

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by *Bev De la Zerda*

I hope all of you will be able to attend the last luncheon of the academic year to be held on May 26th at the Rogue River Room in Stevenson Union. This will be the last opportunity to pass the time with friends before beginning our summer vacation (of course, we are on vacation all the time!). President Mary Cullinan will be our guest speaker and it should be a great time.

If you know of a staff or faculty member who has not been coming to the luncheons, please extend them an invitation. Let them know what great fun we have in renewing old friendships while at the same time creating new ones. Also, please give the name and address of the retiree to Sally Klein or one of your Council members so we may add them to our roster.

See you on the 26th. ▲

The Retirees Association's SPRING TERM LUNCHEON

Speaker:
President Mary Cullinan

May 26, 2010
11:30 am – 1:30 pm
Rogue River Room

RSVP to Sally Klein by
Wednesday, May 19, 2010

Email (preferred):
kleins@sou.edu
Or Telephone:
541-552-6049

Skiing Under the Northern Lights

by *Reider Peterson*

I was very fortunate to have been able to participate in two adventures in Northern Finland and Norway over the last three years. The first was a ten-day ski trip from northern Finland to the northernmost point on the contiguous land mass of Norway. The first day was spent as a shake-down day to make sure we all could ski well enough to make the trip. That was at a Cross-Country center that doubled as a reindeer preserve. We all passed muster and we were bused up to Sevetijarvi and some cabins whose owners also raced dogsleds, so we got a rousing reception. The next morning we were off on our 9 days heading north and a little west. We had spring-like snow conditions: "corn" snow caused by melting during the day and freezing at night. So instead of the normal diagonal stride, I started skating (on skis, of course). And since we were on a snowmobile trail, with very few snowmobiles, it was perfect skating, especially when we crossed lakes, which we did fairly regularly. On some of the bigger lakes, the snowmobile which carried our gear and met us for lunch (almost always with a pot of hot soup going on their portable stove—how good did that taste?!?) would pull people across the lake on ropes. "Skijoring" at it's best! I of course being a purist, would not stoop so low as to accept a tow from a snowmobile, so I was the only one who actually skied ALL THE WAY. I would start skiing across the lake as everybody else was being readied to be pulled, so I was usually across the lake by the time they were half way across. I should hasten to mention that since the engine was air-cooled, they would have to stop about half-way to let the engine cool.

We stayed mostly in reindeer herders cabins who use them only in the summer. So this was a perfect use for them in the off-season. The trips are only run in the spring because of really cold temperatures and the lack of daylight. We started on April 10, and there was one trip following us by a day, which was the last of the season. Even then there was 14 hours of daylight and did not get completely dark until about 10 pm. One of the highlights of the trip was the almost constant calling of Arctic Grouse. We didn't see them very often, however. Another highlight was crossing the tracks of a wolverine, which the snowmobile driver going before us actually saw—an extremely rare sighting! This was on the last day of the trip. I should add that it is illegal to use snowmobiles for recreation in Norway. They can be used for search and rescue and on your own property if you have a farm or other need, or if you use them in the far north for transportation, which was the case with our snowmobile "road".

One day we saw many large herds of reindeer. When we climbed to the top of a high promontory, a Sami on a snowmobile came driving up very fast and demanded to know why we were chasing his reindeer. Our guide got him calmed down and assured him that we were not. We did not know the reason for his excitement until later when our guide explained it to us. Reindeer are spooked nowadays by things that are quiet, like skiers, who might be trying to sneak up on them. But they are not spooked at all by snowmobiles, which the Sami have been using to herd their reindeer for quite a few years. Once he calmed down from the assurances of our guide, he became quite affable and agreed to have his picture taken with all of us. He was quite the handsome man, decked out in his traditional Sami dress.

The last day was a long one to the Arctic Ocean. The wind was blowing off the ocean quite hard, especially on top of the hills where there was no protection. It was also the day of the most climbs and descents, but with the view of the ocean, probably the most scenic. We caught the van at the roadway, and were transported to Mehamn, where we caught the ferry over to Kirkenes, then bussed back to our starting point.

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Sketches from the Center

By Jim Dean, whose wife Helen currently resides in a local memory center

Feeling

Dolly, who hardly ever talks, walks with tiny steps. You can see she was once beautiful. I sit on a sofa with my wife, Helen. Dolly examines this closed-in world of the Memory Care Center, feels her way across surfaces. Textures speak to her. First her hands explore the ridge of the couch—we're on soft plush. First I feel fingers, then see fingers, graceful and long. They move slowly across my shoulders, like cats walking on carpet, caressing my fleece jacket.

"Is she bothering you?" an aide asks.

"No, I don't mind" I say.

Touch tells her something; I can't name it. I wonder what world she comprehends through fingertips. She follows the couch as it rounds. Then she sits by us, solemn-eyed. Helen touches her arm.

These days Helen also responds to pattern, color, texture. Language fades. The Memory Center has swatches of cloth on a ring, fiercely colored, variously textured. These are bright voices to those who hear them.

Unwelcome

Bonnie is short, about Helen's size, with pinkish-red hair, washed-out eyes, reddish skin. She dresses carefully, an anomaly in the Center where dress sometimes runs from unkempt to chaotic. Still, she looks a little dumpy. I'm told she is very particular about her room, and keeps it unusually neat. One day after I briefly talk to her she goes into her room to rest but returns immediately. She has found Kevin, a pleasant little chap, asleep in her bed. "Will you help me get him out?" she asks, quite agitated. I summon an aide; she awakens and rousts Kevin. He emerges rumpled and sleepy and puzzled. The bed was there. He was sleepy. Why the fuss?

Bonnie and Helen had a spat once, on a couch. "They went at each other like two cats. It didn't last long," an aide reported. Helen ended up on the floor with a rug-burn on her arm. She doesn't remember the incident. There are minor benefits to not remembering.

Outbursts

Jonah is the most gentlemanly of all the men in the unit. Though he shuffles behind his walker (green tennis balls on its rear legs to prevent slipping) he still has the bearing of the dignified college professor he once was. Helen appropriates a shirt from his closet. "Helen," I say, "that's Jonah's shirt. Let's take it off and give it to him." She looks uncertain, for she truly wants to wear the shirt. Jonah says, "No, let her wear it." He helps her button it.

Thus I am surprised one lunch-time when Jonah suddenly shouts at Verna, who is sitting near him at a lunch table. "For God's sake woman, shut up!" A long silence settles over the room. Verna looks at him coolly and quietly replies. "Don't you ever talk to me like that again." A few minutes later they are on good terms again.

When I tell Jonah's son-in-law what I heard, he shakes his head in disbelief. "I've never heard him speak like that," he says. "It's completely out of character."

I think: The bizarre, the uncomfortable, the odd, the strangely amusing, the unexpected, the out-of-character—all brought to us by the grace of Alzheimer's disease.

Who the Men Are

I arrive at the monthly dinner a little late, and as I pass Theodore and his visiting wife, she tells me that I have arrived just in time. Helen was running her hands through Theodore's hair, and he was grinning like an ape. Theodore's wife is amused rather than jealous. When I tell Kathy, the activities director, about this, she tells me something that makes absolute sense. Yes, Helen visits the rooms of all the men in the Center. She is looking for Jim. All the men are Jim.

I am grateful that she still recognizes me when I come to the Center. I put some Nivea cream on her face, brush her hair, give her a kiss. We walk a bit, holding hands. I sometimes help her into different clothes. She is glad to see me. I feel blessed, somehow, and terribly sad. ▲

Various Flavors of Coffee

A Book Review by Ed Hungerford

Lately I have been using the Ashland public library for my leisure reading. At Ashland library, the county's resources allow it to buy many popular new books, including fiction—many novels, short stories and translations that the University library doesn't stock in quantity. So I go there to pick up novels, and the "new book" shelves are my first pursuit. This way, a person also encounters oddball, eccentric books as well as mysteries and crime novels, new authors of course, and new non-fiction as well.

Various Flavors of Coffee is a novel that I have read recently. By a British author, Anthony Capella, the book combines an adventure story with several love stories. A young man sent down from Oxford without a degree, an aspiring poet in Oscar Wilde's London—the 1890's, fin de siècle—has exhausted his father's allowance and other available funds, but tries to avoid taking a job, which would be demeaning. But as he is drinking coffee in a café, he is joined by a gentleman who turns out to be the owner of a coffee importing business, who also wants to start up a chain of tea rooms or places to market his product.

The young hero is assigned the task of developing a taste manual for flavors of coffee, and sets about his work, with some help from the owner's young, pretty daughter who manages the firm's finances. Their romantic affair advances suitably, until the firm's owner sends the young man, Robert Wallis, to Africa to seek out new sources and perhaps buy new coffee plantations. Africa in the 1890s hasn't been much explored, so Wallis finds himself in primitive conditions, sometimes in jungles of Ethiopia and Abyssinia where he has life-threatening experiences. By odd means he acquires a beautiful Negro slave, a young woman who speaks several languages, and with whom he has a master-servant love affair. He eventually makes his way back to England a wiser and once more a destitute man.

This is a long book, over 500 pages, but the style is excellent, moves along fast, and is at times full of wit including epigrams that imitate Oscar Wilde. The author, Capella, makes London in the Eighteen-nineties come to life.

Are we drinking better coffee now than in say, 1900 or 1910? Read this book, find out. ▲

HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION (OOPS, RETIREMENT)

by Fran Madachy (Fran Madachy fmad@oregoncoast.com)

Carol McNair asked me to write about how I am spending my retirement, and it reminded me of all those essays I wrote in elementary school about how I spent my summer vacation. Well, here's how (and that's not a toast unless you're sipping a bit of something while reading this).

First of all, I simply cannot believe that it's been thirteen years since I retired to beautiful downtown Pacific City. If you don't know where that is, you're missing a gorgeous part of the Oregon Coast about twenty miles north of Lincoln City.

The house, which I share with an old friend, is situated on the Nestucca River and across the street from the ocean. I fear that when the earthquake and tsunami hit, I'll be a goner, so don't try to call to see if I'm still alive. I keep telling people that I hope I'll be in Salem or some place inland when that happens.

Meantime, I have become a board of directors' junkie. I have been on the Board of our local library, the local Lions club (holding office as secretary twice, president once, first vice president once, and past president once), and Neskowin Chamber Music. I am also chair of Sight and Hearing for the Lions club, providing eyeglasses and hearing aids to the needy. Presumably everyone knows what libraries and Lions clubs do, so I'll elaborate on Neskowin Chamber Music.

NCM brings exceptional chamber musicians from all over the world to perform for devoted music lovers. We currently have seven concerts a year. I have been on the board for almost eleven years, and am now president and artistic director (that's a fancy name for the idiot who agreed to find performers, bargain with agents, hire the groups, and make sure everything is ready for the concerts). We have even hired Alexander Tutunov and Rhett Bender to perform for the series along with such other fabulous groups as the Tokyo String Quartet and New York Brass. Even though it's a lot of work, and my term of office is only up when I get tired of it, I really enjoy dealing with the movers of the music world. I only do this because the board is a dedicated group who want to enrich the life of the coast and the lives of our local school children, who get short performances/demonstrations the day after the concerts.

By means of a generous grant, the NCM board has also started a program of teaching a group of children (twelve at this time) how to play the violin. We were able to provide each child with a violin, and have hired a very fine teacher. Some dedicated philanthropists have added to the fund to provide that this wonderful undertaking continues. The students are still at the scratchy stage, but they are getting better.

As for my performing, I still do it. I play one or two solo concerts locally a year, and even performed a piano quintet with a string quartet from Prague on one of the NCM concerts. That was a great experience! I do a fair amount of accompanying also, especially for high school students at contest time. It's always interesting to go to the State contest where I meet former students, now teachers, and colleagues.

It seems as though hardly anyone outside of Tillamook and Lincoln City teaches piano students, so I have succumbed to pleas from parents to teach little ones. I currently have six students who are nice people, but not great musicians. In past years, I have taught several very talented high schoolers who have won very good college scholarships. One recent high school graduate won \$106,000 to attend Pacific University in Forest Grove.

So, what do I do in my spare time? I love to watch the river, fish, and do a bit of traveling. I hope to cruise the Danube some day. I also play the organ at Church once in a while, and help the church ladies with pot luck dinners, bazaars, etc. And, oh, I do some wood crafting and selling.

Life is good! I do miss Ashland occasionally when I think of my good friends there, and am hungry for some good food and a Shakespeare play or two.

Here's something from Dr. Seuss to think about: "How did it get so late so soon? It's night before it's afternoon. December is here before it's June. My goodness how the time has flown. How did it get so late so soon?" ▲

BARCELONA

by Herman Schmeling

We arrived in Barcelona on a sunny afternoon in late September, nine years ago: Sylvia and I and son Max, our driver. Our month-long tour of Spain and Portugal had begun in Madrid, where we picked up our rental car. From there we had traveled north to Bilbao, site of the new Bilbao Guggenheim, east to the Pyrenees, and south to Barcelona.

There we found our hotel on a narrow street which, as Max drove past it, looking to turn around, grew narrower and narrower. We realized that we were on a medieval street, perfect for oxcarts, but too narrow for turning around, so Max backed up and parked on the sidewalk in front of the hotel. We hauled our luggage into the lobby and registered. The woman behind the desk recommended parking our car in the hotel lot across the street, \$40.00 for four days and nights, which sounded reasonable to me. But not to Sylvia and Max who had noticed a FREE PARKING sign on a street corner we'd passed a few blocks away. They assigned me to stay with the luggage while they went to park the car. Twenty minutes later and they were back, convinced that they had saved us forty bucks.

Four wonderful days in Barcelona, perfect weather, more museums, lovely walks, tasty food (best ham in the world) and Gaudi architecture--time to pick up the car. Again, I was left in the lobby with the luggage. The twenty minutes I had anticipated became an hour, then two hours--I was getting worried--when, finally, they drove up. What happened, I asked, as they came through the door. Well, when they couldn't find the car after much walking and searching, a bilingual policeman informed them that the sign they had seen meant "sometimes," certain days free, other days, a charge. He suggested checking out the possibility that the car had been impounded, then made the call for them. Sure enough, it had been, and impoundment camp was close by. It cost \$140.00 to bail it out.

Sylvia said, Max told me later, your father will never let us forget this. And I haven't. ▲

Going to Dinner

A group of buddies in their forties discuss where they should meet for dinner. Finally it is agreed that they should meet at the Gausthof zum Lowen restaurant because the waitresses there have low cut blouses and nice breasts.

Ten years later, now in their fifties, the group meets again to discuss where they should meet. They agree to meet at the Gausthof zum Lowen because the food there is very good and the wine selection is excellent.

Ten years later, now in their seventies, the group meets again to discuss where they should meet. They agree upon the Gausthof zum Lowen because the restaurant is wheelchair accessible and they have an elevator.

Ten years later, now in their eighties the group meets again to discuss where they should meet. They agree to go to the Gausthof zum Lowen, which would be a great idea because they had never been there before. ▲



*We do not grow old
absolutely, chronologically. We
grow sometimes in one dimension,
and not in another; unevenly. We
grow partially. We are relative. We
are mature in one realm, childish
in another. The past, present,
and future mingle and pull us
backward, forward, or fix us in the
present. We are made up of layers,
cells, constellations.*

—Anais Nin

Skiing, continued from page 1

My second trip in that part of the world was a six day “hut-to-hut” ski trip in the Jotunheimen area of Norway. We started skiing at Gjendesheim and finished at Elvsetter. The highest point in Norway is in this region (Galdhopiggen at 2469 meters) and many other peaks. Even though the region is not all that high in elevation (we were skiing at about 4000 ft.), the entire trip was above tree line, until the very last day when we descended about 1500 ft. Tree line that far north is quite low.

All of the trails are marked with small tree branches or twigs set about 100 feet apart, because if it starts to snow or gets foggy, there are absolutely no visible landmarks. They do this by snowmobile in the fall once they get enough snow to hold them. One day we did start out in a snow storm and the next branch was barely visible from the one we were passing. By midday the storm had passed and we again had amazing vistas to see -- all white with some black rock mountains or outcroppings. At one point we dropped into a channel between two mountains which forms a natural wind tunnel and the wind had created a huge snow drift that towered 30 to 40 feet above us.

The word “hut” is not quite accurate. These are generally very nice lodges with a sitting area and a kitchen and a great staff to prepare and serve their delicious meals. The sleeping quarters are generally dormitory-style with accommodations for 40 to 50 people. Many families spend their vacations at one of these lodges and go out on day trips. Spring vacation (roughly around Easter) is a very popular time to do this and people will book them at least a year in advance to make sure they can get in. Our trip was the week before spring vacation began so the lodges were not very crowded, which made it very pleasant.

This trip had a lot more ascents and descents than my first trip. It seemed that we were either going uphill or downhill, with not a whole lot of level. On this trip we had to carry “windbags”, which were nylon bags that were slipped over you when you were having lunch or taking a rest break. It was the only way one could be comfortable taking ones gloves off and eating and/or drinking something. Otherwise your hands would be frozen or at least very uncomfortable in a very short period of time. I would not have wanted to do the trip without them. They can also be used in an emergency in the event of not making it to the next hut. Our guides said they know of only one time that a party had to spend the night out, although on the day of the snowstorm, we arrived at the hut at about 8:30 and in the dark. There was just enough of a moon to make it a pleasant “moonlight” ski.

Since my father was born and raised in Lillehammer, it was very exciting to do a ski trip near there. The Jotunheimen area is about 100 miles northwest of Lillehammer. There are many areas where you can do hut-to-hut ski trips, but I think this has to be the most beautiful in all of Norway. ▲

See photographs of Reider's skiing trips at emeritus.sou.edu, click on the Retirees News link.