

OLLI Holds Annual Meeting & Cokie Roberts Speaks at Annual Mona Sherman Lecture

The Annual Meeting at the Mahaiwe Theater on May 24th was an exciting opportunity to review OLLI's growth, celebrate our talented leadership, and welcome Peter Bluhm as incoming president. The ensuing 9th Annual Mona Sherman Memorial Lecture was sold out, as Cokie Roberts spoke on "Putting the HER Into HIStory."

President Len Tabs chaired the meeting. He introduced Ellen Kennedy, President of Berkshire Community College. Ms. Kennedy glowingly remarked how the collaboration between OLLI and the college has positively impacted BCC students. She highlighted the mentoring program and OLLI's annual \$5,000 gift of books to the library.

Len Tabs reviewed OLLI's operations. There are 1,038 members who chose from among no fewer than 70 courses in 2016. The organization boasts trips and special events such as theater parties, the faculty party, and the art show and auction. Other offerings include the Distinguished Speakers series, a Leadership Academy, and the mentoring program. There were special winter events in Florida. Len thanked the many volunteers, including the newsletter and catalog committees. Exciting new initiatives are the Shared Interest Groups (SIGs), University Day, and the updated interactive website.

OLLI Vice President Carl Shuster detailed the SIG program, which was inspired by reports from the World Health Organization and the Berkshires Regional Planning Commission.

In his role as Treasurer, Len provided the fiscal report, indicating a healthy

financial condition from both operating income and OLLI's endowment.

Next, in the election of board members and officers, the entire slate was accepted unanimously. New board members are Robert Desrosiers, Harold Shair, Christopher Guidette, Gordon Josephson, Ann Morgan, and Virginia O'Leary. Sandi Rubin will serve as secretary, Carl Shuster as vice president and Leonard Tabs as treasurer. Peter Bluhm brings many talents to OLLI as incoming President. Having served on committees and edited our newsletter, he brings a high level of professionalism to all his endeavors.

Megan Whilden, Executive Director, concluded the meeting. She showcased summer events and thanked the volunteers who make OLLI's activities possible.



Cokie Roberts and Lisa Sharkey

An annual highlight is the Mona Sherman Lecture, a memorial to an extraordinary OLLI leader. Lisa Sharkey, who is Ms. Sherman's daughter, gave tribute to her mother and

introduced Cokie Roberts. Ms. Sharkey, formerly a successful TV news producer, is now a senior vice president at Harper Collins Publishers.

Cokie Roberts, an award-winning journalist and political commentator, recently wrote *We Are Our Mothers' Daughters*. Noting that traditional histories frequently downplay women's contributions, she recounted



BCC President Ellen Kennedy has her book autographed

little-known anecdotes of famous American women. Combining historical facts with humor and candor, Ms. Roberts reminded us that women have woven a social safety net throughout U. S. history and worked to perfect the Union, especially in the areas of abolition and universal suffrage. She noted that "from the beginning, American women were involved and were fierce."

During the Q and A, Ms. Roberts discussed current issues. Her comments about her own mother's political activism were particularly enlightening, and it was clear that both Ms. Roberts and Ms. Sharkey exemplify the best in mother-daughter role modeling.

— Linda Halpern

President's Message

As OLLI's newly elected president, I'd like to introduce myself. My wife, Valerie, and I moved here almost six years ago from Vermont. We moved south to be nearer to family, but we landed in the Berkshires because of its cultural opportunities and natural beauty.

We found Berkshire County to be like Vermont in many ways (if a bit warmer). Nature is important to life in both places. The mountains are always a backdrop and they provide rare opportunities to get away from one's daily existence. But there were also two important differences. Tanglewood needs no introduction here, but it is a rare institution which greatly enhances our area culturally and economically. OLLI was the other surprise. We found lots of classes, lots of activities, lots of speakers. It quickly became clear that we had an extraordinary opportunity for an intellectually and socially vigorous life in our new home.

Now that I have learned more about its past, our OLLI seems even more remarkable. Founders and early leaders like Tom Easton, Arthur and Mona Sherman and Norman Avnet managed somehow to pull the Berkshire Institute for Lifelong Learning (BILL) up by its own bootstraps and create an energetic institution with scores of active volunteers. Later, when Bernard Osher donated funds for the permanent support of an Executive Director and we became an OLLI, we got even stronger and even more dynamic. So my first thought today is of gratitude to all those who preceded us on the BILL and OLLI boards and as officers. We, who now take the classes and attend the lectures, owe many thanks to past volunteers who set such an ambitious scope for OLLI.

I also want to thank Lenny Tabs for his recent service as President. Lenny won't toot his own horn here, but he

deserves enormous gratitude. Under Lenny's leadership we greatly improved our financial management system and our relationship to Berkshire Community College. Also, we have begun to offer a "university day" as an annual summer event, and OLLI has revamped its web site and begun to offer online enrollment. Thanks Lenny. I look forward to continuing to work with you as treasurer and as past president of the OLLI board.

Thanks also to all the volunteers whose work continues to be so vital. I appreciate the trust that the Board of Directors has placed in me, and I hope that over the next two years I can lead OLLI to become even more secure financially, to expand our reach to more people in the Berkshire region and to become even more effective at enriching the lives of older adults. — Peter Bluhm



Fall Courses ■ September 12 through October 27

MON.	<p>Contemporary Gender Roles – Deborah Caine – BCC Today's Headlines – Steven Tobin – BCC A Serious Look at 20th Century Comedy – Halpern – BCC Fine Art Photography – Kubis – Various locations</p>	THURS.	<p>The Battle of the Sexes: Insights from Aristophanes, Shakespeare & Shaw – Waldinger & Edelman – SCC Beowulf and the Heroic Age - Nancy Walters – SCC Edith Wharton: Home and Abroad - Macheski – SCC</p>
TUES.	<p>World War I: 1916-1917 – Siedor – BMUS Partisanship, Gerrymandering & the Right to Vote – Hyson – BMUS Nixon – Wallach – BMUS Ludwig van Beethoven: He Did It All – Stark – BMUS The Berkshires: Preserving and Walking the Land – BNRC – Various locations</p>	FRI.	<p>Forgeries and Fakes – Greetham – KF Architectural Gems – Various – Various locations Bread and Pasta - Arkans & Koelle – BCC Descartes' Meditations: The Transition from Medieval to Modern Thought – Cameron – KF Who Are Your Heroes? Why? – Berson – KF</p>
WED.	<p>Environmental Law: Its Historic Past, Its Uncertain Future – McKnight – WC Frontiers of Science – Lebestky – WC Memoir Writing – Dorsel – Sweetwood Exploring Early Manuscripts and Printed Books – Hammond – WC Climate Change – Several instructors – MCLA International Folkdancing – Herzig – WHIT</p>	<p>BCC = Berkshire Community College, Pittsfield BMUS = Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield BNRC = Berkshire Natural Resources Council KF = Kimball Farms, Lenox MCLA = Mass. College of Liberal Arts, North Adams SCC = BCC South County Campus, Great Barrington WC = Williams College, Williamstown WHIT = Whitney Center for the Arts, Pittsfield</p>	

Please refer to the fall 2017 Catalog or visit www.BerkshireOLLI.org for more details.

Edith Wharton in Wartime

Edith Wharton (1862-1937) is famed as a writer, as the first woman to earn the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and as designer of her Lenox estate, The Mount. What is not well known is her extraordinary humanitarian work during World War 1.

Wharton was living in Paris in the summer of 1914 when Germany bombarded Belgium and refugees began to pour into France. She immediately started to establish workrooms (*ouvroirs*) for unemployed Parisian seamstresses, hostels for refugees, rescue homes and schools for Belgian children and tuberculosis sanatoriums for soldiers. Wharton drew on her fluency in French, her contacts with upper-class French society and her contacts among wealthy Americans to raise funds to establish and run these institutions.

In 1914, she co-founded The American Hostels for Refugees. Its multiple units took in 9,300 refugees in its first year. In 1915, at the request of the Belgian government, she organized the Children of Flanders Rescue Committee. This brought thousands of Flemish children from the cellars of their war-torn homes and burned-out villages to rescue homes in Paris. Recently, Anne Provoost, a Belgian author, spoke at The Mount about her grandmother, who had been one of the first children rescued from Ypres when Germany attacked the city.

Wharton took a personal interest in the young refugees. When some children's Belgian families were unable to take them back, Wharton assumed responsibility for their education and arranged for their care in France.

All during this time, Wharton continued to write and travel. She wrote numerous letters as well as war articles for *Scribner's Magazine* and the *New York Times*. As one of the first and few journalists allowed to be at the front lines, she witnessed military action in England and France. Her *Scribner's* articles vividly described life in wartime Paris and in the battle zones. She disagreed with President Woodrow Wilson on America



Edith Wharton in France WWI with soldiers and Walter Berry

remaining neutral and strongly advocated for American involvement in the war. In one of her many letters to American friends she wrote:

The 'atrocities' one hears of are true. I know of many, alas, too well authenticated. Spread it abroad as much as you can. It should be known that it is to America's interest to help stem this hideous flood of savagery No civilized race can remain neutral in feeling now.

As a fundraising project, Wharton organized and edited *The Book of the Homeless*, a volume of original work by celebrities, to be sold for the benefit of her charities. With the help of her close friend Henry James, she sent appeals for art and text contributions to highly regarded European and American artists and writers. The book, published in 1916 by Charles Scribner, included works by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, Auguste Rodin, Joseph Conrad and Sarah Bernhardt. Profits were divided among the Hostels and the Children of Flanders Rescue Committee.

Edith Wharton wrote modestly of her efforts: "Everything I did during the war

in the way of charitable work was forced on me by the necessities of the hour, but always with the sense that others would have done better." The French government, however, recognized her outstanding work and awarded her the French Legion of Honor in 1916. She also received an award from Queen Elisabeth of Belgium. Edith Wharton died of a stroke in Paris in 1937 and is buried in the cemetery in Versailles.

There is so much more to know about Wharton's life, work and era, and OLLI members will have two opportunities in the fall. The course schedule includes "Edith Wharton: Home and Abroad" by Cecilia Macheski and "World War 1: 1916 & 1917" by Greig Siedor.

— Joanna Fribush

Meet New OLLI Board Member Gordon Josephson

Gordon joined the OLLI board in July. Soon after he changed careers, he and his wife, Susan, traded their usual Cape Cod vacations for the Berkshires. Both moves proved successful. The new career invigorated him, and that vacation led to their making West Stockbridge home. Now retired, Gordon brings his many interests and collaborative leadership to OLLI's Board of Directors. He looks forward to learning more about OLLI's operation, challenges and opportunities.

Raised in Rockville Centre, New York, Gordon attended the University of Vermont, where he developed his love for New England. He earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics, and a master's in physiology and biophysics at UVM. He continued his education to obtain a medical degree from the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center.

An internal medicine residency brought Gordon back to UVM. Like all residents, he rotated through the

emergency room. "Emergency medicine was beginning to put shoots in the ground as a new specialty at the time," he said. The field intrigued him, as it required broad knowledge and rapid decision-making. He next completed an emergency medicine residency at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1977.

Gordon then spent 20 years as head of hospital emergency departments in Worcester and Framingham. The field was new and the mentors few, so he had to learn hospital administration along with patient care. He found healthcare management satisfying, and began to wonder if he had another 20 years of clinical practice in him. He found the answer at Harvard, where he pursued a master's in public health one course at a time.

In 1997, Gordon became the chief operating officer of Springfield's Baystate Medical Practices, a network of 250 doctors. The group grew to 600 members by his retirement in 2015. As a physician executive, he made leadership training a priority, offering the



most promising physicians a 10-week mentoring program.

Gordon's longstanding interest in art, music and politics no longer competes with medicine and management for his time. He enrolls in OLLI courses, and contributes his expertise to the science curriculum committee. In the spring 2016 semester, he developed and co-taught a course

entitled *Our Current Healthcare System Decoded*. OLLI's extensive and varied activities impress Gordon. Members can enroll in a class, attend a lecture, take a day trip or join a SIG. Choices abound, whether the attraction be intellectual or social.

Serving on two boards of directors (Berkshire South Regional Community Center and OLLI) provides Gordon with structure in his retirement, and family further enriches his busy life. He and Susan, a former language teacher, then realtor, have a son and two grandsons in Newton, and a daughter and two granddaughters in Washington, DC.

— Katherine Zdeb

OLLI Benefits the Berkshires in So Many Ways

One of my favorite things about OLLI and its members is how much we give back to the Berkshires community.

OLLI members mentor Berkshire Community College students, many of whom are the first in their family to go to college. OLLI volunteers tape selected OLLI courses that are then shared online and on local TV so those who are not able to attend our programs can enjoy them at no cost.

Each year OLLI donates funds to BCC which are used to buy new library books. And each year OLLI offers the community a free lecture by a nationally known commentator or author through the Mona Sherman Memorial Lecture and the generosity of the Sherman-Sharkey family.

And we know that many of our OLLI members volunteer at almost every non-profit in the Berkshires, from tutoring children and cooking meals, to welcoming people to world class cultural experiences.

But most of all, OLLI contributes to the health and vitality of both our members and the greater Berkshires community by providing extraordinary opportunities to learn, to meet new friends, to explore new places and to volunteer in meaningful ways. In all of these ways, OLLI and its 1,000-plus members ensure that the Berkshires area is welcoming and engaging for everyone.

Thank you to each and every one of you for being part of OLLI, and for helping us make a positive impact in the Berkshires. — Megan Whilden, Executive Director

Shared Interest Group – French Conversation

Voulez vous parler français? OLLI members interested in speaking French language and experiencing French culture are welcome to join this Shared Interest Group. The SIG was the brainchild of Monica Sinclair and several others.

Monica explains that speaking another language “is a mindset; it’s an openness to other cultures and ideas.” The core mission is to bring together Francophiles who appreciate the French way of life, including good food, wine and coffee as well as the *je ne sais quois* of charming French towns, museums, movies and other arts. Perhaps most importantly, Francophiles appreciate a certain respect for intellectualism that is characteristically French.

Having lived in France, Monica considers herself comfortable with the language, although not fluent. The group is inclusive; all are welcome. Fluency levels range from rudimentary high school

knowledge to native French speakers. Meetings are held mostly in French, although members sometimes consult Google’s translation app.

Monica notes that OLLI is similar to the University of the Third Age (U3A), an international movement whose aims are the education and stimulation of retired people – those in their “third age” of life. Emphasis is on sharing, rather than formal teaching.

The SIG began meeting last November and has since met every two to three weeks in coffee shops around the county. They’ve been joined by native French speakers who currently work as chefs at Chez Nous, a Lee restaurant. The SIG selects topics in advance, for example, French proverbs, or politics in France. One member hosted a wine tasting in June.

The group is growing, evolving, and sharing ideas for new activities. It is organized democratically.



If you are interested in joining, please contact OLLI member Monica Hailes at monica@hailes.com. — Linda Halpern

Instructor Phil Halpern

Fall 2017 Course
A Serious Look at 20th Century Comedy,
Part 2

Bon vivant, raconteur and a favorite OLLI lecturer—all of these descriptions apply to Phil Halpern.

Phil grew up in Philadelphia where he attended a Jewish Day School and then public schools. He attended Temple University, spending a semester in Jerusalem. Upon graduation he returned to Jerusalem to study at the Greenberg College for a year. Back in Philadelphia, he enrolled in a doctoral program in Jewish studies at Dropsie College (now the Annenberg University). Phil’s father was a highly respected rabbi whose first wife and two daughters were killed in the Holocaust. An 18th generation rabbi within his family, he was incapacitated by a stroke but always maintained his good spirit and sense of humor.

Phil left the graduate program and started working in the nut industry. He moved to New Jersey where he met Linda, his wife of 41 years. When he developed non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma after the birth of their second son, the strength and good spirit that he fortunately inherited from his father helped Phil to a full recovery.

Linda and Phil started coming to the Berkshires in 1983 and bought a second home here in the 1990s. They moved to Lenox full time when they bought Brook Farm Inn, which they operated for fifteen years. Phil’s ebullience and warmth made guests feel very welcome and Linda’s attention to detail and great hosting combined to make the inn function well and kept the same guests coming back year after year. Active in his community, Phil served on the Lenox Chamber of



Commerce and was president for one term.

Phil loves learning about comedy—not just the jokes—but also the back stories about the comedians and the evolution of the art. Continuing the course he taught for OLLI last year, this fall Phil will offer a course on comedy beginning in the 1950’s. He also recently taught a course on Jewish humor at Temple Anshe Amunim.

In addition to their two sons, Linda and Phil have four grandchildren. Now that they are retired, they have more time for OLLI classes, more time for their grandchildren, and more time to travel. They recently spent time in Argentina where Phil reconnected with friends with whom he attended school in Jerusalem.

— Sandi Rubin

OLLI Celebrates its Volunteer Faculty

Pittsfield, Country Club • June 27, 2017

OLLI instructors and co-leaders of OLLI's Performing Arts Initiative, Barbara Waldinger and Nancy Vale



OLLI Executive Director Megan Whilden and former OLLI board president Arthur Sherman



BCC Dean of Community Outreach, Education and Workforce Development Jill Sasso Curtis with Abbie von Schlegell



OLLI Past President Leonard Tabs with Distinguished Speakers Series co-chair Hope Hagler and Ellen Tabs



Thaddeus Kubis, instructor



Claudia Coplan, Josie Thompson and instructor Susyn Reeve

Thanks to our OLLI Volunteers

OLLI's strength and vitality comes from its corps of active, committed volunteers. They recruit our lecturers, plan and teach our courses, run our special events, host our SIGs, keep our membership growing, help in the office, publicize our activities, communicate with our members, supervise class arrangements, provide leadership and generally pitch in wherever needed. These men and women, over 150 of them, gave OLLI their time, energy, creativity and skill during 2016 and 2017. We offer them our sincere thanks, and we hope we have included everyone.

Antoville, Ellen	Ganot, Bonita	Nardacci, Judith	Smith, Elske
Aylesworth, Chris	Geller, Michael	Nesis, Leon	Smith, Vicky
Barnett, Charlie	Geller, Susan	Neumuth, Edwin	Solomon, Lonnie
Bastow, Ev	Gerard, Joseph	Nishman, Judith	Spatz, Naomi
Bieniek, Robert	Goldberg, Sheldon	O'Leary, Virginia	Sterman, Chelly
Bluhm, Peter	Gorham, Susan	Oransky, Lesley	Sterman, Lance
Bluhm, Valerie	Greenapple, Larry	O'Toole, Carroll	Stewart, Ronald
Bookless, Maxine	Greenbaum, Barbara	Paradis, Roger	Strauss, Lawrence
Brand, Barbara	Grogan, Lina	Plager, Helen Louise	Swiss, Kirk
Breskin, Arline	Grogan, Ray	Poutasse, Margaret	Tabb, Ellen
Brooks, Jock	Guidette, Christopher	Rosen, Charlene	Tabb, Leonard
Brotman, Joan	Hagler, Hope	Rosen, Robert	Tinari, Alex
Brown, Carl	Halpern, Linda	Rubin, Alan	Vale, Nancy
Cahill, Margaret	Hamblin, Carol	Rubin, Lenore	Vandervort, Carolyn
Caine, Deborah	Hartman, Barbara	Rubin, Sandra	Walden, Jean
Calman, Helene	Haus, George	Sabot, Carol	Waldinger, Barbara
Cass, Claudia	Hayes, Joanne	Sambel, Linda	Wallach, Stacy
Chanler, Shelley	Joseph, Judith	Schneiderman, Myrna	Walters, Nancy
Cicchillo, Mary Anne	Joseph, Thomas	Shaffer, Helen Mary	Weaver, Terry
Cohen, Marsha	Josephson, Gordon	Schorr, Marney	Weinberg, Fran
Coplan, Claudia	Katz, Judy	Scotch, Rose	White, Donald
Cromwell, Judy	Kennedy, Lucy	Segal, Anthony	White, Patricia
Crosson, Nancy	Keshner, Judy	Selkowitz, Elizabeth	Williams, Selma
Cukor, Adele	Kidd, Katherine	Shair, Harold	Wolk, Fran
Degenhardt, Ruth	Klocke, Anna	Shalan, Arline	Wolk, Joel
Deinard, Lile	Koelle, Rosanna	Shapiro, Howard	Yudelman, Bob
Desrosiers, Bonnie	Koelle, Thomas	Shapiro, Shirley	Yudelman, Karen
Desrosiers, Robert	Konove, Kay	Sherman, Arthur	Young, Elizabeth
Dobelle, Kit	Lane, Barbara	Shuster, Carl	Zaret, Minna
Donath, Sheila	Latimer, Bill	Shuster, Claudia	Zdeb, Katherine
Dorfman, Ann	Lee, Robert	Siegel, Carole	Ziskind, Ross
Easter, Lee	Leibowitz, Augusta	Sinclair, Monica	
Epstein, Phyllis	Lenahan, Lois	Smilow, Turbi	<i>*deceased</i>
Evans, Richard	Les, Caren	Smith, Dorothy	
Fields, William	Levin, Judy		
Fisher, Andrew	Levitan, Katherine		
Fisher, Jacqueline	Lipkowitz, John		
Fisher, Karel	Margolis, Marilyn*		
Flaum, Marilyn	Margolis, Michael		
Flaum, Paul	Mascelli, Louis		
Foster, Rose	Matturro, Richard		
Fowler, Jacqueline	McNulty, Karen		
Frankel, Elisa	Michelman, Enid		
Fribush, Joanna	Milazzo, Marie		
Gabor-Hotchkiss, Magda	Morgan, Ann		

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Highlighting OLLI Instructors at the Colonial Spring Semester Open House – March 29, 2017



*William Cameron and
William Travis (instructors)*



Betsey Selkowitz and Chris Guidette,



Karel Fisher (instructor)