New Osher Study Leader Has Journeyed In Literature and Life

By Sylvia Sachs

Most people’s lives contain a nugget of a plot line that could be expanded into a novel, or at least a short story (as students in Helen Faye Rosenblum’s revered Osher short story class can confirm), but some lives do stand out as especially dramatic and attention worthy. Such a life is that of Dr. Shujiang Lu, who taught the “Minority Women Literature” class this past term. Not that this quiet, unassuming woman who tells her students to call her Susan rather than struggle with her Chinese name, thinks of herself as the star of an unusual story.

She was born in Hesei, a large city in eastern China, and graduated with a bachelor’s degree from a college in Anqing, also in eastern China. Her major was English and English literature. Since the doctorate she aspired to was not available in China, she began the search for a scholarship and was awarded one to the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. Her husband, Kevin Guo, also a graduate student, followed her eight months later to continue his education. While living in Ontario, they became Canadian citizens. After six years there, the couple moved to Wisconsin, where their daughter, Anying, was born. Next

The Faces of Globalization: See Them at the CMU International Film Festival

By Rosalyn Treger

We can hardly pick up a newspaper without seeing the word globalization. Wikipedia defines it as “an ongoing process by which regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through a globe-spanning network of communication and trade.” A mouth-filling phrase, but what does globalization mean on a human level? Is globalization a culprit or cure for global issues? In film, what are the faces of globalization? The Carnegie Mellon University International Film Festival 2010 explores these questions from March 25 through April 24 through its theme, “Faces of Globalization.”

Share the Ride!

Walking to our class buildings can be a serious problem for some members. To help, Osher will begin a ride-sharing program. Registration forms will include columns where members can indicate that they need a ride or can offer a ride to the classes they select. The class lists that members receive will note who needs rides and who offers rides so that members can make arrangements with each other.

Winter-Spring 2010
From the President

By Julian Eligator

You remember the Bill Murray movie where he was condemned to repeat Groundhog Day until he got it right. In my six years on the board it seems like our Groundhog Day is the problem regarding transportation to our classrooms for those with difficulty walking.

Transportation to the classrooms is discussed at what seems like every board meeting. From golf carts, to the CMU bus, to hiring our own bus, to purchasing an airport transporter—all have been considered or have been unsuccessful. Now as I complete my term as president, I am optimistic that we have found an answer. With the creative idea from my roommate, we will begin a “Ride Share” program.

In the registration forms in the next catalogue, you will find two new columns on the page where you select your courses. One column has a box to check if you need a ride. The other box is to be checked if you are willing to give a ride. Since over 50% of our members live in the zip codes of Oakland, Shadyside, and Squirrel Hill, making a match should be easy. The class lists you receive will note who in the class can offer rides and who needs rides.

CMU Homecoming: Adieu and Thanks—A.L.L./Osher Volunteers

By Joe Scorpion

Early in October we were advised by the University Events Office that they have made a number of changes to the format for homecoming and will no longer offer the Alumni Lounge as a gathering area for alums. As a result our members will no longer be needed to serve as greeters/facilitators for Homecoming Week.

For nearly 12 years A.L.L./Osher members have assisted with this event and have always found it to be a rewarding experience. We wish to extend our thanks and appreciation to all those who served over these many years.

Thanks for Helping

By Joe Scorpion

The sixteenth annual Carnegie Mellon University Food Drive conducted in November 2009 was the best drive ever. As a result, a total of 7,896 pounds of food items and $1,702.10 in cash was contributed to the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Congratulations and many thanks to all those Osher members who, along with the campus community, again so generously responded to the call to aid the hungry in our area.
Osher Holiday Party Warms a Cold Friday

By Jayne Keffer

On the cold Friday afternoon of December 11, approximately 85 guests enjoyed a delicious lunch and special entertainment at Oakland’s famous Pittsburgh Athletic Association. The club was tastefully decorated for the holidays with pine boughs, holiday trees, and poinsettias. The lobby glowed with a warm fire emanating from the huge stone fireplace. The tasty lunch consisted of a seasonal mixed green salad, wild rice pilaf, Mississippi mud cake, and a choice of one of three entrees: roasted vegetable ravioli, veal marsala, and almond-crusted tilapia.

During our lunch, the very talented Dr. Robert Runzo, an Osher member, played familiar Broadway and oldies tunes on the club’s grand piano. After lunch, as a special treat this year, Connie Rapp and her class “Singing for Fun” performed, entertaining us with several familiar songs such as “It’s a Great Day for Singing a Song” and some not-so-famous, yet beautiful, selections. In the past Connie and her students were reluctant to perform before our group because they felt they were not good enough. Judging by the audience reaction, I think Connie’s group is more than ready—they were terrific, and so was Dr. Runzo, who accompanied them. I hope they will return to perform next year.

The revelry did not end with this entertainment. Millie Lynch, Senior Administrative Coordinator for Osher, had a few Barnes and Noble gift cards to give away. Instead of the boring penny-under-the-coffee-cup routine, these gift cards were given to members who had the chutzpah to come to the microphone to entertain the group with some act. Ed Landerman started it all off with something goofy. (Not quite sure I can identify what he did!)

With some prodding, others followed. Among the performers, Julian and Rhoda Eligator, Jerry and Joan Wolfson, Jeanne Hanchett, and Grace and Sil Moritz sang a few songs; Janice Moravec recited a very moving poem; Ruth Westerman led the group in exercises; and Bob Resnik and Flip Conti told jokes. My apologies to the others who participated and whose names I didn’t know. In all, everyone seemed to enjoy themselves with the food, the company, and all the fun entertainment. Thank you to all who helped with making the day a success. I especially want to thank my committee: Carol Wolsh, Dee Davis, and Jane Prantl, for all their time and hard work.

Above, at lunch from left: Phyllis Davidson, Mary Scuilli, Dolores Blumstein; above, right: Connie Rapp leads her singing class.
There’s More To a Course Than Its Title

By Sally Cohen, Curriculum Committee Chair

Occasionally Osher members have said they were disappointed in a course that they thought would be appealing. The course wasn’t what they expected. It wasn’t what they wanted it to be. However, we’ve learned that sometimes these courses were picked solely by their titles, and the members didn’t know any details that were to be included in the content.

When looking through courses in the catalog, we should keep the following questions in mind: “what should a course title do?” . . . and “what can’t a title do?”

A course title needs to be enticing. It should grab our interest and motivate us to find out more; it should urge us to read on. Our study leaders are encouraged to create “catchy” titles. I often tell study leaders the title should be “sexy,” and sometimes we work together for a while to achieve that goal.

But a title cannot possibly tell us what the scope of a course will be, and it’s the scope of the course—the content presented over a period of weeks—that will indicate whether we’re likely to enjoy it or be turned off by it. That information is found in the course description.

Routinely, study leaders and committee members discuss how course topics will be developed over a period of weeks, and they often work together to create course descriptions. As study leaders relate subject details that have interesting or unusual slants, they select some of this information to be put in the catalog. Course descriptions, then, can become previews of coming attractions. They can increase readers’ knowledge and curiosity and, in this way, help them make course selections. However, these same details can also cause members to realize that though the course title initially seemed attractive, the overall content really is not appealing.

There are also individual likes and dislikes regarding class formats and teaching styles. When looking for “good” courses, it’s important to think about these. Some of us like to be a part of class discussions, others do not; some like to delve into material using outside reading or the Internet, others want to get course information solely in class; some want to take on a subject that they know nothing, or little, about, others want to review subjects they haven’t thought about for a while; and so on. We can find these particulars in the Course Catalog along with reading and assignment requirements, specific skill levels needed (or not needed), participation expectations, materials fees, off-campus class sites or visits, use of audio/visual material or the Internet, and, occasionally, class size.

We should, of course, take note of study leaders’ qualifications that relate to the subjects they are going to teach. Although we know about instructors we’ve had previously, they sometimes develop new topics revealing unknown abilities and interests. But biographical descriptions of unfamiliar teachers can be quite informative.

The following examples of Osher courses provide condensed information illustrating these ideas:

**Drama in the Neighborhood (interesting; need to read on . . .)**

Class participation; reading required: study three plays (playwrights August Wilson, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams); issues: striving for success against encroaching demands from families and neighborhoods; students read roles/selected scenes, discuss character motivation, thematic development; related author information; DVDs shown.

**Voice Power: How to Increase Confidence and Communicate Effectively (some detail, but need to read on . . .)**

Includes interactions with family, medical, and other professionals; gain critical listening skills; individualized strategies; class participation and outside practice required.

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The Osher Traveler: They Still Shoot Birds Here
By Leslie Evans

With her husband and four Pittsburgh friends, new Osher member Leslie Evans visited the island of Malta, the birthplace of one of the group, for a week in the fall of 2009. Her experience gives a different view of the Maltese culture than most Americans get from a day-stop on a Mediterranean cruise.

The infinite Mediterranean stretches out from the highest bluff of Marsaxlokk, and I squint for a tuft of Tunisia. A gunshot breaks the silence. Close enough to startle. To argue with my instinct to duck, I recalled an earlier breakfast conversation.

“Why do they shoot birds? Don’t they know if they keep shooting birds, there won’t be any?”

“There will always be birds. They migrate.” Ray calmly explained the Maltese way. “The rifle or shotgun is their only recreation. The father passes the gun down to his son, and therefore the age-old custom.”

“Aren’t there laws to protect birds from a tradition that decimates wildlife?” Custom or not, I couldn’t let it alone.

“Things change slowly here. They have banned capturing birds with nets.” Ray Jesus is my friend Christina’s boyfriend; he left Malta for Australia when he was 20. He is now 55, yet boyish, telling his memories of Malta. “Hunters fabricated traps with a meter-long stick with a platform on the end of it. They positioned netting on sticks with springs on either side of the platform and a wild bird in a cage next to the platform to attract new victims.” Ray’s swooping two-armed motion finished his description.

“Let me see if I get this? You can’t catch birds with nets, but you can shoot them up with bullets?” I rolled my eyes.

“Changes are slow. In the old days everyone wanted a bird in a cage, a hobby that costs nothing. Now this is very old-fashioned and frowned upon.”

Christina challenged his report. “Ray, there’s still a man in the Saturday market who sells caged birds.”

“It takes time,” he finessed with a smile.

Christina has the last words. “Hunting birds is stupid. The bird is so small you can’t eat it or stuff it.”

My husband, Greg, offered, “If it’s in a cage, you could talk to it.”

I hear his voice clearly now. “Come and look at this.” Near a handmade, above-ground, prehistoric “man cave,” made from stone rubble, Greg pointed out torn netting and stone platforms. We debated over whether the trap was still in use.

Confident that the gunshots were for birds and not tourists, we hike higher. After a half-hour of sticky, sweaty gasping up cobblestone streets and wiggly stone paths, we look back toward the start of our hike. From this vantage point we see where we are staying for the next two weeks—the fishing village Marsaxlokk next to its bay, bordered by sand-colored buildings tinged with pink and orange, blocks seemingly stacked atop one another on the opposing hill. These 3’ x 2’ limestone building blocks cover Malta in various configurations but are always the same color.

We realize that beachfront property on this south side of the island belongs to boats. I survey our quiet little village on the right and then the noisier shipping port on the left. The palette on the right side of the inlet, a background of calm aqua splashed with blue and brown handcrafted fishing boats called luzzus. We can barely see the thin red, yellow and green traditional trim. We cannot see the eyes of Osiris painted on the bows, a symbol brought to Malta by the Phoenicians, but I could feel eyes watching me. All luzzus are buoyed in place, with only the slice of a silent motorboat bringing in its catch. The bay and the even larger open sea, larger fishing vessels and cargo carriers with tall cranes lifting containers. The left palette is silver, aluminum, rust.

My video camera records this beautiful postcard-worthy scene—with gunshots in the background.
First Impressions: Hoping Osher Is Worth the Wait

By Joan Adibi

I kept hearing how much my friends were enjoying the courses at Osher, both at Pitt and at CMU. I learned there was a long waiting list at CMU, but one could jump the line by teaching a course. I looked at the catalogue and was intimidated. Who would sign up for Thai massage or Buddhism or meditation, or tennis as an inner game—my current interests? So I registered at Pitt and waited for my name to come up at CMU.

I had to wait seven years. When I got the acceptance letter in October 2009, I didn’t realize I had to sign up for courses right away. By December many of the courses I would have chosen were filled. I debated once more. Maybe I should continue at Pitt, where there is a wider selection if you’re willing to commit to auditing an undergraduate course for a whole term. But then I remembered it was winter and I would not want to walk or wait for the bus in the freezing cold. I finally made a decision. I chose Osher at CMU because of proximity, friends, familiarity (I have a master’s degree from the Heinz school), and reputation.

My first class, “Obama’s First Year,” was organized by Moe Coleman, a man whose opinions and political stances I have always admired. How timely it was! Each of the four sessions dealt with breaking news. A knowledgeable resource person gave a presentation, followed by the students’ questions. David Shribman, editor of the Post-Gazette, gave an overview of the issues facing the President and analyzed his leadership style. Jim Roddy and Joe Mistick provided a bipartisan perspective from the local level. Judy Lave, professor of economics at the University of Pittsburgh, delivered a very clear and concise overview of the dilemmas of the proposed health care legislation. Finally, Stuart Hofman, chief economist at PNC, gave his views of the economy. What was most impressive about the course was the caliber of questions asked. I found that many of the students were friends. It was fun to talk to them afterwards about their opinions. I learned a lot and was motivated to learn more.

I didn’t get into any of the other courses I had signed up for until the second week in January, when I learned there had been a cancellation for “Three Operas by Mozart: A Glimpse of Genius.” Again, it was a very heavily subscribed course, and it was hard to find a seat if late. Donald Wilkins is eloquent and well steeped in the historical context and the analysis of the music. I wish he had more than six weeks to teach. He imparts his enthusiasm as he interrupts the film versions of the opera to make a point. And he apologized that he had to condense because of the time constraints. I find the music beautiful to listen to though a little soporific in a warm, dark room. I know I will be better prepared for attending a local performance of The Marriage of Figaro in April.

I am prepared for some heavy reading in the second half of the Winter Term: Dante’s Paradiso and Proust’s In Search of Lost Time. I know from having been in one of Andrew Miller’s classes at Pitt’s Osher program that I am in for a treat no matter what he teaches. And my good friend Rhoda Eligator is leading the discussion for Proust. So I am excited about the chance to read and learn more about a work that I have started in the past but never finished. In addition, I have signed up for a course on budgeting, one in conversational German, and another one on Pittsburgh theater. I am looking forward to a challenging, stimulating, and consuming March and April.

My other experience of the organization has come from volunteering. One is as a contributor to the newsletter. Roz Treger gave me my assignment. It seems that the newsletter committee has been putting out the newsletter for many years. Not only are they committed but they are also well organized. Ann Austin trained me on how to answer the phones in the Osher office. And I was pleased to meet the staff members, Mary Cay, Millie, and Phyllis, who all seem to be very much on top of things. All in all, the organization seems very collegial.
Is There a Cure For Wintertime Blues?
By Millicent Lynch

Winter was an endurance test. For those who drove the roads around Pittsburgh, it was a test of nerves and patience. For those who had to shovel snow, it was a test of strength.

Because of the intensity of the winter storms, we canceled our February evening lecture (Ed Reis speaking about George Westinghouse), and many classes had to be canceled—in fact, more than a week’s worth of classes could not meet. The final session of Andrew Miller’s class in re-reading Dante’s *Purgatorio* was canceled twice, stranding the Pilgrim (and the class) in Purgatory just when they were on the verge of entering the earthly Paradise.

The cancellations were disappointing; the skies were grey; the snow kept falling; but there were still some good times to be had this winter, thanks to Osher. I participated in my first one-day trip with Bob Dickman and company to the Cleveland Museum to see the Paul Gauguin Paris 1889 exhibit. In addition to enjoying the exhibit, I also had an opportunity to make new friends (Gertrude Mallet became my bus mate), and I had lunch at an authentic delicatessen (Corky & Lenny’s in Cleveland. Everything that has been claimed about Corky & Lenny’s corned beef sandwiches is true. They are not only huge but awesome). And we had wine and cheese on the bus trip back to Pittsburgh.

I also had a great time working with a mail committee in February.

Can you believe this picture? Although the conference room table was filled with flyers, envelopes, and labels, we got a mailing done in two hours. Plus I got to meet some new mail committee volunteers and participate in some interesting and funny discussions.

By working in the office, I also get advance notice of upcoming activities for the spring and summer. RoseMarie DeRiso has a wonderful array of trips planned for Osher members in 2010—from Savannah to the Hudson River. Two of our study leaders are participating in RoseMarie’s trips this year. Susan Parker will lead a trip to Philadelphia Area Gardens in May, and Alex Kramer will lead a trip to Frederick and Sharpsburg, Maryland, and Harper’s Ferry, West Virginia, in June. Bob Dickman is planning a day trip to the Frick Museum and the Westmoreland Museum of Art, and as we went to press, Bob was working with study leader Charles McCollester on an April trip to three local post-industrial towns.

Upcoming lectures include Rob Rogers (March 24), Jim Osborn (April 20), and Joel Tarr (May 12). We also hope to reschedule Ed Reis’s lecture on Westinghouse. As I write this, the 2010 Summer Catalog is being proof read. We are offering a total of 93 classes—the highest number of classes scheduled to date for a summer term.

So even though the weather reports were shaky, and the slush on the ground was ugly, Andrew Miller’s class finally met and made it into Paradise. There were still some positive lessons from the winter of 2010. So stay involved, take classes, and never lose hope that spring is ahead.

Journey
In Literature and Life
Continued from page 1

move was in 2001 to Greensburg, where Susan is now a tenured professor at Pitt’s campus there.

In addition to her teaching, professor Lu has always been a writer. She has published articles on Chinese poetry, English composition, and Asian-American women’s literature. Her book of memoirs, *When Huai Flowers Bloom*, was published by SUNY Press in 2007.

And how was Osher lucky enough to get her to teach for us? Her friend Alice Chen, Osher member and teacher, suggested she would enjoy the experience. And she did, as did her students. Wouldn’t it be a good idea to keep this charming woman around our campus with another course? How about one on life in China today? Because Susan, her husband, and daughter travel to China often, she is full of information about the remarkable changes she has observed there. Perhaps she could be encouraged to organize a class on that aspect of her life.
Ad Lib

By Sylvia Sachs

On Page 1, we’ve profiled a new Osher study leader whose career has brought her across the world from China to Pittsburgh. Could you have moved off to a foreign country and adjusted so wonderfully to a different language and culture? I know I couldn’t. Even in my own kitchen, where English is spoken, I was unable to understand and cope with such a simple thing as a change in my television-watching routine.

Comcast had insisted it was necessary to attach new widgets to all televisions, or after January, channels higher than the number 20 would not come through. So I set a date for the installation and late one afternoon a pleasant young man arrived and attached a little black box to both the living room and kitchen sets.

Okay, I thought I had it all straight, and I was able to watch the 11 o’clock news from my favorite chair in the living room. The next morning when I turned on the set at 7 a.m. to watch the Today Show, as I have done for many years, I got nothing but a mess of snow and other jerky movements, accompanied by bits of unintelligible sound. I was not at all happy with this change in my routine.

Which explains why at 7:15 a.m. that blustery morning in January I was standing on a chair next to my kitchen counter, holding a telephone to my ear while I squinted at the buttons on the top of my TV set. I got on the chair because otherwise I could not see the top of the set and the screen at the same time. As I teetered over the counter, a patient man named Jason was giving me instructions. I could understand and follow his directions since his English was excellent, unlike that of the first person from Comcast, a woman with a lilting foreign accent. Jason and I talked and I pushed buttons while staring at the screen for about half an hour to no avail. Finally my new best friend, who said he was in Greensview, admitted defeat. He said he would send another technician, but not for two or three days.

Why would I go through all this at such an ungodly hour? Let’s say I’m a little set in my ways, and a weekday should not begin without that cup of coffee and watching the news by my favorite and accustomed reporters. So when this was not happening, I was ticked off enough to try to get it fixed immediately. Of course, I could have taken my coffee into the living room, but that wasn’t the way I liked it. Talk about being able to adjust to new lifestyles—China—forget about it.

Two days later, another pleasant and competent young man stood at the kitchen counter for an hour adjusting techniques and trying different tools and even checking twice with a buddy at headquarters, but the picture would appear for a second, and then disappear. He shook his head; he’d never come across a TV like this before. My luck. Finally I asked if he could just remove the little black box, and I would manage in the kitchen without cable. He could do that and he did. Good old Channel 11 popped right up, and my morning routine was restored.

P.S.: January ended, and the first of February, even though the black box was gone from the kitchen set, CNN (#32) came on loud and clear. I hope Jason doesn’t see this newsletter.

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Marilyn McDevitt Rubin muses: “I came home from a recent visit to New York City with an appetite for Jane Austen stimulated by an exhibition exploring her life and legacy at the Morgan Library and Museum. JP’s collection of Austen manuscripts and letters is the largest of any institution in the world. I believed he loved her.

Vladimir Nabokov loved her, as did Rudyard Kipling, Sir Walter Scott, William Butler Yeats, and

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masses of others, among whom I include myself. I have a little two-penny print of her. She is at her desk, writing by candlelight. In my mind she never left her desk, writing, writing, writing so her readers might swoon with pleasure opening her books and entering into her world.”

**Ed Reis**, who is admired and sought after for his skill as an impersonator of George Westinghouse, was scheduled to present the February 9 Osher lecture, but the weather caused its cancellation. Ordinarily Ed wears a false beard at his performances, but for his many friends among our members, he decided to be more authentic—he grew a beard just like George’s. Ed’s talk will be rescheduled, says Jeanne Hanchett, who arranges these things, and she’ll remind him to grow it again.

As always, most Osher folks are out and about, and often their activities are noted in the pages of the local press. **Millie Lynch**, our senior administrative coordinator, clips them out when she spies them, as does Registrar Mary Cay Burke-Hamill. Here are a few of those they gathered:

The *Post-Gazette* presented a Jefferson Award to our distinguished and much-honored member **Barbara Shore** for her outstanding social work career. A long article on her life and work appeared on February 6.

Also in the *Post-Gazette*, much of the February 9 “Scene” column was devoted to the celebration at the Twentieth Century Club of K. Leroy Irvis Black History Month. The evening featured a new documentary produced by Kenneth Love that premiered Feb. 1. “Newspaper of Record: Pittsburgh Courier 1907-1965” was presented by the University of Pittsburgh Office of Public Affairs. More than 600 guests attended, and among them was **Eric Springer**, an Osher study leader. He had been a *Courier* staff member at one point in his distinguished career.

In the “biography” feature on page 2 of the October 9 *Post-Gazette*, study leader **Owen Cantor** wrote of the life and death of his mother, Beatrice, who from an early age was a musician, acrobat, dancer, and actress, and from whom he inherited his love of music. As a young performer, “she had an accordion with her name emblazoned in shiny rhinestones: BEATRICE.”

Printed alongside a movie review and above the talk show listings in the December 17 *Post-Gazette* was an assertive letter from member **Mary Ellen Hoy**, urging the newspaper to hire a drama critic. “In a city with a wealth of rich dramatic productions,” she wrote, the “lack of a drama critic is unforgivable.”

The North section of the October 8 *Post-Gazette* reported on a new miners memorial in the Acmetonia neighborhood of Harmar Township. Osher study leader **Jeanne Cecil** was one of the organizers of the project, and labor historian **Charles McC Collester**, an Osher study leader, was one of the speakers at the memorial’s dedication.

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**An Osher special event in December featured a concert by the CMU chamber music groups.**
The opening paragraph of this riveting debut novel immediately strikes the reader, as it is meant to do, as a slightly jarring invitation into the universe of shenanigans and revelations that lie ahead:

“It started as an accident. The small Herend rabbit had fallen into Claire’s purse. It had been on the piano and she had been gathering up the sheet music at the end of the lesson when she knocked it off. It fell off the doily (a doily! on the Steinway!) and into her large leather bag. What had happened after that was perplexing, even to her. Locker had been staring down at the keyboard and hadn’t noticed. And then, Claire had just... left. It wasn’t until she was downstairs and waiting for the bus that she grasped what she had done. And then it had been too late. She went home and buried the expensive porcelain figurine under her sweaters.”

No one would be faulted for assuming that such a passage introducing a novel, significantly called The Piano Teacher, foreshadows a character-driven exposé about the eponymous young English woman, and the thorny situations into which she is driven by her initial kleptomaniacal act. Claire’s convoluted personal involvement with Victor and Melody Chen, whose daughter she tutors, is certainly pivotal to the plot. The world of luxury and contrasts suggested by the “doily! on the Steinway!” and the general atmosphere into which a private, foreign! tutor is welcomed, certainly form the spine of the body of events to come.

But like the environments of the Hong Kong of the early 1940s and then the early 1950s into which the author draws us, secrets and intrigues abound. Assumptions mislead. Motivations for many deeds remain shrouded, even as their unintended consequences color lives. In that opening passage, the Herend rabbit, almost forgotten until its pedestrian finale much later, nevertheless carries a great deal of the symbolic freight of the book. An ironic symbol of fertility, the rabbit is a luxurious artifact, European in a Chinese household. Its disappearance will be noticed, apparently mourned. Discipline for the theft will be meted out, but inappropriately. The hiding place, in a drawer full of sweaters, seems to swaddle the rabbit in a zone of soft comfort unlike anything available to any other character in the cast. So, thematically, it’s all in place right there at the beginning, but Janice Y. K. Lee lets a languid and riveting tale unfold on the way to her conclusion.

In interviews, Ms. Lee has said that the novel is about two women, Claire and Trudy, who are in love with the same man but at different times in his life. Claire appears at first as the quintessential fresh bride to an opaque British water engineer; she is agog at the fresh universe surrounding her. Trudy Liang, Will’s early love, is the exotic Eurasian. As she sees it, her “impure” pedigree is definitively offset by her great wealth, which opens all social doors. The man in question is the emotionally elusive Will Truesdale. The narrative alternates between Trudy’s time with him, in the early 1940s, when war encroached upon Hong Kong and the concept and practices of Empire took a horrifying new course, and Claire’s day, beginning in 1952.

The book is also very much about Will Truesdale himself and the ways his two separate entanglements propel his actions. No less strategically placed are several relatively minor characters, without whose presences nothing else would be explainable or explained. Of what significance is the Crown Collection of priceless Chinese artifacts, whose mysterious

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Film Festival
Continued from page 1

Presented by the Humanities Center of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the festival, now in its fourth year, combines a number of feature-length documentaries, films, and shorts with appearances by authors and audience participation to humanize the issues raised by globalization. Osher is one of the supporters of the festival.

The festival aims at reaching a broad audience, showing films in several locations: Pittsburgh Filmmakers’ Melwood Screening Room and Regent Square Theaters, the Kelly Strayhorn Theater, McConomy Auditorium in the CMU University Center, AJ Palumbo Hall at Carlow University, and the Future Tenant Gallery Downtown.

The festival begins on Friday, March 25, with the Pittsburgh premier of The Age of Stupid at 7:15 in the Melwood Screening Room.

According to the festival’s synopsis: “from the vaults of humanity, the sole survivor (Oscar-nominated Pete Postlethwaite) of the wasted world asks, ‘Why didn’t we save ourselves when we had the chance?’ His question delves into the archives of seven characters from across the globe. After three years in seven countries: America, UK, India, Nigeria, Iraq, Jordan, the Alps, director Franny Armstrong presents an interspersion of documentary footage, narration, drama, animation, and a soundtrack featuring a full orchestral score to a Radiohead track.”

Some More Examples

Weaving Girl, filmed in China in 2009, will have its American premier on Saturday, March 27, at the Melwood Screening Room. From the festival’s synopsis: “Two textile workers smoke their cigarettes during a brief break from the reality of reduced lunch breaks, docked pay and chemicals.” In a life of privation, loss, and illness, the need for love persists.

Mid-August Lunch, filmed in Italy in 2009, will have its Pittsburgh premiere at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 28, at the Regent Square Theater, with a reception to follow. The director, Gianni di Gregorio, plays the leading role, a middle-aged alcoholic bachelor caring for his widowed mother. From the festival’s synopsis: “When the bills are beyond his dwindling budget, he bargains geriatric care for waived bills. The old women are lonely and vulnerable in a world that is constantly moving, but when the women discover their common lot, they make a connection that is a youthful celebration of culture and cuisine!”

What could be a more globally themed work than a film about North Korea made in Norway by a Polish director? Yodok Stories will have its Pittsburgh premiere at 8 p.m. on Friday, April 9, at the McConomy Auditorium in the University Center at CMU. The festival synopsis says, “If the gravity of a totalitarian regime seems ill-fitting as the subject for a musical, Yodok Stories is mind changing. Inspired by the theatrics of the communist parades he once filmed in North Korea, acclaimed Polish Director Andrzej Fidyk conceived of the idea to portray the conflict of the split nation in a musical. North Korean defector Jung Sung San took the bait, risked his life, and began the intense theater-directing process of putting his painful memories of the Yodok concentration camp to music and dance.”

Schedules and Tickets

Schedules for “Faces of Globalization” have been emailed to members and will be available in Osher classrooms and other campus locations.

Buy Tickets at the door or through the web at www.cmu.edu/faces.

Opening Night (March 25 with Reception): $15/$10 student. Regular admission: $7/$4 student. For student price, members must show Osher ID when picking up tickets.
A New Book by Ed Fisher

The family of the late Ed Fisher, Jr., a longtime member, study leader, and volunteer, has posthumously published a book written by Ed. Entitled *The Farm As It Was*, the book contains essays and sketches of the farm owned by his grandparents and uncle. There is one copy of the book in the Osher office. The book is published by Trafford Press. (www.trafford.com).

### Speaking of Books

*Continued from page 10*

whereabouts subtly underride the plot? What interest does Edwin Storch, a not-quite-stereotypical British transplant to Hong Kong, take in Claire? How do the atrocities that occurred in Hong Kong during World War II play out in the 1950s? Why does Will, with his pedigree, agree to occupy a position as an egregiously inactive chauffeur to the Chen family? Why, indeed, does Victor Chen employ him? A thought that comes to mind is, “Keep your friends close, your enemies closer,” but for Victor Chen and Will Truesdale, the axiom would not quite apply. What then?

The unfolding of the novel’s various mysteries in Part III of the book weaves together many but not all of the threads of this intricate fabric. Then what about the motives that are left unclear, the time gaps that are never filled in? For this reader, that writerly choice, which is surely deliberate, is part and parcel of the novel itself. If it is indeed a tale of stealth, otherness, mystery, colonialism, and secrecy in the wondrous hodgepodge of Hong Kong, then it is also about the fact that her people often live side-by-side, cheek-by-jowl, with their backgrounds, cultures, even languages opaque to one another. Add to that mix the natural reserve of the Colonial British, the natural snobbery of the self-perceived upper crust, and the obstacles to facile communication become a pervasive fact of life. Mystery cohabits everywhere.

In the opening paragraph of the book, perhaps the most important implication of Claire’s shocking moment is that she remains a mystery even to her own self. Part of the inevitable take-away from this elegant novel is the necessity of somehow finding peace with the unintended consequences of one’s own actions, and of the actions of others. Not everybody can, not everybody does. But on the page as in life, those who do will find a zone of comfort after all.

### First Impressions

*Continued from page 6*

like a big family. It runs smoothly. Through Osher’s association with CMU, it is very nice to have access to the library and the parking garage. No one gets lost in the shuffle. Although Osher members don’t audit undergraduate classes, we have some interaction with CMU students and faculty and can fit the four-to six-week courses into our travel schedules or attention spans!

Being back in school has provided a welcome supplement to my retirement. It has given me structure, a place to go. I had felt isolated and lopsided. All of my activities were either family-oriented or Yang-oriented, i.e., strenuous exercise, and not a lot of Yin or intellectual endeavor, aside from book groups. Who knows where this experience will lead? What new chapters might be opening up? Meanwhile it’s fun to be learning new things in the company of similarly inclined others.

### What They’re Saying

“Alex Kramer is a gem!”

“A demolition of the South’s cherished myths presented with substance, erudition, and wit. Alex Kramer scores again.”

“I loved every minute of this class. Mr. Kramer is so very knowledgeable he has made the History Channel my favorite channel on TV.”

“Alex Kramer is a gem!”

“The Civil War”
Osher Attractions

Lectures
Wednesday, March 24
7:30 p.m.
McConomy Auditorium
University Center
Rob Rogers
“How a Cartoonist’s Brain Works”

Rob Rogers’ editorial cartoons cover national and international issues. He also lampoons local topics, particularly in his weekly feature “Brewed on Grant.” Syndicated by United Features Syndicate, his work regularly appears in the New York Times, the Washington Post, USA Today, and Newsweek.

After his lecture, Rob will be available to sign his new book No Cartoon Left Behind, which can be purchased in the CMU bookstore.

Tuesday, April 20
7:30 p.m.
Jim “Oz” Osborn
“Technology for Smart Living”

Jim Osborn is executive director of the Quality of Life Technology Center at Carnegie Mellon University.

Wednesday, May 12
7:30 p.m.
Joel Tarr, Ph.D.
“Devastation and Renewal: An Environmental History Of Pittsburgh and Its Region”

Dr. Tarr is Richard S. Caliguiri University Professor of History and Policy at Carnegie Mellon.

Snow canceled our February lecture—Ed Reis as George Westinghouse. It will be rescheduled in June.

Exploring Robotics

Osher at CMU has joined Osher at Pitt for an exciting three-part series at the Carnegie Science Center. During each session, participants hear from a robotics expert and have some time to further explore robotics including the roboworld™ exhibition.

Sessions run from 2–5:00 p.m. at the Carnegie Science Center.

Tuesday, March 9
Robots and Robotics through the Years – A Personal View with Dr. Ralph Hollis

Monday, April 5
Medical Robotics – The Wonder of Snake Robots and Minimally Invasive Surgery with Dr. Howie Choset

Monday, May 3
Robots in Space with Dr. Red Whitaker

At previous evening lectures, top: Dr. William Follansbee of Pitt medical school speaking in November on health care reform; above, center, Dan Simpson, associate editor of the Post-Gazette, with Jeanne Hanchett, who arranges the lectures, and Al Treger. Simpson spoke in October about the G20 summit held in Pittsburgh.
Something for Everyone in Multi-Day Tours Planned  
For Osher in 2010

Spring awakens our appetites for travel, and RoseMarie DeRiso has planned a rich offering of multi-day trips.

April 27-30
Charlottesville, Virginia
Some highlights:
- Blue Ridge Mountains
- Monticello
- Montpelier
- Ash Lawn Highland
- Court Square
- Appomattox Courthouse

May 16-22
Charleston, Savannah, Atlanta, and Nashville
Some highlights:
- Aiken-Rhett House
- Nathaniel Russell House
- Magnolia Plantation
- Telfair Academy
- Stone Mountain
- High Museum of Art

June 4-5
Frederick and Sharpsburg, MD
Harpers Ferry, WV
Tours led by Study Leader Alex Kramer
Some highlights:
- National Museum of Civil War Medicine
- Antietam National Battlefield
- Harpers Ferry National Park
- History of John Brown’s Raid

June 16-19
Philadelphia Gardens
Tours led by Study Leader Susan Parker
Some highlights:
- Morris Arboretum
- Chanticleer Garden
- Japanese Garden
- Longwood Gardens
- Mt. Cuba Native Plant Center

June 16-19
Philadelphia and the “Late Renoir” Exhibit
Some highlights:
- PA Academy of Fine Arts
- Barnes Foundation
- Perlman Hall
- Philadelphia Museum of Art
- and the “Late Renoir” exhibit
- Brandywine Valley
- Winterthur
- Nemours Mansion/Gardens
- Longwood Gardens

July 20-23
Shaw Festival, Niagara-on-the-Lake
Some highlights:
- Lodging at the five-star Prince of Wales Hotel
- Plays: The Women, The Doctor’s Dilemma, One Touch of Venus, John Bull’s Other Island

August 23-27
Chautauqua, NY
Some highlights:
- Lodging at Athenaeum Hotel
- Week’s subject: Supreme Court

October 10-16
Autumn in New York
Some highlights:
- Nautilus (Groton, CT)
- Breakers (Newport, RI)
- Ogunquit/Kennebunkport, ME
- Franconia Notch/Cannon Mountain, NH
- Lake Champlain, NY

Left, Renoir’s “Girl in a Red Ruff”; right, George Bernard Shaw
**Etymological Jeopardy!** (familiar game, interesting combination; read on. . .)

Game format, compete against yourself, don’t have to reveal how you do; interesting way to deal with word roots and meanings; examples of class process given in the course description.

**Urban Mushrooming** (city planning? city planting? read on. . .)

Subject is plants; study mushroom biology, classification, ecology; hunt for mushrooms on CMU campus and in Schenley Park; study mushrooms found; Frick Park trip.

**Let’s Figure It Out** (topic? math? read on.

Asks about interests in brain exercises like Sudoku, Ken Ken; knowledge about cancer risk and changing behavior; required reading book about numbers in news, politics, life has memorable entertaining stories; students to volunteer to present and discuss individual chapters; easy number games/problems in class; not for experts.

**Ancient North America** (general topic, read on. . .)

Settlement and culture north of Mexico. Discuss archaeological excavations, social and political complexities, artistic achievements of peoples on Northwest Coast and Alaska. Lecture and discussion.

And so we encourage everyone to look through all the course material. The titles, course descriptions, and information about study leaders’ backgrounds, together should help us choose courses we will enjoy. There is more to a course than its title . . . it is important to read on!

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**What They’re Saying About Classes**

“An amazing class—Kathy Jones is a wonderful teacher who is great at sensing the mood of the class and is flexible enough to allow exploration while keeping subtle control. Excellent—hope she teaches again!”

“Drama in the Neighborhood”

“Fantastic—at any age or stage, Rosa is wonderful!!”

*Rosa Barnett Averbach, “Downsizing”*

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**And About Osher Students**

To Curriculum Chair Sally Cohen: “I want you to know that I totally enjoyed my teaching experience. My group was so enthusiastic and thoughtful in their individual responses to readings and discussions. As I’ve told my family and friends, most of them retired public school teachers, I had a long and rewarding career in public education, but my Osher experience came the closest to being what teaching should be in an ideal world.”

*Study Leader Kathy Jones*
Parking Information

Osher members may use the garage in the new Gates Building. To get to the garage, go down Frew Street towards Phipps Conservatory. Make a right turn onto Roberts Drive, which is between Porter Hall and Scaife Hall. Make an immediate left and follow the curved driveway down past Wean Hall. Pass Wean Hall on your right and go straight ahead to the entrance to the Gates Garage. The fee for 1-3 hours of parking is $6.00 and for 3-5 hours is $9.00. The Gates Garage is much closer to Wean Hall than the East Garage. Fuller instructions for parking are in the Summer 2010 Catalog.

Volunteer Wanted

We are looking for a creative member with graphic skills who would like to prepare office flyers and other needed documents. If you are interested, please call the office at 412-268-7489.

Calendar Information

Starting with the Fall 2010 term, the Osher calendar will conform to the CMU academic calendar with respect to religious holidays. Study leaders can continue to specify that their classes not meet on religious holidays.