

HAPPY NEW YEAR **New Year's Traditions in Other Lands** HAPPY NEW YEAR

OLLI is enriched by the geographical diversity and experience of its members. At the beginning of this new year, member Peter Voit and OLLI president Chuck Duffy share memories of having lived in other lands and experienced other traditions that mark the way we humans welcome, embrace, and give thanks for another year.

“Switzerland”

My family’s tradition in Switzerland was, to us, one of the most special times of the year. The main emphasis was placed on New Year’s Eve, called Silvester. Silvester began in the early morning hours when my dad, mother, brother, and I participated in a contest to see who could wake up the earliest and march throughout the house, beating two kitchen-cooking lids together. This tremendous noise was not only to wake the entire household but also to chase out the old spirits, allowing the new ones in. My Dad always seemed to win because he got up around 4:00 A.M.; therefore, *he* was named “king” for the day. This gave him the privilege of being pampered and served by my mom, brother, and me for the entire day of Silvester. It also meant he was exempt from cleaning our house and yard (making everything immaculate) to welcome in the New Year. It was fun for me as a young boy because my brother and I always tried our darndest to wake up earlier than dad and be named the king for Silvester. Now, this family tradition holds so many precious memories, especially during this holiday season.



Peter Voit

“Japan”



Chuck Duffy

Many Asian countries follow the lunar calendar, but Japan has used the Gregorian calendar since the 1890s. The holiday period begins December 15, continuing through almost nightly gatherings with classmates or business friends. December 25, is a particularly popular date for these parties. Businesses and government offices close on December 28, and reopen January 4. Households do a thorough cleaning; in Kyoto they sweep the bottoms of shallow canals that run through older parts of the city.

New Year’s Eve is the second most important holiday, the end of a year. New Year’s Day is number one, the beginning of a new year with the symbolism of one of the 12 astrology animals for that year. On New Year’s Eve, the huge bronze bells in temple yards are slowly struck 108 times to emphasize the need to reflect on the evils that confront society. At midnight, throngs begin visits to temples and shrines, where it is customary to throw coins into a large collection box, clap three times, and pray for good things in the new year. In the morning, many families gather for a special meal of significant foods, and sip a sweet sake as a toast. In older households, this is the only food prepared until January 4.

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From the President



Chuck Duffy, President

Welcome to OLLI in 2012!

I wish you all good health and good will for 2012! OLLI is moving into the new year with classes for the winter term now under registration. We have numerous new offerings that we hope will be intriguing and enticing to you. And, of course, the Wednesday bonus classes are scheduled. "Knowledge never retires," so live it up academically this year!

I look forward to seeing you on campus as new classes and new activities unroll.

Curriculum Corner

OLLI members are usually courteous, but there is one place that can use some improvement. It relates to the time for changing classes. When one class directly follows another, only fifteen minutes separate the two. This is not a lot of time for students from the first class to vacate the room and the facilitators from the next class to set up, especially if audio/visual equipment is involved. Incoming students may feel that students from the previous class, who might be chatting in the room about the subject matter of their finished class, should clear out. Those needing to enter and those slow to depart have led to conflicts.

The solution to the problem is easy: Be courteous! Don't agitate your fellow OLLI members. Be mindful of their feelings. Let's get along with one another. There is no contest between the members of one class with the members of another.

Something that can help here is for classes to end on time. This can be difficult to do if there is lively discussion going on when the end time arrives, but still, it should be done. Even when the class is scheduled to end at noon and no class directly follows, some of the students may have a one o'clock class and need the whole hour for lunch.

Facilitators can aid the instructors with ending the class on time.

Be considerate!

Be courteous!



Hugh Nicholson, Chair

New Year's Traditions— Japan,
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The first time I was exposed to this custom, I ate 18 bowls of delicious broth containing a small piece of chicken or shrimp and a block of mochi—rice pounded into a thick paste. I didn't realize that the inch-square of mochi was the equivalent of a bowl of rice, and that I could skip it. (Fourteen pounds gained!) From January 2, calls begin on seniors and bosses. Government officials gather for a toast and bow on January 3, and the stock exchange meets on the January 4. It is proper to wish 'Happy New Year' until the fifteenth of January, and some partying continues, but then life returns to normal.



Cultural Committee

Submitted by Eleanor Schweinsberg, Chair

The next Huntsville Symphony Orchestra preview lecture by Taavo Virkhaus will be on Thursday, January 19, at 2:45 p.m. in Madison Hall, Room 202. This lecture will introduce the Saturday, January 21, performance of *Barbie Blue Meets The Firebird*,” a world premiere of the Barbie Blue Overture-Fantasy, composed by HSO conductor Gregory Vajda. The renowned Finnish violinist Elina Vähälä will perform the Mendelssohn concerto.

We will continue to attend the “Live in HD” Metropolitan Opera broadcasts at Hollywood 18 Theater, South Memorial Parkway, Huntsville. On the schedule for January are the following:



Wednesday, January 4, at 6:30 p.m., encore of *Rodelinda*

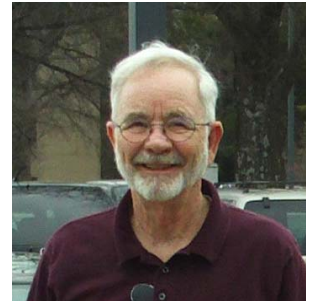
Wednesday, January 11, at 6:30 p.m., encore of *Faust*

Saturday, January 21, at 11:55 a.m., simulcast of *The Enchanted Island* (Encore Wednesday, February 8, at 6:30 p.m.)

Let me know what ideas you have for future cultural events by calling me at 256-883-0602.

Social Committee

Back-to-School Potluck Lunch



Bill Johnson

Please join your OLLI classmates on Friday, January 20, 12:00–2:00 P.M. for the winter Back-to-School Potluck Lunch, planned and facilitated by the Social Committee. It will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church in the recreation hall. This is an opportunity to reconnect with classmates from the previous term and to welcome and socialize with classmates new to the winter term. The event is potluck, so bring your most appetizing dishes. Come out and enjoy good food and conversation as everyone prepares for the winter term of new classes.



OLLI ADVENTURERS!

Ed and Paulette Bernstein are featured in the Huntsville Times Traveler Feature, visiting the Monte Carlo Casino in Monte Carlo, Monaco!

Winter Birding in North Alabama

Submitted by Bill McAllister

People often ask me where they can see birds close by. Winter is a great time to see large birds that others might enjoy with you. Here is a short list of places not far from Huntsville.

1) My favorite stop is Wheeler Wildlife Refuge, operated by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service on State Highway 67, east of Decatur. Go to the Visitor's Center on the south side of the highway for specific information about good viewing opportunities. Here, one can see Sandhill Cranes (Figure 1), geese, and many species of ducks in large numbers. Look for the very rare Whooping Crane. The Observation Building has telescopes and a refuge volunteer to help point out different species. Also, at the Visitor's Center ask about other places on this very large refuge that might be open to the public. The hours are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

2) Guntersville Dam (north side). The north side is accessible from U. S Highway 421. A visible Bald Eagle nest can be seen here, and the nest is active during January and February. Many gulls and herons congregate below the dam to feed on the fish.

3) At Lake Guntersville, see Common Loons, various rafts of ducks, scattered egrets, herons, and an occasional eagle cruising along the shoreline for fish. The deep water attracts diving ducks that spend the winter there. Access to a telescope is quite helpful.

4) Guntersville Dam (south side). This side is accessible from Union Grove Road via State Highway 69. Look for woodpeckers and hawks in addition to water birds. This side also has restrooms and paths in the woods.

5) Don't forget your own backyard. I will conduct a backyard birding class for OLLI members in the Spring Term.

Over 30 organized bird walks are conducted by the North Alabama Birdwatchers Society (NABS) throughout the winter, spring, and fall. See this list with locations and start times at www.northalbirding.com.



Figure 1. Sandhill Cranes nest in northern latitudes and winter at refuges in the southern states that provide large fields of grain. Each bird is over 40 inches tall and weighs over 10 pounds. Flocks can number in the thousands.

"Looking Back" on the Holiday Party of 2011



“Maturity is when we finally let go of our inhibitions and start to really embrace living.” The December 7 Holiday party was proof of that statement evidenced by the laughter, dancing, and hoopla of the evening. The “Looking Back Band” played songs we all grew up with, and almost everyone could sing the lyrics and dance the dances that were popular in our youth. Thanks to Bill Johnson and the Social Committee (pictured upper left), the party was well planned and the decorations were lovely.





Help (Re)Name Our Newsletter

Would you like to name our newsletter? We have a newsletter with the organization's name on it, but not a newsletter name. We need a spiffy title that captures what OLLI is all about. All OLLI members are therefore invited to send their best ideas for an appropriate name. Please send your suggestions to ollinewsletter@msn.com, and type "Newsletter Name" in the subject line. The deadline for submissions is January 9, 2012..

Save
this
Date!

Annual Aging Conference in Huntsville

April 11-13, 2012

Alabama Gerontological Society

"To Infinity . . . and Beyond! Exploring the Future of Alabama's Seniors."

Thirty-first Annual Aging Conference, The Westin Huntsville, 6800 Governors West, NW,

Requesting a Wheelchair Donation

If anyone has a wheelchair to donate to Member Services, it will be welcomed. Some OLLI members would like assistance accessing class rooms from the handicapped parking spaces in front of Wilson Hall. Please call the OLLI office at 256-824-6959.

Important Notice: Inputs for the February 2012 Newsletter are due by January 24.
Please send articles and ideas to Lorrie White, Editor; Joyce Pettis, Co-editor, at OLLInewsletter@msn.com.
Please understand that due to cost and space constraints, articles may be edited for length.



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