

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by *Bev De la Zerda*

It is an honor to be elected President of the Retirees Association of Southern Oregon University for the second time. I have worked at this institution since graduation from Southern Oregon State College in 1972. I was fortunate to be hired by Marythea Grebner as the Accounts Payable Clerk for Stevenson Union. Through many promotions, I became the Executive Assistant to the Director of Auxiliaries, Phil Campbell, in 1986, a position I held until September, 2001, when I became the Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Student Affairs. During my 30 years of service for Southern Oregon University, I served under every President since Elmo Stevenson, four Union Directors, and several name changes for the University. I was able to meet and help many students, staff, and administrators along the way. It has been mostly a pleasant journey, filled with many adventures, good times, and good friends.

It should be an exciting year. Your Council is ready to serve you. If you have a project or activity you would like to see the Association under take, please contact a Council member or Sally Klein so they may be discussed at the next Council meeting. The Council is also trying to locate staff retirees who are eligible to join the Retirees Association. If you know of a staff member who is qualified, please give their name to Sally Klein or Jeanne Stallman so they may be invited to the fall get-together. I encourage all members to attend the fall meeting on Thursday, November 5, to renew old friendships and maybe create new ones. See you there. ▲

## A Really Good Book

by *Carol McNair*

Kavalier and Clay, by Michael Chabon is a really good book. It is not a new book; it won the Pulitzer Prize in 2001. But if you are as far behind in reading your Pulitzer Prize books as I am, it may be a surprise to you. It is a story of two young men who make good in the comic book industry. It begins in 1939 when Superman is a new sensation and ends in 1954 with the Kefauver hearings. But that is so far from being a description of the book. Chabon tells stories -- the book is 651 pages long -- about the characters' lives. Chabon has written in defense of plot as a literary device and I am much in agreement with him. It isn't just a page-turner either, though. The characters are wonderfully drawn and his prose style is excellent. A further bonus for those of us who were alive in those years is that we recognize the landscape. For instance, there is an episode at the World's Fair grounds in Queens. Although I was only seven years old in 1939 and living in Iowa, I knew that

the New York World's Fair was one of the most important things that ever happened. The trylon and the perisphere were its magnificent, omnipresent symbols. This is one of those books that you read and read to get to the end and when you finish, you're so sorry to leave that world. It is a really good book.

## COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The Council for the Southern Oregon Retirees Association was held on August 19, 2009. The Council elected the following officers for the coming year: Bev De La Zerda, President; Ralph Fidler, Vice President; and Wayne Schumacher, Secretary. Council members are Lodi Belford, Dan Bulkley, Marjorie Bulkley, Harry Cook, Sue Corp, Ernie Ettlich, Esther Halvorson-Hill, Thom Jones, Bruce Moats, Ron Nitsos, Don Reynolds, and Sandi Whitesitt. John Englehardt continues as Web Master. Carol McNair has agreed to be the Newsletter Editor for the coming year. Sally Klein and Jeanne Stallman are the liaisons with Southern Oregon University. ▲

## FALL LUNCHEON MEETING TO FEATURE SURPRISE SPEAKER

The Newsletter has learned that at the November 5 meeting of the Retiree's Association a new feature will be introduced, a surprise guest speaker. The free luncheon will be held, as usual, in the gracious Rogue River Room of the Student Union. Good fellowship and congeniality will begin at 11:30, with the always delicious buffet served at noon.

Another attraction is the prize which will be awarded to the person who guesses the identity of the surprise speaker. At the check-in table, where diners have the opportunity to make a contribution to the scholarship fund in appreciation for their free lunch, they may also enter their guesses as to the identity of the surprise guest speaker. The prize for guessing correctly will, like the speaker, be a surprise. ▲

## The Retirees Association's FALL TERM LUNCHEON

November 5, 2009  
11:30 am – 1:30 pm  
Rogue River Room

## Surprise Speaker

RSVP to Sally Klein by  
Monday, October 20, 2009

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

# Asked what they had been doing since they retired, the following

## On Applying as a Volunteer to Medicines San Frontiers (Doctors Without Borders) by Cecile Baril

How did I ever get into this? It has been almost a year since I sent in my application and resume and almost three years since my initial inquiry about becoming an MSF volunteer. Every time I heard of a disaster somewhere, and there have been so many, earthquakes, hurricanes, epidemics, wars, genocides. I would think about the fact that I really had nothing better to do than just watch it on TV or listen to the radio. And the fact that I was retired with little in the way of competing obligations was particularly irksome. One day I heard a recruitment/information meeting would be held in Portland so I signed up. Due to limited seating, registrations filled quickly and closed, but I got in. Sadly, the afternoon of the meeting I was lying in bed with a serious stomach flu and absolutely unable to move. I was also unable to get in touch with organizers soon enough for them to “let someone else in.” That was disappointing and embarrassing; I was sure the only outcome from such behavior would be to put my name up on a big board somewhere under the heading: FLAKES—DO NOT ENGAGE IN ANY WAY.

Many months later, I decided I was ready to try it again. Since there were no scheduled recruitment meetings in Portland I had to be satisfied with telephone conferencing (with computer images) and an interesting question and answer process. Two of those and I was hooked. The next obstacle was finding a resume. Somehow with several changes in computers after my last resume update (who keeps those up to date after retiring?) I couldn't find one. Finally I found something I had prepared for doing volunteer work with agencies in the city. In went the application and the resume. Four months later I was notified they would like to interview me in New York.

Told I should be ready to take an accounting exam, I spent the next 6 weeks reading accounting books. I can only say it is a very counter intuitive system that absolutely requires you to forget your previous understandings of words like debit and credit. After the initial struggle it more or less fell in place and the exam went well enough. The interview itself was rather complicated due to the fact that I thought I was interviewing for a position of logistician and half way through I learned that in fact I was being interviewed for an administrator position. Back in the days when I was advising students about career preparation, not knowing what you are interviewing for would have been high on the DO NOT DO THIS list.

In spite of that, they moved the application on to the next stage which was attendance at “Information Days” in New York a couple of months later. There I joined 22 participants at the orientation, most of them doctors and nurses, a few public health folks, a few logisticians and two administrator types like me. Intense and engaging meetings provided us with a pretty good understanding of the major principles upon which MSF operates. The most important is independence (from nations, states, religions, and other organizations). For example, they take no money from the US government and no money from drug firms or other providers of medical supplies. They want no strings attached to the funds they receive. Another important principle is neutrality: they will provide services to victims of both sides of an armed conflict. A third is impartiality: services are provided regardless of gender, age, religious affiliation, and ethnicity. Finally, the idea of “temoignage” is critical to their work. Best translated as “witnessing”, temoignage is something that happens by virtue of having people present to witness how the victims are being treated, supported, and harassed. Just being there in solidarity with the people who are in a helpless state at that moment is a kind of temoignage. Being there allows the organization to advocate for the victims and in the worst case scenario, there is the possibility of going public about atrocities or activities which are harmful to victims. While MSF does try to work with the “official groups” to address problems they see in the field in a non-public confrontational way, if the organization feels the officials are unwilling to do what is necessary to alleviate the problems or if it feels the work it is doing is somehow exacerbating the victimization, it will make public their analysis of the problem. At that point, they are usually evicted from the country in question or they will withdraw. It was the inability (contractually) of a group of French doctors to

“blow the whistle” when they were working for the International Red Cross Committee that led them to leave that working arrangement and establish MSF as an alternative in the first place.

Information days are over, I have gotten ready all that I can so I can leave on two weeks notice, and now I wait. ▲

---

## FITNESS AFTER FIFTY

by Lorraine Skaff-Winger

Those of you who attended our winter Retirees' meeting heard Andy Baxter, of Baxter's Fitness Solutions for fitness after fifty, speak about the importance of nourishment and exercise. I joined Baxter's on the recommendation of my physical therapist. I have been a member at Baxter's for nearly two years and find the atmosphere to be very relaxing and comfortable. It is nice not to have LOUD music blaring or to have the energy of the “lycra” and bodybuilder crowd surrounding me. It is also nice to be able to converse with the more mature persons who are working out. The biggest advantage, however, is that Andy is extremely knowledgeable about exercise and how the more mature crowd can benefit from the use of the equipment which is designed for those over fifty.

Andy and his staff are very friendly and willing to help – everyone knows your name and makes you feel welcome. They are willing to help you with nutrition, exercise, and the correct use of the machines. Your exercise regime is tailor-made for you and your specific needs. The staff is concerned that the members protect their spines, hips, knees, and shoulders and are there to assist in utilizing the equipment properly. I have found that my strength, range of motion, and motor skills have improved.

If you are into rowing, Andy is the expert who has won many championships. Of course, he believes that the rowing machine is a great general exercise workout. He is a medical exercise specialist, post rehab conditioning specialist, and personal trainer with more than 20 years of experience.

If you are looking for a small gym where you can workout without feeling embarrassed or competitive, try Baxter's! ▲

ng people replied...

## Mushroom Research

by Darlene Southworth

I retired officially in 2000. Shortly before that, in late 1999, I was part of a team that received a large five-year National Science Foundation Biocomplexity grant. It was a new program and among the six principal investigators was considerable knowledge about grant writing; also we were lucky.

I decided to continue with my plan to retire—I would quit teaching, receive no pay, live on PERS and volunteer in my own laboratory.

It is now 9 years and a million dollars later.

We studied the mycorrhizal fungi associated with oaks—assessed fungal community diversity, looked at effects of serpentine soil, trapped small mammals to see who is eating truffles and dispersing spores to oak seedlings, discovered and named three new species, and looked at fire effects on below-ground ecosystems. We collaborated with many students and technicians at SOU, UC Davis, and UC Riverside. This research has given me a new perspective on life below ground.

One of our challenges was the identification of an underwater mushroom—a new habitat for mushrooms. In 2007 a hydrologist, Robert Coffan, brought us mushrooms that he had found growing in the Rogue River (!). My technician, Jonathan Frank, and I went with Robert to the site and found them as he had said. That began an epic struggle to classify the mushroom and describe it as a new species. The manuscript received eight critical reviews over 18 months and went through two journal editors before acceptance by a scientific journal. On our last visit to the river site, we reflected on why this was worth all the pain. Clearly the novel biological observation was enticing and the work—far beyond our comfort zone—was a stimulating challenge.

It has been exciting to learn a new field of research at this time in my career. Now the grant money is gone so maybe I really will retire and attend SOU retiree luncheons. ▲

## Memory of Bob Alston

by Greer Maarkle

WHEN BOB WAS THE CHAIR OF THE ART

DEPARTMENT I went to him to discuss a “problem” that had been brought up by colleagues. Bob looked at me very earnestly and said, “We don’t have a problem. People just think we do.” Bob was right. He knew from his own experience that academics will argue and debate the most irrelevant issues. Given a day or two, most “problems” will resolve themselves.

Such was Bob’s wisdom and leadership style. He gave us the freedom to grow as scholars, artists, and teachers. His leadership and resolve were essential in the development of the Schneider Museum of Art and the Center for the Visual Arts. Thanks to Bob we have a university museum, studio facilities, and classrooms that are second to none. His generosity has made it possible through the Hearth Fund for scores of students to make short-term loans to meet emergency financial needs.

We celebrate Bob’s life in the many ways in which he touched us. He was a caring and thoughtful professor whose teaching influenced a generation of students. He was a fine artist, a mentor, a colleague, and most of all, a good friend. One of the best days I spent with Bob was in Eugene at a football game between the University of Oregon and the University of Southern California. Bob was an impassioned Trojan. We can take some comfort in the fact when the USC football team scores a touchdown, we will be able to hear Bob’s cheers across the universe. ▲

## SOU RETIREE ID CARDS

by Jeanne Stallman

The Retirees Association Council has been working with University administration to develop a process for all retirees to have University ID cards. At this point, only Emeritus Faculty have ID cards. While offering ID cards to all retirees fits into SOU’s desire to have retirees continue to feel like part of the campus community, details about how to make cards available remain to be worked out. Tune in to our November 5th luncheon for more details! ▲

SOUTHERN  
OREGON  
UNIVERSITY

*Conferences/Senior Programs  
Southern Oregon University  
1250 Siskiyou Blvd.  
Ashland, Oregon 97520*

Non Profit Org  
US Postage  
PAID  
Southern Oregon  
University

---

## **The Road to Geezerdom** by *FrankLang*

**T**his Nature Note is going to be a little different. The topic is about Nature all right, but not about outdoorsy, birds and the bees, poop in the woods nature, but human nature and what happens to us on life's journey from conception to the grave. We bumble and stumble along guided mom's and dad's genetic contributions, molded by culture and environment, buffeted by the chaos of random and non random events. Along the way, we frequently see signs, some large, some small, that we are on the road to Geezerdom.

My companion on my recent trip to Waterton Lakes National park pointed this out to me. "You know," he said, "that you are on the road to Geezerdom, when best friends give advice, and your reply is, 'You can't tell me what to do!'" "Whoa," thought Nature Notes, 'the Road to Geezerdom?' "How far down the Road is he? Surely there are signs along the way."

Now the on-line edition of the Oxford English Dictionary defines "geezer" as a term of derision applied especially to men,

usually, but not necessarily elderly; a chap, or fellow. Nature Notes has never been called a geezer to his face. A curmudgeon, yes, but geezer? No. He has, however, referred to others, often in an almost affectionate way, as old geezers. A young geezer, some how doesn't seem right. Punk does.

Jim Henson' puppets, Statler and Waldorf have raised the state of geezerdom to near celebrity status. Statler is the taller, thinner one. Round and roly-poly Waldorf has wife named Astoria. Statler and Waldorf are both well dressed. Not all geezers are well dressed, however, and Nature Notes is pretty sure that a gradual disinterest in appearance is another of the signs along the road to you know where.

A sudden liking for shoes that do not require bending over for putting on or lacing is a sign. Wearing neckties with a record of past meals is a road sign as is refusing to wear neckties at all. Personal hygiene no longer seems to be quite as important as it used to be. Time to take a shower? No, I'll wait. I might get sweaty doing some-

thing right after. I'll shower after that. Time to floss and brush? No, I'll wait until I finish my coffee. Wait, it is almost lunchtime. I'll brush and floss, after lunch.

Find yourself wearing the same pair of socks for more than a day? Change your underwear everyday? No? It's a road sign, buddy. Sleep in your underwear? Geezer! While we are on the subject of underwear, Nature Notes fails to understand why grown men still wear white underwear like their mommies made them do. Grow up guys. Oops, forgot about wifey and your trying to be a good example for the kids.

There are other signs on the road geezerdom. Forgetting to zip up is not one of the signs, unless you notice and don't care. Forgetting to zip down however is a clear sign that you have passed beyond geezerdom to decrepitude.

We seldom refer to women as geezers. Nature Notes doesn't know if there are any geezerettes out there, but he bets there are. Any ideas for New Year resolutions?▲