



# Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

*at the University of Oklahoma*

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**NEWSLETTER**

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*Spring 2015*

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# LETTER from the DIRECTOR

*OLLI Newsletter Spring 2015*

This is the time of year we spend reflecting on the previous year's accomplishments and shortcomings. We also spend time looking forward to and setting goals for the new year.

When it comes to OLLI, we did a lot more in 2014 than ever before. We offered more courses and had more members take our courses than any time in the 25-year history of the program. The fall semester saw historic enrollments of more than 100 members in several classes. Sometimes I felt like a broken record when I would kick off a course and announce yet another milestone in the program. Making those announcements meant we were doing things right and each of you were participating and enjoying your journey of lifelong learning.

One of my favorite days came last spring when we had two courses meeting at the same

time with about 75 members in each. All the other classrooms in between the two large courses were filled with our courses. OLLI at OU took up an entire corridor at the Forum Building.

January is also a time to look forward to what we want to accomplish in the new year. There is no doubt 2015 is a pinnacle year for us – especially the spring semester. This is the time we have the chance to go from good to great. I know everyone has heard me stress the importance of reaching 1,000 members so we are eligible to receive another million dollar endowment. I hope you've heard me talk about not just receiving the money, but what the money will do for our program. We will be able to double our course offerings and recruit even more OU faculty to teach the courses as recommended by our members.

I'm especially looking forward to this semester because it's the biggest and best OLLI at OU has ever offered. Patrick, Amy and I worked very hard to recruit the best faculty and the best topics for you. I seriously cannot thank Patrick and Amy enough for their hard work. I hope you feel the same way we at OLLI at OU feel about this semester.

We are so excited about the spring semester we've decided to dedicate it to President and Mrs. Boren for their 20 years of service to the University of Oklahoma. We will kick off the semester with a special Mornings with the Professor featuring former U.S. Representative Dan Boren.

I hope to see you soon. May this year bring you much happiness and health!

Chris Elliott  
Director



# Professor Spotlight:

## **KEN JOHNSON** { *World Traveler, Geologist Emeritus, OLLI Instructor*

*By: Patrick Piscitelli, Program Coordinator*

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Ken Johnson has been involved with OLLI at OU since 1996 (then “Senior Adult Services”). His first lecture was Jerusalem: The City at the Center of the World. The program and its members fascinated him so much that he made it a point to lead at least one course each year since. Another aspect that adds to Johnson’s dynamic involvement with OLLI is his dual-role as a student and as an instructor. When Johnson isn’t at the front of the room, elucidating his research to students, he is the student, listening and learning new material with fellow members and friends.

### **What motivates you to lead OLLI courses?**

**Ken:** Most of the OLLI courses I’ve taught are based upon travels with my wife, Dorothea, and this is a good way to share those experiences with others at OU and in the Norman community. The research done to prepare each course keeps my mind active, and I’m always learning new and fascinating things.

### **Which class has been your favorite to teach?**

**Ken:** Probably the Senior Seminar on Geologic Processes with Major Impacts on

Earth History. Preparing it let me dig more deeply into such processes as plate tectonics, volcanism, earthquakes, tsunamis, glaciers, and icebergs and show how they have impacted various parts of the world, especially Oklahoma. The response to that course by participants was very positive, and clearly they considered it one of their favorites.

### **What do you like most about OLLI at OU?**

**Ken:** Participants attend the courses because they WANT to, not because they HAVE to, and their enthusiasm is very rewarding. The response by, and interaction with, participants keeps me on my toes, and means I’ve really got to be prepared—it’s like me taking a final exam in every course. It’s true that “the best way to learn something is to teach it.” My talks contain many PowerPoint slides (and a bit of humor), and the talks and slides are geared toward the intelligent and interested layperson—ahem, the typical OLLI member!

### **How did you first become involved with OLLI?**

**Ken:** That was so long ago; I really can’t remember. I probably got an inter-



departmental announcement requesting submittals to the “Mornings...” program, and, having just given a colloquium on the history of Jerusalem to staff members at the Oklahoma Geological Survey (OGS), I felt it would be an appropriate topic for a Mornings with the Professor lecture.

**Your expertise is the geologic sciences. What about this subject interests you?**

**Ken:** I grew up in New York City and never heard the word “geology” until I was 22 years old and enrolled in a geology course at Columbia University’s night school. Until that time, I had no career direction. The course was fascinating, and I then discovered that one could go to college and get a degree in a fun subject. I immediately headed west

and ended up studying at OU and working at OGS. I have always been a “generalist” in the field of geology, working on virtually all phases of geologic research—except paleontology and petroleum exploration. Now, in retirement, one of my interests is to give OLLI participants, and others, an appreciation for geologic processes, how they impact our lives, and the historical and cultural development of interesting parts of the world.

**You and your wife travel all over the world - what are some of your favorite places?**

**Ken:** Most of our travels have been for the study of geology, natural resources, environmental problems and historical/cultural development of the areas visited. We’ve traveled to about 85 countries, and have been to all seven continents at least a couple of times. The top eight places, not necessarily in any order, are: Antarctica, Iceland, Malta, Chile, Easter Island, Galapagos Islands, New Zealand, and the Alaskan Inside Passage. I have offered, or will offer, courses on all of these places (and many more) in the OLLI program.

**You have been an integral part of the Oklahoma Geological Survey. What are some of the other roles you've played at OU?**

**Ken:** I was a research geologist at OGS (1962–1999) and also associate director at OGS (1978–1999). My research was varied, including environmental geology, hazardous and radioactive waste disposal studies, metallic and nonmetallic mineral assessment, evaluation of potential dam sites, geology of caves and karst, and general geology of Oklahoma. Other activities included: visiting professor in Geology and Geological Engineering at OU (1972–1999); chair, Oklahoma Hazardous Waste Management Council (1981–1993); member, Environmental Advisory Board of the Chief, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (1992–1996); member, Editorial Board of the journal *Environmental Earth Sciences* (2000–2008); and director, Oklahoma Mining and Mineral Resources Research Institute (1978–1980). My research has resulted in more than 270 publications, and, since retiring, I have been an invited lecturer on 40 ocean cruises—from Antarctica to Alaska to Spitsbergen, and all places and seas in between (2004–2012). Needless to say, I enjoy travel and communicating with people.

Ken attempts to offer at least one OLLI course each year, but this spring he exceeds that personal goal by leading two Senior Seminars and two Mornings with the Professor, holding courses and lectures at both OLLI at OU locations – Norman and Oklahoma City. His Norman courses include *History of Britain: Prehistoric Times through 1066 AD* and *Polar Bears and Harp Seals: The Top Predators and Top “Cuties of Canada”*. The courses being offered at the OKC location are *Geologic Processes with Major Impacts on Earth History and Panama Canal*. Ken’s desire for learning and knowledge makes him an integral part of the OLLI at OU program. Like all of our members, Ken has a thirst for continual education and his courses certainly reflect that passion for lifelong learning.



# Course Spotlight: Songs of France Then and Now:

The French Song (French Chanson) Genre  
in Its Heyday, Its Wane and Its Renewal

By: Amy Dickey, Program Coordinator

“A song is a play, a movie, a novel, an idea, a slogan, an act of faith, a dance, a celebration, mourning, a love song, a weapon, a perishable thing, a companion and a moment of LIFE.”

-*Georges Moustaki*

Spring 2015 features several courses guaranteed to introduce members of OLLI at OU to new areas of interests. Dinah Stillman is back on board for another semester, teaching a course that highlights the history and importance of French songs.

Dinah has long waited to teach an OLLI course over French songs. “French songs are not just songs. They are paramount pieces of music and, we cannot live without music,” Dinah said. Her love for French melodies has increased her desire to share the history of the songs with OLLI members.

## The History of French Songs

“French songs developed all through the Middle Ages, transforming from poetic pieces of art to weapons people would sing to protest regimes, particularly during the

French Revolution,” Dinah said. At the beginning of the 1900s French songs became a permanent piece of French culture. “People would go places on weekends to listen to singers,” she said. “From the 1920s to the 1950s, the French song became intellectual, each song telling a story, a kind of mini play.” The timeline and expansion of French songs kept evolving with each decade. “During the 1960s, there was a tidal wave



Dinah Stillman

of American and English rock and the songs in the 1970s were about social and political causes. Songs in the 1980s had an electronic feel, while in the 1990s and 2000s, very talented young singers emerged and were known as ‘la nouvelle chanson Française,’ the revolution of ‘the new French song.’”



Edith Piaf

The queen of French love songs

### Teaching French Songs Is an Act of Love

The Songs of France Then and Now course will explore the storylines behind French songs. Each French song is an important aspect of the ever-changing French culture. Some of the most famous French musicians OLLI members will listen to and discuss include Edith Piaf, Charles Aznavour, Jacques Brel, Serge Gainsbourg and the latest French sensation, Zaz, who has millions of followers on YouTube.

There will be an in-depth discussion over Edith Piaf, who was widely regarded as the queen of French love songs and was crucial in skyrocketing French songs into the powerful pieces of music they are today. “Piaf was known for leading a life of both suffering and passion, and her singing career was so influential that composers would volunteer and write songs for her and her music,” Dinah said. One of Piaf’s most well-known songs is “La Vie en Rose.”

#### La Vie en Rose

Quand il me prend dans les bras  
Il me parle tout bas  
Je vois la vie en rose.

When he takes me in his arms  
and speaks to me softly  
I see the world through rose-  
colored glasses.

If you want to listen to wonderful melodies and beautiful voices, sign up for Songs of France Then and Now and enjoy something different from American music.

Songs of France Then and Now: The French Song (French Chanson) Genre in Its Heyday, Its Wane and Its Renewal will meet Thursdays, January 22 through February 12, 2 – 4 p.m.

# BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP:

## The OLLI/CESL Collaboration Success

By: Amy Dickey, Program Coordinator

“Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all people cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends.”

- Maya Angelou

This past semester, OLLI at OU paired up with the Center for English as a Second Language (CESL) to create a mentorship program. The goal of the program was for OLLI members to be paired with a CESL student over the course of 12 weeks. The original idea was for OLLI members to mentor to their assigned CESL student. What both departments learned at the end of the year event held in December is the mentorships quickly turned into friendships, where cultures were intertwined, traditions were shared and lives were forever impacted.

In the fall of 2014, CESL hosted students from 23 different countries. In the OLLI and CESL collaboration, students from six

countries participated. In early December, OLLI had the opportunity to hear about the friendships formed throughout the semester.

### Yvonne and Maria

OLLI member Yvonne was matched up with Maria from Mexico City. The pair bonded quickly over the love they shared for their kids, cooking and the Spanish language. Maria trained Yvonne in Spanish, while Yvonne helped Maria improve her English. “What you find out when you are studying another language is that you end up learning more about your own language,” Yvonne said.

Yvonne and Maria participated in many adventures together, including visiting the Paseo art district in Oklahoma City, where they had dinner and looked at art together.

Maria and Yvonne



They also met at Barnes and Noble and discussed current events from their own perspectives. Sharing recipes and cooking meals intertwined Yvonne and Maria's culture as one. Maria taught Yvonne how to prepare her chili relleno and Yvonne taught Maria how to cook her first American Thanksgiving dinner. "At the Thanksgiving table, we talked about why we celebrate Thanksgiving and why it is such a big deal," Yvonne said.

When they first met, Yvonne asked Maria, "What can I do for you?" Maria simply responded, "Just be my friend; I need a friend."

Since then, they have become best friends. Their friendship will continue to progress over meals and conversations about their families. Next fall, they plan to go to a football game together.

### **Betty and Ruby**

OLLI member Betty was paired with Ruby from Taiwan. The two quickly hit it off after Betty invited Ruby into her home and Ruby fell in love with Betty's rat terriers. The pair met once a week and decided to embark on an activity they both had never tried before:

crocheting. Betty signed them up for classes. "The class gave us a reason to get together each week and have dinner together," Betty said. Ruby's mother crochets regularly; once Ruby returns to Taiwan, she plans for the two to crochet together.

Ruby's cultural preferences were discovered when, Betty would pick her up to go to dinner at 5. Ruby would eat very little. By their third dinner together, Ruby explained that she was never hungry at 5 since she normally ate at 9 at night.

Betty shared her daily life with Ruby. "She took me out to eat, we watched a documentary together and we went to church together," Ruby said.

The pair bonded over their love for Taiwan and formed a friendship that will continue for the rest of their lives.

### **Janet and Gilce**

OLLI member Janet was paired up with Gilce from Angola. Janet instantly became the grandmother Gilce could turn to for advice about living in Oklahoma and traveling through parts of Texas. "I gained a new grandmother. Every time I talked to my parents on the phone, I told them I was going to my grandmother's house," Gilce said.

Janet and Gilce did a lot of shopping, visiting Sam's Club, Crest and Kohl's frequently. "I tried to prepare her for cold weather. I made her buy some heavy duty gloves. She wore them when it snowed," Janet said with



Betty and Ruby



Janet and Gilce

a smile. The two cooked occasionally, trying to incorporate fish into dinners due to its prominence in Angolan meals.

“I learned more about her country than she probably learned from me,” Janet said. But Gilce said, “By being a part of Janet’s life, I got to see that American people are normal people. They are just like Angolans, but in a different kind of way.”

The two plan on venturing out of Norman in the spring in hopes of introducing Gilce to other unique aspects of Oklahoma.

### **Kathy and Alejandra (Ale)**

OLLI member Kathy befriended Alejandra (Ale) from Columbia. Kathy did not hold back when it came to introducing Ale to the day-to-day activities of her life. “I volunteer at the Sooner Theatre, so I took Ale one night. She helped me serve the popcorn and drinks and then we got to watch the production, *Our Town*,” Kathy said.

Kathy opened up her home to Ale, “She helped me with an indoor house sale,” Kathy said. “And to show her what fall is like in Norman, on game days we did our own version of a tailgate.” Ale and her husband even took Kathy to Diwali Night at OU, which is organized by the OU Indian Student Association .

“One night Ale spoke in English and I answered her in Spanish. I got to practice my Spanish while she practiced her English,” Kathy said. The two plan to expand their ability to practice Spanish and English together over the next semester.

The ultimate goal of mentorship was reached, but having friendships form between different cultures made this program an even greater success. OLLI and CESL administrators are excited to offer this program again for spring 2015. If you are interested in being paired with a CESL student, contact Chris Elliott at [celliott@ou.edu](mailto:celliott@ou.edu) or call (405) 325-3488.



Ale and Kathy

# OKC PROFESSOR SPOTLIGHT: MARJORIE CALLAHAN

*By: Patrick Piscitelli, Program Coordinator*

*OKC's Latest OLLI Addition*

OLLI's expansion to OU's Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City celebrates its first-year anniversary this spring semester. Success in OKC is contingent on offering new courses and adding new instructors to the program for our members. Last fall, OLLI at OU welcomed a new instructor to its OKC location, Marjorie Callahan. Marjorie serves as graduate liaison for the Division of Architecture, associate director of Faculty Affairs, and assistant professor of Architecture. Her first senior seminar was *The Realms of Architecture*. She developed a following among the participants because of her in-depth discussions, enlightening presentations and genuine passion for the subject.

## How did you first hear about OLLI at OU?

**Marjorie:** In 2012, my future son-in-law PhD OU History candidate Walker Robins, wondered why I hadn't taught at the OU Health Sciences Center like he was doing. So I did.



## Why did you want to lead an OLLI course?

**Marjorie:** The location for the coursework (Samis Center) caught my attention. In high school (Casady in Oklahoma City), Mike Samis and his wife, Karen Hulseby Samis, were a year ahead of me. Interestingly, at an award ceremony a few years back, Mike Samis mentioned me in his talk. Besides the traditional rigor of research and of teaching as a faculty member in the Division of Architecture at OU, there remains the joy of discovery in writing, in thinking, in

sharing about architecture generally. Clearly, the opportunity to have conversation with another mindset appeals to my sensibilities.

### **This was your first time teaching for OLLI. Can you describe your experience?**

**Marjorie:** Poetically speaking: nervous and thrilled, insightful and profound feedback gained, preparation and practice multiplied, caution and fear lifted.

### **What do you like most about OLLI at OU?**

**Marjorie:** The audience.

### **What is your overall opinion for OLLI at OU and its expansion to OU's Health Sciences Center?**

**Marjorie:** The OU Children's Hospital Samis Conference Center is a gorgeous facility. All experiences there gave my students and me such joy. We doubt we can go anywhere else now since we have had the best:

- a. parking is easy and convenient to Oklahoma City and Edmond residences;
- b. facilities have technology staff who are helpful and present with top-flight acoustical and visual resources;
- c. seating is comfortable;
- d. restrooms are handy, clean and new; and
- e. there is a café in the building for further discussion and coffee.

### **You are scheduled to teach a spring course for OLLI. What are you most looking forward to?**

**Marjorie:** Getting better at what I do. And, this time around, I will take more time upfront, not waiting, to get to know my audience as part of the conversation and inquiry. And to know, without question, that what I am sharing really matters to the audience. They are interested; they love to learn.

### **What are you offering OLLI students in spring 2015?**

**Marjorie:** From my last audience, there was a strong request for the next architecture course I presented to focus on "green issues." What could they do with their architecture at home to be sustainable, considerate, and kind to the earth? Last summer, vacationing, I came upon a book in a rustic cabin about water-strategies for storm water management. I turned the book into a PowerPoint presentation on my laptop just to manage my memory of its contents. So, when the audience and my own recent passion collided, clearly I had a masterpiece for my next OLLI coursework.

Marjorie's architecture course this spring is *Going Green with Architecture*. This course will meet Thursdays, February 12 - March 5, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

# Member Spotlight: **NANCY ALLARD**

*By: Amy Dickey, Program Coordinator*

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## **Infectious Laughter with a Love for Learning**

Every now and then if you are lucky enough, a person who is completely selfless, possessing a childlike joy, will enter your world and your life will be forever changed. Since Nancy Allard set foot into her first OLLI class, OLLI and its members have been forever changed by her kindness, warm welcoming laughter and passion for learning.

Nancy was born in the sunshine state. Despite her Florida roots, she spent most of her life moving around the country as a Navy brat. Nancy lived on all four coasts before her eighteenth birthday. Her greatest memories with her family growing up were during the days spent next to the ocean.

“I remember being in the ocean when I was little. I got overturned in a wave, and my dad pulled me out of the water and put me on the shore. He made sure I was okay and told me to go back in so I would not be afraid of water and so I did. It was lovely and, as a result, I have absolutely no fear of water,” Nancy said. In that moment, Nancy’s father taught her an unforgettable skill she has carried with her throughout her life: how to overcome her fears.



Nancy has been married to her husband, Jim, for 58 years. Throughout their half century together, their family has grown from three children to now four grandchildren. “I love these grandkids and I love my kids.”

## **A Passion for Lifelong Education**

Since 1956, Nancy and Jim have called Norman their permanent home. After her youngest was two-years-old, Nancy’s education became a priority and her passion for lifelong learning was ignited. She enrolled at the University of Oklahoma.

“I love OU,” she said. “Having to grow up the way I did, I was never very connected. But I was a great adapter.”

Over eight years, Nancy earned her undergraduate degree in sociology and her master’s degree in social work. She did several

post graduate trainings with the Menninger Foundation in Kansas, which led her to open her own private practice, where she practiced clinical social work until her retirement. For two years Jim and Nancy traveled around the United States in a motor home. After 730 days of constant travel, the pair fell in love with Angel Fire, New Mexico, and bought a condo where they could spend their summers away from Norman.

After a lifetime of traveling, Nancy took an interest in learning about the history of the places, how things are and how they come together. Not long after, she was introduced to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Oklahoma.

### **A Decade with OLLI**

After attending a workshop at St. Stephens United Methodist Church in Norman, Nancy's interest in the New Testament of the Bible expanded. Her interest continued to be fueled after taking Barbara Boyd's *Understanding the Bible*. "She did a fantastic job. She was very focused. She went through the Gospels, when they took place and who wrote them," Nancy said. "After Barbara Boyd, along came Kyle Harper's *History of Christianity*, which was, an awesome class on a topic about which I still have an interest in."

Since 2006, when Nancy was first introduced to the OLLI program, her intellectual curiosity has expanded. She is most interested in history. "How and why do people do what they do?" Over the past eight years, Nancy averages ten courses a semester.

"OLLI is so open and so easy and the staff is so considerate, she said. "When you get old you need a little consideration. There is a real recognition that people are older. The professors' enthusiasm for teaching the old folks is just awesome; the professors love it."

When asked what was unique from other programs designed for people 50 and older, she stated, "There is so much available knowledge that is being presented to us, some in the form of discussions, but you don't have to discuss if you don't want to. The environment is flexible, yet structured. You can come or not. You can listen or not and you don't have to take any tests."

Lifelong learning has become a part of her daily routine, enhancing her knowledge and introducing her to new areas that she wants to learn about that she had not thought about before, especially in the areas of history and religion.

"I cannot imagine not learning. Lifelong learning has helped my mind, challenging me to think and talk about things that I could not talk about before," she said.

Nancy Allard is well on her way to a decade of membership. Over the past eight years she has taken more than 100 courses and programs through OLLI at OU. Her love for the program can be seen every time she walks into the room, lighting it up with her infectious laughter, passion for learning and joy for life.

# Stay Connected with OU and **VOLUNTEER** at the **Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History!**

*By: Patrick Piscitelli, Program Coordinator*

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The Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History community is full of natural science and cultural enthusiasts. There is something here for everyone, from behind-the-scenes work with fossils and artifacts to working with the public.

## **Interested in volunteering?**

Volunteers are at the heart of the Sam Noble Museum community. They inspire understanding, appreciation and stewardship of the Earth and its people. Come be a part of our community!

### **VOLUNTEER BENEFITS**

- 20 percent discount at Excavations, the museum store
- Complimentary admission to the Sam Noble Museum
- Exclusive invitations to lectures and special events
- Educational opportunities through field trips, workshops and programs
- Access to the Volunteer Library
- Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

**For questions or more information, please visit:  
[education.snomnh.ou.edu/volunteer](http://education.snomnh.ou.edu/volunteer) or call 405-325-1652**



Sam Noble Museum

