Obtaining those sites is a challenge we will need to address.

- Our broadcast email is now functioning, and I urge you all to check your email at least weekly. Administrative Coordinator Millie Lynch shares interesting items from other Osher programs and keeps us up-to-date on current events at Carnegie Mellon, trips, and other local activities

- When I became a member of Osher (A.L.L. in those days), I did not appreciate the mechanics of how our program operates, how we rely on volunteers in our daily activities. Obviously, the need for volunteers is constant and ever-growing, as our enrollment grows. Many members have staffed committees for 10 years. We need a new generation to maintain our vitality and enthusiasm.

Remember, this is your organization, and your talents can be put to good use. Can you give three hours a month at the front desk? Can you give three hours a month on the mailing committee? Would you be willing to be a study leader assistant—a job requiring little time outside your class period? Get involved—you might enjoy contributing. These are our present needs, but there are many additional opportunities to help and innovate. For further information, you can contact Millie at the office at 412-268-7489, or call me at 412-521-9043.

People Are Saying . . .

Quantum Physics, Bernard Cohen, Study Leader
“Very thorough course of complex information presented in interesting way! Very good instructor.”

Fifteenth Annual
CMU Food Drive
November 2008
By Joe Scorpion

Carnegie Mellon University will launch its Annual Food Drive early in November. This is one of the largest private food drives in the area. Last year a total of 5,676 pounds of food items were collected and contributed to the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank.

For the past several years our Osher program has participated in this drive with our members generously donating non-perishable food items, paper products, toiletries, etc.

Members can drop off their donations at three collection sites: the Osher office located in the lower level of the Hunt Library and classrooms 4707 and 4708 in Wean Hall. Place items in the cardboard cartons that will be set up at these sites. Watch for notices!

Hopefully, with the help of our Osher members, the University will exceed last year’s totals.
Alphabet Soup: You Can Add to the Mix

By Sally Cohen, Curriculum Chair

The Osher office at CMU is building an alphabetized database of members’ current and/or previous “day jobs.” The scope of professions and occupations is broad, and it’s interesting to think of people we know in the various categories.

When I first saw the list (see below), I thought of the rich mix of talent we have available as classmates and study leaders. The categories started to swirl around in my head like letters in alphabet soup! I played around with that metaphor and came up with the following:

Think about stirring our unique alphabet soup in a large container. What a delicious brew! We can mix up all sorts of combinations. We can create a thick bowl of course categories to fill up a 12-week term or smaller cups that would show us programmed weeks-at-a-glance. Let’s lift a spoonful of “C’s” and see what we get:

Chef-Cook, Chemist, Choreographer, City Planner, Clergyman, Clinician, College Administrator, Computer Expert, Consultant, Control Analyst, Counselor

How about adding some “E’s,” “A’s,” and “P’s,” and simmering them together:

Economist, Educator, Engineer, Entrepreneur, Executive Director, Accountant, Actor/Director, Antiques Dealer, Architect, Art Historian, Artist, Attorney
Pharmacist, Photographer, Physical Therapist, Poet, Police Officer/Detective, Politician, Professor, Psychologist, Psychiatrist/Psychotherapist

The combinations are almost limitless and should satisfy a variety of appetites. As subdivisions and attributes of each category are included, the soup becomes thicker and more interesting. In fact, each bowl could provide a meal in itself!

Naturally, this is not how Osher programs develop. But it’s fascinating to think about curriculum planning this way. In a sense, we do add to and stir a program pot. When we schedule study leaders’ classes according to the sessions, days, and times they request, we usually come up with an enticing mix of topics and teachers. So after inserting the ingredients into our basic broth, we find the combinations are quite satisfying. Of course, sometimes we need to dip into the larger pot to add flavors that will complement those that are already in the recipe.

The Curriculum Committee always is pleased when new study leaders offer to teach and when former study leaders expand their topics or teach new ones. People with unfamiliar backgrounds may develop course topics that differ from others we’ve had. Those with familiar backgrounds may add different dimensions to a known subject area. And, as you know, some have had lifetime hobbies and interests that are amazingly different from the focus of their present or past “day jobs.” All these and more make Osher at CMU a very special place.

Now that we’ve started our database, we want it to expand. Help us do that! Let us know what you’ve done and what you are doing. Add to the mix.

Suggested List of Professions for Occupation Field on Database

Accountant, Actor, Director, Antiques Dealer, Architect, Art Historian, Artist, Attorney, Banker, Bookkeeper, Beautician, Businessman/woman, Chef/Cook, Chemist, Choreographer, City Planner, Clergyman/Minister/Rabbi, Clinician, College Administrator, College President, Computer Expert, Consultant (Field, if known), Control Analyst, Counselor, Designer, Doctor—Medical, Doctor—Ph.D., Draftsman/Draftswoman, Economist, Educator, Engineer, Entrepreneur, Executive Director, Farmer, Flight Attendant, Government Employee/Government Work, Health Professional, Homemaker, Hospital Worker, Hospitality Worker, Human Resources, Jeweler, Journalist, Judge, Lawyer (see Attorney), Librarian, Military Services, Music Therapist, Musician, Newspaper Columnist/Editor, Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Office Worker, Optician/Optometrist, Pharmacist, Photographer, Physical Therapist, Poet, Police Officer/Detective, Politician, Professor (Field, if known), Psychologist/Psychiatrist/Psychotherapist, Realtor, Reporter, Research & Development Work, Secretary, Social Worker, Tax Preparer, Teacher-Elementary, High School, Therapist (other than those above), Tradesperson (Boilermaker, Carpenter, Electrician), Travel Agent, Vet, Writer
A Profile of Bernard Osher
By Joe Scorpion

Known as the Academy for Lifelong Learning at Carnegie Mellon University for nearly 16 years, our program recently changed its name to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. This name change was required by the Bernard Osher Foundation for our receiving two $100,000 grants, applying for a $1 million endowment, and joining a network of lifelong learning institutes across the U.S. Many have asked, “Who is Bernard Osher?”

Bernard Osher, born in 1927, is an American billionaire, best known for his work as an auctioneer and philanthropist. The November 2007 issue of BusinessWeek listed him as the eleventh most-generous philanthropist. A native of Biddeford, Maine, Osher studied at Bowdoin College, graduating in 1948. After working at Oppenheimer & Company in New York, he moved to California, where he became the founding director of World Savings, which became the second-largest savings institution in the United States, later sold to Wachovia for $24 billion dollars.

An avid art collector, he also purchased the British auction house Butterfield & Butterfield, which became the fourth-largest auction house in the world. In 1999, he sold the company to e-Bay for $260 million.

The Bernard Osher Foundation, headquartered in San Francisco, was founded in 1977 and seeks to improve the quality of life through support for higher education and the arts. In the fall of 2000, the foundation began to consider programs targeted toward more-mature students, not necessarily well-served by the standard continuing education curriculum, and toward the more-senior students, many of whom are at retirement age and interested in education for the joy of learning.

At present, the foundation is supporting 121 Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes on university and college campuses in 48 states and the District of Columbia. The institute at Carnegie Mellon is one of 11 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Fall Lecture Series Underway

A lively fall lecture series began on Tuesday, September 23, with Pittsburgh City Councilman Bill Peduto speaking on “Building a New Pittsburgh: Clean, Lean, and Green.”

Monday, October 6, retired physics professor Robert Resnick spoke on “The Life and Times of Albert Einstein,” illustrating his talk with many interesting photos, and study leader William Reck displayed his painting of Albert Einstein.

Wednesday, October 15, Stuart Hoffman, chief economist at PNC, addressed a timely subject, “The Economic Forecast for Pittsburgh and the U.S.”

Wednesday, November 12, videographer Ken Love will show his documentary “Samuel Rosenberg: Pittsburgh’s Painter Laureate.”

Thursday, December 18, William Block, the retired publisher of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, will talk about a Civil War general.
CMU’s Posner Center to Feature a Powerful Exhibit: “Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk”

The Posner Center at CMU will display a traveling exhibit featuring the art of Arthur Szyk January 7 through March 28, 2009. The work focuses on World War II | The Jewish Response | The Meaning of America.

According to the CMU website, “Arthur Szyk was a Polish Jew who came to the United States in 1940 and used his art to work against injustice and oppression. Szyk’s powerful satiric images mobilized others against Nazism, racism, and other injustices. His style used Polish folk idioms combined with the bright colors and intricate details of illuminated manuscript miniaturists.”

He said of his work, “Art is not my aim, it is my means,” and “I am but a Jew praying in art.” (source http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Szyk).2

Sidney Stark
Continued from page 1

political environment of the fiction or its author. “What Shakespeare was thinking was not relevant,” Sidney remembers. In the Osher short-story course, reflecting current trends in literature study, the discussion includes the world of the story and of the writer while still focusing very closely on the words on the page—“what the author has to say,” he recalls Helen-Faye Rosenblum stressing, “not what we want to say.”

Sidney will be following contemporary short stories with ancient literature—Andrew Miller’s course “(Re)reading the Aeneid.” He says, “The plot thickens and becomes more world-wide. It will be fun to read fiction again after all these years, and with such superb instructors.”

“What’s next? Who knows,” Sidney says, “maybe I’ll teach a course. Good luck to OLLI, and thanks for having me.”

Sam Edelmann
Continued from page 1

Participants were engaged, perhaps interested a little less in listening than in talking—nothing like Sam’s experience teaching at Pitt years ago. Sam said he learned quite a bit from the class. “I still eat spicy,” he said, “people in their 70s, not so much.” Class participants seemed more interested in Italian and French food than in Sam’s favorite South Asian cuisine. “I should try some of their recommendations,” he said.
How Julian and Rhoda Eligator came to visit Wasilla, Alaska, before it became famous

The eldest of the Eligators’ seven grandchildren, Philip Sanson, had his 13th birthday in August, and his grandparents’ gift was a trip to a place of his choice. Since he is very talented musically and he and his branch of the family live in Cambridge, England, his grandmother thought he might choose Tanglewood or some other musical hotspot in the U.S.

“But he said, no, he just wanted to have fun . . . in Alaska” says Rhoda. “So the three of us went to Alaska.”

The trip, while on the ship Radiance of the Sea and while touring on land, was a spectacular success, according to the proud grandparents. They loved being with Philip and getting to know him better. They shared the fun of seeing the Alaskan sights. They watched whales at play in the water; while sightseeing from a helicopter, they got a spectacular view of the unique landscape from the top of a glacier; and they visited a facility where injured animals were treated. And on the road to Anchorage they passed a little town called Wasilla, which they noticed only because it had normal stores for the local folks rather than the many tourist shops they’d been seeing along their route.

Within two weeks of their return home, Wasilla, Alaska, became a “destination.” Who would have thought?

Ask many retirees how they fill their free time, and they laugh. “Free time? I’m busier than I ever was; I don’t have time enough for all I do.” You’ll find lots of people like that among Osher members. A few whom Ad Lib happened to bump into recently are just examples. We always like to know what our members are up to.

An article in the August issue of the Allegheny County Medical Society Bulletin describes the services of the Catholic Charities Free Health Care Center and the volunteer work provided by physicians there. Among the doctors mentioned is Osher member Alvin Bodek. A quiet guy, Al said he finds his work at the clinic “fulfilling.” When he sold his family practice in West Mifflin after more than 50 years there, he didn’t want to give up medicine completely. He wanted to help where the service was completely free.

“I read about the center in an article in the Post-Gazette, and it was what I was looking for. It’s open to all kinds of people who need help.” Al has been volunteering there every Thursday since mid-February.

And that’s not the only volunteer work that occupies this man of varied interests. He had always been a patron of the Music and Art Department of the Carnegie Library’s Main Branch in Oakland and decided to volunteer so he could see behind the scenes. He goes on Wednesdays and does everything from working in the archives to affixing labels on tapes.

“When I’m sticking on labels I put on my earphones and listen to music,” says this happy volunteer.

Volunteering takes both Selma Ryave and Alva Fleming to their favorite venue—the theater. Very often, by plan, they work at the same show, either meeting at the theater or even taking the bus together. Their volunteering takes them to eight theaters—

the Benedum, Byham, Irish and Classical Theater, Cabaret at Theater Square, City Theater, Hamburg Theater, Public Theater, and the Playhouse.

“I had to give up my car a couple of years ago because of eye problems,” says Selma, “but I haven’t let it stop me. I usher at around a hundred shows a year, and I love it.”

Alva Fleming may not do quite as much ushering, but only because sometimes she’s part of the performance. A violinist, she plays in the University of Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Tuesday Musical String Ensemble, and the Pittsburgh Civic Orchestra as well in the orchestra at Pittsburgh Savoyards presentations. In addition she is a caregiver for a blind member of her Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

“I have nobody in my family at home any more, so this is what keeps me going,” says Alva. “I’m just about to leave for a rehearsal right now.”

Then there’s Ron Fuchs, who explores his many creative talents in the free time he gained when the family-owned Frick Park grocery store was sold in 2000. He sang in the Osher chorus. He’s always been a painter, he says, kind of specializing in portraits, but now he’s started taking drawing classes on Fridays. An aspiring actor, he was bitten by that bug when he was an extra in a couple of locally made movies. Often Ron expands his knowledge in Osher classes, but he’s so enthusiastic about acting he’s taking professional acting classes Downtown.

However, somehow Ron finds time to serve regularly as a Eucharistic minister at Shadyside Hospital and as a docent in the Car and Carriage House at the Frick. In addition, he can be counted on for help whenever needed in the Osher office and to be the scooper at every Ice Cream Social for Osher volunteers.

Lots of nice things happened since the last newsletter: Joan Shames had a
Ad Lib  continued from page 6

“Random Acts of Kindness” item in the Post-Gazette thanking a Carnegie Mellon student for the help he gave her and her husband to reach their car on campus during a blustery spring rainstorm. He sheltered each under his big umbrella then dashed off to class without giving his name. . . Four “chessnuts” (members of the Saturday chess class) joined a large, festive group of Sidney Shore’s family to celebrate his 90th birthday. We already knew he was an erudite, worldly gentleman, but it was an eye-opener to hear about his being a World War II bombardier and prisoner of war (where he taught fellow prisoners French to occupy their time) and to see huge photos of Sidney looking very dashing in his Air Force uniform. Obviously, he is the family hero. . . . Joe Scorpion is proud of his grandson Steve’s summer work at many basketball camps all around the country, including the legendary Five-Star Basketball Camp, Pitt, and Villanova. Steve’s back as assistant basketball coach at Polk Community College, Winter Haven, Florida. . . . A two-page rave review of the work of artist Christo Braun especially referring to his scenic designs done for Pittsburgh Ballet Theater appeared in the spring issue of Shady Avenue magazine. Braun is the son-in-law of Suzanne and Gerst Gibbon and widower of their late daughter, Deborah. . . . Intrepid traveler Martha Malinzak is back from another adventure-packed trip, this time to Argentina, Chile, Patagonia, and environs. . . . Gerry K. Smith, who led “News and Views” at A.L.L. for eight years, for the third consecutive fall term is leading a discussion group Friday mornings in October at Hampton Township’s Community Library. A special election-night watch will top off the series. . . . An exhibition opened at the Mendelson Gallery on October 3 featuring the watercolors of Osher member and study leader Robert Bowden and the sculpture of his son Paul—their first together. . . . We’re happy to report that Dick Cohen is doing well in his recovery from back surgery. Good news for fans of his popular music classes.

The Ties That Bind  By Martha Raak

What happens when 54 relatives spend a week together on Cape Cod—chaos, fun, laughter, a few arguments, and lots of activity. Our family plans a biannual reunion with one branch of the three families in charge on a rotating basis. My sister, brother, and I have long since passed the baton to the next generation. Some come for the whole week, others for a few days. The Left Coasters fly, while many of us drive.

Ray and I met our new, ninth, grandchild, Olive Marjorie, for the first time. She looks like a cabbage patch doll and rarely cries. Our oldest, Kelly, is the first of the grandchildren to be heading off to college this fall. Some of the teen boys are over six feet now and ogling the girls.

Our parents had 28 great-grandchildren. Albert and Regina Codi both passed on this past year. We planned a wonderful life celebration for them featuring photos and mementos, stories and music, with the grands taking home whatever they could glean. My sister-in-law prepared a beautiful package for each with remembrances, photos, a CD, and written memorials by the three of us, their children. They had been married 73 years and were 95 and 93 at their deaths. We look to them as a symbol of commitment.

One evening we celebrated my sister, Marie, and her husband, Bernie’s, 50th wedding anniversary. One of the male teens got up and said he couldn’t imagine being with the same girl for 50 years!

One of our traditions is a golf outing. Now some of the teens are joining in. We also have some very competitive volleyball games. This year one of the sons-in-law led us in a fun Zumba workout—aerobics to Latin music and lots of fun. Try it! Our son-in-law, Mike, took the kids out on a sailfish sailboat. A few went fishing. Many of us went to a variety of beaches, including the highly duned with giant waves at Wellfleet. Gretchen, Mike, and I biked 30 miles on the wonderful National Seashore Bike Path to Wellfleet. Mike and his son, Russ, cycled back.

Politics always result in a lively conversation. A life-sized Obama cutout was circulating, causing consternation in the majority Conservative camp while we Liberals insisted on having our picture taken with him.

We always take a large family reunion portrait. This year our niece hired a professional to come and take our picture on the beach. My husband, Ray, was seated in a nice wicker chair in the center as he is unable to walk far on the sand. He looked like a high priest sitting there. There is always one wide-open-mouth photo since many of us Codis like to talk, so why hide it.

So there it is—an encapsulation of a week at the Cape in ’08. We all love each other, even though we may not always like each other, but that’s family, isn’t it?
Speaking of Books:
By Helen-Faye Rosenblum

In his introduction to The Best American Short Stories: 2008, Salman Rushdie reminds readers of the truism, no less valid for being commonplace, that “The human being is a story-telling animal, or, actually the story-telling animal, the only creature on Earth that tells itself stories in order to understand what sort of creature it is.” With similar spirit, in a recent number of the New Yorker (September 29), Louis Menand cites Lionel Trilling’s famous dictum that “. . . literature is the human activity that takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty.”

Hannah Tinti, a celebrated editor and short-story writer prior to the publication of her novel, The Good Thief, whose young eponymous hero has already been admirably called a Dickensian or Steven-sonian character. In truth, young Ren is a magnificently original creation, and the world he inhabits is sui generis. The novel unfolds as a craftily layered storyteller’s story. As novelist Tinti spins a mesmerizing yarn, story-telling itself inspires characters, propels the plot, and finally determines the surprising yet inevitable outcome. Early on, Tinti signals how important the art of the tale will be to Ren. She describes his very first encounter with a novel, The Deerslayer (stolen, of course).

“The Indian gazed at him from the cover, cool and exotic. Ren ran his fingers over the picture, moved closer to the light, opened the book, and began to read. As he entered the story [italics mine], hemlocks and pine trees soared overhead, a lake spread out before him like a mirror reflecting the sky, and the sound of a rifle shot boomed in his ears. Ren made his way through the dense forest with The Deerslayer.”

And we make our way just as palpably through Tinti’s intricate plot with Ren, experiencing all through his eyes. At the opening, Ren is one of the desolate, hopeful boys who have been abandoned to Saint Anthony’s orphanage, a harsh institution whose inmates learn resourcefulness, self-preservation, and the small larcenies required for survival in such an environment. Ren’s hopes for adoption are slim: most potential parents go to Saint Anthony’s to select a strong youngster who will participate in their hard-scrabble labors, rather than a dear child to augment a loving family. Ren, already 11 and lacking a left hand, is hardly a likely candidate for a farm laborer, although a neatly stitched flap of skin seals his wrist, and he already possesses a certain practiced agility.

One day a youngish stranger appears at Saint Anthony’s, and the boys assemble in their accustomed pre-adoption lineup. To everyone’s amazement, the man immediately seizes upon Ren, and identifies him as his own long-lost, much younger brother. What a yarn he spins for the priests, including the abduction of parents, a scalping (whose desiccated relics he earnestly produces), and a credible explanation of how Ren became maimed in the course of rescue. With relief, hope, and a little bit of absolution, Ren goes off with the man, Benjamin Nab, toward a future undreamed of in his imagination.

It takes no time at all for Benjamin to reveal himself as a consummate con artist. His every encounter is a field ripe for treachery, and every treachery is illumined by the brilliant hard-luck stories he invents. In his creatively larcenous imagination, a crippled lad by his side will be the perfect prop for his various
chicaneries, and he will not be wrong. Who, after all, can resist the entreaties of a pathetic waif? Thence to New Umbrage, where they will settle. The village is both a wretched factory town and a virtual cemetery. A mine collapse beneath the town itself has entrapped forever most of the able-bodied men in the region. The factory, a virtual sweatshop, employs unmarried or unmarriageable young women in the making of mousetraps. Their taskmaster, Mr. McGinty, is a tyrant. When the two purported “brothers,” Benjamin Nab and Ren, are finally joined by Benjamin’s drunken former-schoolteacher friend Tom, the three will embark upon their ultimate remunerative practice: grave robbing.

Now, as “Resurrection Men,” these grave robbers are not simply motivated by the finery sported by the fresh corpses they abduct. In fact, the corpses themselves, resold for authentic research to a physician at the local hospital, are the ultimate cash-producers. However ghoulish the practice, a certain humanitarian aura surrounds its purpose. And in a novel as artfully sculpted as this one, suffice it to say that at the denouement no detail of any occupation will go to waste.

Along the way, Ren will build a constellation, a family of sorts, to which he will add: a deaf and humane woman who reads lips but shouts in reply; a dwarf who descends upon Ren from a chimney; an actual, murderous, strategically forgiving giant, literally risen from the dead (you have to read it); the vicious McGinty; the angry, pitiful mousetrap girls; a set of orphaned twins, and a few other characters of significance to the plot.

If the cast of characters sound something like a carnival sideshow, it isn’t. There are at least two major strands to this novel, the ways and means of Ren’s survival, and the unraveling of the mystery of his identity and the missing hand. In the care of a writer as inspired as Tinti, each and every person belongs to the unraveling of the tale, as naturally as any player in the human comedy. When the giant comes to life, we are believers. When the dwarf literally drops in for dinner, well, why not? In the end after violence, betrayal, murder, and a certain amount of reconciliation, Ren will save his own life and future by telling a final, brilliantly cobbled story of his own. In its course he will inadvertently find some home truths, and the novel will close as perfectly as one might hope, notwithstanding the carnage that has gone before.

Don’t be deterred by the intimations of the ghoulish in this description. There’s plenty of blood to be sure, but it’s not gratuitous. It frames the plot. And Ren is indeed The Good Thief. One of his earliest recorded pilferings at the orphanage was a copy of The Lives of the Saints. The work inspires him. Like the paradox of grave robbing in the service of humanity, nothing in this novel has a simplistic morality. But rarely in contemporary fiction does a work with such complex issues at its core offer such a dazzling entertainment to carry its freight. Read it at whatever level you may, The Good Thief offers storytelling at its remarkable best.

**Tutoring at Colfax Elementary School**

*By Carole Wolsh*

There is a well-kept secret. Yes, we have been tutoring at Colfax School for 14 years. Just ask Ellen Katzen and Carole Wolsh, who have continued to go to the school now known as Pittsburgh Colfax K-8 all these years. At first we started with about 20 tutors, but through the years, we have dwindled down to only a few tutors. Diane Spodek, Myrna Prince, and Elaine Saltzman are some of our treasured tutors. Colfax welcomes everyone, and it is a wonderful experience to help mentor their students. If you want to be a part of this wonderful experience, call Carole Wolsh for details at 412-521-1758.
I’m always interested in articles that relate to improving health and extending life. The following list of super foods is attributed to Dr. Keith Block, an Illinois physician with a special attachment to seniors.

- Garlic. The doctor says it’s an organosulfate that helps clean the body of chemical residue from drugs or pollutants. Perhaps readers will remember, as I do, that way back in grammar school Italian kids wore garlic around their necks in flu season. Locally raised garlic, available at most farmers’ markets, is beautiful this year. Use it in marinades and salad dressings and to add flavor wherever appropriate.
- Soybean tofu: Don’t know much about cooking tofu. Doc says stir-fry.
- Mushrooms: stimulate the immune system.
- Blueberries: For years we’ve known that this fruit is brain food. Throw a handful in with the raspberries, nectarines, bananas, or cereal at breakfast.
- Kale: “Possibly the healthiest food on earth,” says the Doc.
- Flaxseed: I quote, “In addition to omega-fatty acids, flaxseed contains lignans, which are antioxidants that suppress tumor growth. If you can’t find flaxseed cracked, buy it whole, grind it, and then sprinkle a teaspoon over cereal.”
- Kidney and garbanzo beans: I assume that these beans, canned and rinsed well, used frequently in soups and stews, retain their saponins, which shield DNA from free radicals that damage tissues and are associated with cancer.
- Carrots: Help prevent many types of cancer and also slow the growth of cancer cells.
- Tomatoes: Loaded with lycopene. Look for deep red color.
- Strawberries: High in folic acid.

According to Jane Brody in the New York Times, “Long-term studies have shown that how people live accounts for more than half the difference in how hale and hearty they will remain until very near the end.” She reports that “there is nearly universal agreement that about 35 percent is determined by genes over which we have little or no control.” But, she continues “it is never too late to adopt habits that predict old age.” Among these are healthy diet and regular exercise. “Long-term studies have also pinpointed exercise as the single most potent predictor of healthy longevity, in women as well as men.” These are weight-bearing activities that strengthen muscles and bones and stretching exercises that reduce stiffness and improve flexibility and balance.

Twenty-seven folks from Osher toured the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, September 16-19, and, as usual, RoseMarie DeRiso, our leader, had it all arranged efficiently and enjoyably, even though it was her first trip to the area.

While the main attraction, the fabulous Vanderbilt “castle” was worth the eight-hour bus trip, additional sights rounded out the experience. Biltmore, with its 250 rooms and gorgeous grounds, is amazing, considering that it was built during the turn of the twentieth century but included many of the amenities we have all come to expect—electricity, central heating, elevators, telephones, etc. It’s a great example of what untold wealth, a forward-looking mind, and a tremendous ego can create.

Two other famous men also had homes in Asheville, and seeing them illustrated more-normal lifestyles. The boarding house run by the mother of the author Thomas Wolfe is kept intact and clearly evokes memories of his novels to readers who loved them when they were sensational bestsellers decades ago. While the Wolfe home was an example of lower-middle-class life struggling to hold on, the home of poet-journalist Carl Sandburg was comfortable even by today’s standards. One could imagine moving in—if being set in a woodsy paradise a bit of a way from town were not a problem.

Seeing these three contrasting styles of residences in one small city at the first half of the last century was a thought-provoking experience. Of course Biltmore was the main reason for the trip and it lived up to expectations, but the natural beauty of the surrounding countryside as well as the charming small city of Asheville added to the enjoyment of the trip.
Members Answer It’s All Talk Invitation

The Summer 2008 issue invited members to tell It’s All Talk what they’ve been doing. We heard from some interesting and active people.

Dorothy Holley, a long-time member of Osher—or A.L.L., as it was known when she joined in 1981—looks back on her life in her latest book of poetry, Late Day Thoughts. In verse she muses about various complexities of life, including illness, but does not dwell on her recent cancer.

Dorothy, now 85, came to Pittsburgh in 1981 to baby-sit some of her grandchildren. Born in rural Ohio, she has lived in many parts of the U.S. Books have always been important in her life, and she can remember early volumes that encouraged her to appreciate life in the country and in the city.

She met her husband-to-be while both were students at Ohio State University. There they heard the news about the bombing at Pearl Harbor. Shortly after that, Mr. Holley joined the army, and his wife traveled with him to a number of stations. Later, they traveled together to many parts of the country, “always looking for a better job.”

For many years Dorothy Holley has been a member of the Madwomen in the Attic, a poetry workshop at Carlow University. In addition to her latest volume of poetry, she has written two other books: A Whole Quart Jar, published in 2005, about growing up on a farm, living through the Depression, losing a dear family member, and learning the relationships among generations, and The Garden Journals, published in 2006, with illustrations of city garden plots and excerpts from garden journals. All three books are available from Foothills Publishing, P.O.Box 68, Kanona, N.Y. 14856.

Regina Belle

Ask Ralph Hartman, who joined A.L.L. more than a decade ago, what he most likes about the program and he’ll say, “A.L.L. (now Osher) is one of the finest things I’ve run into in my life. I’m impressed by the lack of egos of the instructors and the courses that allow—even encourage—free discussions between the leaders and the class.” He recalls with enthusiasm the first course he enjoyed: Jack Feeney’s course on the Constitution. Many others stand out as well: Alex Kramer’s course, one by Dr. Roger Sutton, another by Sandy Baskin, and many more. He himself even taught an acting course.

Theater, particularly musical theater, has long been an important part of Hartman’s life. He has participated in many shows with the Pittsburgh Musical Theater and has even involved his grandchildren in several musicals. This retiree from Westinghouse Electric Corp in Large, where he was an accountant, also enjoys high-school football.

He’s attended Friday evening games for the past 40 years and even taught a session on the sport in one of his classes.

For many years Ralph Hartman worked on a novel in his leisure time. Recently he decided to self-publish the book, Trial by Choice. It is available through amazon.com or the Barnes and Noble web site.

Regina Belle

Osher member and study leader Maureen Hahn wrote:

My friend Marion and I enjoyed an Osher trip to NYC in October 2007. Both of us had visited New York before but were aware of the problems involved in getting around, buying tickets, and finding reasonably priced meals in a huge city. The Osher trip solved those problems. It looked like a very busy four days in the Big Apple, but it was far more than our expectations. Our hotel was simple, clean, comfortable, and well-located. The motorcoach was comfortable and the driver excellent. He delivered and picked us up near the entrances to all the museums, theaters, and restaurants at prearranged times.

We enjoyed dinners at the Tavern on the Green and a restaurant in Little Italy. One night we attended a theater performance, and an opera on another. On our return journey to Pittsburgh, the bus was quiet as we rested and talked about all we had seen, the new Osher friends we had made, the delightful trip.
A Special Evening

Race and Religion in the Presidential Race

Thursday, Oct. 30, 2008
7:30 PM, Gregg Auditorium
Porter Hall 100

DVD presentation of:
Cornel West and Susan Nieman
discussing
Race and Religion in the Presidential Election
Followed by a Panel Discussion
Rev. Donald Dutton
Rev. Dr. Donald B. Green
Beatrice Jones
Rev. Dr. Moni McIntyre
Eric Springer, Esq.
Rabbi Ron Symons

Popular Tour to Youngstown Museum

The one-day tour to the Butler Institute of American Art attracted so many participants that a second trip was scheduled. Altogether, 78 people traveled to Youngstown on August 19 and 21. Below, Special Events Chair Gloria Kleiman and Bob Dickman, who planned this tour and our other day trips, enjoy the Fellows Riverside Gardens after touring the Butler Museum of American Art on August 19.