

CreativeVoices



**Creative works by members of the
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Cincinnati**
includes the 2014–2015 report to the membership

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Each year, OLLI at UC invites members and volunteers to contribute their creative work in the form of short fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and visual art to be featured in *Creative Voices*.

Creative Voices is published by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Cincinnati.

Editor
Cate O'Hara

Selection Committee
Sally A. Peterson
Judy Stewart
Connie Trounstone

Cover Art
In the Window
by **Larry Pytlinski**
Larry J. Pytlinski is an award-winning amateur photographer who has studied with both Muriel Foster and Jymi Bolden.

The selection committee for Creative Voices wishes to thank everyone who submitted their creative endeavors and made the process of selection so delightful and so difficult.

Angelique and Luis

by Tony Barga

I had just returned from the men's room and was walking to the table where Angelique, Luis, and I had been seated together. We'd been to a movie earlier and had stopped at this place in Arlington afterwards. When I'd excused myself a minute or two earlier, we'd just finished our first round of drinks. Angie had been trying to get the attention of the one very busy waitress to order more. But now our table was empty.

I looked across the long room and saw Angie standing there at the bar, right by the little section that was demarcated by two curved chrome bars. You know, the place, about three feet wide, where there is no bar stool? They keep it open so the bartender can pass trays full of drinks over to the waitress.

Anyway, Angelique is standing there facing some guy, a pretty big fellow. I can see that she and this guy are exchanging unpleasant words. Angie has this way of putting her hand on her hip and thrusting out her chin a little when she's giving somebody lip. Luis is about twenty feet from them, moving quickly in their direction. Something tells me that he is not hustling over there to pour oil on troubled waters. Luis, who I'm pretty sure has a thing for Angie, is running on testosterone. I'm thinking he's going to intervene, aggressively, on behalf of the young lady that he'd accompanied to this establishment.

Some background: Angelique is my sweet, bright, beautiful little sister. She's twenty-four, just graduated this past spring from Georgetown with a law degree. Luis is my friend whom I met in Mexico last summer, now on his first visit to the States. I was working at an archeological dig near Guadalajara and had been permitted by the local university to use their gym. My preferred form of exercise is martial arts, especially karate. That's where I met Luis, at the gym. He was an undergrad math major at the university and a boxer. There was even talk around the gym that he might be good enough to turn pro in a year or two, probably as a welterweight. Which is to say, Luis is not a very big guy. He

probably weighs around a hundred and forty-five pounds and stands maybe five-nine.

So like I said, I can see this situation developing just as I'm coming out of the men's room. The bar is crowded, and I can see Luis will reach the place where Angie is standing well before I can get there, but I start double-timing it in that direction. While I'm still maybe thirty feet away, Luis reaches the bar, coming up behind the fellow who is arguing with Angie. Luis doesn't waste any time saying "excuse me," or tapping the guy on the shoulder or anything like that. He grabs him by the arm and spins him around, pressing forward, backing the guy up against the bar, probably cursing him in Spanish, if I know Luis.

I'm thinking probably he's hoping the guy will swing on him. Sure enough, the guy does. And as soon as he does, Luis deftly slips the punch and becomes a kind of a whirlwind, landing a good, solid roundhouse right, on the side of the guy's head, and then backing up and dancing a little, jabbing at his face, and scoring, I can see, even from where I am.

It looked odd to see such a small man bringing it to this big galoot. The recipient of all this abuse had easily six inches and fifty pounds on my Mexican buddy. Luis's first punch, right on his opponent's ear, took the fight out of the guy. Anybody could see that. It was a hard punch, intended to end the fight quickly. And one of Luis's jabs had given the mutt a bloody nose, a very bloody nose. Profusely is how this guy's nose is bleeding. His bearded chin and the top of his shirt are already covered in crimson.

This fracas would have been over right then except for the fact that the big fellow had three buddies with him, and they were right nearby. It's not automatic, in a situation like this, that the friends of somebody undergoing a butt-kicking will immediately involve themselves in the hostilities. But this time they did. The action was seamless, as very suddenly Luis found himself with multiple new opponents. And while he'd had the element of surprise before, now he did not.

I was getting closer to the action as two of these three buddies had already closed on Luis. They must have heard some of what Luis had said to their friend, because they were calling him names like wetback motherfucker and taco-jockey-cocksucker, et cetera. But they weren't having that much luck landing solid blows on him. And Luis was punishing them for their meddling. One of them closed in tight, trying, I suspect, to grab him and take him to the floor. Were that to happen, he could easily get the crap kicked out of him.

But Luis was not only a very good boxer: he'd also been in his share of barroom brawls. He continued to move, darting in to deliver a combination here, a jab there, all the while avoiding a clinch that might impair his mobility. It looked to me like the two who were attacking him were having second thoughts about having gotten involved. Or at least that was my initial impression. But just as I pushed an onlooker aside and finally stood in close proximity to the melee, I saw the third guy of this trio, carrying a pool cue, and slipping up behind Luis. He unobtrusively positioned himself then drew back his cue stick, gripping the thin end, taking a stance like Albert Pujols awaiting a lazy curve.

What choice did I have? Am I going to let Luis get his head caved in while he's defending my little sister? Not if I can help it. And I can. I whirled and planted a kick on the side of this guy's knee. The knee bent about twenty degrees in a direction that knees are not supposed to bend. He dropped his cue stick and collapsed to the floor, giving vent to a high-pitched, keening wail that sounded a little like a spike being drawn slowly from a green oak plank. His scream was so piercing that it overwhelmed any other noise in the saloon, although, coincidentally, the bartender had turned off the jukebox at that exact moment.

Luis's two remaining assailants put their hands up, palms forward, and stepped back. "All right, all right, relax, guys," said the one, a little nervously.

Luis stepped toward the speaker and said, “No, hijo de puta, I am not relaxing. And you should not. I may not be finished with you. This man you are defending, he put hands on this young woman. We start with him apologizing. Then the four of you depart this premise. Quickly. Comprendre?”

Nobody spoke for a second or two, then Luis fills the silence with, “Or, if you want, we finish this outside. You want that?” He looked toward the other three, each in turn. “You? You? You?”

It was apparent, none of them wanted that. The man who had counseled relaxation looked to the man with the bloody nose. “Ralph, you stupid bastard, tell the girl you’re sorry. We were just about to leave anyway. Tell her you’re sorry and let’s get the hell out of this shit-hole.” Ralph did as he was told. And they left. Quickly. Or pretty quickly. The man with the crooked knee was, let’s say, a little mobility-impaired. But at least he’d stopped with that god-awful screaming.

Turns out the four men had caused trouble before in that bar. So the man-

agement raised no issues with Luis or me for having dealt with them as we did. We could probably have partied for free until closing time, since everybody in the place seemed to want to buy us a drink. But Angie and I didn’t feel like partying anymore. I felt oddly weak and drained, probably the aftermath of a big spurt of adrenalin. Luis seemed all right, even maybe a little excited, but Angie and I just wanted to go home.

It was at this point that I learned about exactly what had happened, while I was in the men’s room, to cause the uproar. Angie explained that because the waitress had apparently been too busy to serve our table, she’d walked over to the bar to get the drinks herself. While she was waiting there for the bartender to prepare the drinks, bloody-nose guy, Ralph, had walked over for the same purpose. While standing near Angelique, he had taken the liberty of a quick feel. Angie had reacted with loud indignation, and Luis, back at the table, had apparently witnessed the whole thing. I couldn’t help but think that this was a

rather insignificant bit of misbehavior on Ralph’s part to have caused so much trouble. I’m sure Angie didn’t want to seem ungrateful to Luis after he’d come to her aid and all. But I know her well enough that I’m certain she could have handled the situation without his help. And being a kind of a strong, independent girl, she probably resented his interference.

This episode at the bar in Arlington happened over five years ago. If my recollection of detail seems surprisingly sharp, it’s because I’ve had to go over this story repeatedly for the police and for various attorneys. I’ve recited, and lived, this account so many times in the last five years that I sometimes wake up in a cold sweat in the wee hours of the morning, trapped somewhere in the relentless inevitability of the narrative. Usually I wake up right where we’ve just walked out the front door of the bar.

We had one drink after the fight, in my case a straight shot of bourbon, which seemed to restore my equilibrium a little. But within fifteen or twenty minutes we decided to leave. We walked out the front door, turned left and proceeded about thirty feet and turned left again into the parking lot. Two men waited for us there, the two who had been in the fight but had not gotten hurt very much. Each was armed, one with a .38 revolver, the other with a nine millimeter automatic. They emptied their guns on the three of us. I survived, as you can see, but just barely. Angelique and Luis both died there on the pavement.

Retired math and computer science teacher Tony Barga works at honing down his fiction-writing licks in George Weber’s writing class.



The People’s Gallery by Carol Heideman

Carol Heideman credits OLLI with helping her see the world with fresh eyes and inspiring her to capture what she sees with her camera.

Discovery

by Judi Morress

A few weeks ago, I received a letter from the Discover card people. I pitched it in the recycle bin with the rest of the junk mail, including but not limited to offers from every credit card company, every cable or dish provider, every insurance company, every pizza delivery—ad infinitum. No wonder

the city distributed bigger recycle bins. I can hardly wrestle the thing to the curb. And no wonder that the Post Office is in trouble.

Back to the Discover card: something made me dig that unopened letter out of the bin. Much to my surprise, they wanted to give me money. No, not an

offer to give me a rebate if I opened an account. They wanted to give me \$51.55 based on the settlement of a class-action lawsuit, where they “inappropriately” charged Discover accounts for a credit-protection feature. And this was for my Discover account! What Discover account? Do I have one?

Then I remembered that several years ago I had opened a Discover account—probably from one of those junk mail offers. I think I opened it for some special deal, paid the bill, and then never used it again. But I realized I’d better find the card, because the letter said that the \$51.55 would be deposited in my Discover account. I’d have to charge something to get the \$51.55. I dug in the desk drawer where I keep old business cards, old credit cards, calculators that need new batteries, and other small items too good to throw away. I found it, between a Shillito’s credit card and a coupon for Frank’s Nursery and Crafts, and it hadn’t expired.



Information, Please!

by Richard Lingo

Richard Lingo offers thanks to Howard Todd and Bernadette Clemens-Walatka for moderating their Wednesday photography workshop for OLLI.

The letter said that the \$51.55 would be applied to my account no later than the twenty-first. I figured I'd go to the Discover website, access my account, see when the money was there, and then charge a purchase for a little bit more than the \$51.55 and pay the additional amount when the bill came. Now, in order to access my account, I had to set up a user ID, password, and secret answers to questions about my ancestry, pets, and schools. This took more time than I anticipated. (Why should that surprise me?) I had no idea that so many Discover cardholders were named Judith, were born in 1939, and had used every permutation of these facts to set up their user IDs and/or passwords. I eventually got through with a user ID and password composed of gibberish,

which I wrote down and put in the folder on my desk labeled "REALLY IMPORTANT PAPERS." This is where I keep all the user IDs and passwords along with cryptic instructions like "How to change an existing document's line spacing from single to double" (and other tricky things that the average seven year old knows).

Well, the money was there, and I was going out to dinner that evening. Great—I could start using the \$51.55! When the bill came, I got out my Discover card. "Oh, I'm sorry," said the waitress. "We don't take Discover." I paid with my Visa. On the way home, I realized that not only was the needle on the gas gauge firmly planted on empty, the little gas pump icon was glowing orange. Fortunately, I was close to home and the gas station. Maybe they take Discover!

They did! I filled up the tank. It came to \$51.56—one cent over! Now, my dilemma. Will Discover waive the one cent? Will they send me a bill? If they send me a bill for one cent, I think I'll tape a penny to it and send it back.

More and more these days, I find myself muttering, "It shouldn't be this hard."

PS. In typing this up, I discovered that my computer keyboard does not have the "cent" symbol. You remember that, don't you? It was a c with a | through it.

Judi Morress is a lifelong Cincinnati and has been attending OLLI classes for eleven years.

Ghosts of Ellis Island

by Joy Haupt

Cardboard boxes tied with coarse string
hand-woven baskets overflowing
clothing, photos, candlesticks . . .

volumes of books, some leather bound
pages withered as windswept leaves
foreign names scribbled inside:
Tuchman, Viccaro, Szyllinski, Khazian.

Tourists stare in silence, shed a tear or two
for the lives of unknown ancestors,
for broken dreams abandoned
to a dusty display.

Joy Haupt has been writing off and on for more than twenty years and is delighted to have recently found a peer group at OLLI.



Sketch of a Man by Jim Jennings

Jim Jennings is an aspiring artist of modest talent and shameless ambition.

History Burns

by Pamela Hirte



Yellow Flower by Donata Glassmeyer

Donata Glassmeyer, a moderator and student with OLLI, appreciates continuing her retirement "career" in communications, art, and education.

A rancid odor wakes me; the nightmare begins.
Almost dawn and smoke overwhelms.
A stench settles outside,
animals utter ungodly noises.
Doom wafts over my Kentucky farm.

Flames of red, purple, and orange catch my eye,
crashes and crackles cry out to heaven.
Frightened, panic pours over me,
a fire rages out of control,
a century-old barn burns.

Chaos takes over, destruction everywhere
fire crews battle, sparks stray.
Generations of farmers, a legacy extinguished.
Long, black hoses snuff out the blaze.
Shame consumes me like a backdraft.

Some animals escape; cattle, hogs, chicken run wild,
then, I smell the stench of death and seared flesh.
Ash covers annihilated farm equipment.
Charred wood is incinerated dreams.
Did I lose this family heritage tonight?

Like a ghost among yellow-jacketed men,
I see through sullen eyes.
Everything drenched in water.
Fire chief yells, "Electricity added to barn."
I'm a watered-down farmer, drowning in my guilt.

Was progress the culprit?
Tears of regret flow down,
the ancient sweat of kin scattered to the winds.
An eerie gray smoke drifts,
hides sooty face from ancestral disgrace.

Pamela Hirte credits the poetry and writing courses OLLI offers for improving her skills as a poet.



Baby Shoes *by Virginia Cox*

Olli has given Virginia Cox the opportunity to share her passion for photography and to enjoy classes on a variety of subjects that satisfy her insatiable curiosity.

In the Grocery Store

by Judi Morress

I saw the young woman bend down,
trying to comfort her sobbing toddler
who wanted to sit in the grocery cart,
but couldn't. The new baby was there.

And I thought how hard it is
to be the older child, feeling displaced,
to be the younger child, always trying to catch up,
to be the mother, trying to accommodate everyone.

And I wondered how do we do it—this moving through life,
moving through roles that never quite fit us
before we move on,
every experience overlapping the previous one
before we've learned how,
only to be overlapped by yet another.

And I realized how unknowingly brave it is
to leap into the role, to play the part, to be the one.
We discover the part we're already playing,
making it up as we go.
And somehow it works.

Wisdom comes slowly, and then acceptance,
and finally forgiveness.
Hardest of all is to forgive ourselves.

Judi Morress is a lifelong Cincinnati and has been attending OLLI classes for eleven years.

Judi's River

by Doug MacCurdy

My journey home along the Ohio River after hearing Judi's remembrances of her home on the shore.

The sky and the river were blue and clear
as I traveled home along the shore.
My thoughts were on the stories here,
By one tale inspired, to look for more.

There were the houses along the way,
with gray stone steps to reach the view.
Which one, I mused, could hold such sway?
Which one had steps of thirty-two?

The memories of children in the woods,
the honeysuckle and the cedar stands,
The rivers' obligato to my many moods,
threaded my mind with lasting strands.

A barge, a train, the Delta Queen,
a whistle, a horn, a calliopo's tweet.
These visions form a joyful scene
of towels waved to cheer and greet.

The river like a force that flows
and is present in my every dream,
and a gentle calmness is bestowed
through a veil of redbuds, a quiet stream.

As I journey on, I am struck by sorrow.
Withered flowers, a simple cross.
Whose sadness did I just borrow?
Unknown mourner, I share your loss.

As I pass, the river frames a field
and carries bulk of coal and oil.
it nourishes a bounteous yield
and rewards the miners' toil.

It harbored our settlers and gave them life.
It gave millions hope on whose banks they stood,
gave steadfast vigil through peace and strife.
This eternal river is a nation's blood.

According to Doug MacCurdy, "My father was first published at age 80, this is my first at 72. Late development is a family trait."

Overlooking the Ohio River

by David Brafford

Muriel Foster's photography class for OLLI has taught David Brafford to look at photography in a new light.



Morning Ritual

by Bryan Goddard

A cool, crisp ocean breeze washes over my bare skin
as the pungent smell of marine life overtakes me.
I can hear the rhythmic breaking of waves on the sandy shore
and taste the salty spray from nearby rocks.
As I enter the brisk waters
I look out onto the clear horizon
to behold the rising of a golden sun.

Bryan Goddard appreciates the inspiration his OLLI classes have given him to pursue his creativity in writing and other ways.



Ibis *by Janet Elfers*

Janet Elfers has always had an interest in writing and photography, and thanks to OLLI moderators, she has been given tools as well as inspiration.

My Afrikan Violet: No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

by M. Tambura Omoiele

No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness
She has never been to Afrika; she has no interest or desire to go
Chestnut brown skinned woman slight dimple in her chin
Soft brown hair tender headed woman
After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

She adored Lalique crystal, fine china, silverware, white linen napkins and tablecloths
Evening dinners served with proper table setting and serviettes to the left of the plate
An afternoon church social and style show; Russian tea and frappe punch served with
Petit fours in dainty shapes of pink, green, and yellow breads
After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

Pristine white nylon curtains with ruffles crisscrossed the living room windows
Paintings of little blonde hair girls sitting in meadows of flowers graced the walls
Better Homes and Gardens and *Ladies Home Journal* lie on the coffee table
Never saw *JET* or *Ebony* magazines in our home
After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

In the living room stood a drum top table, on top was a finely starched white doily, complemented a long neck cut glass vase, which held tulips and gladiolas when in season
German porcelain figurine and a ceramic bust of a sophisticated white lady with a large brim hat
The what-not shelf on the wall held the knick-knacks
After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

Always given white dolls at Christmas; all my paper dolls were white
Betsy Wetsy was a beloved baby doll; she took a bottle and she could wet
She stitched doll clothes, seeing to every detail: the hem, the sleeves, the snaps and buttons
In coloring books all the images were colored with yellow hair and blues eyes

After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

The favorite doll was my Queen Elizabeth by Madame Alexander
Dreams of being a queen one day; my heart's desire;
Never knew of the Afrikan Queens Nzinga and Nefertiti
Or the Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra
After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

Shopped for clothes in the Jewish clothing stores downtown
Dr. Ryderband a Jewish pediatrician examined my ears, nose, and throat
Went to the Jewish children's birthday parties where she cooked and cleaned
I could not play with the Black children from across the alleyway
After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

Hard pressed straight black hair; pink and white ribbons adorned my braids
Church on Sunday was a handkerchief in my pocketbook and white cotton gloves in hand
Shirley Temple curls, made from twisted brown paper bags, cascaded under an Easter hat
A white imitation of life lifted from the pages of McCall's magazine
After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

Nursery rhymes and riddles, I recall them all: Humpty Dumpty, Little Bo Beep, Little Miss Muffet, Little Jack Horner, Four and Twenty Black Birds, Hey Diddle Diddle the Cat and the Fiddle. Mary and a little lamb pranced across my bedroom walls; Jack and Jill fell down the hill

Goldilocks and the Three Bears were bedtime stories, she never read Aesop's Fables to me
After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

A Victrola played big, yellow, vinyl records, "When You Wish upon a Star." We used to sing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" together; we never sang "Kumbaya"; Negro spirituals and gospel music, hand clapping, foot stomping, head rocking, body bucking and shouting they had the

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Cincinnati

2014–15 *report to the membership*

A Vibrant Learning Community

Letter from the Chair

Dear Members and Friends of OLLI:

This issue of *Creative Voices* is the result of the energy, enthusiasm, and creativity of our members. It provides a forum for our members to share their special talents with you and a broader public.

OLLI exists because people want to share and learn. As you may know, all our courses are taught by volunteers. They are OLLI, and without them OLLI at UC would not exist. They deserve our heartfelt thanks. The talent and diversity of this group is amazing. The number and variety of OLLI courses are a direct reflection of their interests and dedication.

Moderators are not the only volunteers who make OLLI work. The OLLI Board of Trustees and committees are also made up of volunteers. The Curriculum Committee recruits the moderators then somehow magically creates the schedule that slots all those moderators into times and days of the week. The result is a curriculum that offers more choices than many of us can schedule. The Marketing Committee oversees the purchase of paid advertisements as well as informal means to tell the OLLI story and attract new members. Other OLLI committees — Finance, Governance, Friends, and Special Events — work behind the scenes to help manage the organization's budget, by-laws, fundraising, and social events. A special thank you to them all as well as to those who volunteer at the office and on special committees.

As you can see, OLLI runs on volunteer efforts. I would encourage you to please consider joining one of the committees to keep OLLI strong and vital.

It has been a difficult year for those OLLI members attending classes in Blue Ash. First we had to leave our long term home on the UCBA campus. Record student enrollment at UCBA left no room for OLLI. We spent the fall quarter at UC Carver Woods, but parking and other issues caused us to leave that facility. Adath Israel (ADI) has been OLLI's home for morning classes two days a week for many years. We were able to secure additional days, times, and larger classrooms at ADI for the winter and spring quarters. We are grateful to ADI for their cooperation, and we will continue there next year. And a very special thanks to OLLI members for their cooperation and understanding throughout these transitions.

I also want to thank our staff, Program Director Cate O'Hara and Program Coordinator Gay Laughlin, for their smiling efforts during what has been a trying and difficult year.

Finally I want to acknowledge the support of the University of Cincinnati and the Bernard Osher Foundation, our partners in OLLI at UC.

Dan Domis,
Chairman, Board of Trustees

Volunteer Contacts

OLLI runs on volunteer power! Please consider how you can help OLLI grow and improve by volunteering. Call 513-556-9174 to explore your options.

Who makes OLLI great? You do!

Whether a veteran member or new to our program, you can experience the exceptional courses, tours, lectures, and special events that support OLLI's mission of providing opportunities for lifetime learning and social interaction to the mature residents of Greater Cincinnati.

You'll stretch your intellectual and social muscles — reach out and try something new and meet others who share your love of learning.

OLLI changes lives:

- Judi M. realized that most of her friends are people she has met through OLLI and is now teaching a class—even though she never finished college.
- Ralph M. tried Ballroom Dancing, lost weight, improved his balance and health, and participated in a dance showcase with his dance instructor.

- Larry P. has taken classes in nearly every subject, but his passion is photography. Through his OLLI experience, he has exhibited and won prizes for his photographs.
- You can all explore art, history, new technologies, current events, financial planning, French and Spanish conversation, exercise, nutrition, literature, science, music, philosophy, religion, writing, travel, and much more.

Please consider showing your love for OLLI with a tax-deductible gift to Friends of OLLI. Your gift will be put to good use to ensure OLLI's viability for years to come, keep fees low, purchase necessary classroom equipment, and provide scholarships for your fellow members with financial need.

**Friends of
OLLI at UC**

Please accept my gift for:

- \$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100
 Other \$ _____

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

- Gifts of \$1,000 or more will also receive recognition and benefits through UC's Charles McMicken Society, including free OLLI tuition, free campus parking, bookstore discounts, and more.
- Your tax-deductible gift can be doubled or tripled with a matching gift from your employer. Many companies match gifts from retirees. Please check with your human resources department.

Name _____ Today's Date _____

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And will be paid Quarterly Semi-Annually Annually

Check enclosed (payable to UC Foundation/OLLI)

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Mail form and donation to:

OLLI at UC
PO Box 6249
Cincinnati, OH 45206



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January 1–December 31, 2014

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(\$500 and up)

Estate of Joan S. Bluestein
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This list is based on outright gifts, gifts-in-kind, and matching gifts received during 2014 and designated to Friends of OLLI or Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. It does not include other gifts to UC.

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(\$100–\$499)

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Holy Ghost. I had never seen before

After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

Educationally, she assured I attended an integrated elementary school in another neighborhood in 1954, Linda Brown was fighting for that same right and equality in Topeka, Kansas

Fighting for Civil Rights or any rights was not her forte

She baked cookies, cakes, and pies instead with recipes from a *Betty Crocker Cookbook*

After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

Renowned Black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar's home was around the corner and down the block, I never went. She knew of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman, and

Sojourner Truth, but she never told me. She passed by Malcolm X on a street corner in Harlem; he was preaching and teaching, it was empty rhetoric to her ears

After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

Like blades of grass that defy the asphalt they found cracks to push their way up and out

She blossomed the same way; a flowery plant reversed her black conscious contradictions

Ladies marveled over its beauty, they agonized over how to pamper the delicate velvet forest green leaf; frequent human touches could brown and kill a leaf

After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

The violet's flower ranged from soft lavender to deep purple, she was always proud of its bloom

She gave stems with a leaf to church members, friends, and neighbors, along with meticulous instructions for its care: fill a juice glass with water, cover with wax paper, then punch a hole in the center to place the stem. Place in a window facing east, unknowingly, toward Afrika

After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

The very essence of the plant made her Black and Conscious. She was in touch with her Afrikan roots. She could grow an Afrikan violet, a tropical plant indigenous to East Afrika

How she came to love that particular Afrikan plant, I'll never know

It does not really matter what drew her to that flowery plant

After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

Silver hair now frames her face, the dimple almost vanished, cloudy eyes, crooked arthritic hands, and wrinkled skin; she still has that special, gentle touch of care and protection of the tender Afrikan violet. She is the epitome of Black Consciousness and Black Awareness

She's my Afrikan Violet. Oh, how I love her so

After all, she had No Black Consciousness and No Black Awareness

M. Tambura Omoiele is a full professor, who has devoted her retirement to writing a chapbook, a children's book and a coffee table book on Kenya while also serving as a moderator for OLLI.

Sunset over the Gulf by Janet Elfers

Janet Elfers has always had an interest in writing and photography, and thanks to OLLI moderators, she has been given tools as well as inspiration.

Peering into the Face of God

by V. Franklin Colón

As a boy, I grew up in a Christian home. My maternal grandfather was a devoted fundamentalist preacher. My mother's oldest sister was also a minister, but of a softer tone. She preached a love of God concept in which every individual was loved and cared for. They were both good, loving people, and as a child, I listened to their sermons and heard their admonitions. I internalized on the one hand a confusing mixture of theological dread and on the other a sense of hope for some kind of celestial sheltering for all "God's children." But, Grandpa said that there was "only one way to gain salvation," while my aunt posited that "all of people are the beloved children of God": result, a deep sense of confusion and uncertainty.

There is no doubt that uncertainty caused me to question the balance of truth in what I was hearing, and it left a persistent sense of doubt as to the nature of the fairness of many life outcomes that I had observed. When I verbalized the doubts, the usual explanation given me by my loving mother was that we must accept whatever happens as a part of God's plan, but because of the fact that we are only human, we are unable to understand that plan. Not satisfactory to a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old kid interested in science. I wanted to assess the stated religious hypotheses through observation of day-to-day real-life experiences.

One morning at age fourteen, I was listening to the radio news prior to getting off to school. What I heard shocked me severely. I heard a boy's name that I recognized, a boy from another school whom I didn't know personally but about whom I had heard nothing but very good things. He had apparently been killed in an automobile accident in a nearby small town. He was sixteen years old, a state champion wrestler, an honor roll student, and an all-round good guy. My immediate emotional response was denial. It had to be somebody else. He was too young and too good a guy for his life to be wasted on a highway tragedy. How could this be? Was this one of Grandpa's "wages

of sin" examples? Why was such a good person taken by my aunt's loving God?

That is where a serious quest began. I wanted to understand the issues of fate, fairness, faith, good works, love, hate, human behaviors, compassion, personal disregard, evil, and, hopefully, justice based on the faithful observance of religious direction.

In the subsequent 60 plus years, I have studied theology, psychology, psychiatry, philosophy, and religious history with none providing the clean and simple answer that I, among many, would like. I have concluded that religion is not a matter for logical understanding; it is not a soluble problem. It is a complex matter of individual need: need for a guiding and interceding force greater than that we individually can create. In studying our and other societies, it seems clear that we do not freely choose the religion we espouse, i.e., as a matter of personal choice. In general religions are adopted because of family tradition, societal pressures, cultural attitudes, geographic locale, and even political pressures.

Back to my original concern: is there an omnipotent, omnipresent, and all-knowing being in the universe pulling the strings on celestial marionettes, whether planetary systems, constellations, animal, vegetable, or mineral? Is God the one my grandfather depicted or that of my aunt?

To this day I have not reached a clear conclusion, but I do know that in the recent past I have seen what I believe to be the face of God within the Cincinnati community. I saw it when a young woman basketball player with an untreatable brain tumor was honored at the Cintas Center at Xavier University by an enthusiastic audience of more than ten thousand. I saw it when the players on the opposing team allowed her to fulfill her dream of scoring in a college basketball game. It was in the glow of her face and the faces of all those at the event. It was the joyful face of love freely given by a crowd of good, generous people concerned with the fulfillment of the dream of a courageous young woman. There

was no personal gain for the crowd other than the joy of giving.

I saw that face again when a small girl with yet another serious brain tumor was feted by Cincinnati's professional football team as well as others throughout the nation. Her football player father, previously unemployed, was hired by the Cincinnati Bengals to fill a playing position so that he could have the health insurance coverage to provide his child the care that any parent would wish for his family. The crowd at the stadium was open and generous, and their faces reflected the same love seen at the Cintas Center: again, freely given love and joy.

Many years ago in my search for a theological understanding, I was told by an old, dying woman that the answer to the question was simple. She said, "God is love." If we consider the simplicity and fullness of that answer, we can deal with a good many personal and societal problems. If we do express and accept love, kindness, generosity, tolerance, and respect for others, life can be more fulfilling for us all. Love is innate and in abundance within most of us. Let us use it more to help fulfill the dreams of others and our own, and it will allow us to see the face of God more often.

As a physician for more than 50 years, V. Franklin Colón celebrates occasions of heartfelt generosity, warmth, and kindness toward those who, despite huge personal challenges, are undaunted in their courage.



Preposterous Rhinoceros by Sam Hollingsworth

Teaching at OLLI has significantly changed the art created by Sam Hollingsworth.

Random Acts

by Donata Glassmeyer

Pregnant for the first time in 1985 at the age of thirty-eight, I was one of those intensely monitored soon-to-be moms who endured a myriad of technological advances known to modern obstetrics for the wellbeing of me and my beloved only child. In my third trimester, diagnosed with gestational diabetes, I trudged dutifully each week to a major metropolitan hospital for additional observations.

My last hospital visit before delivery occurred on a bleak, bitterly cold January morning. Gray snow caked the city, and I slipped into the only pair of boots that fit my swollen feet. Too big to bend over to zip them, I hurried to my appointment.

With doctors and nurses nervously convinced that my unborn child was fine, I was released back into the cold winter to await her birth. I dreaded leaving the warmth of concerned professionals and made my way to the hospital parking garage, embarrassed that my boots were unzipped but knowing I'd soon have my baby in my arms, so who cared about sloppy boots anyway.

I entered the old, dirty elevator to make my descent into the darkness of the garage. The doors clanked shut, but slowly choked open again to admit another. He was young, sullen, unkempt. My gut reaction was fear. He eyed me, and I prayed for him to take my purse but leave me and my unborn alone. Almost sick with anxiety, I watched him turn to me as the elevator doors banged closed. My prayers intensified, and I clutched my coat tight over my belly, too scared to think, desperate to get to my car.

We descended and as the elevator doors creaked open, the boy said, "Mama, you need help." He knelt down before me and zipped up my boots. He was gone in an instant: my relief and gratitude profound. His simple consideration remains a warm reminder that "random acts" may indeed be kind.

Donata Glassmeyer, a moderator and student with OLLI, appreciates continuing her retirement "career" in communications, art, and education.

Reading Ulysses

by Jim Jennings

The bagel shop is quiet, and I am smug. There is only the faint rhythmic drone of bland popular music, the burbling caffeinated murmur of the soft-spoken early morning crowd, the gentle cacophony of bustle behind the stainless steel counter. Yet for all the mundane subtlety of a gray morning, there is a remarkable distinction to this one: for I, an otherwise humble retiree, have at last finished *Ulysses*. Yes, all 644 pages of the goddamn monster (in the Galber Edition).

My gloating shall remain politely understated in keeping with my customary modest demeanor. Smug though I am, I remain sympathetic to my less-distinguished compatriots. Those who have not read Joyce's monumental tome are, after all, deserving of pity not disdain. Perhaps there are fellow members of the proud and few in this room (given that it is situated in a collegiate neighborhood), but I think that I'd recognize my peers by the confident thrust of jaw, the crisp purposefulness of stride, and the bold defiance of a certain distant gaze. No, I suspect that I'm alone here at the pinnacle, anchoring my flapping, solitary pennant in the windswept rocks.

Let my example serve as proof that it is indeed possible to read Joyce's renowned and controversial tome. But take note that the route to this towering literary summit is littered with the frozen remains of those who tried valiantly yet failed.

I'll argue that the mountaineering metaphor is apt. We've all seen those pictures that depict a route up Mount Everest, with each day's trek marked by a dotted line between campsites. With that template in mind, I offer my advice on breaking down the immense challenge of *Ulysses* into difficult but manageable steps:

Step One: Quit your day job. One must have priorities.

Step Two: Live alone. No spouse or partner will love you sufficiently to tolerate your daily musings on the motivations and significance of Joyce's characters. Perhaps an especially patient and literary dog would be tolerant.

Step Three: Sign up for a non-credit course in *Ulysses*. (Then sign up for the subsequent course on the second half of the book.)

Step Four: Resolve to take the class seriously, do the reading, and show up.

Step Five: Accept that it will take a long time, much of which you will spend lost in blinding snow with your goggles frosted over and the trail markers obliterated.

Step Six: Accept the ineluctable (note Joycean adjective) grip that Joyce's words have on your mind. Argue in support of your sense of the characters and the narrative. Note how sincere you are in your arguments. Ignore the disinterest of your audience.

Step Seven: Keep reading, even though the class ended with you still several days' slog short of the summit.

Step Eight: Accept the dawning understanding that you will never really be through with the damn thing—it will burrow into a little crevice of your brain and remain there, a permanent symbiotic (or so one hopes) parasite.

I suppose that, like love, any addiction involves a need that you can't precisely define. The allure of *Ulysses* lingers somewhere near the murky frontier of consciousness, where the dark mystery of the subliminal mind begins. Joyce was a show-off, of course — an over-educated cultural hipster of his unsettled post-war era — but the dude was on to something.

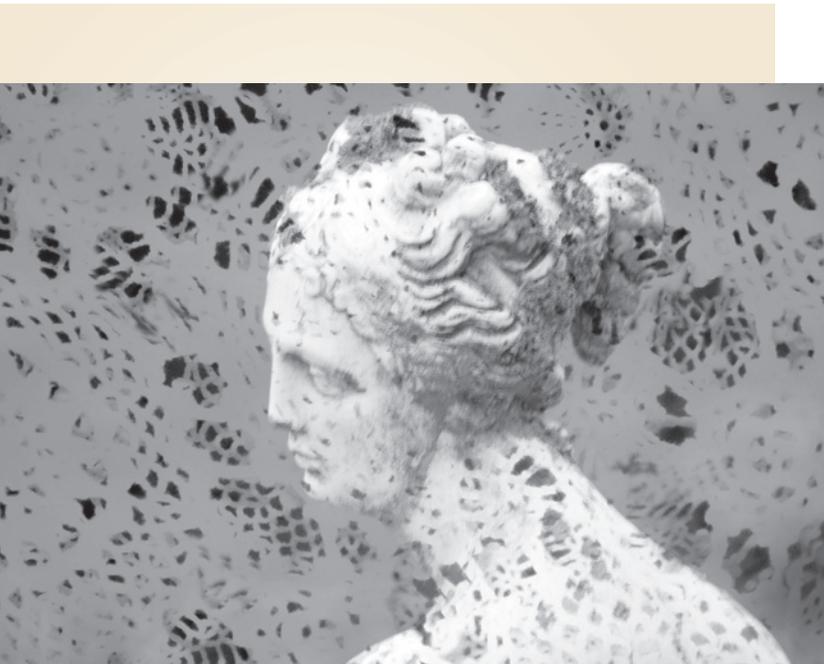
Joyce was so bold as to write as we think, underneath the facade that we nurture as a socially acceptable version of our true self. We don't necessarily think in words (not even those of us who are way too literal), so finding words to portray our inner monologue necessarily requires a touch of genius.

Today, almost a century after Joyce mercifully decided that his opus was finally ready to go to press, *Ulysses* glistens like a brilliant mountain, taunting our complacency. Inspired by the challenge, we find a reliable literary Sherpa, strap on the heavy knapsack, and set off on the steep and boulder-strewn trail, climbing toward Camp 1...

Jim Jennings is an aspiring writer of modest talent and shameless ambition.

Sculpture and Lace by Virginia Cox

Olli has given Virginia Cox the opportunity to share her passion for photography and to enjoy classes on a variety of subjects that satisfy her insatiable curiosity.



Six

by Harriet Feigenblatt

Louise hated the number six. It stalked her all day at school, ready to pounce at any moment with no mercy in its soul. Her head hung low at her desk, gloved hands clasped together, words of prayer always swirling around in her head. Please, God, let the answer not be six. Of course, the answer would sometimes be that accursed number, and the whispering taunts would begin.

Today was no different. During the arithmetic lesson, Louise cringed when Miss Stillwell presented the class with a division problem. "Raise your hand if you know what nine into fifty-four is."

There was a sudden scurry of activity. Fists banged on desks, stifled giggles escaped from closed lips, hurtful remarks flew around the stuffy classroom.

"Louise, Louise, give us the answer, puh-leeze!"

"Five, SIX, pick up sticks!"

"Sing a song of SIXpence!"

Miss Stillwell turned from the chalkboard and faced the class. "Settle down, children." Glaring at Louise, she picked up her ruler and menacingly wagged it in the air. "Louise, if you keep disrupting my lesson, I'm going to have to use this again!"

"I'm sorry, Miss Stillwell," Louise murmured.

"Look at me when you speak!" The teacher's shrill voice penetrated every corner of the room, bringing the class to sudden attention, all eyes on the formidable woman in front of them.

At that instant, the bell rang, ushering in the end of the school day. The children waited for Miss Stillwell's head nod and obligatory wish for a good rest of the day. Louise was the first one out, trying to outrun her tormentors during this daily ritual.

The five blocks to her house always seemed like a thousand, especially when the footsteps of her classmates were close by, their jeering words snapping at her like a wolf about to spring on its prey. Louise ran with such determination today that she arrived home before the

other children had even left the school grounds.

When she swung open the front door, Mother stepped out from the kitchen and gave her daughter a big hug. "Go upstairs and do your homework. I'll call you when dinner is ready." She knew better than to ask about school.

In her room, Louise removed her gloves. She hated wearing them and she hated not wearing them. Mother had made them after Miss Stillwell sent a note home, making it quite clear that

Louise's "problem with her hand" was causing a distraction in the classroom. If she wanted her daughter to continue her schooling, she'd have to find some way to cover it.

Louise looked down at her left hand with its six perfectly formed fingers. As she often did, she covered the sixth finger with her other hand. It looked so beautiful without that unasked-for addition.

That night, she stayed in her school clothes and sat on her bed, waiting until Mother and Father were asleep. Grabbing



Little Flirt by Glenn King

Glenn King observed, "It is so much fun to share my love for the arts with my OLLI family."

a small pouch from under her pillow, she took a deep breath and quietly headed down the stairs. Opening the front door, she looked both ways and then stole out of the house into darkness.

As Louise neared the outskirts of town, she could see carnival lights in the distance while a calliope played its luring tune. Her pace quickened, and when she arrived at the entrance, she followed the sign to the sideshows. There were various tents, each with a barker enticing the passing crowd to view his particular exhibit. She stopped in front of the first one.

“Come see the amazing Bearded Lady! You’ll be shocked and horrified when you see her face! Only one nickel! Ten minutes left tonight!”

Louise pulled a nickel from her pouch and held it up to the barker. The corners of his mouth curled up as he quickly took the coin. “You won’t be disappointed, young lady.” He led her to the door of the tent.

There were about a dozen spectators staring at the figure on the platform. Wearing a lacy red dress, the performer walked daintily back and forth as if she were a model showing off the season’s newest fashion. Dark hair covered much of her face, and she occasionally tugged at it to prove its authenticity.

Louise looked directly at the woman on stage, then smiled and waved at her with her left hand. To her delight, the woman smiled back and winked. Louise

thought she had the prettiest eyes she’d ever seen.

A few minutes later, the barker came into the tent to usher out the gawkers. “Show’s over, everyone. Come back next time we’re in town.”

Louise lingered after everyone else was gone. The bearded lady nodded her head at the barker. “It’s all right, Jim. Let her stay for a bit.” She took the young girl’s hands in hers.

“I hope you enjoyed the show tonight.”

Louise looked puzzled. “But everyone was staring and pointing at you. I didn’t enjoy the show, but I did want to meet you.”

“Oh, I don’t mind the staring and pointing, dear. It’s how I make money. Anyway, what can I do for you?”

Louise chose her words carefully. “I just wanted to meet someone else who is . . . well, different.”

The woman laughed gently. “Well, you sure came to the right place!”

“Ma’am, do you ever wonder why God did this to us? To punish us?”

“First, my name is Maureen. And second, I don’t look at this as a punishment. It’s a gift.”

Louise pulled her hand from Maureen’s and held it up. “A gift? How can this be a gift?”

The kind woman put her arm around Louise and replied, “Without this beard, my family would starve. If I didn’t

send money back home every week, they’d be eating the dirt off the floor. So, it’s a gift.”

She paused for a moment. “I saw you when you came into the tent. You didn’t have the same look of horror the others had. You didn’t see only a woman with hair covering her face. You saw a person behind the beard. That’s something very few people can do. And it’s because of your hand that you have this gift.”

Louise had always regarded her six-fingered hand as a curse. And now someone was telling her it was a gift! She would have to think about that. She thanked her new friend and gave her a hug.

As she walked back home, she recalled that the gawkers in the tent had not only a look of shock but a look of fear as well. They were afraid of Maureen, of sweet, gentle Maureen!

Louise quickened her pace and felt a surge of energy as Maureen’s words came back to her. Without realizing it, her curved posture straightened, and her head was held higher. No longer was she the girl who would cower in front of others and hide her hand in a glove. Tomorrow was a new day, and Louise had a feeling it would be the best one ever.

Harriet Feigenblatt has wanted to write since she was five years old and finally realized her dream at age fifty-seven after attending writing classes at OLLI.

Summer

by Barbara Roth

It is the summer of blue hydrangeas
and sudden storms

Of clear blue skies
and gentle breezes

Of muggy mornings where the dew soaks my skin
as I walk the neighborhood

It is the summer
of cross-eyed baby robins
squawking as they frantically hop after worm-seeking
mothers

The summer of weddings
Sparkling-eyed brides
and laughing grooms

It is the summer of ominous dark clouds
rolling in amidst echoing thunder
and rain slapping furiously against freshly washed windows

It is the summer of flowers
tall beyond expectations
leaning across clover-filled lawns

And squirrels digging through freshly potted planters
looking for last year's acorns

A summer of porch sitting
and deck drinking

Of Findlay Market tomatoes
ripe from the sun

And berries bursting with flavor

Of bike rides in the country
where the sun browns my arms
and the humidity leaves me dripping

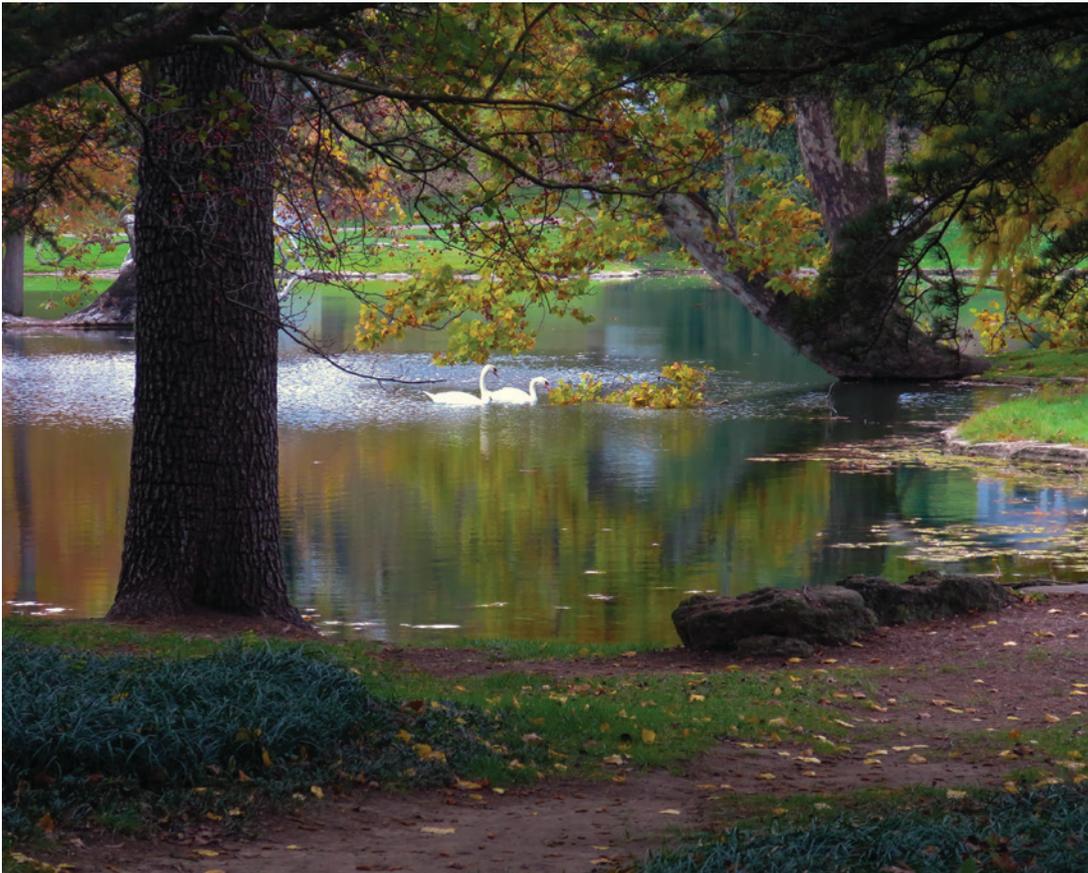
While hawks teach their young to hunt
and rivers run high and dark from the summer storms

A summer of days packing and unpacking

Of opening one house and closing another

It is a summer of memory making and destinations still to come

Barbara Roth enjoys retirement as it gives her more time to work on her poetry, which she has been writing since grade school.



Spring Grove in Autumn

by Sue Wilke

OLLI classes have improved Sue Wilke's skills, and she has grown to really love photography with taking pictures becoming a spiritual practice for her.

Wise Passiveness

by Ella Cather-Davis

At the end of the days...
when sorrow has tossed us
into the wind like chaff and
upon coming down we enter
into being at last, after all
that becoming, we understand.

Sorrow was the exercise. Thus we
examine it at the end of days,
praising the astonishing journey.
We were born of hope and grief.
Daily we breathe ourselves out,
exhaling our essence, we no longer

long for things, and in the parting of
what we let go, we observe ourselves
blameless. So there it was. Simply.
We always knew death waits, that
we will take nothing away as we go,
we can only leave something behind.

Permanence is passé. Now there is
no anger, only a peaceful acceptance
of our miniscule existence in an immense
cosmos where we were but a speck.
We exit the need of understanding, enter
a laser beam of transcendent serenity,
and wise passiveness.

Ella Cather-Davis owes her revived interest in poetry which has greatly enriched her life, to Rose Adkins, a moderator of OLLI classes who encouraged her to write, resulting in multiple publications over the last 8 years.



Trying to Survive Winter by Howard Todd

Howard Todd is a teacher, first in history at the University of Cincinnati and now of photography at OLLI, and loving both.

You Can't Always Tell

by Emilie Kerlin

You can't always tell by looking
What makes a person strong.
You can't always tell by looking,
That the suffering has been so long.

You can't always tell,
Unless you see behind one's eyes.
You can't always tell,
Unless you learn what's in disguise.

And you can't always know,
But you just might be the key,
That opens a person's prison
And sets that someone free.

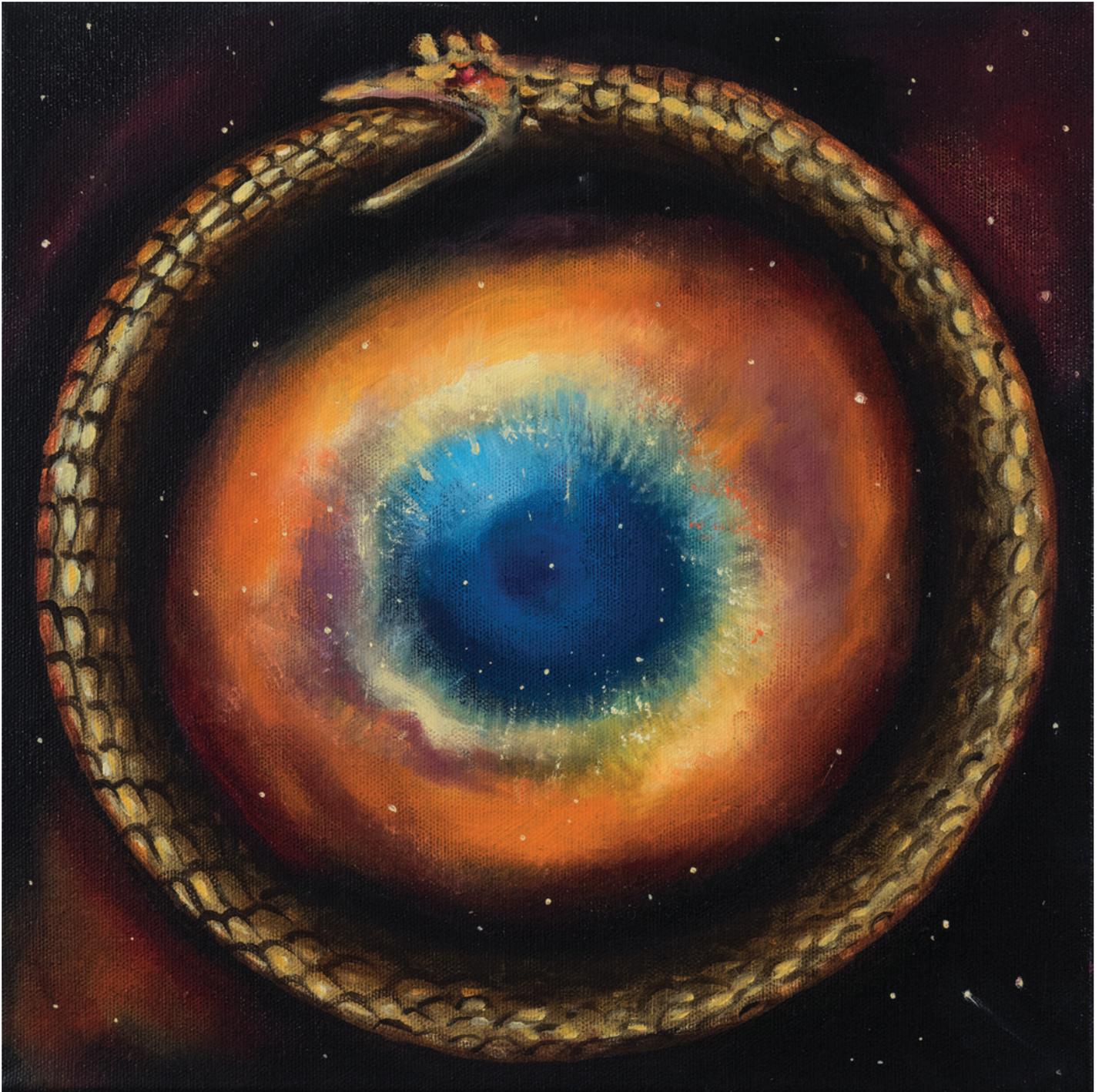
Emilie Kerlin has learned that it's never too late
to be inspired and to pursue a passion — like
writing — just give it a try.



Antiquated Stallion

by Judy Stewart

Retirement affords Judy Stewart an opportunity to
explore photography, something she loves.



Ouroboros and the Eye of God by James Slouffman

James Slouffman has loved being a moderator at OLLI because it has allowed him the opportunity to explore subjects such as opera, music, mythology, and depth psychology, thus inspiring his creative life even more.



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Vision Statement

OLLI is the premier organization offering educational and social experiences to the mature residents of Greater Cincinnati by:

- Nourishing intellect, expanding knowledge, and exploring new ideas.
- Sharing interests and experiences.
- Cultivating friendships.
- Being a resource of the University of Cincinnati and supporting its goals.

Mission Statement

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Cincinnati provides opportunities for lifelong learning and social interaction to the mature residents of Greater Cincinnati.

OLLI contacts

Program Director

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