

# The OLLI Insider

News for OLLI members at The University of Alabama in Huntsville

March 2025



## STUDYING LIFE, NATURE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY; BUILDING CHILDREN'S BEDS

*OLLI members extract DNA from kiwis and strawberries at HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology (two photos); a single whooping crane and multiple sandhill cranes at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge; a three-dimensional printer at work in UAH's Shelby Center for Science & Technology; building beds for children at the nonprofit Sleep in Heavenly Peace; on Beaverdam Boardwalk in Alabama's largest tupelo swamp.*



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# From the Editor

## ‘THE PLANET GOES ON BEING ROUND’



Did you know the Flat Earth Society has a website? Go ahead, check it out at [theflatearthsociety.org](http://theflatearthsociety.org). Tell me whether you think it's serious or just a spoof of a preposterous idea that science disproves.

The theory that the earth is flat is perhaps the ultimate example of denying the facts in favor of an opinion. Humans have sailed and flown around the world; we possess

pictures taken from space. There is much more evidence, I'm sure, but long ago we reached the point where knowing the earth is a globe became "fallin'-down sense." That's a term that my high school math teacher, Margaret Bell, often used with a wink to the laws of gravity.

Wendy Cope, now 79, is a schoolteacher in England who became a published poet. She wrote my favorite commentary on this subject. The title is "He Tells Her."

The poem is about an argument between a man and a woman. He insists that the earth is flat. She "tries her best to prove him wrong," but he won't budge. Cope concludes that despite their argument, "the planet goes on being round." (The poem is short and delightful. Read it at [tinyurl.com/flat-or-round](http://tinyurl.com/flat-or-round).)

A column by Atlanta journalist Ralph McGill published Feb. 6, 1969, three days after he died, described listening to an uninformed, opinionated man on an airplane. McGill's headline was "Suffering a Fool in Silence." In the column, he cited facts to refute the man's opinions that people were hungry "because they are too damned shiftless to work."

That's what we have to do sometimes — just let people talk and politely listen. Some people are beyond convincing, and relationships are more important than winning an argument. But if we have done our own research, we can be confident of our conclusions and convictions.

If you know the facts, it's not just a matter of "he said, she said." The planet goes on being round.

**Inside The Insider:** John Mason, as president of the OLLI board, describes the health benefits of prioritizing, diversifying and deepening your connections with others — such as your OLLI friends. In his history column, John discusses how well (or not) the Articles of Confederation held the United States together before the Constitution was adopted.

Philip Graham writes that Americans imprisoned on British ships during the Revolutionary War deserve more recognition. Thousands of them died.



Earth, photographed from a million miles away in 2015 by the Deep Space Climate Observatory satellite. The area shown is North and Central America. (NASA photo)

Glen Adams profiles Nancy and Bob Darnall, who are active in OLLI leadership as well as being teachers, students and travelers.

Jean Krieger, leader of the Artist Studio Member Interest Group, names some famous actors who are also painters. Chris Stuhlinger and Steve Jones tell what's coming up with the Hiking & Biking MIG. We have photos from the Dine Out MIG.

Leah Black reminds us that the deadline for OLLI's annual photo contest is April 1. Betty Koval writes about the bonus March 21 on Alzheimer's and dementia. Dave Sayre lists travel opportunities, announcing a 2026 trip to New Mexico. Chris Stuhlinger details coming events and explains why and how to sign up in advance.

Val Seaquist describes how OLLI's Curriculum Committee operates and invites you to join it.

Clay Williams announces plans for a new, better online registration system that will take effect during summer semester.

Lee Roop remembers a Black farmer who was his childhood neighbor. Lee learned a lot about related history recently with the help of a historian, librarians, books and files.

**Steve Stewart**  
*Editor, The OLLI Insider*

# From the President

## A TWOFER: PARTICIPATION HELPS OLLI AND YOU



By the time you are reading this month's *Insider*, the nomination period for becoming a member of our 2025-26 Board of Directors will have ended. Our board is crucial to the functioning and success of our program, and it needs *you* to bring it fresh ideas and make it better for all of us.

And if you have decided to self-nominate for a position, then you should also be considering taking it a

step further and running for one of the elected officer positions or committee chairs. We are always looking for exceptional people to fill these roles, and I happen to know that our ranks are filled with just those individuals. So take your candle out from under the basket and let it shine! Volunteer for a position of leadership.

Elections for certain positions will be held at the May 9 Board of Directors meeting. Please contact me, Jill Stewart, or any of the current board members to find out what those positions are and how you can fill one of those niches.

By the way, you don't have to be an officer or even a board member to serve on our committees or work with one of the Curriculum Committee's disciplines to recruit new instructors. All you have to do is volunteer. We need you!

And if you do, you might find that there are other benefits headed your way. As it turns out, volunteering and the interactions that come with it are a key ingredient in a happier lifestyle.

And why is volunteering so important to us as OLLI members? Well, if you want to believe the Harvard Study of Adult Development, which, since 1938, has been studying human happiness, read on. They have consistently found that in a world where joy can feel fleeting, people who have more robust and deeper connections with other human beings report higher levels of happiness.

"The good news," says Harvard, "is to be happier, you don't have to be wealthy, famous or even super accomplished. Everyone can pursue more happiness by focusing on expanding and deepening their connections. Social connection fuels our well-being, strengthens our communities and helps us bounce back from challenges. Yet, so many of us are missing out on these incredible benefits. It's time to start prioritizing our connections and begin building a world where everyone feels supported and believes that they truly belong."

Now those of you who are devout followers of this column know that I've been telling you that for months! And apparently now, even Harvard has picked up on it!



Nancy Darnall and John Mason prioritize their OLLI relationship during the annual holiday party Dec. 7. (Photo by Jill Stewart)

So to reach this goal, try three things:

1. Deprioritize relationships that do not produce positive outcomes. Then you are, by default, freeing up time to prioritize the relationships that do bring more joy.
2. Focus on the relationships that matter most to you. Think about how much time you currently spend with these people. Is it enough? How could you be in community with the people who matter to you most more often?
3. Make OLLI an integral part of your daily routine by enjoying all of its benefits whenever you can, *and* by volunteering to take positions of leadership and on committees. You will then be better able to reach out to expand and deepen that community.

So listen to Harvard — and to your beloved president: Since research shows that people with stronger connections to others are happier, focus on prioritizing, diversifying and deepening your connections. And volunteer! When you do, you'll begin to increase the joy not only in your life but also in the lives of others.

And with that, I'll bid you adieu. Till next time ...

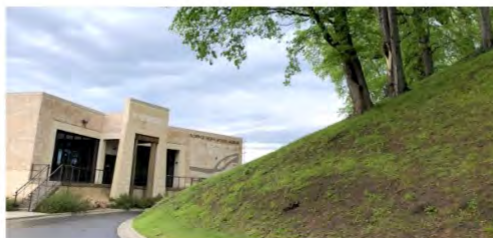
**John Mason**  
**President, OLLI at UAH Board of Directors**



# Events Committee



Coming events: Mooresville, The Stovehouse, beekeeping aviary, UAH sports and Florence Indian Mound Museum.



## REMINDERS ABOUT SIGNING UP FOR OLLI EVENTS



We've been getting good attendance at our events, and I'm seeing several new members participate, which is great! Because sign-up for events may often reach capacity, here are a few reminders:

1. Everyone who wants to attend an OLLI event or tour (organized by the OLLI Events Committee) must sign up in advance for the event (sign-up links are available on the OLLI website [under Bonuses and Special Events] and on the weekly eNews).
2. Make sure that your email address is spelled correctly on the sign-up form. Otherwise, you may not receive detailed information prior to the event.
3. An important part of the sign-up procedure is agreeing to the release/waiver form (a UAH requirement).
4. Some of our events have strict attendance limits, so it's very important to sign up and to let the committee chair (Chris) know if you will not be able to attend after signing up. Someone on the waiting list will be able to take your place (walk-ins might be turned away).
5. So far, after almost 3½ years of events and more than 80 events/tours, there has been only one event where we could not accommodate all who were on the attendance list or waiting list. By following the guidelines above, we hope to continue this record and not disappoint anyone!

Listed below are several events and tours scheduled for March and April. Mark your calendars and plan to participate. There is so much to see and learn about in the greater Huntsville area!

Note that registration is now open for the remaining spring semester events.

### Recaps

**Bird-spotting at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge**, Jan. 31 — OLLI members observed thousands of sandhill cranes and one majestic whooping crane (endangered) during a pleasant afternoon visit to the refuge. We also explored the nearby bald cypress swamp and boardwalk.

**HudsonAlpha DNA extraction class**, Feb. 7 — A large group of participants learned about the intricacies of DNA, and then each person in our class was guided through the steps of extracting DNA from a strawberry or kiwi. All were amazed by the clumps of DNA that finally appeared in their test tubes!

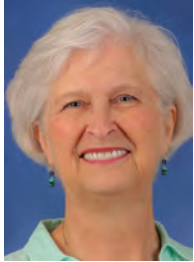
**Shelby Center tour**, Feb. 21 — OLLI members experienced a most interesting visit to three departments at the UAH Shelby Center for Science & Technology. Lara Holaday, biological sciences outreach coordinator, showed us the rooftop greenhouse, which included an experiment about growing vegetables on Mars. Dr. Themis Chronis introduced us to his physics lab and showed us simple experiments using magnets. Dr. Alisa Henrie explained how students design and "build" various items in her engineering technology lab, including the use of three-dimensional printers.

**Sleep in Heavenly Peace tour**, Feb. 22 — OLLI attendees were given an overview about this organization's international mission to build and provide beds for children in need (1,900 beds locally since 2020). Our group then joined other volunteers to actually help construct several bunk beds.

*(continued on the next page)*

# Coming Bonuses

## LEARN ABOUT ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA



Just a quick reminder about the bonus **"Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia,"** presented by Dianne Pierson with the Alzheimer's Association on March 21 at 11 a.m.

She will be discussing the three stages of the disease and how to recognize them. She will describe the current treatments and further research.

Many of us are very aware of this disease, and some of us even feel like we are headed in that direction. Dianne will most likely inform most of us that we are not, as my doctor informed me on the subject. I recalled all the numbers and words he had asked at the beginning of the visit too quickly.

Most people simply do not have the same recall as when they were much younger. I don't know about you, but I hate



The March 21 bonus presentation will cover how to recognize Alzheimer's as well as how it is treated.

hearing "Well, as you age ..." every single time I have a doctor visit.

Sign up for this and other bonuses and events at [tinyurl.com/bonuses-events](http://tinyurl.com/bonuses-events). See you there!

**Betty Koval**  
**Bonus Coordinator**

## Events Committee

### REMINDERS ABOUT SIGNING UP FOR OLLI EVENTS, CONT.

#### Coming events

- Saturday, March 22 — **Historic Mooresville walking tour**, 9-10:30 a.m. Learn about the history of Mooresville from a knowledgeable local volunteer tour guide as we stroll through the quaint streets and visit three of the remaining old structures (stagecoach tavern, post office and brick church). Hear fascinating stories about former and current residents. The entire town is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Cost: \$10 per person; pay by cash or check at the door. Registration limit: 30 members.
- Friday, March 28 — **Martin Stamping and Stove Factory (aka The Stovehouse) tour** (Huntsville), 2-3 p.m. The guided tour of this vast complex will include the history of the building (operational since 1928). Someone will walk us through how the vision of the current owners is progressing and provide insight to areas not open to the public. The tour is free. Registration limit: 25 members.
- Friday, April 4 — **UAH Beekeeping Club apiary visit** (Huntsville), 2-4 p.m. Following a north Alabama winter, spring warmth energizes honeybee colonies for the summer ahead. The rewards of caring for bees and for harvesting the wondrous products of their labors are joyful. This hands-on tour at a local apiary will increase participants' understanding of the importance of bees' health, the benefits that come from responsible bee husbandry, the threat to their existence, and the increasing need for beekeepers. Participants are advised to wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and comfortable, closed-toed, closed-heeled footwear. The docent will provide a proper veil and outer protective clothing. Participants with bee-sting allergies may participate. Each such participant, however, must inform OLLI when registering for the tour and bring personal medications for allergic reaction treatment. The tour is free. Registration limit: 25 members. Registration deadline is March 7.
- Saturday, April 12 — **UAH sports: lacrosse, baseball, softball** (UAH campus). Men's baseball at noon and 3 p.m.; women's softball at 1 p.m. and to be determined; men's lacrosse at 1 p.m. Cheer on the UAH Charger teams. Attend one (or all) of three sporting events at Charger Park on the UAH campus. All games will be in the afternoon. There is no charge for attending, so you are free to move among the ongoing games. No registration limit.
- Friday, April 25 — **Indian Mound Museum tour** (Florence), 1:30-3 p.m. Visit an Indian mound built nearly 1,700 years ago by Native Americans in the Shoals. A presentation about the mound and its builders will be followed by a guided tour of the museum. We will be able to climb the mound as well. The museum is an excellent educational center presenting artifacts and displays of Native American cultural practices. Meet at the museum lobby by 1:30 p.m. Carpooling will be available. There is a \$2-per-person fee for the visit. The museum closes at 4 p.m. There is no registration limit.

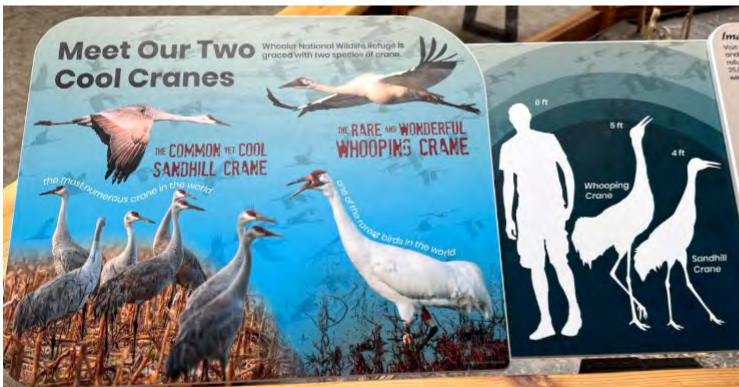
**Chris Stuhlinger**  
**Events Committee Chair**



# Events Committee

## VISITING THE WILDLIFE REFUGE WITH THE CRANES

OLLI members saw one rare whooping crane (second row, left photo) amid thousands of sandhill cranes at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Decatur on Jan. 31.

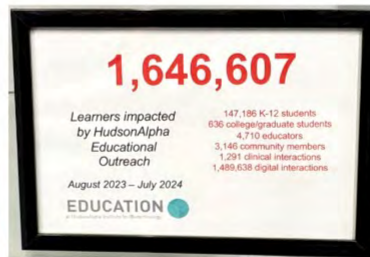


(Photos by Marsha Langlois, Steve Jones and Chris Stuhlinger)



# Events Committee

## LEARNING TO EXTRACT DNA AT HUDSONALPHA



(Photos by Patricia Haag, Marsha Langlois and Chris Stuhlinger)



# Events Committee

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AT SHELBY CENTER

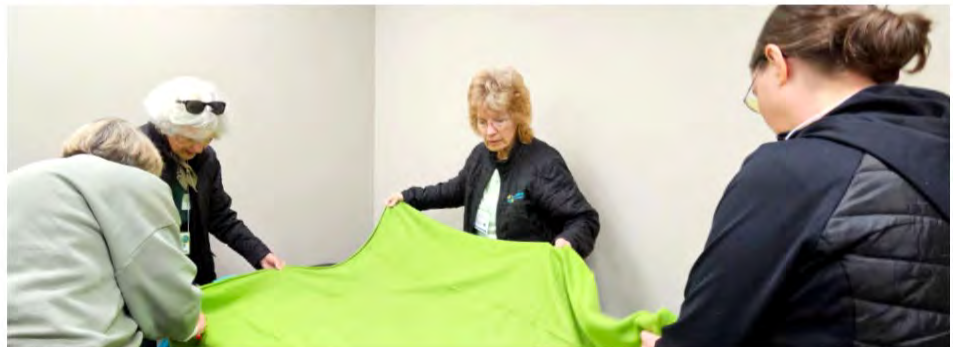


(Photos by Marsha Langlois and Chris Stuhlinger)



# Events Committee

## BUILDING BEDS AT SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE



(Photos by Patricia Haag)



# Curriculum Committee

## YOU COULD HELP PLAN OLLI'S CURRICULUM



If you are new to OLLI or, perhaps, come for only a few classes, let me introduce you to OLLI's secret of success: *volunteers*.

Although this article will speak of the Curriculum Committee, there are other committees contributing to well-rounded educational, social and healthy life experiences, and you can see their news in other articles in this publication.

OLLI has four UAH employees — Clay Williams, Alice Sammon, Anelisse Westmeyer and Justin Clay — who put in hours that would quickly run off a volunteer. The rest of OLLI's activities are managed by volunteering members serving on various committees. This article will introduce you to the Curriculum Committee.

The Curriculum Committee is responsible for locating and engaging instructors to teach over 50 classes per term.

There are 11 subcommittees, distinguished by areas of interest (we call them "discipline areas"), involved in locating instructors for each term. This is done many months in advance of the term (it is almost time to begin lining up fall 2025 instructors).

The Curriculum Committee's discipline chairs and the subject areas they work with are: **Val Seaquist**, arts and letters; **Sue Farbman**, foreign language; **Birgit Stensby**, history, civics and political science; **Clay Williams**, information technology and OLLI Alabama Shares; **Joan May**, leisure and nature; **Steve Jones**, natural resources; **Bill Confer** and **Richard Brooks**, psychology, philosophy, theology and religion; **Bob Carroll**, science, math and engineering; and **Barbara Hitchings**, skills and hobbies.

Two discipline areas — finance and economics, and health and fitness — are without chairs. Great opportunity, folks!

Other committee members who play important roles in supporting the OLLI teaching program outside of working with instructors are **Rick Heeth**, facilitators; **Betty Koval**, bonus presentations; **David Sayre**, travel; and **Vicki Goodness**, **Clay Williams** and **Justin Clay**, course guide preparation.

How do we do it? Those of us who have been involved for a while have a list of willing instructors to contact. Some may not want to teach each term, but they are usually happy to return periodically.

Other members often suggest someone for us to contact. We then contact those people to inquire if they are interested and explain to them the basic requirements of an instructor. We hear of potential instructors from other organizations we belong to, from local newspaper articles and



The Curriculum Committee finds instructors to teach courses in a variety of disciplines. (clipart-library.com)

even from chance meetings. One does not have to have a degree or training in the topic of their class — just an interest they wish to share. We have met so many interesting people who have shared so many interesting things.

If you are interested in being a discipline chair or assisting a discipline chair, contact the one supervising an area that interests you and see if they would like an understudy. This is a good way to ease into the position. You may be surprised how rewarding this activity is.

If you want to see how the Curriculum Committee works, you are welcome to attend our monthly meetings, at 1 p.m. on the third Friday of the month in 152 Wilson Hall. Hope to see you there!

**Val Seaquist**  
*For The Curriculum Committee*



## NEW ONLINE REGISTRATION SYSTEM COMING



OLLI staff members are constantly trying to improve services and procedures to enhance the experience of members. We listen to your comments and try to formulate solutions to problems.

One constant source of complaint is our current online registration system. Many members do not use it, as it is not the most user-friendly system. And, to be honest, staff has problems with it as well.

With this in mind, OLLI purchased a new registration system in 2024 called CampusCE. CampusCE is used by most OLLIs, and our staff witnessed several demos and talked to OLLI directors across the nation about its use. The system seems to be easier to use and would integrate into our existing UAH website.

Since last November, OLLI staff have been undergoing weekly training on the new system. There is lots to learn, and there has been plenty of head-scratching, but we are excited to be changing to it later this spring.

We will be sending out more details on the new system over the next few weeks. The goal is to go live with it for summer 2025 registration. Because we offer fewer classes in the summer and not as many members take classes due to travel and other reasons, summer seemed like a good time to test the system to work out any bugs or kinks before fall 2025.

Eventually, every member will get an email about the system as well as a link to check their personal system profile and change their password. Staff will also be offering training sessions, as we want members to feel comfortable using the system. We are eager for more members to use it to register for courses, maintain their memberships, etc.



A new online registration system will debut for summer semester. The goal is less head-scratching and easier registration.

(Art by Susan Lucille Davis)

Though we are excited about the new system, this will be a change in how things work. Our age group is not known for enjoying change, but we ask for everyone's patience as we get used to it.

We want all members to understand that staff remain committed to offering quality customer service and that we will be here to help you with your registration needs.

If you have any questions about the new system, don't hesitate to ask.

**Reminder:** UAH and OLLI will be closed the week of March 10-14 for spring break. There will be no classes that week.

**Clay Williams**  
**OLLI at UAH Program Manager**

## WHY DID ISRAEL ATTACK A U.S. NAVY SHIP?

On June 8, 1967, during what is commonly referred to as the Six-Day War, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) crippled a defenseless, neutral U.S. Navy ship, USS *Liberty*.

This unprovoked attack claimed the lives of 34 crewmen, including two civilians, and severely injured another 171 sailors. The Israeli government communicated to U.S. President Lyndon Johnson's administration that the attack was a "case of mistaken identity."

As sensitive documentation and communications have been de-classified and released over the past 10 years, the preponderance of evidentiary facts indicates the attack was deliberately carried out, not one of mistaken identity. Yet, the U.S. Navy may have negligently and unnecessarily

placed the *Liberty* in harm's way.

The nagging question is "Why did IDF carry out the attack on USS *Liberty*?"

Registration is open for this semester's offering of "Dead in the Water: The Israeli Defense Force Attack upon USS *Liberty*." Philip Graham will teach the course from 10:30 a.m. to noon on four Thursdays, April 10-May 1.

Determine for yourself whether the 1967 event that we witnessed in our youth bears upon the Middle East crisis that we are witnessing today.

**By Philip Graham**



# Course Spotlight

It is time to register for Spring 2025 courses. You can register for courses at [uah.edu/olli/term-registration](http://uah.edu/olli/term-registration).



## INSIDE THE ALABAMA STATE HOUSE

**3/17 - 4/7 • M • 8:30 - 10:00 am • 4 sessions • In Person • M. Ball • \$40**

Learn about the political process in Alabama from a true insider. This course provides an overview and deep-dive discussion into the Alabama Legislature.



## THE POETRY & PROSE OF WORLD WAR I

**3/17 - 4/14 • M • 3:15 - 4:45 pm • 5 sessions • In Person • W. Thames • \$40**

The Great War was the unfortunate inspiration for some of the 20th century's most moving poetry and prose. This course explores how the war affected poets like Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke, John McCrae, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Siegfried Sassoon and others. The course will also review selected prose, including *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Company K* and similar works.



## GENDER, THE MOST POWERFUL EXPRESSIONS IN ART HISTORY

**3/18 - 4/29 • Tu • 1:15 - 2:45 pm • 7 sessions • Live Virtual • D. West • \$40**

A product of cultural production, gender masterpieces do not merely reflect the ideas of a single artist or a patron. They articulate and reflect the norms of a society that has changed little but is challenged today by the #MeToo movement in Western countries.



## MILITARY DECISIONS THROUGH A GENERAL'S EYES

**3/19 - 4/30 • W • 1:15 - 2:45 pm • 7 sessions • In Person • J. Scales • \$40**

The military uses a defined procedure for deliberate decision-making. Learn how this works through a combination of lecture, demonstration, and practical work — requiring a lot of student input! The military campaign to be used as a basis for learning is a well-known American Civil War campaign.

## Save 20%

*When you register for 4 or more  
term courses at once.*



# People of OLLI



The Darnalls' extended family in Vail, Colorado, in May 2023: front row, Baylee and Kimber (Bri's daughters), LJ and Emerald (Alyssa and John's children); back row, Bri, Nancy, Bob, Mason (Ryan's son), Ryan, Maya (Ryan's daughter), Jamie (Ryan's wife), Sarah (Bob's ex) and her husband Bobby, John (Alyssa's husband) and Alyssa, GG and Ray (Jamie's mother and stepfather). Other photos: Nancy and Bob with penguins in Antarctica, Bob at the Great Sphinx and the Great Pyramids in Egypt, and Nancy and Bob with Louise Bill (left) and Sonja Reynolds in Valetta, Malta.

## NANCY AND BOB DARNALL: OLLI LEADERS, TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND TRAVELERS

OLLI has several married couples who could lay claim to the title of Mr. and Mrs. OLLI, but it doesn't really take much examination to realize that this title can only go to Nancy and Bob Darnall.

Both have served multiple terms on the Board of Directors (Bob was president for two years), have taught numerous courses, have taken even more, and have traveled on several OLLI trips (much more about their service later).

Nancy and Bob are the subjects of this month's *Insider* profile, the first featuring a husband and wife.

Nancy grew up just up the road in Fayetteville, Tennessee, the daughter of children of farmers.

"They [her parents] could and would take on just about any job that needed doing," said Nancy. Over the years, they ran a drive-in concession stand and co-owned a Gulf station. Her father also worked at companies like General Shoe, John Blue and Schrimsher Construction, and ultimately his own company, Barnett Construction.

"My father could sell anything," said Nancy. "When I was 12, I thought he had sold me!"

Her mother began as a production worker at a dress factory and later became a bookkeeper and administrative manager for several small roofing and electrical companies. "Today she might have been a CPA or the CEO of a midlevel corporation," said Nancy. "She was whip smart, quick and decisive."

"My younger brother Barry and I were latch-key kids, except with no keys," said Nancy. "Nobody locked their doors." Barry and Nancy camped out in the backyard during summers. "We would eat pork 'n' beans out of aluminum pie plates with Merita white bread around a pretend campfire. I read a lot, played football and baseball with the neighbor boys, and hung out with girls."

There was no question in the family that Nancy would go to college. She earned a degree in secondary education from Memphis State University and later an MBA from Wake Forest University.

*(continued on the next page)*



# People of OLLI

## NANCY AND BOB DARNALL: OLLI LEADERS, CONT.

She married her first husband (also named Bob) after her first year of college, a marriage that lasted 10 years.

Her working history is diverse: registrar at Memphis State Law School; administrative assistant at the University of Kansas; purchasing manager; human resources manager; executive recruiter; and operations manager at Frito-Lay. Her volunteer record since 1990 is even more diverse: GED instructor; HOPE Place; Huntsville Botanical Garden; United Way; and, of course, OLLI.

And now a bit about Bob: He was born in Queens, New York, and grew up in northern New Jersey in what Nancy calls a Cleaver household (see "Leave It to Beaver"). His father was a sales engineer, and his mother stayed home and raised the three children.

One non-Cleaver item: "When I was 7," said Bob, "we moved into the shell of a house that became the family home for over 50 years. For years, my dad spent nearly every weekend finishing the inside of the house. As I got older, I was able to help with construction.

"Growing up, I was usually the biggest and smartest kid in class. I was really interested in sports. In high school, I played football and basketball and was co-captain of the football team. I was always interested in math and thought about being an actuary, but decided on engineering.

"I attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, a small engineering school in upper New York State. My major was mechanical engineering, and after five years I had a B.S. and M.S. I played football and lacrosse in college and ended up playing a year of semi-pro football for the New England Patriots farm team."

After graduate school, Bob married his college sweetheart and went to work for Raytheon in Boston, doing mechanical design of missiles and radar systems. They lived in New Hampshire and during this time had two children, son Ryan and daughter Alyssa.

In 1978, Raytheon offered Bob a marketing job in Huntsville, a complete change from his normal work. He had planned to spend two years here and then head back to New England. "But I decided Huntsville was a great place, to live and I've been here ever since," said Bob.

In 1988, Bob and his wife divorced. Within four months of the divorce, Bob met Nancy. There is a long story that they tell by tag team, but the short version is that Bob heard a promotion for a dance on WLRH radio. The first time he told the story of hearing about it, he mentioned that the spot included two men and a woman. Nancy was the woman. She says, "I picked him up on the radio." A year later they married.

Bob and Nancy were enjoying being empty nesters when their lives took a dramatic turn.

"One day Nancy came home and asked me if I might want to be a foster parent," said Bob. "We decided to sign up as short-term foster parents of babies and very small children. We ended up with several children, each only staying for a

few days or a couple of weeks.

"One day we got a little 6-month-old girl, and we were told that we could have her for a month while the judge decided who would get custody. Well, one month turned into nine months, so we got to enjoy her first birthday, saw her first steps and heard her first words. Her grandparents, who got custody, asked us to stay in touch. Several years later, the grandfather died and the grandmother was very sick. She asked us to adopt Bri. So suddenly we were in our 50s (50 and 57), raising a 7-year-old."

Now a bit about their travels: They began in 1990 with a trip to Cancun, Mexico. Since then they have traveled to all seven continents, crossed the equator several times, ventured into both the Arctic and Antarctic circles, and visited at least 80 countries. Last year they followed a three-week trip to Ireland with three weeks in China. This year they will go on an OLLI trip organized by Bob to Peru and later a trip that will include Japan.

Bob retired in 2010, and within a few years they had both joined OLLI. Bob initially was planning to take only math and science courses, but after a course in Russian literature his vision expanded. He now takes a variety of courses. He served one term on the board as treasurer and another as president, and now is the treasurer again.

Bob had no plans to teach, but then was encouraged to start a course on bridge. He continues to teach bridge and also teaches a course on puzzles. He learned bridge as a child from his parents, both of whom taught bridge.

Nancy has been even busier. She has served on the board three terms, edited *The Insider*, chaired the Public Relations and 30th Anniversary committees, and organized a trip to Spain.

She began teaching with courses on civil rights, which morphed into a course on the Great Migration. She has done several courses on popular music, including "The Road to Motown" and several terms of "Soundtracks of Our Lives."

"OLLI offers lots of opportunities to be involved as much or as little as one wants," said Nancy. "Every single job felt like a dream job, with occasional flickers of issues to resolve. The great thing about OLLI is that problems are solvable because almost everyone wants us to succeed."

Today son Ryan lives in Edwards, Colorado, with his physician wife. He is a project manager for a general contractor. They have two children.

Daughter Alyssa lives on Isle of Palms, South Carolina, with her husband. She works for a nonprofit that provides services and interns for trail development and backline support for firefighters combating wildfires. They have two children.

Daughter Bri lives in Madison County, where she studies nursing while raising her birth sister's two daughters.

Thanks, Darnalls, for the many, many things you do for OLLI.

**By Glen Adams**

# Member Services Committee

## APRIL 1 IS DEADLINE TO ENTER PHOTO CONTEST



Well, it is March already, and the time is getting short to enter those wonderful photos in the OLLI annual photo contest.

The topic this year is "Contrasts."

It is always so amazing to see the wonderful pictures that our OLLI members submit to the contest. There are prizes for the top three winners.

The winning photos are announced at the annual dinner each year, and all photos submitted are displayed on a slide show at that time. The winning photos are then displayed outside the OLLI volunteer office until the next contest rolls around.

Please go to [tinyurl.com/olli-photo-contest-25](https://tinyurl.com/olli-photo-contest-25) (on the OLLI website) for more information on the requirements to submit photos. The deadline for submission is April 1, so be sure to get them in by that date.

Hopefully, you have been coming early on bonus Fridays to share goodies and great chats with other OLLI members. If you have any comments or suggestions about any way we can add to what is available in the lounge, please let us know.



2024 photo contest winners are on the wall beside the OLLI volunteer office in Wilson Hall. The first-place winner was "Swan Creek" by Philip Flowers.

Ideas for additional member interest groups are also welcome.

**Leah Black**  
**Member Services Committee Chair**

## Social Committee

### ONE MORE FREE BREAKFAST THIS SEMESTER

The last of this semester's weekly free Early Bird breakfasts will be available in the OLLI lounge (152D Wilson Hall) starting at 7:45 a.m. on Thursday morning, March 6. These photos are from the Feb. 6 breakfast. The OLLI Social Committee, chaired by Marilyn Szecholda, schedules these breakfasts each semester on the weekday when most members will be attending classes. (Photos by Justin Clay)





# Travel Committee

## OPTIONS NOW INCLUDE A TRIP TO NEW MEXICO



Travel opportunities still available for 2025 and 2026 including the following:

- **Discover Costa Rica** — Aug. 30-Sept. 7, 2025. Explore the diverse rainforests, wildlife, culture and history of this small Central American country during a nine-day/eight-night adventure curated by Nanda Journeys. Visit a volcano, stay at a self-sustainable ranch, tour local farms, walk through the rainforest, meet the locals, see a Pacific beach, and more. For a detailed itinerary and trip registration information, see [tinyurl.com/olli-costa-rica2025](https://tinyurl.com/olli-costa-rica2025) or contact Chris Stuhlinger. Twenty travelers had signed up at press time in late February, and only a few slots remained.
  - Steve Goodman is leading a wonderful adventure, **Hidden Gems of the Dalmatian Coast and Greece**, including a cruise — April 24-May 10, 2026. This trip will include Croatia (Zadar, Zagreb, Plitvice Lakes, Split, Dubrovnik), Montenegro (Kotor), Albania (Saranda, Butrint), and Greece (Corfu, Delphi, Athens). This trip is with Overseas Adventure Travel (part of Grand Circle Travel), with whom we have had great experiences previously. Contact Steve Goodman for details, or go to [tinyurl.com/olli-dalmatia-greece2026](https://tinyurl.com/olli-dalmatia-greece2026).
  - Hot off the press: We are finalizing a wonderful trip, **The Best of New Mexico: Santa Fe, Taos and Albuquerque**, Nov. 16-23, 2026. This should be posted very soon in the travel tab ([tinyurl.com/olli-travel](https://tinyurl.com/olli-travel)) on the OLLI website.
  - **Signature City Pittsburgh** — May 25-30, with OLLI at UAH-planned options for pre- and post-extensions. This trip will tell a great story of the rise of American manufacturing, the impact of a key industrial city, and what makes it "America's Most Livable City."
  - **Two Worlds of Peru: The Inca Highlands and the Amazon** — June 13-27. This trip includes a six-night riverboat voyage.
- And in addition to all of these, we are looking forward to some special treats and new locations to explore. We invite any and all of you to provide input and people who would like to take a little stretch to help pull together a wonderful OLLI-UAH adventure.
- Trips still to come but already full include:
- **Shiloh National Military Park and Corinth Battlefield Unit** — March 10-11. This trip is led by Phil Graham, who has put together a wonderful trip for American history enthusiasts. What a wonderful learning experience it will be to visit places where such difficult events in our country's history occurred! In a place where history was made, travelers can reflect on its impact on our country's development.
- Contact David Sayre, other members of the OLLI Travel Committee, or coordinators for the various trips at [olli.info@uah.edu](mailto:olli.info@uah.edu).
- All who wander are not lost!
- David Sayre**  
*Travel Committee Chair*



OLLI travelers sampled "Cuisine and Culture in Acadiana Louisiana" on Jan. 13-20. For more photos from this trip, see the next two pages as well as February's *OLLI Insider*. (Photo from Sherry Sobul)



**UAH and OLLI will be closed**

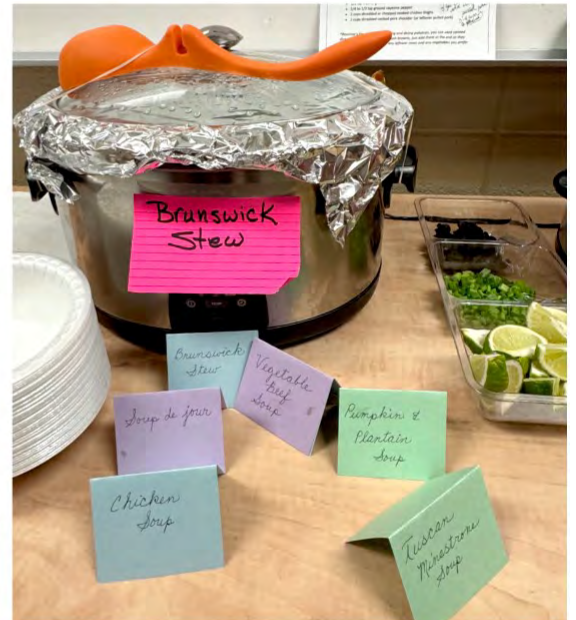
**March 10-14**

*No classes will take place that week*



## PLENTIFUL AND FLAVORFUL HOMEMADE SOUPS

The annual Souper Bowl luncheon in Wilson Hall on Feb. 14 featured homemade soups made by OLLI members. The Social Committee, chaired by Marilyn Szecholda, sponsored the event.



(Photos by Marsha Langlois)



# Travel Committee

## OLLI TOUR OF ACADIANA LOUISIANA, JAN. 13-20



(Photos from Sherry Sobul and Linda McAllister)



# Travel Committee

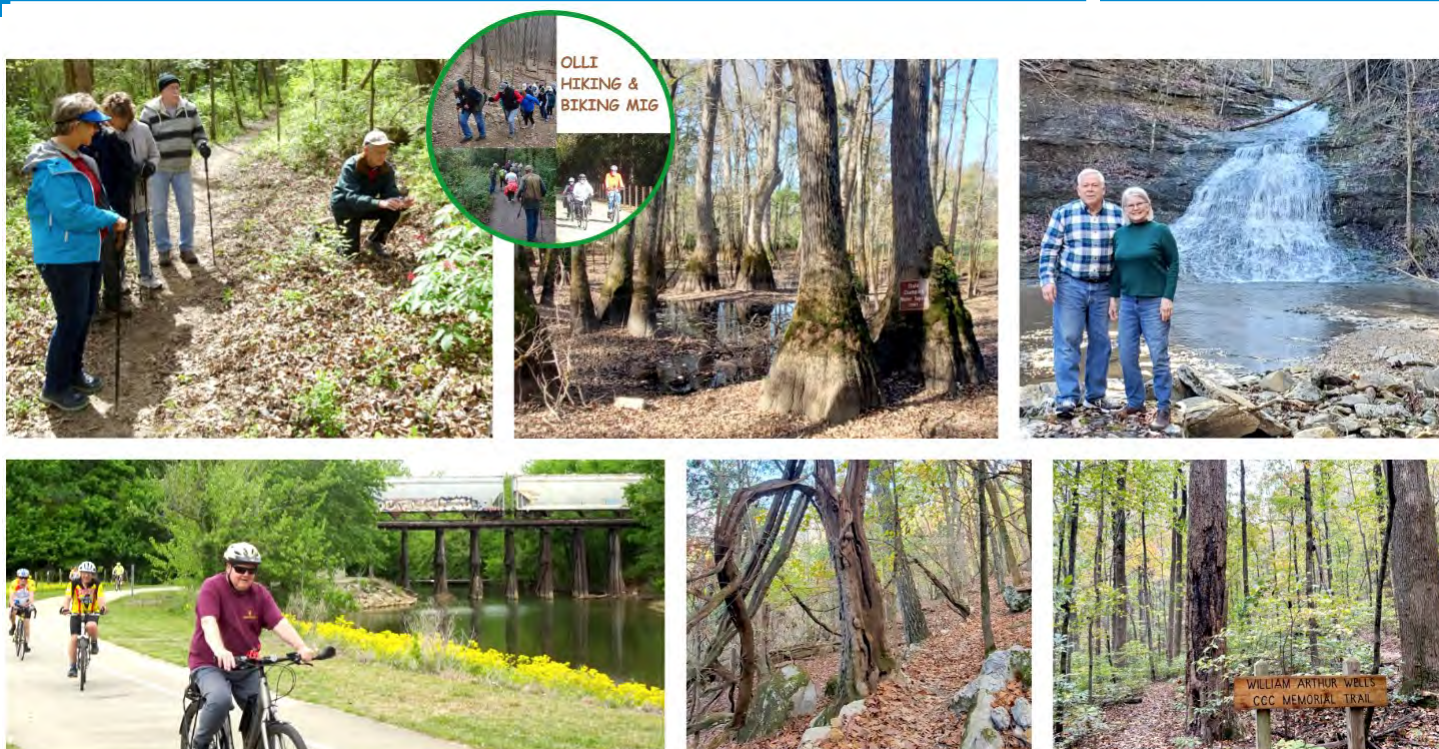
## FUN AND FOOD FOR LOUISIANA TRAVELERS



(Photos from Sherry Sobul and Lyndel Brauning)



# Member Interest Groups



Left to right, top to bottom: Terry Trail, Tupelo Swamp Trail, John and Marsha Langlois' farm, Aldridge Creek Greenway, Green Mountain Nature Preserve North and Wells Memorial Trail.

## HIKING AND BIKING IN MARCH, APRIL AND MAY

We have several more opportunities for you to enjoy the great outdoors with your fellow OLLI members.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel and postpone an activity for the first time since we started the member interest group more than a year ago. The nature walk at Hays Preserve (scheduled for Feb. 15) was canceled due to flooding and rescheduled for Saturday, March 15.

Join the Hiking & Biking MIG to receive details about upcoming activities. Sign up at the link below and agree to the blanket release/waiver form. You must have a valid OLLI membership to join the MIG and participate in MIG activities.

Join the MIG: [forms.gle/6M5BoaWX9Z4TLugE9](https://forms.gle/6M5BoaWX9Z4TLugE9)

### Recap of recent event

**Beaverdam Boardwalk**, Feb. 2 — Our group marveled at the massive and ancient tupelo trees in Alabama's largest tupelo swamp during our nature walk on this sunny day.

### Coming MIG activities

- Saturday, March 1, 10 a.m.-noon — **Hike at Terry Trail (Chapman Mountain Nature Preserve)**. Look for birds at the bird blind and learn how to identify the large hardwood trees along this educational trail.

- Saturday, March 15, 10:30 a.m.-noon (postponed from Feb. 15 due to flooding) — **Nature walk at Tupelo Swamp Trail (Hays Preserve)**. See two state champion trees: a water tupelo and a shellbark hickory.
- Sunday, March 23, 1-4 p.m. — **Nature walk at the Langlois farm (Paint Rock Valley)**. OLLI members John and Marsha Langlois have invited MIG members to see the Virginia bluebells in bloom at their farm near Estillfork. They also have a beautiful waterfall and stream near their house. And we'll learn about what it takes to raise chickens. Carpooling is suggested (details later).
- Saturday, April 5, 10 a.m.-noon — **Bike ride at Aldridge Creek Greenway** (south Huntsville). Ride to Ditto Landing on this south Huntsville greenway.
- Sunday, April 13, 1-3 p.m. — **Nature Hike at Green Mountain Nature Preserve North**. Visit the Halloween Forest to see a grove of uncommon smoketrees.
- Saturday, May 3, 10 a.m.-noon — **Hike at Wells Memorial Trail (Monte Sano State Park)**. See the towering hardwood trees growing in this cove forest.
- See you on the trail!

**Chris Stuhlinger and Steve Jones**  
Co-Leaders, Hiking & Biking MIG



# Member Interest Groups

## NATURE WALK AT BEAVERDAM BOARDWALK, FEB. 2



(Photos by Randy Boyette, Steve Jones and Dave Moore)



# Member Interest Groups

## LEGENDARY ACTORS WHO ARE FAMOUS PAINTERS

The term “art” can mean many things, whether it is music, performance, sculpture or painting. Many famous actors feel drawn to canvas.

Among celebrities, oils and acrylics are the preferred materials, but skill varies from person to person. Compare their talents for yourself by viewing their images on websites such as Artnet, Artsy, Fine Art America, Mutual Art and Getty Images.

**Pierce Brosnan** is an Irish actor known for his James Bond films “GoldenEye,” “Tomorrow Never Dies,” “The World Is Not Enough” and “Die Another Day.” However, Pierce’s first ambition was to be a painter. He graduated from St. Martin’s School of Art as a commercial illustrator. Brosnan has been painting colorful landscapes, abstracts and heavily outlined portraits for decades. He typically sells for charity, with his portrait of Bob Dylan raising \$1.4 million for AIDS research. Pierce had his first solo show in May 2023.

**Jim Carrey** is an American actor and comedian known for his performances in “Dumb and Dumber,” “Bruce Almighty,” “Liar Liar” and his Ace Ventura series. But most people don’t know that he has been drawing and painting since he was a kid. Carrey tends to paint vivid portraits using color for shading, and he sometimes uses his paintings to make political statements. The actor had solo gallery exhibitions in Las Vegas, Palm Springs and Los Angeles and has his own studio in New York.

**Johnny Depp** is an American actor well-known for his unconventional movies, such as the “Pirates of the Caribbean” series, “Edward Scissorhands” and “Sweeney Todd.” However, Depp is also well-known for his celebrity portraits, such as Bob Marley



Actors who are also painters include (from left) Johnny Depp, Sylvester Stallone and Pierce Brosnan. (Public domain photos via Wikimedia Commons)

and Heath Ledger. His work is influenced by the vibrant colors of Expressionism and recognizable imagery of Pop and Street Art. Over the years, Johnny has produced hundreds of paintings that capture the raw emotions and stories of his life.

**Dennis Hopper** was an Oscar-nominated actor and filmmaker best-known for such iconic films as “Easy Rider,” “Rebel Without a Cause,” “Apocalypse Now” and “Blue Velvet.” But who knew he was also a central figure in Los Angeles’ Avant-Garde art world? Hopper’s artwork focuses on people living on the fringes of society — realistic portrayals of eccentric characters. Dennis was influenced by artists like Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol, even though photography is central to his artwork.

**Sir Anthony Hopkins** is a Welsh actor. His most famous performances are in the movies “Hannibal” and “Silence of the Lambs” as well as his portrayal of the character Odin in Marvel’s Thor franchise. Anthony started drawing when he was about 5. He once played Pablo Picasso on screen, and Hopkins’ paintings are influenced

by Picasso but have more of a dark and disturbing feel. Some of his other paintings are painted in bright, vivid colors and look like works in Francis Picabia’s “Transparencies” series.

**Lucy Liu** is an American actress known for her iconic film roles in “Charlie’s Angels” and “Kill Bill.” But Lucy considers herself equally an artist because she has been painting since she was 15. Liu has staged a gallery show most every year since 1993 and landed an exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore in 2019. Her most recent exhibition was in 2023 at the New York Studio School.

**Sylvester Stallone** is best-known for playing boxer Rocky Balboa and Vietnam veteran John Rambo. Yet few people know that he has been painting for as long as he’s been acting. Sylvester’s work is known for its bold colors and brushstrokes. His paintings often depict boxers, mythological figures, and key characters from his films.

**Jean Krieger**  
**Leader, Artist Studio**  
**Member Interest Group**

# Huntsville Then and Now

## HISTORY SHEDS LIGHT ON CHILDHOOD MEMORIES



My childhood home in northwest Huntsville wasn't big in the 1960s. It was just under 1,000 square feet in a subdivision of small brick homes just off Mastin Lake Road.

Some people's basement playrooms are bigger today, and that's great, too. Bigger is always better, right?

Built of brick and wood during the Rocket City's early boom years, our house had three bedrooms, one

bathroom and one carport for one family car.

And when we moved in, our street was the last new street off Mastin Lake Road as that two-lane road headed west toward Ardmore Highway. Mastin Lake didn't stay farmland or two lanes for long. It's now home to everything from churches, schools and subdivisions to a company staffed largely by robots.

But I still remember the big farm behind us when we arrived and the Black man who owned it. Both farm and farmer were gigantic to my boy's eyes, especially in the spring when he came over to plow my father's garden. The farmer did that with mules whose hooves seemed as big as hub-caps, as I've said many times.

The 43rd or 44th time I told my wife the plowing story, saying I'd love to know more about that farmer and the big farm he lived on, she suggested I talk to William Hampton. Hampton knows Huntsville history, and we had recently heard him speak to the Arts Huntsville grants award dinner.

Hampton invited that night's audience to visit his Huntsville Revisited Museum, so I thought I'd have a good shot finding him there at the northwest corner of Oakwood Avenue and Memorial Parkway.

As soon as he heard my boyhood story, Hampton knew which family owned that farm. All I had to do, it turns out, was ask the right person.

Hampton said the family were descendants of a plantation owner and heirs to part of his plantation in that area. One of the owner's sons had children by one of the family's enslaved Black women. He was married at the time to a White woman and had children from that marriage, too, he said.

Historians know some White plantation owners had children with Black women who worked and lived on their property. The women had no choice, and the correct term for this is "rape." The children were considered slaves at birth.

But those owners did sometimes remember those children in their wills, history shows. The key word there is "sometimes." It was known to happen. And this landowner apparently remembered both offspring in a will dividing the property. Black people, thus, still owned some of that land a century later when our family moved next door.

Following my memory to this history is one of the most rewarding experiences so far of my fairly recent retirement. I



Librarians, historians, books and files can help us understand what we remember — for example, by showing how the legacy of slavery affected a Huntsville neighbor. (Image by wal\_172619 from pixabay.com)

had the time to study something I remember from childhood that turned out a far better story than the size of mules' hooves.

I spent some time in the main Huntsville-Madison County Public Library downtown — also easier when you're not working all day — and its history specialists were happy to pull the books and files that led me to some of slavery's history in north Alabama.

There is a lot in those archives. For example, I saw the work of historians diving into the political debates that followed in Alabama after the Civil War. Those debates about land, legal rights and simple freedom weren't buried — some of them, at least — but were documented for history. They're still there if we go and look.

So, if you hear people criticizing public libraries today for what they have for loan, remember that. The librarians have a pretty good record of knowing what's worth keeping and sharing.

And Huntsville history isn't always what we heard happened or is happening. I've seen a thing or two growing up with people from New York to Los Angeles and beyond. And with people who trace their families to some of Alabama's oldest history.

The range of opinions is broad, and the opportunities to miss the best story are everywhere. I've told the story of the giant mules so many times to illustrate "early Huntsville" as I remember it.

That mule was huge, but there was a lot better story and more Huntsville history in the farm and farmer behind us all the time. I just needed to grow up and have a little help to see it.

**By Lee Roop**

*Lee Roop is a resident of Huntsville who grew up Madison County and never left. He's a graduate of UAH and a retired Huntsville Times and AL.com reporter, editor and columnist.*



# An Insider's Look at History

## HOW THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT CAME TO BE: THE ARTICLES OF (LOOSE) CONFEDERATION

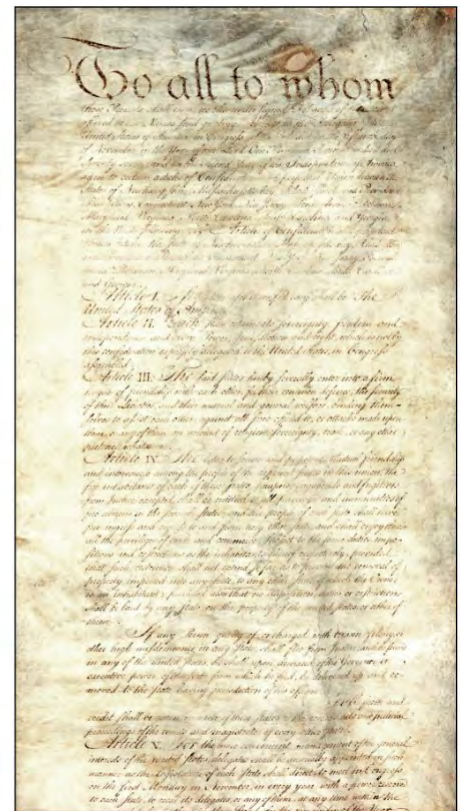
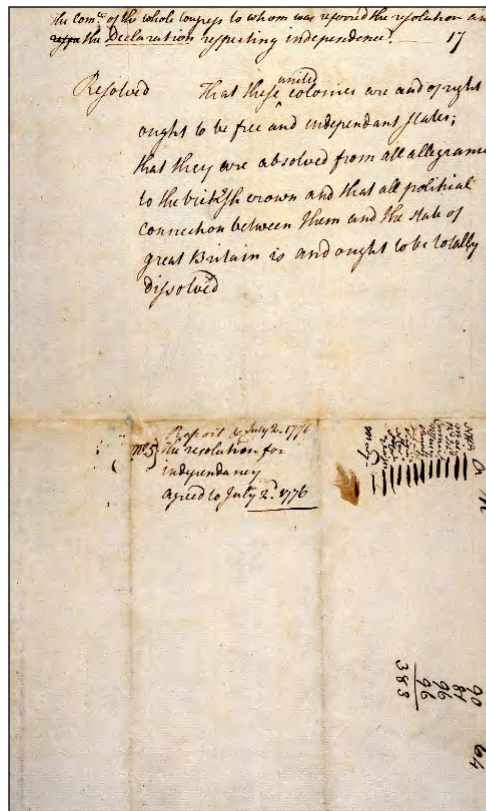
I've written about monthly events in military history for a number of years now. I love the topic and even enjoy researching and writing the column, but I'd like to make a slight change in direction. This is partly because it gets harder to find good subjects happening every month, but also because I believe that we as Americans are sadly deficient in understanding how our government came to be and how it works.

Therefore, in conjunction with a couple of our other in-house experts on government and the Constitution, this month will see the first of a series of columns trying to explain what our government really is, what the Constitution says it can (or can't) do, and some other related topics currently in the news. I hope you enjoy it!

Given that thesis, I can't think of a better way to begin than by starting with the Articles of Confederation, whose formal ratification was announced by the Continental Congress on March 1, 1781.

By the early 1770s, more and more colonists had become convinced that the British Parliament intended to take away their freedom. After fighting broke out in Massachusetts in the spring of 1775, the king declared the colonists "in a state of open and avowed rebellion," and for the first time, many colonists began to seriously consider cutting ties with Britain. So the colonists elected delegates to attend a Continental Congress to counteract Britain's oppression. Its second meeting convened in Philadelphia in 1775.

On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee introduced a resolution "that these united colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states," acting under the instruction of the Virginia Convention. The Lee Resolution contained three parts: a declaration of independence, a call to form foreign alliances, and "a plan for confederation."



A 1776 resolution (left) proposed by Richard Henry Lee declared the American colonies to be "free and independent states." The Second Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation (right) in 1777. (Images from Library of Congress and National Archives)

Congress approved the Lee Resolution four days later and appointed three concurrent committees in response: one to draft a declaration of independence, a second to draw up a plan "for forming foreign alliances," and a third to "prepare and digest the form of a confederation."

Because many members of the Congress believed the actions Lee proposed to be premature or wanted instructions from their colonies before voting, approval was deferred until July 2. On that date, Congress adopted the first part (the Declaration). Therefore, the words of the Lee Resolution are echoed in the Declaration of Independence.

The committee tasked with determining what form the confederation of the colonies should take was composed of one representative from each colony.

John Dickinson, a delegate from Delaware, was the principal writer. His draft of the Articles of Confederation named the confederation "the United States of America." After considerable debate and revision, the Second Continental Congress adopted those Articles of Confederation on Nov. 15, 1777.

This "first constitution of the United States" established a "league of friendship" for the 13 sovereign and independent states that retained "every Power ... not by this confederation expressly delegated to the United States." The Articles of Confederation also outlined a Congress with representation not based on population — each state would have one vote in Congress.

(continued on the next page)



# An Insider's Look at History

## HOW THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT CAME TO BE, CONT

Ratification by all 13 states was necessary to set the Confederation into motion. Because of disputes over representation, voting, and the Western lands claimed by some states, ratification was delayed. When Maryland ratified it on March 1, 1781, the Congress of the Confederation came into being.

But shortly after the Revolutionary War, James Madison and George Washington were among those who feared the young country was on the brink of economic disaster because the central government had little power to settle quarrels between states. Disputes over territory, war pensions, taxation, and trade threatened to tear the country apart.

It's weaknesses were severe:

1. Under the Articles, Congress lacked authority to levy taxes. She could only request the states to contribute their fair share to the common treasury, but the requested amounts were not forthcoming. To remedy this defect, Congress applied to the states for power to lay duties and secure the public debts. Twelve states agreed to such an amendment, but Rhode Island refused her consent, thereby defeating the proposal.

2. Each state possessed a *liberum veto* whenever amendments to that instrument were proposed. Not only did all amendments have to be ratified by all 13 states, but all important legislation needed the approval of nine states. Because several delegations were often absent, one or two states were able to defeat legislative proposals of major importance.

3. All treaties with foreign powers had to be ratified by the states. Even when a treaty was approved, Congress lacked authority to secure obedience to its stipulations. Under such circumstances, foreign nations doubted the value of a treaty with the new republic.

4. Congress had no authority to regulate foreign or interstate commerce. In fact, Congress could not even act directly upon the states or upon individuals.

Making matters worse, Congress was attempting to function with a depleted treasury; and paper money, printed by every state, and sometimes cities within those states, was flooding the country, creating extraordinary inflation.

So in May 1787, the Constitutional Convention assembled in Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation. They shuttered the windows of the State House (Independence Hall) and swore secrecy so they could speak freely. By mid-June, the delegates had decided to completely redesign the government. After three hot summer months of highly charged debate, the new Constitution was signed. With 27 amendments, it remains in effect today.

The Articles of Confederation held the new United States together long enough for it to prevail in the Revolutionary War, but once the war was over the league of friends quickly became a league of impoverished quibblers. Because the Founders had been so concerned with making sure the central government couldn't become too powerful, they had neglected to make it powerful enough to solve issues facing a new nation.

Now the question was whether they could formulate such a comprehensive document that would be acceptable by all states, especially given some of the severe differences among them. Or, as Benjamin Franklin said, Americans had created "a republic, if you can keep it."

**By John Mason**



### Three Smart and Simple Ways to Make a Charitable Gift from Your IRA to support OLLI!

- Create a Life-Income Plan
- Make an Outright Gift
- Name OLLI as Beneficiary of an IRA

Check out our NEW website for more details!

[UAH.giftplans.org](http://UAH.giftplans.org)



## REVOLUTIONARY WAR PRISON SHIPS

*The various horrors of these hulks to  
tell  
These Prison Ships where pain and  
horror dwell  
Where death in ten fold vengeance  
holds his reign,  
And injur'd ghosts, yet unaveng'd  
complain;  
This be my tale — ungenerous Britons,  
you  
Conspire to murder those you can't  
subdue —  
Peter Freneau*

This past week, a *Smithsonian Magazine* article titled “The Grisly History of Brooklyn’s Revolutionary War Martyrs” caught my attention.

The article addresses how the U.S. National Park Service is considering designating the Prison Ship Martyrs’ Monument, located in Fort Greene Park of Brooklyn, New York, as a national military monument. Aside from the fact that President William Howard Taft dedicated this Martyrs’ Monument in 1908, what’s the significance of this yet-to-be-taken government action?

When we are thinking about our Continental Navy during the Revolutionary War, our romanticized thoughts likely turn to the pithy comment attributed to John Paul Jones, “I have not yet begun to fight.” From our American history primers, our perspective is skewed further to dwell on a misty image of the Continental Navy’s unvanquished struggle against the Royal Navy on a frothy and flowing sea with gallant sails billowing. The *Smithsonian* article strongly argues that there’s an unwritten as well as unseemly chapter to that history.

The Martyrs’ Monument is both a memorial and a burial crypt. The granite column was erected “to the memory of those who died martyrs to the Revolution, in the British prison ships of Wal-labout Bay.” On May 26, 1908, a public funeral was conducted, with over 15,000 attendees, for the ceremonial interment of 13 coffins containing bones and remains of prison ship victims collected from the shores of Wal-labout Bay.



Prisoners and a guard inside the HMS *Jersey* during the Revolutionary War; the Prison Ship Martyrs’ Monument in Brooklyn, New York. (Images from the Library of Congress and [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Following the Battle of Culloden in 1745, the British government had employed non-registry naval vessels as prisons to hold the Crown’s treasonous Scottish captives until their trials, future releases or (most likely) deaths. Effective as a measure to prevent both escape and outside communication, prison ships anchored in the Thames River of London proved more economical to operate in terms of manpower and maintenance than jails.

The British Admiralty, with the blessings of Parliament, incorporated this brilliant solution to concentrate its wrath toward captured Colonial sailors. Commencing Oct. 20, 1776, and extending across the remaining years of the Revolutionary War, the British anchored a handful of prison ships in New York’s East River, near present-day Brooklyn Navy Yard. Retired and worm-eaten HMS *Jersey* became the most notorious of these ships.

The Martyrs’ Monument commemorates the Colonial Navy seamen and crew who were captive, fell mortally ill, suffered starvation, were physically brutalized, and were callously disposed of aboard British prison ships. Though a reliable estimate of Colonial sailors who died aboard these floating dungeons is unknown, a conservative number is no fewer than 8,500 deaths. Based on available records from the period, the death estimate is more likely between 11,000 and 11,500 who found final release from overcrowded, inhumane and pestilent imprisonment.

Widely recognized as an authoritative

account, Howard Peckham’s 1974 history *The Toll of Independence* cites the number of American patriot deaths during the Revolutionary War to have been 25,534. Of this number, approximately 27 percent (estimated at 6,824) died in combat. The Battle of Camden (South Carolina) in August 1780 is listed as the engagement with the highest American death toll of about 1,050.

To place the foregoing in perspective, Colonial Navy sailors meeting their demise aboard prison ships during the Revolutionary War account for upwards of 45 percent of all deaths attributable to the Revolutionary War and nearly twice as many as direct combat deaths. Numerous, lesser-known histories and well-researched, scholarly monographs amplify detail regarding the deprivations and inhumane treatment our Colonial Navy sailors suffered on the East River, as well as the American political leadership’s disregard for their plight.

It’s my opinion that the Martyrs’ Monument is deserving of national military monument status, and a new American history chapter is warranted.

**By Philip Graham**

*Philip Graham is a retired U.S. Navy officer and an OLLI member. Sources for this article included publications of the U.S. Naval Institute; Smithsonian Magazine; The Toll of Independence by Howard H. Peckham; and The Ghost Ship of Brooklyn by Robert P. Watson.*



## LOOKING INTO THE CAVES OF NORTH ALABAMA

Scott Shaw, president of the Huntsville chapter of the Alabama Archaeological Society, presented a bonus about north Alabama caves on Jan. 31. He talked about types of caves, their formation, and the history of cave exploration.



### Alabama Caves

- 50 ft. of natural passage
- Currently 4,882 caves
- 6,527 Entrances
  - Elam Church Cave - 29
- Most are in North AL.
  - 2,343 in Jackson Co.
- Formed in limestone
  - Sandstone (120)
  - Dolomite (5) Marble (2)



(Photos by Justin Clay and from the speaker)



## NONPROFIT BUILDS BEDS FOR CHILDREN

The Feb. 14 bonus presentation was about Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a national nonprofit with a Huntsville chapter. The organization builds and delivers twin beds to children who need them. Speakers included Ken Moultrie (suit jacket) and Steve Hettinger (red shirt). Speakers included Ken Moultrie (suit jacket) and Steve Hettinger (red shirt).



(Photos by Marsha Langlois)





## HENRY VIII'S SIX WIVES CELEBRATE GIRL POWER



OLLI members got reduced-price tickets and a reception on Feb. 9 for the Broadway Theatre League's presentation of the musical "Six" at the Von Braun Center. In it, the six wives of England's King Henry VIII (1491-1547) celebrate 21st century girl power. The wives' names were on the outside doors. Two of them were beheaded, another died, two were divorced from the king, and one survived him. (Photos from Nancy Darnall)



# In Memoriam

## A 'RENEGADE RETIREE': PATTI PATRICK

Patricia Ann "Patti" Patrick, who moved to Huntsville after a hurricane upended life in New Orleans and became an OLLI member and teacher for a decade, died Feb. 11.

Patti, 85, was a retired college dean who taught an OLLI course in Everyday Ethics in 2019. For five terms, she also taught Socrates Café — a course that features the freewheeling discussions that she enjoyed about a variety of topics. As a student, she took OLLI courses including Great Books, Rumble Strips, Campaign News Coverage, Psychology and Socrates Café.

She died at her home comfortably and peacefully, surrounded by family and friends, said Bill Patrick, her brother.

On many occasions, she attended sessions of the Chautauqua Institution in New York State. The nonprofit organization describes itself as "dedicated to the exploration of the best in human values and the enrichment of life" by exploring religious, social and political issues as well as the arts.

She was traveling out of town in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, destroying her apartment and neighborhood. Accepting a longstanding invitation from Bill, she moved to Huntsville.

About 10 years later, Bill joined OLLI and invited Patti. It was "one of the best gifts I ever gave her," he said. OLLI was like "being in Chautauqua at home," he said — a community of "worldly, thoughtful people [that] tapped into her intellect and her sensitivity to human nature." He said one of her gifts was "sensitivity to other people's feelings and experiences."

In Patti's own words, "I died" at OLLI on April 17, 2017.

She was sitting in her wheelchair (necessary because of arthritic knees) in Socrates Café when she passed out. Beth Altenkirch — an OLLI member and the wife of Robert



Patti Patrick

Altenkirch, who was then president of UAH — went upstairs to the Faculty Staff Clinic in Wilson Hall. She asked nurse Amber McPhail to help.

McPhail did not feel Patti's pulse. She used an automatic external defibrillator, chest compressions and other treatments until emergency medical technicians arrived. Patti later said that miracles kept her alive. She had no memories of five days. She blamed a lack of potassium, which was the result of a colonoscopy, for the incident.

In addition to her OLLI activities, Patti led short story analysis groups, contributed to WLRH radio's "Sundial Writers Corner," and sang in the choir at Monte Sano United Methodist Church. She was 2012 Volunteer of the Year for Friends Inc., serving seriously ill, disabled and elderly people in Huntsville and Madison County.

In New Orleans, she volunteered and conducted public affairs interviews for a radio station serving the blind.

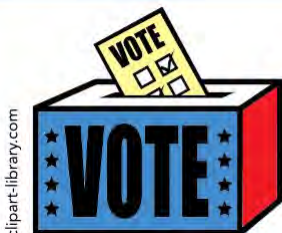
Patti was born in Tupelo, Mississippi. Bill, who is 10 years younger, is her only sibling. He said "she was like a surrogate mother" to him.

The first person in her family to obtain a college degree, she earned a Ph.D. in strategic management from the University of Mississippi. She became associate dean for the College of Business at the University of New Orleans. She taught accounting there before becoming an administrator.

Last year, Patti published a book, *Ramblings of a Renegade Retiree: Memoir of a Nobody*, detailing travels and adventures with family and friends. Beth Thames wrote in the foreword that the book's recurring message is "Sing the song. Take the trip. This life is a short ride. Hold on."

A memorial service will be held June 14 at a place to be determined. Bill said Patti suggested that memorial donations go to each individual's charity of choice.

**By Steve Stewart**



## OLLI Board of Directors election

Watch your eNews, which comes by email every Friday, for information on how to participate in our online election of new Board of Directors members for three-year terms. All OLLI members are eligible and encouraged to vote during a three-week period in March.



# In Memoriam

## MEMORIES OF PATTI PATRICK (EDITED EXCERPTS)

I loved Patti Patrick. We were friends from the day we first met. I came into OLLI as a new member and entered Sam Tumminello's Socrates Café class, sitting there, new, not knowing anyone. This lady walked in on a cane, sat down beside me and introduced herself.

Our backgrounds were similar, and yet very different. She had been challenged as a woman growing up in a man's world, becoming a university dean. I had been challenged by growing up poor, but escaped poverty through education. She was a very progressive Democrat; I was a right-of-center conservative Republican. We loved to spar with each other in Socrates Café, but we also often had long conversations before and after class.

I was there when she died in class, and helped get her out of her wheelchair and connected to the AED that brought her back to life. And I was there when she returned to classes.

Patti and I talked about politics, faith, people and the economy. We shared differing perspectives at times, but were totally aligned at other times. Mostly, we enjoyed each other's company and discussions. We learned from each other and enjoyed that bonding.

—David Styers

What a good happenstance to skip along on a path that intersected with Patti Patrick! It's rare to just bump into a fellow lover of life — life in all of its angles, its mysteries, its certainties. Patti had an appreciation of the creatures of the universe. Good luck for me to meet up.

—Jane McBride

I thought she was one of the smartest, wittiest, and just plain fun-to-talk-to people I had met at OLLI. She will be greatly missed in the discussion classes, as she had very fine points to ponder every single time.

After Patti published her book, I immediately emailed her and asked if she would do one of my book classes. Her reply was "Betty, this is not great literature," and I laughed and told her it would be to us — as it spoke to our demographic. She agreed, and we laughed and just enjoyed hearing more about her life.

She left a legacy of family and friends. She had such a great outlook on life. And when you knew she had lost everything in Katrina, you respected her even more.

Thanks, Patti, for touching our lives — you left an indelible mark.

—Betty Koval

I was only in a few classes with Patti, but she always seemed to be a force of nature. Whenever she was in the room, you could expect to hear pithy insights, probing

questions, and wise and witty comments. I admired her tenacity and determination to participate in OLLI activities whenever she could.

—Jill Stewart

Patti Patrick was a little fireball — full of interesting tales and a lively conversationalist. Her quick wit and vast knowledge of current political events often enlightened us in OLLI classes and the OLLI lounge.

When I discovered the marvelous Chautauqua Institution in New York several years ago, imagine how surprised I was when I told Patti about Chautauqua and learned that she had been attending that summer educational retreat for about 25 years. She was indeed a lifelong learner, and we were enriched by knowing her.

—Linda McAllister

Patti's presence will remain an indelible exclamation point in my memory. Her sharp reasoning, expressed with both profundity and profanity, marked so many conversations and classroom discussions.

Patti loved most everyone, even if she only tolerated our views. Her statements of fact and belief included her thoughts, her frustration, and her hope. With every negative or fearful and apprehensive expression, Patti ended with hope for the future — that humankind in its ultimate version would do right.

Patti expressed opinions without demeaning the statements of her classmates and conversational group. She reminded us of our better nature, thanked us for kindnesses and thoughtful actions, and showed us courage through her life and now death experience.

I will be forever grateful that Bill and Pam Patrick succeeded in convincing Patti to move to Huntsville, Alabama. My life is forever better having known and loved Patti. RIP.

—Nancy Darnall

Patti Patrick was in all the classes I taught ever since she joined OLLI. Smart, feisty and endlessly talkative. I loved her.

—Vanitha Singh

Patti was one of my first OLLI teachers in 2019. She taught an ethics class, where I learned she was a serious thinker but plain-spoken and entertaining. I agreed with most of her opinions. Later we were together in several classes and became friends.

I admired the way she rebuilt her life after Hurricane Katrina. When I read her book, I realized Katrina was just one chapter in a lifetime of adventure and service.

—Steve Stewart



# The Last Word

## TONI MORRISON BOOK DISCUSSION ON MARCH 5

The OLLI Reads Member Interest Group will meet Wednesday, March 5, at noon in 116 Wilson Hall to discuss “The Bluest Eye,” a 1970 book by Toni Morrison. All OLLI members are welcome.

The novel is about an African American girl who grew up in Ohio following the Great Depression and was regarded as ugly because of her mannerisms and dark skin. She developed an inferiority complex and wished for blue eyes, which she equated with whiteness.

## Member Interest Groups

### DINING AT KOREAN BARBECUE RESTAURANT

The Dine Out Member Interest Group got together Jan. 23 at Stone Age Korean BBQ on Memorial Parkway.



(Photos from Nancy Darnall)