

LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE AT VASSAR COLLEGE

Newsletter Issue 4, Fall 2019

It Takes a Village/College: A History of the Vassar College Lifelong Learning Institute By Mihai Grunfeld on the inception of VCLLI

I joined the Vassar College faculty in 1987 and was blessed almost right away to become a part of a local Chavurah - a small group with whom we celebrated the Jewish holidays and learned about Jewish spirituality. There I met David Bloom with whom I began running every morning, rain or shine, on the beautiful Vassar campus. As the years passed and our running slowed down to a vigorous walk, our admiration for this lovely campus moved toward musings about retirement and what we were going to do once we got there. David reached "there" in 2011 and joined the Bard College Lifelong Learning Institute the same year. Our conversations now often touched on how much he was learning and how great the LLI courses were. The only problem, according to my friend, was that Bard was far away.

We understood that the closest LLI at Marist College, the Center for Lifetime Study, had a long waiting list - so long, we were told, that some "people died before making it in." This was both a credit to Marist's offering, and reflected an unmet need. There were, of course, several other LLIs in the region, including SUNY New Paltz Lifetime Learning Institute, Lifespring in Saugerties, ENCORE at the Orange County Community College and LIFE at Mount St. Mary College, but all these were still relatively distant from Poughkeepsie. The obvious answer was to create an LLI at Vassar, so I made an appointment with Jon Chenette, the Dean of the Faculty, and spoke to him about this possibility. Jon was enthusiastic and encouraged me to do my homework and develop a proposal for Vassar's consideration. In addition, he was open to the idea of linking this project to my phased retirement, effectively underwriting some of the planning and development.

This is where the village comes in. It started as a close circle of friends who accompanied me in meetings with the leaders of the Bard LLI and Marist CLS, including David Bloom, Frank Pepe, Mike Kessler and Anne Gardon. Local leaders at Bard and Marist generously shared their experiences and spoke to us about their organizations' histories and structures. In sharing their time, as well as sample catalogues, registration forms and materials, they provided mountains of technical assistance and support.

We organized the first Vassar College LLI planning meeting in January 2017 and invited a lot of friends.

We had a good idea about what we needed to figure out in order to develop a sound proposal for Vassar.

We needed a plan that addressed everything from finances (a budget, membership fees) and a curriculum (presenters, a catalogue), to membership, classroom space, transportation, a Hospitality room and everything in between. Participants in the early planning meetings included: David Bloom, Diane Boujikian, Mark Boujikian, Linda Cantor, Fred Chromey, Susan Davis, Jean Claude Fouere, Carlie Graves, Doris Haas, Muriel Horowitz, Lucy Johnson, Beverly Kaufman, Kathy Kurozman, Debra McGarvey, Ann Mehaffey, Ann Patty, Frank Pepe, Marilyn Rosenberg, Molly Shanley, Sarah Levine-Simon, Georgette Weir, Carole Wolf, and Michael Yarmosky.

Now we were a community! Over a period of a few months, we developed a detailed proposal, anticipating as many of the questions and concerns the College might have. I presented the resulting proposal to Jon Chenette. He, in turn, shared it with the president and the Vassar College Executive Council and came back with their support.

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Carlie Graves, myself and the Dean worked on a Memorandum of Understanding, defining the LLI-Vassar College relationship.

Through the planning process and start-up, we benefitted enormously from the regional network of LLIs, including annual autumn conferences. One was in November 2016, and the other in October 2017 which Carlie Graves, Lucy Johnson and myself attended at Marist College. We met leaders of the LLIs in the region and learned more practical tips about how they structured their organizations and the achievements and difficulties they encountered. Some of our early advisors and supporters included: Donna Warner, Joyce Carter, Anne Sunners, Carol Lee, and Margaret Shuhala (Bard LLI), Susan Davis and Susan Puretz (Lifespring), Barbara Van Italy, Leathem and Anne Mehaffey and Merrilee Osterhoudt (Marist CLS), and Marilou Abramshe (Suny NewPaltz LLI). Chuck Mishaan provided invaluable help in setting up our computing system.

In March of 2018, we launched the first semester with 20 courses and a membership of 130. A year and a half later, having just completed our fourth semester, we have a membership of 300 and an offering of 38 on-campus courses, 5 off-campus courses and 7 special events. Our members say they value the intimacy of small classes which foster participation, and how our Hospitality room bustles with a sense of a community. We recently hired a permanent administrative assistant, Denise Laforgue. The LLI is led by an Executive Committee of five, a General Council of 17, and many committees staffed by member-volunteers. We cooperated on several events with Marist CSL and will host the next regional LLI mini conference at Vassar in autumn 2020.

Vassar College LLI owes a debt of gratitude to Dean Chenette for his consistent leadership and support of the LLI from the beginning, as well as the generous assistance of many people from all areas of the college, including:

Stephen Dahnert, Vice President for Finance and Administration
Brian Swarthout, Director of Budgeting and Planning
Marianne Begemann & Carlos Alamo, Dean and Assistant Dean of Strategic Planning & Academic Resources
Teresa Quinn, Assistant Dean of the College for Campus Activities
Angie Zalaznick and Dana Nalbandian, Controller's Office
Michael Cato and Brian Chickery and Peter Conklin, Computing & Info Services
Steve Taylor, Director of Academic Computing Services
Daria Robbins, Director of Web Development
George Laws, Ray Schwartz, Jason Bailey and Magan Brown, Communications Office
Kim Squillace, Arlene Sabo and Sal Incorvaia, Vassar Safety & Security
Dayle Rebelein, Campus Activities Office
Ruth E. Spencer, Associate Vice President of Human Resources

In conclusion, we are a volunteer run organization counting on our members to do all the work that is needed. We are grateful for their effort and hope that you too will step forward and help us advance our goal of educating our members in a collaborative fashion.

Sampling of Fall 2019 Courses



Animation: Beyond the Cartoon

The photo of Presenter Sybil DelGaudio in action is a prime example of the enthusiasm and energy she brings to each and every class. The topic of her class, "Animation: Beyond the Cartoon", follows the development of animation from before color and sound to the results technology allows us to achieve today. The class is informative, interactive and fun.

When thinking of animation, my mind automatically goes to characters such as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Bugs

Bunny and real live characters such as Walt Disney. While cartoons and cartoon movies make up the majority of animated features, animation has been used for many different purposes. These include, among others, art for its own sake, commercial ventures, educational vehicles and training films, each of which Sybil reviews. As discussed in class, the lines are sometimes blurry as commercial vehicles can certainly also be artistic.

Animation is a true labor of love. One second of an animated film can contain 24 frames of film, each one different from the next, each one created by hand. Another amazing technique is the etching of images directly on film, again frame by painstaking frame. Sybil includes a plethora of information on these techniques and the key players responsible for their development.

Sybil fills the class with anecdotes that bring the topics to life. I feel confident that my classmates would join me in saying that it is a class well worth taking.

Glenn Conciatori

The Actors and Directors' Lab

Some of the best teachers are storytellers who encapsulate truth and demonstrate correct methodology by cleverly disguising it as entertainment. Roger Hendricks Simon is such a master storyteller. Bringing his straightforward style and good humor into the Vassar classroom, he shares his passion and years of experience without diminishing or intimidating his students.

During our first VCLLI session, Simon disarmed us immediately and got us into action quickly. He



Sampling of Fall 2019 Courses *Continued*

assured us there were no grades while making it clear he wanted us to take risks and even fall on our faces at times because every great actor needs to make mistakes to learn what not to do. His classes covered the importance of the use of the voice, the art of observation and demonstrating detail, the actor's use of the body and face to communicate, and the use of mindfulness in everyday life to draw from daily experiences when creating a role.

Simon told us stories of famous directors he has known, sharing their strengths and weaknesses, and he outlined the difficult role of the director. Students were encouraged to help direct each other as peers performed scenes in class. The actors and directors lab is a fast-paced class that touches on the important basics of acting and directing, leaving room for further development. It is an immersion course that whets the appetite for ongoing creative exploration in the world of acting and/or directing. Hopefully Roger Hendricks Simon will return next semester to share his craft with new students and to help amplify the skills of those of us who had the joy of attending the Fall semester.

Vincenza Dante



America in the Industrial Age

Tom Walker's classes are tight, well-organized and informative.

The spark in the lectures is his ability to connect abstract concepts to historical facts. This ability is truly outstanding.

He has a breadth of knowledge which allows him to discuss with ease ancient history to the present. He makes things relevant to today.

What else is going on, then, on the earth? It's living history.

Millicent Cox

Sampling of Fall 2019 Courses *Continued*

Technology and Ethics

"Technology without hatred is always a blessing. Technology with hatred is always a disaster. "

– Simon Wiesenthal

For me, so much of what we covered in Paul Stoddard's course, Technology and Ethics, was framed around that sentiment. Our lives have been inexorably changed by technology, and it remains to be seen whether it will usher in the promise of the future or lead us down a path to disaster, or some combination of both outcomes. Paul did a great job introducing and explaining a wide range of topics: social media, data collection and breaches, the development of addictive software, computer learning, corporate ethical codes for using technology, political manipulation, Blockchain, and Artificial Intelligence, among others.

Everything introduced was covered within an ethical framework that guided our many spirited classroom discussions. The class was informative, thought provoking, and especially useful as we move ahead within the Technological Revolution.

Michael Yarmosky



Art Thefts and Forgeries of the 20th Century



One of the best things about LLI is that you can take a class on something you know nothing about and educate yourself in that. When I saw the course on Art Thefts and Forgeries of the 20th Century, I signed up. Our instructor, Matt Solits, was very knowledgeable, jovial and a great presenter. He made the topic very

Sampling of Fall 2019 Courses *Continued*

interesting. We learned a lot about motivations behind art thefts and forgeries to details about the thefts of Mona Lisa, forgeries of great artists such as Vermeer, Van Gogh and others. It was one of the best classes I have taken.

Sudhir Desai

Dancing with the Goddess at Mid-Life & Beyond

It has been a joy and a pleasure to be a student in Ms. Dante's Dancing with the Goddesses class. Ms. Dante has created a class which is rich in its diversity of teaching. She uses many modalities in her teaching methods such as writing, artwork, and amazing multi-media examples from different cultures and artists. She is incredibly knowledgeable and has a fascinating background which enriches our experience about what she is teaching. I am impressed by her teaching skills which are so heart centered. She is able to re-interpret in such a positive manner women and aging and sagging.

I am a grief therapist and educator and I am inspired by her content, creativity and ability to connect with her students. I respect her teaching skills and her desire to inform and educate women, empowering them in their sagging years. This course is a must take for men and women as there is a very important message Ms. Dante is bringing to her students and to the world.

I am hopeful that she will teach this course again as I will sign up in a nanosecond to attend her classes.

Shelley Tatelbaum

Dancing with the Goddess at Mid-Life and Beyond was an 8 week course taught by Vincenza Dante. She is a Creative Arts Therapist and a retired social worker.

The instructor has an in-depth knowledge of the concept of the Crone Goddess and her role throughout history in many cultures.

Women have been viewed and defined throughout history to suit the needs of society.

A parallel was drawn to our modern image of a Crone which often has negative connotations.

The instructor has a vast knowledge of this subject, giving many examples with presentations on the computer, along with personal accounts and photos.

Nancy Foster

While we don't dance physically, in Dancing with the Goddess of Midlife and Beyond, we dance through history and our imaginations, learning about the powerful images of women from history and mythology.

Sampling of Fall 2019 Courses *Continued*

Maiden, mother, crone. We've learned that crone, despite common sinister perception, is a source of inspiration, as early and indigenous cultures considered elder women full of power and wisdom. Vincenza Dante shares her deep knowledge and motivation in this class, encouraging us to make as our own the grand stories of the goddesses.

Elizabeth Comstock



Memoir Writing and Memoir Legacy Letter Writing

(Please See The Members' Corner For Students' Work Below)

Sometimes the piece a student reads is heartbreaking. Other times, everyone is laughing because it is hilarious. But no matter what, listening to the work of fellow students in the Memoir Legacy Letter writing class taught this semester by Beverley Sloane is always interesting and often enlightening. At least half the class of twelve represents returning students from Ms. Sloane's Memoir Writing class offered in the first Fall semester of Vassar's Lifelong Learning program, a testimony to the inspiration this teacher conveys.

The question we all have asked at different times is: how does she do it? It is no easy thing to get a diverse group of older students, with very different life experiences ranging over sixty, seventy, eighty years, most of

Sampling of Fall 2019 Courses *Continued*

whom have never tried memoir writing, many inhibited and also perplexed as to how to get going, to write and to write well and interesting stuff.

Ms. Sloane gradually, and in the most soft spoken, understated way introduces suggestions for technique....maybe some dialogue here, an historical setting there, an appeal to smell, sight, or hearing for that moment, a clearer sense of time and sequencing throughout would help... all the while emphasizing what a breakthrough the student has made in conveying something special to all of us, how they have captured the essence of memoir writing and legacy letter writing.

The class often starts out with a five minute writing assignment, more or less a warm-up, which gets the juices flowing, the brain in gear. Maybe a few in the class will read what they write in that five minutes, and then, Ms. Sloane calls for volunteers to read what they wrote for that week's assignment.

What becomes clear is that she as the teacher is not the only one who will comment. Everyone listening is part of the helping editors for the student reader, making suggestions, asking for clarification, offering commendation.

At the end of most classes, Ms. Sloane will read from a literary work, often a prize winning memoir, illustrating what she has been quietly emphasizing. At the end of the course, everyone who fully participates glows with achieving something they didn't think they could do and do so well. They now have at least five or six, often more, writing pieces that didn't exist before the class and now can be passed on to family, friends, others, or not, as the student writer wishes.

How does she do it? Get us to write and write interesting stuff? Hard to say what the magic is - but definitely a special teacher and some pretty special students.

Mary Keelan

Members' Corner

Here is where we feature the creative work of LLI members. We welcome enquiries.

A Quick Decision

The phone rang just as I was starting to prepare dinner. From the display I could see that it was my friend Mary. Upon picking up the phone I heard her always cheery voice

"Hey, a bunch of us are taking a trip to the 9/11 museum in NYC, want to come?"

"Mary, you know I swore that I would never set foot in that thing called a museum. It is nothing but misery" I replied. "I know", was her answer," but it would be an easy trip. It is a bus trip from the Seniors in Hopewell. There are only very few available seats left.

Members' Corner continued

After the museum the bus will drop us at the Seaport and we can have lunch."

Lunch sounded good, and with hesitation I agreed to come along.

Upon arrival at the museum site my heart was pounding, and my throat was tightening.

I do not believe the 9/11 museum should be called a museum. This was a tragedy with which so many people and families in particular are still dealing with. Our daughter, a graduate student at NYU at the time was working as an EMT on an ambulance in her spare time and is still dealing with this tragedy so many years after.

I will not forget the morning of 9/11 when she called to say "my unit was called in and I am going".

"Please do not go, please" was my plea. To no avail. To this day the effects of working on the site are with her. Health issues, depression, delay in writing her thesis and with that delay in graduation are all the results of her work at the World Trade Center site.

Here I was now. I asked my friends to go on without me, I wanted to experience this on my own terms. Taking the escalator down to the footprint of the towers I could feel a chill creep into my bones. Slowly I went through the different exhibits, listening to the audio of last phone calls, good byes to loved ones and absorbing the feelings of those who are now victims and those who have to live with their memories of this fateful day and all the days to come. When I reached the last exhibit I could barely go through it. Personal mementoes and artifacts of those who lost their lives as well as those few who did survive and whose belongings were found later on in the rubble bore witness to hate and greed and human misunderstanding. There it was, a pair of broken eye glasses, the wallet with its marks of dust, the dented Fireman's helmet, the wrist watch bearing witness to the moment in time when it stopped showing time, the engagement ring removed from a survivor at the hospital and then donated to the place bearing witness. It was taking my breath away to know that my daughter had to deal and witness this tragedy first hand. Gruesome images are still playing out in her mind to this day. I needed air. I needed to get out. I walked over to the Reflecting Pools.

The way the water spills over and into the bottom reminded me of "life interrupted."

Sitting a while in the sun I tried to feel the joy of being alive and having another day which God created.

I do not regret that I went along. I do not want to ever go again.

- Antje Landanno

Members' Corner *continued*

Proud of You

One of my proudest moments of you was when you won the play writing contest in your school. Your play, called "The Dress" about a talking dress and a very disturbed young girl, won first prize. You were given the opportunity to have it read by actors at an off-Broadway theatre in Manhattan. You decided not to go because it conflicted with your cross country running camp in Vermont. I was so proud of you for making that decision on your own.

You have had to make some difficult decisions in your life, but your choices reflect what a thoughtful, wise and good person you are. You are working as the manager of a non-profit in Boston which helps people in impoverished nations. You help to educate and empower the most marginalized people on the planet, mostly women and children, and for this I am incredibly proud of you.

I still have the play you wrote. In fact, I have kept many of the things you made or wrote or did while living here. I have a wonderful book you made and wrote when you were about ten about a chipmunk. I have a funny picture of us when we went to Woodstock for the day wearing the same mother-daughter sweaters. A photographer was intrigued and took our picture. I have such good memories of you growing up here.

I remember when we were sitting together out by the oak tree at sunset. We were close, I know you wanted to help me, to comfort me. Your presence comforted me. You listened attentively to me and your kindness and warmth emanated towards me like a cool breeze on a hot summer day. The sun began to sink down through the trees turning the clouds bright orange and purple. The fireflies began to appear.

We got up and walking together, quietly, not talking, I realized that just being together was enough. It was a comfort to me to have the warmth of you near me. Hundreds of fireflies began blinking their psychedelic light show. We watched together and marveled in the beauty of it. In that moment I was so proud of you for the honest, loving, courageous person you are.

You always loved to read and read well above your age level. In fact, you enjoyed Steven King novels which worried me as they are scary with adult concepts and you were only nine or ten. In hindsight, I shouldn't have worried so much because look at the awesome, independent, hard working person you have become. I have great respect for your career choice, and I take great pride in being your mother.

- Laurie Hedlund

With Halloween just over, my thought is simple:

Who needs to navigate a corn maze next year when you can more easily request all your classes be held in Blodgett !! lol

Rumor has it that ghosts of students past are still seen trying to find their next classroom there....

- Bob Ulrich

March 6th Orientation for class managers and presenters.

Class Dates: March 13, 20, 27, April 3, 17, 24, May 1, 8 (no class April 10)
May 8 General Membership Meeting and Cocktail Party
February 10-24 Course Registration

March 10-17 Add/Drop Period

The Vassar College shuttle will, once again, provide transportation for the spring semester. The shuttle will ferry students to and from the South Parking Lot each Friday during classes. For those who prefer to walk, additional parking can be found in the North Parking Lot and on Collegeview and Raymond Avenues.

(Please do not park in the lot across from the nursery school or on the grounds behind Kenyon.)

Our fall semester got off to a rousing start with classes and special events attended by more members than ever before. The Vassar LLI membership has expanded and we now have close to 300 members.

As a volunteer organization, it is rewarding to see how many of our members have stepped up to lend a hand. With only one part-time employee in the LLI, everything that members see, hear, and experience has been carefully planned and accomplished by volunteers.

Our talented volunteer presenters bring an astonishing amount of knowledge and expertise to share with members. Class managers consistently volunteer to assist presenters and members so that everyone has a rewarding experience. The hospitality committee serves up wonderful snacks and beverages in the welcoming atmosphere of Kenyon Club Room.

Each of the committees in the executive council is made up of volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure the success of the LLI. Many, many thanks to all our volunteers!

If you haven't yet made a contribution by volunteering, please consider stepping up to join a committee, helping with a social event, planning, managing or presenting a class, or assisting with our hospitality room.

If you would like to volunteer but don't know exactly what is needed, contact the LLI office and leave a message that you would like to help.

We truly appreciate our members and would like each person to have a role in supporting the success of the LLI.

"You will get satisfaction out of doing something to give back to the community that you never get in any other way." - RBG

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With Appreciation For Our Fall 2019 Presenters & Producers

Presenters

Regina Armstrong	Harvey Flad	Chuck Mishaan	Beverly Sloane
Kele Baker	Carlie Graves	Denise Morett	Xiaodong Smith
David Bloom	Mihai Grunfeld	John Nelson	Matt Soltis
Warren Boroson	Judy Harkavy	Joe Nevins	Paul Sparrow
Mark Boujikian	Sean Hemmerle	Sande Nosonowitz	Mickey Steiman
Linda Cantor	Roger Hendricks Simon	Jim O'Brien	Paul Stoddard
Fred Chromey	Maria Hoehn	Lisa Paravisini-Gebert	Brent Sverdlhoff
Miriam Cohen	Emilie Houssart	Marilyn Price	Sarah Timberlake
Rob Cohen	Lucy Johnson	Juris Pupcenoks	Taylog
Vincenza Dante	Cara Lee	Ed Rosenberg	Lou Trapani
Ann Davis	Dan Levine	Nathan Rosenblum	Bob Ulrich
Sybil DelGaudio	Marta Marchetti-Kandl	Barry Rothfeld	Thomas Walker
Rebecca Edwards	Anna Matya	Erendira Rueda	Andy Weintraub
Melissa Everett	John McCleary	Judith Saunders	Pam Wright

Producers

Joanna Frang	Carlie Graves	Kathy Kurozman	Diana Salsberg
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Executive Council: Mihai Grunfeld (*Chair*), Lucy Johnson (*Vice-Chair*), Carlie Graves (*Membership and Registration Coordinator*), Larry Miller (*Treasurer*), Joanne Valeo (*Secretary*)

Committee Chairs: Lucy Johnson (*Curriculum*), Diana Salsburg (*Special Events*), Joanne Valeo (*Class Managers*), Theresa Catapane (*Member Services*), Sybil DelGaudio (*Classroom Support/AV*), Glen Conciatori and Roseanne Ashby (*Public Information*), Betty Olson (*By-Laws*), Michael Yarmosky (*Campus Needs*), Cary Auerbach (*Newsletter*), Sarah Kennedy (*Facebook*), Howard Spilke (*Phone*), Valerie Carlisle (*Email*)

Members at Large: Carole Wolf, Joan Blumberg

A special thanks to newsletter contributors (see article by-lines).

Photo credits: Millicent Cox, Sudhir Desai, Mihai Grunfeld, Laura Russel, Judy Sanford, Joanne Valeo

We welcome contributions (and suggestions) from the LLI community.

Best,

Cary Auerbach and Michael Yarmosky

Images From Our Fall Semester



**Gentle Walks Visits Rosendale
and the
Women's Studio Workshop 14**



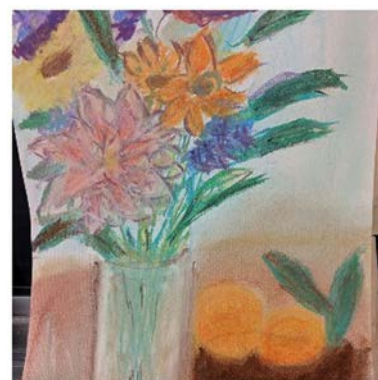
Images From Our Fall Semester *continued*

Drawing from Observation with Charcoals and Pastels



Marilyn Price commenting on and giving suggestions for our drawings.

Below: a composite of students' work from early in the term:



Thanks to Laura Russel & Joanne Valeo for the photos.



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Images From Our Fall Semester *continued*

A Glorious Day at Storm King Art Center



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