Provost Designate Supportive of Osher
Hopes to Join Some Day

By Gloriana St. Clair

On April 10, President Joe Shirk, Vice President John Olmsted, Executive Director Lyn Decker, and Secretary Gloriana St. Clair met with CMU’s Vice President for Research, Dr. Farnham Jahanian. In July, Farnham will become the provost, the chief academic officer of the university. We told him that his predecessors Paul Christiano, Mark Kamlet, and Nathan Urban had all viewed lifelong learning with great favor. Based on the number of incisive questions Farnham had, he, too, will support our efforts.

Farnham, a renowned computer science researcher, former head of NSF’s Computer and Information Science and Engineering efforts, and Michigan University’s chair of the Computer Science and Engineering Division, hopes to drop in on a class to see our study leaders in action. He admired our ranking among national Oshers, our independent and frugal financial model, and our emphasis on a quality instructional experience.

The high point for the Osher Executive Committee was his query about how space constrained our operations. He invited us to revise the proposal for Osher space currently at the university. As provost, he will chair the space committee and will ensure that we receive consideration as new space is built and old space is reused.

The handout we created for this event contains quotes from several CMU faculty about the gratification of being a study leader for such a committed and challenging group of students. Farnham had many questions about the finances of our own Osher (dues, course registration fees, in-kind contributions of space from CMU, and Osher endowment proceeds) and those of other Oshers. Most other Oshers support the staff who run the program as a part of their ongoing continuing education efforts, while at CMU we support ourselves. He understood a key point—that CMU’s study leaders contribute their time for the love of learning.

Farnham was also pleased that the national Osher Foundation had recognized the excellence of our program by giving us a second million-dollar endowment, one of only a handful of programs in the nation. He joined us in praising Bernard Osher’s vision in seeing lifelong learning for mature adults as a significant space for improving quality of life. Vice President John Olmsted had been in California when Osher began his philanthropic efforts and recounted his personal delight in the Bernard Osher family’s focus on lifelong learning. John also praised the quality of CMU’s program.

President Joe Shirk, who belongs to both our program and the University of Pittsburgh’s program, talked about the differences between the two. Pittsburgh is the only city with two programs side by side. We are fortunate that the availability of their program relieves the pressures produced through our prospect list. In answering Farnam’s questions, we noted that it would be impossible for us to reduce the list. Like CMU, we must focus strategically on the quality of our program.
From The President

By Joe Shirk

I cannot believe it has been a year since I was elected president of the board for Osher at CMU! This is the honor of a lifetime, serving such a distinguished organization. A lot has happened during the past year—and a lot more is in the works for the coming year.

A different and exciting venue for the annual meeting—the riverboat “Empress.” What a wonderful way to celebrate our 23rd year as an educational experience for young-at-heart senior citizens of Pittsburgh’s three rivers area.

Changes at Carnegie Mellon:

After serving 16 years as president of CMU, Jared Cohon stepped down in 2013 and was succeeded by Subra Suresh. Your Executive Committee at that time met with Dr. Suresh to introduce him to the Osher leadership team and to explain our history with CMU and our vision for the future. Our mission at CMU fits perfectly with President Suresh’s vision of “K-to-Grave Learning.”

Further changes occurred as our long-term mentor and friend, Provost Mark Kamlet, returned to a teaching position in the university. Farnam Jahanian will replace him as provost at the end of the academic year. In the meantime, Osher instructor and CMU professor Nathan Urban is the interim provost. The Osher executive team has met with Dr. Jahanian to discuss and review the role of Osher and its relationship with the university (see article on page one).

Osher members as mentors:

Osher can strengthen our ties with the university in our roles as mentors to the students by expanding our offerings in classes designed as audiences for graduate students honing their skills in presenting their research or artistic projects.

Osher has recently agreed to support and mentor CMU’s Public Communication for Researchers program for graduate students.

Details of the support are currently being formulated with Osher and the program’s leadership and the office of the vice provost for education.

Quest for additional classroom space:

We have met with Campus Design and Facility Development (CDFD) to review our needs for additional classroom space this past year. Although there is no promise that our situation will improve in the short term, CDFD are aware of our needs for additional space, and as new construction progresses, there is the hope that we will be able to find space in some of the older buildings on campus as the university moves classes to the new facilities. Nothing is promised, but hope springs eternal!

Search for skilled volunteers:

Often Osher@CMU has need for both occasional “ad hoc” services for specific projects or for various committees of members with specific specialized skills.

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What is Osher@CMU? The black & white graphic below is my expression of who we are and what we do—in perhaps the style of Carnegie Mellon’s own Andy Warhol. A good eye can perhaps spot the university’s namesake in the classroom. The original is in color and is located in the Osher office.
Osher Will Miss Sharon Lippincott
By Leslie B. Evans

During a recent Q & A session in Sharon Lippincott’s “Write a Mini-Memoir” class, she suggested beginning our mini-memoirs with a flashback. I blurted out, “I miss you already.” Several students came up to me after class and said I verbalized their thoughts exactly. Osher doesn’t want to let her go, but she and her husband, Ezra, will soon follow their grandchildren to Austin, Texas. This class is her swan song in Pittsburgh, though she hopes to continue her work in Austin.

Sharon Lippincott has been leading lifstory workshops in the Pittsburgh area since 1999 and Osher memoir writing courses since 2007. Sharon has also led a Lifstory Writing Group at the Monroeville Public Library for nearly ten years, and she helped with the implementation of the “This I Believe” essay program sponsored by the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA). More than a dozen lifstory writing groups have begun around Allegheny County and the world as a result of that project.

In her role as memoir guru, Sharon shares tips and examples in blog posts on transforming memories into stories. She has published two writing handbooks: The Heart and Craft of Lifstory Writing and The Heart and Craft of Writing advice: “Write your story with your own story-telling voice, which is as unique as your fingerprint.”

If you haven’t had a class with Sharon, maybe you can hear her enthusiasm for her work in her following quote: “Helping people get excited about leaving a legacy of their personal history is the most rewarding work I’ve ever done, and I look forward to each new opportunity. In this wonderful Internet Age, it’s now possible to work with individuals and groups around the world, and that gives me goose bumps!”

We are a little jealous of the Austin writers who will obviously benefit from her move there, but we can keep in touch with Sharon. She reminded me recently, “I’ll only be a phone or Skype call away.” And you can Google her.

We’ll Miss Ezra Lippincott Too

In addition to losing Sharon Lippincott as a teacher at Osher, we are losing another popular teacher, Sharon’s husband Ezra. A retired nuclear physicist with a long career in research and engineering, Ezra Lippincott has been for the past four or five years teaching Osher students nuclear science, and, as the Lippincotts are world travelers, he has more recently been sharing their travel experiences with Osher students. Ezra has enjoyed his time with Osher at CMU students continued on page 6
Speaking Of Books
By Helen-Faye Rosenblum

A Map of Betrayal
By Ha Jin

Ha Jin, the distinguished novelist, poet, essayist, and short-story writer, began his life as Jin Xuefei in 1956 in Liaoning, China. The son of a military officer, he joined the People’s Liberation Army during the Cultural Revolution, when he was 13. The call of higher education and a passion for literature led him to leave the army at 19, to further his studies at Heilongjiang University, then to achieve a master’s degree, specializing in Anglo-American literature, at Shandong University.

He left China in 1980 to attend Brandeis University on scholarship. When the events of Tiananmen Square transpired, Ha Jin determined that he could not return to the land whose destiny had led to this brutal turn of events. He emigrated permanently to the United States, and made the decision to write thenceforth in English, the language in which he has since garnered numerous honors and awards. Even a superficial glimpse of Ha Jin’s complex history suggests a proclivity to bring to the writerly table the ability to work with and elucidate more points of view than one, and give the reader fresh perspectives and insights into both the geo-political swamplands that surround the citizens of earth, and the human conditions that inflect everything.

Ha Jin raises the insight ante on the very first page of *A Map of Betrayal*, by opening thus:

“My mother used to say, ‘Lilian, as long as I’m alive, you must have nothing to do with that woman.’ She was referring to my father’s mistress.”

In the next few pages, as the first-person narrator of alternating chapters, Lilian reveals most of the circumstances that govern the core of the novel. As protagonists often tend to do in novels, both contemporary and canonical, Lilian Shang is about to embark on a quest to unearth the facts of the life of a parent, in this case the now-deceased father known in America as Gary Shang, who was for decades a deeply embedded mole in the CIA. He has been described as the most important Chinese apprehended in the United States in his era.

(Gary Shang has apparently been loosely modeled upon the career of the real-life spy Larry Wu-Tai Chin, an actual spy whose perfidious career lasted from 1952 to 1985. The human details of Gary Shang’s life, and the dual and conflicting loyalties driving him, present themselves as entirely the products of Ha Jin’s fertile and creative imagination.)

Although American born, to an Irish-American mother and her native Chinese father, Lilian has learned to speak serviceable Chinese. Now that both of her parents are deceased, Lilian has come into possession of Gary Shang’s meticulous journals, for a long time in the custody of his Chinese mistress. (Stopper alert: Would such a spy as Gary, operating completely underground and in the end, serving two masters, ever actually keep a written journal which he would then hand off to another party? Perhaps not, but then again, *A Map of Betrayal* is a map of improbabilities on many levels. One of the copious gifts that Ha Jin presents to his readers is a touching believability that requires us to say, “Well, why not?” The true life of a spy is improbable to begin with, and yet, here they are, among us. Much more than we know, such contradictions may be more than likely.)

So, on sabbatical leave from her university, Lilian will travel to China on a Fulbright fellowship to teach for a semester at Beijing Teachers College. The teaching stint, of course, is secondary to Lilian’s primary purpose, which is to search out and kindle a relationship with her father’s first family. That group includes the wife whom, on the orders of his handlers, he never divorced, despite his second actual American marriage to Lilian’s mother. The plot has been thick since the beginning.

It is in the alternating chapters, narrated in the third person but essentially from Gary Shang’s point of view, that Ha Jin presents both
an enlightening amount of carefully integrated information about the Chinese geo-political history of the era.

Although the alternating points of view do belong effectively to Lilian and to Gary, that third sensibility is at work as well, the one that works to explicate the bewildering paradoxes of the Cultural Revolution, and the forces that ultimately defined Gary’s double, or even triple, life. It is that third voice that propels Lilian as she attempts to untangle the mystery of the father who was on the one hand the unrepentant, morally unconventional spy, and the man who came to love his adopted country so deeply that he honestly regarded his spying activities as an attempt to help China and the United States to understand one another, and ultimately to live in peace.

As Lilian continues her China sojourn, she will begin to unravel the history of her father’s first family, including the children and grandchildren whose existences remained shrouded in the mists of the mountainous Chinese countryside. She will discover the ways in which Gary’s chief spymaster enticed him and ultimately betrayed him. She will find that certain familial traits run deep even when the families are divided by continents, cultures, and generations. And she will find that the affinities are not always benign.

The quest for family history and coherence through travels to the country of family origin is a familiar theme in contemporary fiction.

Devoted readers have followed Amy Tan’s captivating characters back to China beginning with her first sensational novel, The Joy Luck Club, and many times since. With A Map of Betrayal, Ha Jin brings an important set of literary and narrative dimensions to the table. Surely influenced by his own successive experiences with a native and an adoptive country, he delivers a fascinating and credible set of dualities: citizenship, gender, patriotism, fidelity, trust, not to mention the fundamental polarities of communism and capitalism. By fleshing out his yarn with the quotidian details of how people live, dress, eat, think, move, in city and country, America and China, what they fear, what they defy, how they relate to cell phones and the Internet and the pilfering of confidential documents at the highest level, Ha Jin takes his readers into a rarefied world of cloak and dagger without the cloaks and without the daggers. It’s just life, not derring-do. We have begun with Lilian, asking of her father’s life, “How could he?” We end in a fresh generation, with the richness of this novel behind us, saying, “Oh, my. So that was how he could.” This is a novel of fresh perspectives, underscoring Ha Jin’s reputation as a first-rate storyteller and chronicler of the ever-bewildering human condition.

From The President
Continued from page 2

We sometimes need the advice or service of members with experience or expertise in finance, accounting, personnel, editing, public relations, photography, computer skills, graphic design, educational coaching, as well as other specialized skills to serve on committees or work on various short-term projects. Examples would be for members to advise on long- and short-term strategies for the Finance Committee, developing programs to mentor graduate students in making presentations, etc. These committees would meet only occasionally. If you would be willing to make yourself available for such projects, please call or e-mail the office with your contact information. We would greatly appreciate the expertise your experience could offer to make our program even better. You can truly make a difference.
A GLIMPSE INSIDE AN OSHER CLASSROOM

Introduction
To a Spicy Cuisine
By Joan Morse Gordon

Dave Green's Foods of Indonesia cooking class opens up a whole new culinary vocabulary. Within the span of two hours at the Wilkins Community Center kitchen Dave whips up a three-course feast sprinkled with fascinating cultural facts.

On our own on a trip to the WFH Oriental market in the Strip (2306 Penn Avenue), we fill our basket with fresh turmeric, lemon-grass, ginger, basil leaves, galangal, trassie (shrimp paste), tamarind, palm sugar, coconut milk, and kecap manis (sweetened soy sauce). Many of the recipes call for bumbu, a mixture of herbs and spices, which usually include shallots, garlic, ginger, turmeric (which turns everything orange) made into a paste and heated to blend.

To savor a sample of this exotic cuisine, I suggest you turn an ordinary fruit salad into this unexpected combination called Rujak:

1 seedless cucumber, sliced (don't peel)
1 fresh pineapple, peeled, cored and diced
2-3 other fruits (Asian pears, mango, papaya)

1-2 tsp. tamarind (a fruit paste)
1/4 tsp trassie (optional) that's shrimp paste, remember
1 tsp sambal oelek (hot pepper sauce)
Juice of 1-2 limes
Palm sugar or brown sugar

Combine fruit in a large bowl.
In a separate bowl combine tamarind, trassie, sambal oelek, and lime juice. Add shaved palm sugar or brown sugar to taste and mix well. Pour dressing over fruit and toss together.

The result is an amazingly refreshing dish—and strictly Indonesian.

The Spice Islands, as Indonesia is known, comprise over 13,000 islands, of which about 6,000 are inhabited. Starting in 1602, it was under Dutch control for over three centuries, during which time both Portugal and Spain had some influence as well. Different regions of the islands have understandably developed variations in their cuisine.

Tumpeng, a cone-shaped mountain of rice, has been named the official national dish by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Rijsttafel (rice table in Dutch), a Dutch-Indonesian crossover, when practiced formally, calls for 40 dishes served by 40 waiters in special costume.

Always adventurous Dave, who has run a bakery and a restaurant and taught courses on a wide variety of regional and national cuisines, will be teaching The Foods of Persia in Osher's summer session.

We’ll Miss Ezra Lippincott Too
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and is looking forward to perhaps meeting Osher students in Austin, Texas, where he and Sharon are planning to reside and be near their daughter. We thank Ezra and Sharon for the knowledge and pleasure they have given us and wish them well in their new life.

Filomena Conti
Helping Handicapped Classmates in An Emergency
By Gloriana St. Clair

On a brutally cold night in mid-January, an unusually large number of sirens drew me to my 8th floor windows looking over Dithridge Street, where I saw flames in other windows across the street. My neighbors and I watched, worrying about the people who were not standing outside in the freezing weather, noting that the fire department’s ladder did reach up to the eighth floor, and generally contemplating our good luck.

Later, I found out that the apartment belonged to Roz Rosenblatt, a student in my fall homing to Doris Lessing course and an active Osher member. Shoeless and coatless, Roz had grabbed her purse full of important identification cards and left her apartment without looking back. The emergency room discharged her and charged the visit to Medicare with only a $50 ER copay. That ambulance ride often costs as much as $1000. While Roz lost books, music, family photos, and precious tchatchkies, getting the firemen there before the fire spread saved herself and her neighbors from injury. Roz reflects, “The priority is to preserve yourself without injury. The rest is just stuff! Don’t look/go back because you might get killed if you do.”

Osher has recently been working with a number of CMU staff from Environmental Health and Safety, the Campus Police, and Facilities Management to ensure that we imitate Roz’s common sense approach to signs of an emergency. Like me, some 50 other Osher members self-identified as needing assistance. On behalf of this group, I ask the more physically able to assist.

Here are some tactics we recommend:

- Download from the app store CMU Alert. Those with smartphones will be able to call university police quickly with it.
- Carry a CMU emergency tag on your keychain to use with an Android or landline phone. It provides the correct phone number for calling university police. (Osher office has these.)
- Call campus police (412-268-2323) rather than 911. The 911 operator may have to make several calls to bring the right assistance to the right campus location.
- Ask if someone wishes to be pushed in a rolling chair to a safe area.
- Accompany those with canes, walkers, and wheelchairs to safety as follows:
  - In Hunt library, escort them out the emergency exit, where workers can assist them up the stairs and away from the building. The exit is near the classroom.
  - In Wean, escort them across the Newell Simon bridge, unless that is blocked by fire. Then escort them to the marked Area of Refuge.

In Porter, escort them to the exterior porch for the large classroom.

In the Mellon Institute Auditorium, escort them into the stairwell.

- Designate one able person to remain with those awaiting rescue.
- Think about your risk-tolerance when you select your classes.
- Make sure that fellow classmates are aware of the emergency contingencies for each class you attend.

By the act of participating in Osher, members proclaim their faith in education as enriching the quality of life. We could stay home to listen to music, learn about scientific discoveries, and read great literature, but we prefer to come together to share in learning. The risks of leaving home exist, but if we follow our friend Roz’s example, we can survive an emergency and go right on learning together.

Thanks to Roz Rosenblatt for her assistance with this article.

Navigating Healthcare for the Older Adult: A Panel Discussion

Wednesday, April 29, 7:30 p.m.
McConomy Auditorium, Cohn University Center
A panel discussion focused on how to age well while navigating your continuum of care.
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Carnegie Mellon
Hunt Library
4909 Frew Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3890
412 268-7489
www.cmu.edu/osopher

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