



Elders

Learning Institute for

April, 2011

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APRIL RAIN SONG



Let the rain kiss you.
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops.
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.

The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.
The rain makes running pools in the gutter.
The rain plays a little sleep-song on our roof at night--

And I love the rain.

By Langston Hughes



Embracing My Inner Crone

--Catherine Giordano

The Druids carved women's life into three:
First, Maiden, nubile sexuality,
Second, Mother, fruition and family,
And last, Crone, wisdom and serenity.

Finally, the time has come to face it.
Denial's cocoon tried to encase it,
But now it's burst free, I won't debase it,
My inner crone, I must embrace it.

Age brings so much physical dysfunction,
But there is one happy compensation--
The later years do bring gains in wisdom,
Self-acceptance, confidence, liberation.

I have not become, I am becoming,
So many ideas, my brain is humming.
My life's days, I'm not summing,
I now dance to a different drumming.

These are my glory days, lived avidly,
I'm discovering creativity,
I indulge in wild spontaneity,
All because I achieved sagacity.

The Gold Bracelet

--Sandi Trainor

It was a dreary rainy day and I felt a sad feeling
come over me
because my Mother had recently passed away
and I found an old
jewelry box that she had left for her daughters
to see.

Among the jewelry pieces that Mom had tucked
away
I found a lovely, fragile gold bracelet that
brought
a little sunshine into that rainy day.

I knew that little gold bracelet would be a gentle
reminder every time I put it on
of my dear Mother even though she was gone.

My dainty little bracelet has a beautiful golden

shine
and with my Mom's initials, RS, and her
wedding date etched on the back
I am so very thankful that this bracelet is mine.

Now every time I wear it, I feel a special glow
that my Mom can see me
wearing it and that will know—I love her so.

Slow Piano Blues

--Sandra Furlong

Blues, played reeeeeeal slow
Like a sleepy black panther sprawled in the
shade

Its tail a metronome
twitching, ticking,
syncopated with the low, measured growl of
its breathing--
swish, swish, growl, groooowl,
swish, swish, growl, groooowl.

Feathery steps of a sleek white cat
dance just out of reach of the panther's tail
pawing, pivoting,
prancing to a rhythm driven by the tail's
visceral power--
bat, bat, bat, pat, pat, pat, swat, swaaat,
bat, bat, bat, pat, pat, pat, swat, swaaat.

A sensual cadence
captured in a casual moment.
Performers tied to each other's rhythm
related, but with lives of their own.

Heartstrings

--Holly Mandelkern

*Heartstrings singing
Fingers winging
Hopeful ringing
Ditties dinging
Chords a'pinging
Vibrations clinging
Guitar singing*

Highlights of Board Meeting

April 4, 2011

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Secretary – Alice Reinhardt

Minutes approved.

Treasurer – Ian King

Treasurer's report accepted. Ian also reported that \$1500 was received from Machester Properties for participation\ in focus group. Individual participants received \$25.

Vice-President – Marty Weiner

Attempting to set up a Burnham Institute tour before the end of the semester.

President – Phil Easterling

Thank you's read from music department and an engineering student. Phil expressed thanks to Roy Scherer for handling the arrangements for the focus group studying “assistance technologies for elders.”

STANDING COMMITTEES:

Membership – Elizabeth Ingham

Presented a list of 10-year members to be recognized at the April 26 meeting. Betty reminded the group that **the cutoff date for membership renewal is June 1.** After that date, membership will be opened up to those on waiting list.

Curriculum – Dick Tucker

Filling in for Pat James, Dick asked for clarification of some dates for the 2011-2012 year. Venue issues are also being addressed.

No reports from remainder of Standing Committees.

AD HOC COMMITTEES:

No reports.

OLD BUSINESS

Scholarships/Grants:

Some discussion on the awarding process of the recently-established Tucker award. Protocol and procedures remain to be established.

ITN Group:

Judy Thames is working with the group to facilitate LIFE's participation, if desired. ITN is a transportation program for older adults.

NEW BUSINESS

UCF Retirement Center:

Dick Tucker reported the UCF Foundation has asked LIFE to be part of a focus group to revive a feasibility study re: a UCF retirement center. The project has been dormant for the past few years but is being revived and input is desired from LIFE members.

Journey for a Long Life:

LIFE was asked to be a sponsor for the above-named conference to be held at Canterbury Retreat Center on June 10 and 11. Cost is \$40 per day. Sponsorship merely means advertising the conference to our membership.

Research Park Project:

A request for blood samples from an “older age group” has been presented for consideration, a research project being conducted by UCF. Roy Scherer will investigate.

UCF Senior Citizen Class Audits:

Dick explained procedures for auditing classes. Seniors may audit any class at UCF, if space is available.

Diversity Week – October 17-21

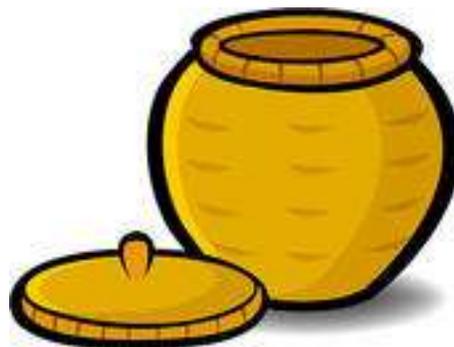
Dick suggested that LIFE be involved in this UCF event, if possible. Judy Thames volunteered to represent us in planning any activities.

Annual Awards – April 26

Mike Hampton will handle getting certificates signed and framed. Dick will contact speakers. The LIFE president is master of ceremonies.

**CONGRATULATIONS
TO
TEN-YEAR LIFE MEMBERS**

**Fred Anklam
Barbara Anklam
Raymond Beloin
Marian Besst
Martha Bradford
JoAnn Brennan
Carol Canon
Mary Ann deVillalvilla
Dorothy Freeman
Charles Fritz
Patricia Fritz
Sandy Jones
Kay Marin
Isabelle Seiken
Edward Wieder
Sara Wieder
Hazel Will
Henry Will
Marge Williams
Robert Williams
Herman Wittig**



Renewal

EVA WALSH

Life Member

is exhibiting her art in an exhibit at the UCF
Library during the month of April. The
exhibit will include baskets, weavings,
beads and miscellaneous items.

FRANK MESSINA

“Met Poet”

will hold a poetry reading and book signing
at the UCF Library 7:00 p.m., Thursday,
April 14
Free and open to the public



June 1

Deadline for Membership

Laugh a Little

--popular song, 1915

**The nice thing about being senile
is
you can hide your own Easter
eggs**

--Unknown

M-O-T-H-E-R

M is for the million things she gave me.

O means only that she's growing old.

T is for the tears she shed to save me;

H is for her heart of purest gold.

E is for her eyes with love-light shining.

R means right and right she'll always be.

Put them all together, they spell **M-O-T-H-E-R**,

A word that means the world to me.



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When asked to name an “elder” who had been a major influence in her life, Mary's answer was quick and unequivocal: “my mother.” We were sitting beside one another at a LIFE class and were participating in a presentation on aging.

I listened intently as Mary Begeal described this woman who meant so much to her: Catherine “Kay” McElroy was Irish through and through and grew up in New York state, a farm girl who helped her father milk the cows and was a real “tom boy.” After her marriage at 27, she worked in New York City at the “five and dime,” spending 15 cents a day on the commute—5 for the subway ride to work, 5 to get home, and 5 for her lunch, “an apple from the man on the corner.”

After marriage, came children. Mary was the first, followed by two younger brothers. A “little mother” herself, Mary taught the boys how to tie their shoes and admits she might have been a little bossy. She was also mother's little helper: “Come into the kitchen and help me make a cake, Mary. Or, let's make some fudge. Mother and daughter spent many pleasant hours together.

Mary's description of her mother is like something right out of a Hallmark card. “She was warm and cheerful. Never angry. Always a smile on her face. Calm, almost like she was on drugs. Wise. So positive about life.”

The common refrain among Mary's friends when she was growing up was “Let's go to your house.”

Mary learned valuable lessons from her mom. In 7th grade, a new girl moved into town. She had lost her mother. “Be kind to her,” Mother said. So I introduced her to my friends and helped her settle into a new school and a new town.

One day Mary came home to find a scruffy, old man sitting on the steps. “Who's that?” she

asked. "Take the man these donuts, Mary; he's hungry," Mother said.

Always a good student, Mary earned a full scholarship to Syracuse University. When she arrived and began unpacking her suitcase, there were a carton of cigarettes and a lighter. A savvy mother was one step ahead of her college-bound daughter and the new freedoms she faced. "I practiced smoking in front of the mirror a few times," Mary said, "but I didn't like it." She ended up giving the cigarettes away. And that was that.

According to Mary, it was her mother who picked out her husband. He was the boy next door and had impressed Mother by scrubbing the floors for his mother. "If you don't marry him, I will," her mom joked. Apparently, Marty didn't need much coaxing. She married Quentin Begeal at the end of her junior year in college. Quentin had joined the service to avoid being drafted and was stationed in Syracuse.



"Mary is very much like her mother," Quentin remarked, "That's why I love her so much. I really liked her mother."

Quentin and Mary started their own family. A beautiful baby girl, Elizabeth, was born. At about one year of age, she was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Many surgeries would follow and both Mary's mother and father were there to offer assistance and support. Mary's close

relationship with her mother--"she's always been my friend and confidant" made the difficult times easier.

Mary and Quentin are quick to say having a handicapped child improved their lives. "We accepted this child as one of God's gifts. It made us better people and it made our relationship stronger because we did it together."

They had two more children—Jeffrey and John—and they found time to do things with their boys when their daughter was at camp. They also met many wonderful people at the handicapped swimming meets held on Sunday afternoons.

During those years, Mary's parents remained in New York while Mary and Quentin moved their family to where the jobs were. Distance did not separate Mary from her mom. "We wrote letters, we talked on the phone, and the folks came to visit once or twice a year." When the kids got sick, Mary could rely on her mother to have a home remedy that usually worked (and cost a lot less).

Mary's mother lived to be 90 years old. The last ten years of her life, she lived nearby and Mary quit teaching to become a caregiver for her parents. When her mother died, Mary said, "There were no tears. She was loved and cared for her whole life."

As she finished speaking, I noted her kind, friendly face framed by silvery curls. Her bright, intelligent eyes looked back at me and she smiled easily. And I thought to myself, Mary may have been describing her mother to me, but she was also describing herself. Like mother, like daughter.

V.B.

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DID YOU KNOW . . .

that persons 60 years of age or older, who have been Florida residents for at least one year as of the first day of classes, may enroll tuition free as audit students (i.e., no academic grade or

credit). Registration is on a space-available basis and begins at 3:30 on the day before classes begin.

To register for the first time, you must complete the Senior Citizen Audit Application and Senior Citizen Residency Affidavit, submitting the forms to the Registrar's Office one week prior to the first day of class. After that, you simply need to complete the application.

For further information, contact:

Kent Woodford, Program Assistant
407-823-5148

kwoodfor@mail.ucf.edu

My Viewpoint . . .

[Adrienne E. Katz is the author of the following article which appeared in the Winter 2011 issue of *50's Lifestyle* magazine. She is a LIFE member as well as a board member in League of Women Voters, Orange County. *Ed.*]

Citizens new to Florida, often remark on how different Florida is from “back home.” There's a good reason for that—Florida is constantly recreating itself. Hurricanes, occasional freezes, fires, a boom-and-bust real estate market and tourist economy can play havoc with the lives of Floridians. We always have had a transient population, with people moving in, out and around the state on a regular basis.

Many people who are new to Florida have become famous, wealthy, powerful, successful or infamous, all in a very short period of time. In more established communities in older cities, there are “ruling families” and fairly strict levels of society. This is not the case in Florida—newcomers are accepted for what they do when they're here, not for where they're from or who “their people” were. Community colleges and continuing education programs enable people of all ages to change their careers by paying relatively inexpensive tuition.

The implication this has for our 50+ population is immense: you can be almost whatever you want to be in Florida. You can become politically active, very social, active as a student or volunteer or become a recluse.

Before World War II, Florida had one of the smallest populations of all the states in the South and was largely agricultural. WWII was the transformational event that led the state into a postwar boom, according to Dr. Gary Mormino, a professor at the University of South Florida's St. Petersburg campus. In his book, *Land of Sunshine, of Dreams*, he explains that more than 2 million Americans trained at 200 military installations in Florida during WWI and thousands returned to stay in Florida after their military careers.

Florida became, as Mormino puts it, “a dream state for the working class.” A 1960's survey showed the two most popular attractions in the U.S. Were the Grand Canyon and Cypress Gardens near Winter Haven.

In 1959, the Castro revolution drove thousands of Cubans to seek refuge in South Florida. The new U.S. Space program caused a population boom on Florida's East Coast in 1970. Disney moved into Central Florida, luring more tourists, workers, entrepreneurs and residents.

Since WWII, Florida has experienced a net average increase of population of 1000 residents per day. A state that had a relatively homogenous population a half-century ago now is second only to California as the most diverse in the nation. The latest projections show Florida's population doubling to 36 million people by 2060.

Today the state's population is 18.5 million (compared to 1.9 million before the war) and Florida is poised to become the third biggest state. Despite our complaints about taxes and insurance, Mormino notes that the state's biggest challenge in the longer run may be water.

Disputes over water rights already have raged even between cities within Florida and between Georgia and Florida. Funding for water treatment infrastructure needs to be part of every city and county budget. If green lawns were not part of our landscaping, Florida would not suffer the droughts that have plagued the state for years.

The recent Gulf oil spill showed that Florida's natural beauty and bounty can be threatened.

Only by citizens voting to demand accountability and responsibility can our state's treasures be protected. As President Andrew Jackson said, "Eternal vigilance . . . is the price of liberty." Our paradise is worth it!

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There are currently 5.5 million Floridians age 55 or older which constitutes 29% of Florida's population.

*--University of Florida Bureau of
Economic & Business Research*