

**VASSAR  
COLLEGE  
LIFELONG  
LEARNING  
INSTITUTE**

**NEWSLETTER  
ISSUE 11 JAN 2024**

# VASSAR COLLEGE LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

Newsletter Issue 11, January 2024

## *Lust of the Mind*



Ask yourself: Why did I join VCLLI? Why at this point in my life, beyond my school and wage-earning years, am I drawn back to the classroom?

One of the reasons I joined was because I love learning. I always had, and still have, a hunger for knowledge.

Aristotle knew that *All men by nature, desire knowledge*. Babies are born with this hunger of the mind. We have a need to consume mental fuel, similar to the need of the body for food and drink. And, apparently, as Francois Rabelais wrote: *The appetite of knowledge is never ending*. Age doesn't matter.

But why do we have this hunger, what Thomas Hobbes called *lust of the mind*? What is the source of our curiosity? I've become curious about *curiosity*.

Encyclopedia Britannica explains it like this: *Every animal seeks information about their environment so they can navigate it. They are externally motivated. But if you're seeking knowledge because you're internally motivated—because you wanted to know the answer—that's curiosity.*

Judith Saunders, one of our LLI presenters, writes about this internal motivation that propels LLI: *I value the purity of intention that prevails in this particular educational setting. Participants are not earning credits or degrees, and those presenting courses are not being paid for their services. Everyone is motivated by an unadorned desire to engage with the subject matter.*

The Britannica article continues: *When something piques your curiosity, your brain enters into what's called 'the curiosity state'. [...]parts of your brain responsible for learning and memory kick into high gear.... And when you actually begin learning, your reward circuitry kicks in. Researchers have determined that dopamine, the brain's reward chemical, is intricately linked to the brain's curiosity state. When you explore and satisfy your curiosity, your brain floods your body with dopamine which makes you feel happier.* <https://curiosity.britannica.com/science-of-curiosity.html>

In the simplest terms, our brains reward us for learning. Curiosity, when satisfied, makes us feel good!

Curiosity is intrinsic, but it can fade if not encouraged. It can be rekindled by exercising your brain in different ways. Being a member of LLI is one way to re-light the fire. In this issue, read about the variety of subjects and experiences that stimulate the curiosity of members of our VCLLI community.

And, yes, community. I also joined LLI to meet people and socialize. That's good for us too! (See p. 2.)

*Thank you to all the writers and photographers who contributed to this issue.*

Special thanks to our cover artist **Marty Zlotkin** and our proofreader **Sandy Corwin**.

Jo Hausam, VCLLI Newsletter Editor

## Meet & Greet

On the first day of classes last September, our hard-working, ever-smiling Administrative Assistant, **Rachel Etkin**, welcomed all new members in the lobby of Kenyon Hall.

Each first-timer was given a name tag with a red star to indicate their new status, thereby allowing veteran members to recognize, welcome, and assist them.

Rachel was also responsible for arranging a free lunch for everyone in the Hospitality Room.

We can look forward to that again this spring!

In the photo on the right, Rachel is standing by the file box containing class lists. Each Friday morning of on-campus classes, she delivers the folders to the Hospitality Room where class managers pick them up.



I enjoy the social aspect [of VCLLI], seeing familiar faces. --**Roger G. Perkins**

Photo of members socializing in the Kenyon Hall Lobby.

*A fine sense of connection and the fun of meeting new like-minded people...*

by **Diana Salsberg**

I was fortunate to be asked for participation in LLI at its very inception. I think we are in our 6th year. It is rewarding to see how well received the programs are, and how engaged and invested members are.

Needless to say, I have learned new things from every instructor, and from fellow members, as we share thoughts and ideas. The community has expanded, and is still growing, with each semester.

A fine sense of connection to one another, and the fun of meeting new like-minded people, makes LLI feel special. And the fun of being on the Vassar campus, with students in our midst, is a reminder of our 'lifelong learning' pursuits.

Additionally, I have enjoyed taking members on field trips off campus. This past fall it was Opus 40, in Saugerties, NY, a sculpture park built entirely by one man, over the course of 40 years. We all enjoyed our guided tour. (See p. 3.) I look forward to many more adventures with LLI and hope you will as well.





# Welcome Back Party

September 29, 2023 in THE BARN



The event was arranged by **Diane Salsberg** with the help of **Terry Quinn, Rachel Etkin, and Carole Wolf.**

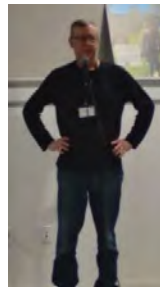
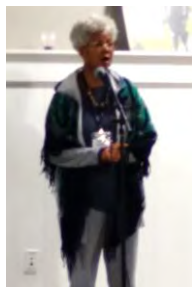
Catered by Twisted Soul Food Concepts



Photo above by **Tim Ryan**



Mihai Grunfeld, Executive Chair, introduced some members of the Executive Council and Committee Chairs, who described the work they do for LLI. (See p. 4 for a complete list.)



## Details and Decisions

### Who and What Makes VCLLL Work?



While you are having a semester break, plans for next semester are being made.

Dates are chosen!

Money is monitored.

Student help is hired.

Zoom class technology is set up.

Shuttle transportation is arranged.

Presenters and courses are selected.

The LLI website and Facebook are updated.

The catalog for the next semester is drafted.

Classrooms are assigned for on-campus classes

Class evaluations are analyzed and sent to presenters.

Field trips and parties are considered. Where? When?

The semi-annual newsletter is compiled and published.

Once members have registered for classes, class lists are made.

Technology training for class managers and presenters are set up.

Hospitality supplies, office supplies, and instructional supplies are purchased.

### Thank you

to the following members who are responsible for running the day-to-day operations of VCLLI:

**Mihai Grunfeld, Neila Radin, Paul Stoddard, Sudhir Desai, Carolyn Lampack, Yvonne Sewell, Sybil DelGaudio, Maribeth King, Joanne Valeo, Rachel Etkin, Gina Klein, Diana Salsberg, Carole Wolf, Teresa Quinn, Ed Kincade, Paul Horstmann, Rob Cohen, Pam Porath, Josephine Hausam, Sarah J. Kennedy, Marion Pompa, Howard Spilke, Tim Ryan,**

**When you volunteer, you not only help our community, you get to know people,  
and you can pre-register for classes!**

Please consider signing on as a class manager, writing for the newsletter,  
taking photos, suggesting courses, or assisting with technology.

For more information go to <https://pages.vassar.edu/lifelonglearning/volunteer/>

# A Quarry Transformed

Text and photo by **Maureen Rant**

Thanks to Diana Salzberg, we enjoyed another fall field trip. And thanks to Mother Nature we had perfect weather.

This year we went to **Opus 40**, a large outdoor sculpture park in Saugerties, NY. It was created by Harvey Fite (1903-1976) in the bed of an abandoned bluestone quarry.

Fite named the venue Opus 40 because he planned on taking 40 years to complete his masterwork. The informational leaflet describes it as “a celebration of the human spirit that is a testament to what one man can build with his hands in a lifetime.”

Perhaps the best part of the visit for me was that our tour guide actually knew Fite and filled the tour with wonderful personal anecdotes.

Fite died at age 72 as a result of an accident suffered on site, 3 years shy of his projected 40-year completion date.

As tragic as his death was, it seems somehow fitting that Fite would die doing what he loved in the place that he loved. Certainly, his spirit lives on in Opus 40.



The 63 acres of meadows and trails is on the National Register of Historic Places. <https://opus40.org/>

## *The Hudson Valley we live in is simply very beautiful...*

*The time spent learning, walking and meeting others was quite invigorating. The class was very enjoyable. And the Hudson Valley we live in is simply very beautiful as shown!*

--- **Sheree Cross**



**Maureen Potter** submitted this photo, taken at the John Burroughs Sanctuary, in West Park, NY, one of the destinations of the course **Gentle Walks in the Hudson Valley**.

The group also went to the West Point Foundry in Cold Spring, the rail trail along with the Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale, and Minnewaska State Park.



**David Bloom and Mark Boujikian** enthusiastically coordinate these excursions.

Photo taken at Minnewaska State Park, submitted by **Sheree Cross**.

# Black Literature: Looking at *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe

by Carmen James Lawrence

*A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you.*

--Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

Imagine, on a day and an hour undetermined, uninvited, unsmiling strangers will come to your community. They will tell you that your culture, your language, your traditions, your history, your music, your methods of governance, your religious practices and beliefs are wrong...all wrong. These strangers may not intend to physically kill you but they do intend to alter everything about you. In their eyes, all that you are must be deconstructed and reconstructed. You can no longer exist in ways familiar; in the ways that pay tribute to your ancestral story.

Our instructor, **Jacqueline Goffe-McNish**, a recently retired professor of English and Humanities at Dutchess Community College, where she was also the Chief Diversity Officer, carried us along a journey in critical reading, thinking and discussion related to these very issues.

The African community or society in *Things Fall Apart* is depicted as one of complex social systems, values, cultural and religious traditions. The novel explores the psyche of the traditional male leader within the community along with the strength and *demons*, if you will, that drive his existence. While the main character, Okonkwo is a male and the story unfolds around him and his journey, female characters are not ignored by the author and are well-developed. We (readers) get a more than fairly substantial glimpse of the roles of women in the story. In fact, the strength and independent thinking that Okonkwo's daughter reveals, is such that Okonkwo laments that she is not a male.

The African characters exist subject to a system of self-governance, laws, culture and religious practices that for the most part work well for the community as a whole, as well as for most of (certainly not all) the individual characters. While the collapse of community systems does not necessarily begin with the onset of European colonialism, the latter certainly drives the bus into the wall. Through the novel's characters, readers experience the loss of treasured traditions, loss of freedom of religious practice and spiritual beliefs, loss of self-governance and human dignity. Ultimately, tragedy takes place when hope is thought lost.

Prof. McNish challenged us to participate actively. Such was our engagement that I often had to remind myself that I was reading a novel! At least for me, emotions emerged as if we were discussing actual real people. She skillfully guided us in energetic discussions of our understanding of the diaspora, creolization, magical realism, post-colonialism, the role(s) of religion, biblical allusion and the treatment and presentation of women in the Achebe's novel setting using the feminist vs. womanist analysis. There was so much more but you will just have to read the book! You may find it to be a keeper. Better still, immerse yourself in one of Professor McNish's classes. I hope that you will find the experience as I did, vastly and deeply stirring and an absolutely delightful literary adventure!



# Printing Merchandise at the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory

Photos by Valerie Carlisle

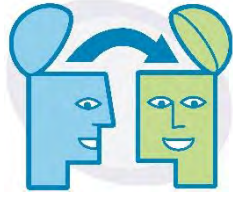
In this course students learned how to use heat transfer equipment to create custom merchandise.

It was presented by teaching artist **Anita Kiewra** at the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory (PUF) Printmaking Studio.

The photos show what it was all about.



**Anita Kiewra** (pictured on the far right in a pink top) works for Hudson River Housing, leading Upcycle, an arts-based workforce training program for people transitioning from homelessness. She also manages the community printmaking studio on the second Floor of the PUF. She is co-owner of Queens City 15 Gallery in Poughkeepsie.



## Who Presents the Courses?

Classes are taught by volunteer members, retired and active Vassar faculty, and outside experts.

### Thank You

to the following who presented and assisted with courses during the Fall 2023 Semester:

<b>Dan Peck</b>	<b>Les Muldorf</b>	<b>Vicky Weinblatt</b>
<b>David Bloom</b>	<b>Anita Kiewra</b>	<b>Jaime Ransome</b>
<b>Maija Niemisto</b>	<b>Harvey Flad</b>	<b>Judith Saunders</b>
<b>Chuck Mishaan</b>	<b>Lou Trapani</b>	<b>Marilyn Price</b>
<b>Kris McDaniel-Micco</b>	<b>Michael Foley</b>	<b>Sybil DelGaudio</b>
<b>Beverly Sloane</b>	<b>Thomas Walker Jr.</b>	<b>Dana Lucas</b>
<b>Anne Constantinople</b>	<b>Roberta M. Roy</b>	<b>David Roberts</b>
<b>Gary Quartararo</b>	<b>Paul Ciminello</b>	<b>Carol DiPalo</b>
<b>Richard Gerber</b>	<b>Kelsy Ponesse</b>	<b>David Kennett</b>
<b>Sandra Opdycke</b>	<b>Christina Di Marco</b>	<b>Lois Walden</b>
<b>Fred Chromey</b>	<b>John Platt</b>	<b>Jaqueline Goffe-McNish</b>
<b>Rob Cohen</b>	<b>John McGiff</b>	<b>Mickey Steiman</b>
<b>Nathan Rosenblum</b>	<b>Lyla Yastion</b>	<b>Denise Morett</b>
<b>Yvonne Elet,</b>	<b>Brian C. Berryann</b>	

**Katy Anson** and representatives of Seward House, Rose Hill, George Eastman Museum, and Sagamore Hill.

## *Instructor Extraordinaire*

Text and photo by **Diane Klemm**

Our six week course, **Psychology & Literature II**, with instructor extraordinaire, **Anne Constantinople**, did not disappoint.

Forewarned, we strapped on the seat belt from our favorite reading chair at home and ploughed through a (short) book a week. Whether individuals loved or loathed the assignment, the accompanying discussion was always first rate.

Anne was prepared and guided us through the ins and outs, the ups and downs of each novel. When we veered off topic, she gently drew us back on course. In no small measure she is to be credited for the coherence and depth of our classroom discussions.

As well, class members deserve to be acknowledged for respectfully listening and considering others' points of view. Hey, a few opinions were even changed along the way.

Some of us had the privilege of experiencing Anne and Psychology & Literature I, different books, a different theme, a year ago. And if there's Psychology & Literature III next fall, I'm signing up. The instructor and the course are that good.



**Anne Constantinople**, (pictured fourth from the left), after earning a B.A. in psychology from Smith College and a Ph.D. in personality and social psychology from the University of Rochester, started her teaching career at Byrn Mawr College in 1965.

Two years later she joined the faculty at Vassar and remained there for 36 years.

Over the course of her career she taught courses in personality, social and developmental psychology, and gender and psychology.

<https://www.vassar.edu/vq/issues/2003/03/vassar-today/vivant-professores.html>



## Judith Saunders

*I really enjoyed the course **Eight Great Short Stories**. The presenter, **Judith Saunders**, was able to not only share her insights, but to engage the class in a lively give and take of everyone's impressions and ideas.*

*The end of the last class seemed to leave everyone wishing it could just continue with more!*

*Please bring her back with a new course next semester! --Edward Goetzl*

For now, she is back, via this newsletter,  
with some information about her career, interests, and involvement in VCLLI.



### In her own words...

Living in the Bay Area of California when I finished high school, I was educated—extremely inexpensively, by current standards—in the state university system: U.C. Berkeley (A.B., M.A.), and U.C. San Diego (Ph.D). In my freshman year I decided I would major in English and aim for a career in the academic world.

While at Berkley, I witnessed a tumultuous series of events, from the Free Speech Movement to the People's Park. In the middle of this period, however, I spent time away from campus with the U.C. Study Abroad Program, which provided one of the most transformative experiences of my undergraduate years. I lived in an international dormitory in Göttingen, Germany for two years, immersing myself in a European culture and working hard to gain competence in a foreign language.

Employment opportunities eventually took me to the East Coast, where I have remained; the bulk of my college teaching career has been spent at Marist College. During thirty years of full-time employment there I've taught courses in my main areas of specialization—American literature and contemporary English-language poetry—as well as composition and creative writing.

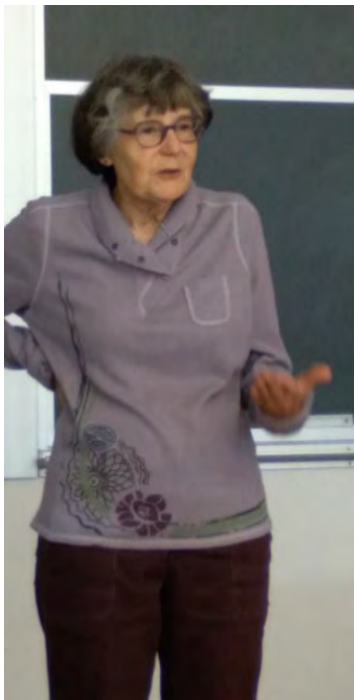
An important highlight of my Marist years was the opportunity to engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary teaching. I've worked with colleagues from Anthropology, Art, Sociology, Mathematics, and Biology, for instance, and one result of these efforts in innovation was the emergence of new scholarly interests. In recent decades, much of my academic research has involved application of evolutionary biology or psychology to literary texts.

In the late 1990s the dean of my school suggested that I teach a class for CLS (the Center for Lifetime Studies), a then relatively new local organization devoted to educational opportunities for retirees. I began teaching regularly there, offering a variety of topics, and one semester I reworked my campus course on Evolutionary Literary Studies to fit the CLS format. It was this course that I was asked in 2019 to reprise for the newly formed LLI (Lifetime Learning Institute). I've continued to present classes for these Senior Citizen groups because I appreciated working with people whose backgrounds contrast so vividly with those of typical on-campus undergraduates: retirees bring richly varied vocational and personal histories to bear on literary materials. Above all else, I value the purity of intention that prevails in this particular educational setting. Participants are not earning credits or degrees, and those presenting courses are not being paid for their services. Everyone is motivated by an unadorned desire to engage with the subject matter.

A good deal of my time currently is devoted to academic research and writing. In conjunction with this work, I occasionally attend national and international conferences. Some of my writing projects target general audiences, e.g., poetry, memoir, humor, parody, and satire.



My recreational reading is heavily weighted toward detective fiction and biography. I have no television, no Netflix, no streaming services, or the like, and I rarely go to movie theatres. (Long ago, pressured by friends, I made a New Year's resolution to see one movie a year . . . but I was unable to keep it.)



For exercise, I walk, hike, and swim.

I also spend time with my pets. Growing up, I had quite a menagerie—not just dogs and cats but guinea pigs, ducks, iguanas, and more. I also kept short-term pets that I caught in the wild, mostly lizards and frogs, including three little Spring Peepers I taught to sit on my finger-tips. Capturing insects to feed these visiting reptiles and amphibians was tricky as well as time-consuming.

These days my household includes only cats (the preferred pets of my adult life) and dogs. In an ideal world I would have a host of more exotic pets, all objects of unfulfilled childhood yearnings: an alpaca, a goat, a burro, a hutch full of angora rabbits. Someday, perhaps, I will manage to live in a place zoned for such creatures... before I am too feeble or too visually impaired to ride a burro, groom an angora bunny, or deal with alpaca poop. I revel unimpeded, meanwhile, in the fantasy.

*I'll meet you down by the river, down by the river / Down by the river, to see what we can see  
Down by the river, by the Hudson River / Down by the river, that's where I want to be.*



## Exploring the Hudson River Estuary



A four session course at the Norrie Point Environmental Center in Staatsburg, conducted by science educator, **Maija Niemisto**, explored the Hudson River Estuary,

Students had a hands-on experience investigating the physical, biological, and chemical properties of the Hudson. They caught and identified fish and aquatic invertebrates, tested water chemistry, and monitored plastic pollution in the water.

Information from the Fall 2023 Vassar College Lifelong Learning Catalog

Photos by **Marian Pompa and Susan Horstmann**



*Just make your way down to the water / That river will bring the world to your feet  
Might be something washed down from the mountains / Or dredged right up from the ocean deep.*

*Once we got careless about our river / Let it fill up with pollution and trash  
Now we're trying hard to protect it / Want to make sure that our river will last.*

Song lyrics from *Down by the River*, by Jean McAvoy, © 1994



<https://cals.cornell.edu/water-resources-institute/about/people/majja-liisa-niemisto>

**Maija Niemisto**, after graduation from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, lived aboard a 28-foot sailboat and sailed the eastern seaboard, eventually discovering the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater.

She joined the crew and education team of that environmental tall-ship and spent 10 years living on the Hudson and teaching about the estuary.

Maija then completed her graduate studies at Stony Brook University's School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences conducting bioacoustics research on fish and zooplankton of the Hudson River Estuary.

In 2019, she joined the NYSDEC at the Hudson River Estuarine Research Reserve.



<https://hudsonriversloopcleeater.wordpress.com/2015/04/24/science/>

## **SPECIAL FICTION FEATURE**

The following novel excerpt was composed  
in the *Fiction Writing* class presented by **Roberta M. Roy**.

### **No Safe Place**

Chapter One

by **Linda Rizzotto**

Mike Jarrett bypassed baggage claim and headed for the car rental where he had reserved a nondescript coupe with heavily tinted windows. When the agent told him it wasn't quite ready, he headed instead for the café to grab a coffee and a smoke. As he walked out of the connecting tunnel there was a crush of people, signs held aloft announcing in both English and Spanish, assistance with immigration. His attention was caught by a woman yelling into a cell phone. She had the frazzled appearance of someone about to bust at the seams. And here it comes. "What am I supposed to do with a French interpreter? I'm at the southern border. I have a client due in court in one hour and I only know his first name." He watched her put her briefcase down and run her free hand across her brow. She was nodding and he could hear her say, over and over, "Okay. Okay." When she hung up, she heaved a big sigh and dropped her head.

He tapped her shoulder. She raised her head, tilting it back until she could meet his gaze. "What?" she barked at him.

"I overheard you on your cell," he began, unable to ignore the look of annoyance on her face. "Let me begin again," he said with a smile. "I was blatantly eavesdropping and heard you need a Spanish interpreter. I'm your guy." She studied him and he was impressed that she did it while maintaining a totally neutral face. At last, she said, "That's nice of you. But these are legal proceedings. I'm not trying to find someone's luggage."

Not to be deterred he said, "I do this for a living. I'm very, very good." He then rattled off in Spanish his impression of the sight before them in great detail.

"Sounds great," she responded. "For all I know you could be rattling off a tapas menu and ordering margaritas for everybody."

He pulled out a business card that listed his linguistic skills with the FBI. She read it, tapped her finger on the side, and slipped into her purse, pulling out a card of her own. It announced her affiliation with the ACLU. "We don't usually play on the same team," she offered.

"Yeah, but right now..." He glanced at the card. "Right now, Ms. Brennan, I'm the only sub you've got."

She handed him a sheaf of papers. He began flipping through them, listening to her tell him she needed as much information as he could get, any piece, no matter how small it might be. He nodded, humoring her, when he stopped in his tracks. "Is this a typo?" He shoved a paper towards her. She glanced at it.



“No. I don’t think so.”

“It’s a kid, right? This tender age child?”

“Yes.” She drew the word out.

“So, what is a tender age child? Who dreams up a phrase like that?”

“In order, under the age of 12; DHS.”

Megan was rapping her knuckles on the door and from behind it Mike could hear a chair scraping the floor and someone’s keys and handcuffs jangling. A sound he recognized well from his line of work. The door swung open and standing there, in his full U S Border Patrol regalia was Officer Boyd. At least according to his name tag. To Mike he looked like an adolescent playing dress up. Every crease sharp. Baton, taser, and cuffs strategically placed to make the most noise possible. He leaned to the side to look past the agent. He shot a look back towards Megan and then forward again. “So, this is your client seeking asylum?” The kid was definitely under 12. Substantially under 12. He was all eyes, big and dark. The boy brushed at his hair that was flopping down it, but it wasn’t to be tamed. His feet did not reach the floor, the legs pumping up and down like pistons. He tilted his head back, looking up. Mike’s height often worked to his advantage when initiating interrogations but today it made him uncomfortable. He quietly pushed aside the chairs and lowered his 6 ft. 2 in. frame to the floor, drawing up his knees. Megan sat across the way, next to the boy.

Mike started out casually, reaching into his pocket for a tin of breath mints, giving them a shake. He took one for himself then offered the tin to the boy who grabbed a handful, stuffing the extras in his shirt pocket. Mike swiveled his head from one side to side, seeing with his own eyes what the boy saw and there was no doubt the picture was grim. Harsh fluorescent lights. Stainless steel table. Utilitarian chairs. The usual one-way mirror was missing, and he found that curious. He factored in the sounds that were also present. Megan Brennan who probably didn’t realize that her mindful breathing was louder than she thought. The little boy loudly slurping on the peppermint mint. And Officer Boyd who persisted in playing with the change in his pocket.

Mike started, in Spanish. “What’s your name chico?” There was no response, so he tried again. “It doesn’t have to be your full name, just your first name.” In little louder than a whisper he heard, “Miguel.”

“Miguel? That’s my name too. Michael is how I say it, but my friends call me Mike. You can call me that if you want.” He saw a flicker of emotion and took full advantage. “I see you playing with that mint between your teeth. Did you have breakfast this morning?” A shake of the head no.

Mike turned his focus back to Megan. “This kid says he hasn’t eaten. Can’t you get him some food?”

“I’m not supposed to leave him alone,” she said. “Not while he’s being interviewed.”

Mike turned the other way. “Hey, Boyd. Get this kid something to eat, would you?”

“Yeah, I’m not supposed to leave him either.” Boyd crossed his arms and spread his legs just a little further apart. Mike thought one good sweep kick and Boyd would go down hard, right on his ass.

“Do you speak Spanish, Boyd? If not, it doesn’t make much difference if you’re in here or not.” Mike looked over at Miguel and saw the dark eyes darting from speaker to speaker, concern spreading across his little face. Mike didn’t want to lose him before he even got started. In Spanish and smiling he said to Miguel, “Sometimes grownups are like kids. Nobody wants to run the errand. I’m going

to stand up and ask Officer Boyd real nice to get you something to eat.” With that Mike stood up, gave a stretch, and grabbed Boyd in what could only be called a good old boy’s grasp. He could tell by the way Boyd tensed up he had scared the bejeezus out of him and that thought made Mike smile as he spoke in a low voice. “This kid, this peanut is being screwed. Take your sorry ass wherever you have to go and get him some decent food. I’ll even pay for it.” He pulled out his credentials billfold, opening it so Boyd was sure to see his shield. He plucked out a twenty and tucked it into Boyd’s chest pocket, gave him a slap on the back and said, “Thanks bro. Much appreciated.”

He returned to the task at hand. “Are you going to record this?” he asked Megan. She gave him a blank look. “I don’t want to lose my connection with Miguel by anyone trying to take notes. Put your phone on record, give it to me later and I’ll translate and transcribe. No big deal.” Megan checked her phone and saw it was fully charged. She set it on the table and was about to hit record when Mike put his hand over it. “Listen, I don’t usually work with such young ....” He paused, realizing ‘suspect’ was not the word he wanted. “Let me rephrase. I don’t usually work with anyone so young, so I’m going to have to experiment. Feel my way around, you know? It would be a help if you just let me do that, okay? At my own pace.” She nodded in agreement, but what options did she have? She recognized she was relinquishing control of the situation and decided for now, at least, she wouldn’t dwell on what her supervisor, Ed McCracken, might have to say about it.

Megan listened as Mike kept up a steady riff as he reconfigured the room. It was all in Spanish and she understood almost none of it, her four years of high school Spanish having been for naught. He pulled the chair around the table positioning it so Miguel and he sat directly across from each other. He had it close enough so when he sat, his knees spread wide, his elbows resting on them, the boy’s feet would be cocooned. She could catch a snippet here and there. A name. Miguel. Some chatter. A number. Cinco. How old Miguel was. Two more names. Paco y Maria.

Mike leaned back, tilting in his chair, a smile on his face. She watched as he pantomimed throwing a football and she realized the discussion had turned to futbol, soccer. Miguel was coming out of his shell, his responses a little louder. She leaned forward, ready to tell Mike to cut to the chase so she could file her paperwork and get him before a judge.

Mike sensed her impatience. He turned his head and said with a smile, “Hang in there with me. You don’t want me to have you search out Boyd, do you?” Seeing the look on her face, he added quickly. “Just kidding.”

There was nothing she could do so she sat back and watched the two of them like she had stumbled across a Telemundo show. Miguel stopped pumping his legs and leaned forward, closing the gap between him and Mike. And it seemed to her whatever question the big man with the blue eyes, three day stubble, and buzz-cut put forth, Miguel would answer.

Occasionally there was a soft laugh, like they were sharing an inside joke. And he says he doesn’t work with children.

There was a sudden change in tone which brought Megan back to the moment. Mike was leaning forward, his head cocked to the side. Yes, she was sure she heard him say ‘otra vez.’ Miguel’s body language had totally changed. She tried to decipher what she was seeing. The little boy was looking upwards, as if to the heavens. The legs began to pump again, and Miguel was now sitting on his hands. Mike Jarrett’s voice had become soft, his hands spread apart, his head nodding. She could

tell he was trying to coax something from the boy. Up until this time there had been no touch, but she saw Jarrett reach his hand across and pat Miguel's knee. A torrent of words spilled out. There was a pause. Miguel dropped his head, the mop of hair falling forward. Another physical interaction, Jarrett reaching across and lifting Miguel's chin.

Mike stood up and with his head signaled Megan he wanted to speak in the hall. Before he could get away, Miguel tapped his hand, saying, "Señor Mike, Señor Mike," gesturing for him to come close. He whispered a question. Mike nodded, spread his arms, and swept the boy into them, giving him a great bear hug. Then he raised him over his head. The incongruous sound of a child laughing caused Megan to catch her breath. Jarrett sat Miguel back in the chair, tousled his hair and walked out, practically trampling over Boyd who carried in a grease-soaked bag.

Megan was right behind him, excited by how much information he seemed to have garnered. The connection between the little boy and the big man was unmistakable and Megan wondered if Mike Jarrett was even aware of the gift he had.

She tried to keep up with his pace and finally grabbed at his elbow. "Hey, you wanted to talk?" she asked. She took a step back when she saw his face. The smile and all the warmth that had been in his eyes when talking with Miguel was gone, replaced with cold fury.

He looked over his shoulder and seeing an empty interview room, grabbed her by the arm and pulled her inside. "I don't know where you get your information from. That pile of shit on your clipboard. Do you know, does anyone know who he was traveling with? Who he walked all those fucking miles with? Yeah, he was with his mother. And his sister. What do you know about them?"

Megan began to flip through her clipboard, but he stopped her. "You won't find it there."

She offered another explanation. "If she was over 12 or looked over 12, she would have been sent to a different facility."

"Nice try. No, she's younger. Still nursing. Doesn't walk. You know what that means? Mom and Miguel took turns carrying her. Two thousand miles. Two thousand fucking miles and they get here and..." He held his hands up in exasperation. "They get here to the land of milk and honey and all they're going to find is barbed wire surrounding a military field installation. Worse? They're not together. They are not together!" spoken with unbridled rage. He shook his head. "My luggage on a cut rate airline makes it to its destination."

He sighed. "Rant over. I'll get the translation to you by tonight."

"You'll still do that?" she asked, rifling through her things to dig out her phone. She held it out to him.

He held up his own. "Got it right here."

She gave him a quizzical look.

"Part of my special skill set," he said.

He headed to the corridor and she watched as he disappeared into the crowd. She peered at the phone she held in her hand. A sense of queasiness settled in her gut as she realized Mike Jarrett had walked off with a lot more than the interview with Miguel.



## New VLLI Facebook Administrators

**Muriel Horowitz** and **Kathy Kurosman** have volunteered to administer LLI's Facebook pages.

**Muriel Horowitz**, a retired educator, who spent most of her career in the Arlington School District, has been involved in LLI since its inception. She was part of the planning committee and then joined the Curriculum Committee, on which she still serves.



She has taught many LLI classes, including *Women in the Bible* and *Storytelling*. You can read about Muriel's work as a performing arts professional at <https://murielhorowitz.com>,

With Lorraine Hartin-Gelardi, she presented *Religions in Dutchess County* and with Linda Cantor and four others, *Wise Aging*.

She's taken a wide variety of LLI courses and loves the community that has developed among LLI members.

Outside of LLI, she is involved in many community activities: Reunite Migrant Families, Dutchess County Interfaith Council, and the Jewish Social Action Coalition.

She says her regular yoga practice keeps her "somewhat centered" and she loves doing some of the *NY Times* puzzles, especially Wordle.

**Kathy Kurosman** was a research librarian at the Vassar Library for twenty years, before retiring in 2010. She began her career there as an interlibrary loan librarian and over the years had various other positions, such as Head of Instruction and Educational Technology librarian. She created and maintained the first library website and continued to maintain the website with the help of people in College Relations and the Computer Center.

Kathy joined LLI shortly after its inception in 2018. She is part of the Curriculum Committee and the Diversity Committee.

She's organized two courses: *Just the Facts*, with Barbara Durniak, and *Leaving Home: Migration in an Ever-Changing World*. She was also part of the Zoom panel discussion *Know Your Community (Food and Agriculture)*.



Her leisure time is spent exercising: walking on the Rail Trail, taking Silver Sneakers classes at the gym, and working out in the Vassar Fitness Center. And like Muriel, she does *NY Times* word games and puzzles. She says, "They start my day. It's so important for us to keep our minds active at this point in our lives."

She adds, "The Lifelong Learning classes and committees are a perfect way to maintain contact with old friends and make new ones."

## An Art Journey: Drawing and the Right Side of Your Brain

by Howard Spilke

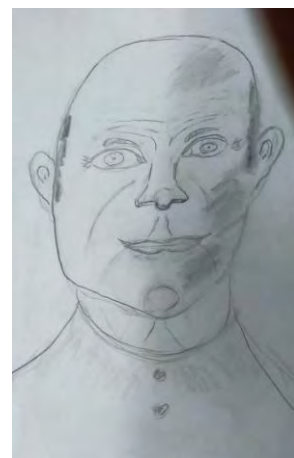
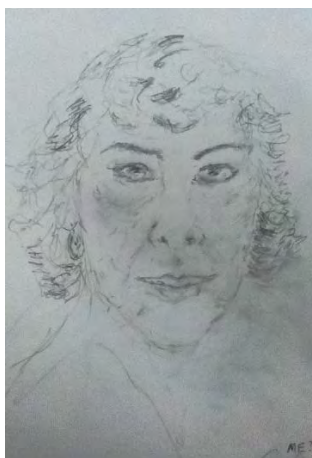
In this small class we were able to improve our drawing skills by engaging the right side of the brain, the more “free-wheeling” side, which controls sensory processing and expression, more intuitive than the analytic left side.

We used unusual techniques such as drawing pictures from images that were turned upside down and pure contour drawing, the simplest form of linear expression.

We drew our hands.



We drew self-portraits.



These practices gave us new perceptual skills and allowed us to see things in a more artistic way. In addition to improving drawing, right brain thinking enhances creativity and problem solving.

Our final project was a still-life drawing.



**Carol DiPalo**, an accomplished artist and teacher, was our guide on this art journey.

## *And Without a Conscious Thought!*

by Roberta M. Roy

Back in the '70's I was a lead activist on behalf of women and minorities in the SUNY system. Under my then name, Roberta M Ottaviani, I chaired the University-wide Caucus on Women's Rights for Women and the SUNY University Senate Committee on Fair Employment Practices. Non-renewed after seven years by the Central Committee on Tenure, despite unanimous recommendation for tenure by my department/discipline, I filed a class action suit against the State and SUNY for sex discrimination against women.

At that time, women at SUNY New Paltz represented about 20% of the faculty. In its large psychology department--in a field in which more women than men had earned Ph. D.s--there were no female faculty members. When one was finally hired, she reported that she was asked to bring her husband to the interview with the result that she said they "interviewed her husband" for her position. LOL

At that time, women, country-wide, earned \$53 for each \$100 men earned. Today, women earn \$83 on each \$100 men earn. As such, we've come a long way, but it ain't over yet! Except perhaps in the VCLLI!

Given my history, one day, I lackadaisically counted the number of males v. females teaching in the VCLLI. The faculty count turned out to be 20 men and 21 women! A perfect reflection of the make up our society where women constitute 52% of the population! However, this is not the end of the story.

Impressed by the results of my analysis, I approached Mihai Grunfeld, VCLLI Executive Chair, to ask if there had been any concerted effort on the part of the leadership to achieve this representative ratio. But apparently there had been none!

We've come a long way, baby! At VCLLI both men and women have arrived at parity . . . and with no conscious effort.

Kudos to our milieu. Kudos to our society. Kudos to us.



## AMUSING MUSINGS

### Is Nurse Ratched Evil?

by **Maureen Rant**

Is Nurse Ratched of “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest” an evil villain, or is she a woman doing her best to maintain order in an environment that could easily become chaotic and dangerous?



This is one of the topics we discussed this semester in *Psychology and Film*, presented by **Denise Morett**. The American Film Institute ranks Nurse Ratched #5 in film villains of all time, right behind the Wicked Witch of the West.

I find this assessment of Ratched rather harsh, considering the Evil Queen in Snow White comes in at #10 and Cruella De Vil at #39. Surely, Ratched has her flaws: she is cold and intimidating and certainly a kill-joy, but she doesn’t strike terror in my heart.

I did, however, encounter one evil villain this semester, one entity that truly scares me, and that was during the class *Financial Planning: Taxation in Retirement*, presented by **Kelsy Ponesse**. Move over Nurse Ratched, make room for the IRS!

## Who Were Your Class Managers?



Can you find the names of your class managers from last semester in the list below?

They are acknowledged in each issue of the newsletter because they deserve our recognition and appreciation.

**Carol Chu**

**Roseanne Ashby**

**Cary Auerbach**

**RoseAlice D’Avanzo**

**Maureen Potter**

**Donna Dortona**

**Muriel Horowitz**

**Skip Weisman**

**Joanne Valeo**

**Beth Hayes**

**Patti Nadel**

**Dora Barreto**

**Rachel Reisman**

**Susan Fink**

**Linda Cohen**

**Terry Quinn**

**Patricia Fitzpatrick**

**Miriam Tannen**

**Rob Cohen**

## Laughter On the Mat

### ***Gentle and Accessible Mat Yoga***

was offered as a 6-week class in the fall and will return for the 2024 spring semester.

Participants, wearing loose and comfortable clothing, learned and practiced various seated and standing yoga postures, breathing techniques, and meditation.

Instruction was in the expert hands of **Dana Lucas** who has been teaching yoga since 2007.



In the course intro she wrote: *I strive to balance the important of foundation and alignment while keeping things lighthearted. My classes are infused with laughter (so important) and a sense of community where everyone is welcome and encouraged to begin where they are.*





## Matthew Vassar and the Picturesque Landscape

**Harvey Flad**, Professor Emeritus of Geography at Vassar College, who has written on cultural and historical landscapes, was the presenter for the course **Matthew Vassar and the Picturesque Landscape**.

The group toured the Vassar College campus (with the assistance of **Yvonne Elet**, Professor of Art and Architecture at Vassar College), the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery (with the assistance of **Brian C. Berryann**, cemetery superintendent), and Springside, Matthew Vassar's country estate.

Springside, located on Academy Street in Poughkeepsie, is a U.S. National Historic Landmark. It was designed by Andrew Jackson Downing, one of the founders of landscape architecture in America, along with Calvert Vaux, who helped design Central Park in NYC.



The photo was taken at Springside, looking toward Willow Spring in the center of the picture, next to the large tree trunk. Harvey Flad is second from the left.

Photo submitted by **Paul Hortsmann**

## Multi-Purpose Kenyon Hall

Kenyon Hall is one of the two primary buildings used by VCLLI on the Vassar Campus. The other is Blodgett.

Kenyon is named after Helen Kenyon, Class of 1905, the first woman chair of the Board of Trustees.

Dedicated ninety years ago, on February 23, 1934, Kenyon Hall opened as Vassar's new gymnasium.

It had space for group, individual and social activities, to be used by students, faculty, and staff.

The ground floor contained a bowling alley and an archery range. The first floor housed a clay tennis court, three squash courts, a handball court, a golf driving range, a basketball floor large enough for two full courts, and a "rhythm room" that was used for the instruction of dance.

On the side of the main corridor was the staircase that led up to the rooftop solarium. The central section, the only two-story section of the building, featured the "Social Room", a large space with a fireplace and beamed ceiling that could be used for meetings. Adjacent to this was the fencing room.

The most anticipated part of the building was the large swimming pool, encircled by viewing gallery and illuminated by twenty-two large windows on three sides.

"Its character," noted Miss Kenyon, "is indicative of the new note in gymnasium planning which emphasizes the pleasure of exercise rather than the duty of taking it."



Kenyon Hall underwent a \$21 million renovation in the early 2000s, resulting in the addition of classrooms and the Frances Daly Fergusson Dance Theater, in the space originally occupied by the swimming pool.



Photo above and facts are from the **Vassar Encyclopedia**  
<https://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/buildings-grounds-technology/buildings/kenyon-hall/>



Today the rooms in Kenyon are filled not only with young, undergrad students, but, also, with lifelong learning students.



Outside Kenyon, the shuttle driver, Frank, drops off and picks up passengers.



Photos by Jo Hausam



## Are You Curious about Spring 2024 Classes?

Here is a brief preview:

Two very popular classes, *Science Sampler* and *Psychology in Film* will be returning.

For art aficionados, there will be a special four-week, on-site course, *Olana, Church, and the Inspiration of Place*.

History will be explored in *A History of Our Times: Social Change and Resistance* and in *American Colossus: 1890-1960*.

Artificial Intelligence is a big concern for all of us. *AI and the Future of Art and Imaging* examines its impact on art.

And here's an intriguing course title: *Also Rans: Four Men Who Ran for President and Lost*.

For those who lean toward the literary, you can enter *The Fairy Tale Experience*, or look at the lives of *Early Feminist Writers: Virginia Woolf and Colette*. Or perhaps you'd prefer to take a fresh look at *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson*.

For mind/body/spirit exercise, which will you choose: *Gentle and Accessible Mat Yoga* or *Stay Young with Qigong*?

And, Mihai Grunfeld will offer a course on Latin American cinema.

### In early February...

1. The complete course catalog will be available.
2. Early registration will be offered to volunteers.
3. General registration will open for all members a few days later.

**Zoom classes begin on Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**On-campus classes begin on Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>.**



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