The 1930s and Today
by Bill Barry
billbarry21214@gmail.com

Under FDR the American federal government assumed new and powerful roles in the nation’s economy, in its corporate life, and in the health, welfare, and well-being of its citizens. The federal government in 1935 guaranteed unions the right to organize and bargain collectively, and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 established a mechanism for putting a floor under wages and a ceiling on hours that continues to this day. It provided, in 1935, financial aid to the aged, infirm, and unemployed when they could no longer provide for themselves. Beginning in 1933, it helped rural and agricultural America with price supports and development programs when these sectors could barely survive. Finally, by embracing an activist fiscal policy after 1937, the government assumed responsibility for smoothing out the rough spots in the American economy.

—The Miller Center on American Presidents

If history is a guide to the future, a look at the past—colored by contemporary political beliefs—can become complicated. When the Recession of 2007–2008 hit the United States, right at the moment of a presidential election, everyone looked backward to the 1930s for possible lessons—after all, that was the most enduring Depression in our country’s history and the debate over how we emerged could be applied to contemporary policies.
On one side were supporters of the New Deal, and of government intervention in the economy, like the editors of *The Economist*, who wrote in January 2008: “Franklin Delano Roosevelt: The man who saved his country, and the world. If he is to succeed, America’s next president needs to inherit at least a modicum of the character and talent that FDR brought to his tasks.”

On the other side, there are historians—or should I say “historians”—like Amity Shlaes, who has been ridiculed as “a New Deal denier” and who claimed “That government actions, from Hoover to Roosevelt, were what made the Depression great in magnitude.” In 2009, Shlaes published *The Forgotten Man*, which one admiring reviewer called “a 383-page indictment of Roosevelt.” Shlaes, chairperson of the Board of Trustees for the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation, not surprisingly, advocates that “if the Obama administration proposes FDR-style recovery programs, then it is useful to establish whether those original programs actually brought recovery. The answer is, they didn’t.”

A fundamental issue was whether the government, especially the federal government, could or should intervene in the economy to relieve unemployment, and even why workers are unemployed. When Congressman Steny Hoyer remarked: “Many Americans still haven’t found good steady jobs in the aftermath of the Great Recession and—rightfully—feel left behind by the recovery. There is much more Congress can do to help…” [Baltimore Sun. June 13, 2016], there was no controversy.

In contrast, President Herbert Hoover proclaimed in his 1930 State of the Union speech that “Economic depression cannot be cured by legislative action or executive pronouncement. Economic wounds must be healed by the action of the cells of the economic body…” because “It is just as important that business keep out of government as that government keep out of business.”

Beyond the controversies over economic policies, however, are current debates about social issues that are debatable only because radical new legislation was enacted as part of the New Deal. The laws endured and, far from appearing debatable, had become accepted as “normal” for many decades, even if the revival of a conservative movement is now questioning their existence.

**MINIMUM WAGE LAWS**—When you encounter demonstrators circling your favorite fast food restaurant, with picket signs that demand a $15 minimum wage, you are witnessing a debate that began with the enactment of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933. This law established federal minimum wages for the first time—almost a revolutionary concept after many Supreme Court decisions that held minimum wages to be unconstitutional.

In 1935, as the Supreme Court was devastating the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins told FDR: “I have something up my sleeve … I’ve got two bills … locked in the lower left-hand drawer of my desk against an emergency,” which became, after the enormous election victory in 1936, the Fair Labor Standards Act, which established a minimum wage of $0.25/hour, a 40-hour work week, with overtime at time and one-half.

In a Fireside Chat supporting this legislation, FDR remarked: “Do not let any calamity-howlng executive with an income of $1,000 a day, … tell you … that a wage of $11 a week is going to have a disastrous effect on all American industry.”
His response anticipated by 78 years the objections today as cities like Baltimore consider the implementation of a gradual increase. Public figures like Ann Costlow, president of the Govanstowne Business Association, claims that the proposal to raise the minimum wage in Baltimore City is “another example of the disconnect between politicians and economics,” because “other employee wages will have to be raised accordingly and this could eventually lead to layoffs.” [Letter to the Editor. Baltimore Sun. May 31, 2016].

The controversy now, and an enduring quality of the New Deal, generally is how high the minimum wage should be set, not whether there should be one.

UNIONISM—A much more controversial part of the New Deal was the acceptance of unionism, after several hundred years of federal policy that declared unions to be criminal conspiracies. The same National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) included Section 7 (a) which guaranteed the rights of workers to bargain collectively. The Act “had such far-reaching consequences that some labor historians have called it the Magna Carta of the labor movement.” Nationwide, union membership grew dramatically. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers, for example, doubled its membership from 60,000 to 120,000 between early 1933 and mid-1934. The United Mine Workers of America quadrupled its membership from 100,000 to 400,000 less than a year after the passage of the NIRA. Even when the NIRA was declared unconstitutional, the Wagner Act was introduced and remains in existence as The National Labor Relations Act.

With an energetic and well-funded open-shop movement, many states are severely restricting unions and waging public campaigns against them as “bad for business.” In a typical attack, Kevin O’Leary claims: “My problem with unions is they breed mediocrity.”

CONTROL OVER BANKS—In reaction to the bank failures of the Great Depression, Congress passed the Banking Act of 1933, better known as the Glass–Steagall Act, calling for the separation of commercial and investment banking and requiring use of government securities as collateral for Federal Reserve notes. The Act also established the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), placed open market operations under the Fed, and required bank holding companies to be examined by the Fed, a practice that was to have profound future implications, as holding companies became a prevalent structure for banks over time.

In 1999, responding to pressure from donors in Wall Street, the Clinton administration passed the Gramm–Leach–Billey Act effectively repealing Glass–Steagall. Clinton proclaimed the end of regulations would permit financial institutions to “diversify their product offerings and thus their sources of revenue” and make financial firms “better equipped to compete in global financial markets.”

For many commentators, however, the very lack of supervision over banks led to the failure—even if “too big to fail”—of major financial institutions. In the past year, a major campaign issue has been the restoration of Glass–Steagall. In an explicit historical reference, economist Robert Kuttner stated: “repeal had permitted ‘super-banks’ to ‘re-enact the same kinds of structural conflicts of interest that were endemic in the 1920s,’ which he characterized as ‘lending to...”
speculators, packaging and securitizing credits and then selling them off, wholesale or retail, and extracting fees at every step along the way.”

**SOCIAL SECURITY**—A movement started by Dr. Francis Townsend to guarantee every retired American an adequate income provoked an enormous social movement, and was both directed at protecting low-income workers whom Dr. Townsend had seen rummaging through garbage cans and at stimulating the economy—the original proposal required that recipients spend all of their Social Security income within 60 days.

In response to this pressure, FDR proposed a national retirement program in 1935 called Social Security, funded through payroll taxes and administered by a public administration.

Opponents of the program today claim that privatizing Social Security would actually benefit the poor. The Cato Institute, for example, proclaimed: “Finally, Social Security drains capital from the poorest areas of the country, leaving less money available for new investment and job creation. Privatization would increase national savings and provide a new pool of capital for investment that would be particularly beneficial to the poor.”

Once again, the enduring quality is not about abolishing Social Security but about how to improve its benefits.

**NATIONAL DEBT**—While FDR campaigned on presenting a balanced federal budget, the deficit spending that all subsequent administrations carried out really began, as the New Deal expanded both federal programs and federal financial support in a desperate campaign to increase employment.

According to economist Paul Davidson, “Just as we expect the Federal government to spend whatever is necessary to protect us from foreign enemies during a war, we should also expect the government to spend whatever is necessary to protect us from the economic terrorism of a great recession.”

Not so, claims Brian Rogers, chairman of the Board for T. Rowe Price, who writes that political candidates keep ignoring our ballooning national debt, which could grow to more than $10 trillion “over the next decade … and its impact will have damaging consequences on our economy and our children’s future.” (“What about the National Debt?” *Baltimore Sun*, May 31, 2016)

**LEGALIZATION OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**—For decades the Prohibitionist movement had advocated the end of alcoholic beverages, supported by statements like “We have seen the evil of the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors in our midst; let us try prohibition and see what this will do for us,” according to Thomas Jordan Jarvis. And for 13 years, alcohol was banned, but one of FDR’s first proposals, presented as a way to raise tax revenues, was the passage of The Beer-Wine Act and eventually the total repeal of Prohibition.

“The accession of not one but three illegal drug users in a row to the US presidency constitutes an existential challenge to the prohibitionist regime. The fact that some of the most successful people of our time, be it in business, finances, politics, entertainment or the arts, are current or former substance users is a fundamental refutation of its premises and a stinging rebuttal of its rationale,” according to Jeffrey Dhywood, “World
War D—The Case against prohibitionism, roadmap to controlled re-legalization.

GOLD STANDARD—As part of the massive reforms taking place, on June 5, 1933, Roosevelt recalled all gold and silver certificates, effectively ending the gold and any other metallic standard and following England, which had eliminated the gold standard in 1931. According to Keynesian economic theory, one of the best ways to fight off an economic downturn is to inflate the money supply.

Groups today, like The Gold Standard Now, insist that “Returning to a classical gold standard would stimulate investment because it provides a fair rate of return through stable purchasing power. With increased investment there will be a greater demand for labor, which leads to full employment and higher real wages for the average worker.”

PUBLIC POWER—According to an editorial in The Washington Post (April 25, 2013), “If you had to name one institution that epitomizes President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, it might be the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Created by Congress in 1933, this immense federal electric-utility-cum-water-project owns 29 hydropower plants, 11 coal plants, and three nuclear plants, which serve 9 million customers in seven states from Virginia to Mississippi.” In 2014, however, President Obama proposed selling off the TVA, maintaining that “[r]educing or eliminating the Federal Government’s role in programs such as TVA, which have achieved their original objectives and no longer require Federal participation.” Ironically, the most conservative members of Congress in the southeastern states loudly opposed the transition because of the low power rates. “It’s one more bad idea in a budget full of bad ideas,” said Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.).

RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY—One particularly unpleasant similarity with the 1930s is the bigotry, using fabricated “religions” to attack the President of the United States. With anti-Semitism common in the 1930s, the Roosevelt administration was attacked as “the Jew Deal,” with “historical claims” that the Roosevelts were secretly Jewish. The American Freedom Magazine of Los Angeles, California (April, 1938) stated: “In an address to the National Convention of the D.A.R., President F.D. Roosevelt said that he too was of revolutionary ancestry. But not a Roosevelt was in the American Army. They were Tories, busy entertaining British Officers. The first Roosevelt came to America in 1649. His name was Claes Rosenfelt. He was a Jew.”

For President Obama, the “birther” claims that he is not a US citizen or—more dangerously—that he is secretly a Muslim, have become common.

In a long column about the Depression and the recession of 2007, Neil Irwin remarked: “But there is a broader lesson here about the challenges of applying the lessons of history to modern policy, whether in economics or any other field. Even when faced with a close historical analogue and high officials with deep historical knowledge, our leaders came up short. The clichéd quotation from George Santayana, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,” might have a coda: “So, sometimes, are those who remember it.”
I Would Never Twis You
by Charles E. Sternheim

cstern@umd.edu

so why call me a
twitterphobe
just because I’m not into
twalking
tweading
twaiting?

twitterflys GFY

the way you nudge tweeples
in twitterloops
it’s twittastic

just not my twing

call it twittertude if you like

but I’m still into
candle light
eyes
silence
sighs
indivisible by

though I wonder
will you still be my tweetheart
if I don’t tweet you back

if I just hold your hand?
The Gluteus Maximus Did It

by Randy Barker

lbarker3@jhmi.edu

Being a physician and an avid reader of George Simenon’s Inspector Maigret detective stories, I decided to make the most of a nasty pain that “jumped” my left hip in France during our seven-week stay in the summer of 2015.

The ode below mixes the ruminations of a physician, contaminated with medical savvy, with the method of Maigret, who typically refocuses his hunches as new information comes to mind, usually primed by a glass of Belgian beer. When he gets a new hunch he shrugs his shoulder, nods his head, reflects (in French: il hausse les épaules, hoche la tête, réfléchit).

As I wrote this, I savored the observation that all these years, confronted with a patient’s symptoms, I often behaved much as Maigret would. Vive la ressemblance!

He shrugs his shoulders, nods his head, reflects

(il hausse les épaules, hoche la tête, réfléchit)

—Posterior left hip tender to touch.

“That’s just a bursa!”

He shrugs his shoulders, nods his head, reflects

(il hausse les épaules, hoche la tête, réfléchit)

—very painful even recumbent.

— I’ll give it to my prednisone dose —pak and oxycodone.

“No….that’s my pseudo-gout!” (textbook: any joint, including the hip)

He shrugs his shoulders, nods his head, reflects

(il hausse les épaules, hoche la tête, réfléchit)

—It was sudden in onset.

—There’s bony point tenderness of the femoral head.
—From five to 10 out of 10 pain with a few steps.

“Oh no…it’s a bony fracture….an avulsion fracture”

He consults Dr. Alain de Blanchaud
—OK for 10 meters then pain so strong I can’t walk.
De Blanchaud (good listener and examiner):
—No fracture.
—Vertebral column the problem.
—Xrays: no fracture, terrible looking spine.

15 days: chair to chair, book to book, meal to meal to bed.

Day 16: No pain with usual walking!

He shrugs his shoulders, nods his head, reflects

(“il hausse les épaules, hoche la tête, réfléchit”)

—Recalled I had the same symptom (“bursitis”) short
duration and much less painful two months ago.
—Had been bracing hard against left leg doing
vigorous resistive exercise for right shoulder tendonitis.
—Bracing hard can really tense the gluteus maximus
muscle
—Stopped the bracing. Better…in fact resolved
—Resumed bracing hard in France, doing resistive
exercise for right shoulder tendonitis.
—Terrible hip pain came back.

“Of course! It’s a pinched nerve, the sciatic, and the

Gluteus maximus did it!

It took a bite out of the traversing sciatic nerve, which
cried foul for 15 days.”

Epilogue:

I had enjoyed a Maigret-style quest for the culprit as the facts
changed or became clear, France 2015.

A Long Conversation about
Navy Life ... And Death?
by Joe Krebs

jmkrebsjr@aol.com

“This is your stop, Admiral.”

Mumbling, “Thank you,” to the bus driver who was
having a little fun at my expense, I grabbed my bag and
got off. In fact, the single gold stripes of a brand new
Ensign definitely looked a little meager, underscoring
the nine ranks and 30-some years that would have separated my Navy status from an admiral.

I walked through the Main Gate onto the grounds of the Norfolk Naval Base on that gray February afternoon in 1968, leaving behind the civilian world; and, as it turns out, much of what I knew.

Going into the Navy was my leaving home. I was doing at age 25 what many had done when they went away to college. I grew up in what was, essentially, a white, upper-middle-class, midwestern, Catholic ghetto in St. Louis. My father was a doctor, and most of his friends were doctors or dentists—many of my friends were the children of doctors or dentists. I attended a Catholic elementary school and a Jesuit high school, university, and law school, living at home the whole time. I lived a friendly, comfortable, predictable—I guess, cozy—life.

The Navy was none of those. The ad campaign said, “Join the Navy and see the world!” I was about to find out that, for me, the promise referred to more than traveling the mere globe. I’d wandered into a world of stunning diversity of race, religion, class, and education.

In school, I was surrounded by Johns and Mikes and Larrys and Gerrys. I didn’t know anyone from the South. Here, I met and lived with guys named Luke and Dale and Champ and Zork. I learned that officers senior to me were called “Sir” and that enlisted men were called by their last names or their ranks, never by their Midwestern-friendly first names.

I arrived in Norfolk thrilled because I’d been assigned to the USS John F. Kennedy, then the Navy’s newest aircraft carrier. This was the very ship I had asked for in the final days of Officer Candidate School, when we were given the chance to express preferences for duty stations. All I knew when I named JFK number one on my list, was that this ship was new, big, and had a legal office. I was hoping I might get assigned to do legal work, even though I hadn’t gone through the Judge Advocate General program.

One hitch, though—the ship was still under construction in Newport News, about 45 minutes away from the Naval Base, and wouldn’t even be commissioned until September, seven months from now.

I reported to the Pre-Commissioning Unit in Building P-4, a red-brick, two-story building erected during World War II, and was greeted by the smiling face and friendly handshake of a man who would eventually scare the hell out of me. Commander Charles Long had a thin, sun-tanned face with squinty, crinkly eyes that could blink from laughter to anger in a millisecond.

He told me that I was one of the first junior officers to arrive “onboard” and that my job was to be the First Lieutenant for the Pre-Commissioning Unit. Yes, I was “on board,” even though I was in a building. The floors were “decks,” and the walls were “bulkheads,”
the hallways were “passageways,” and the staircases were “ladders.”

On a ship, the First Lieutenant is the officer in charge of the Deck Department whose sailors anchor the ship, tie it up to the pier, conduct at-sea re-fueling, operate the ship’s boats, scrape and paint and keep things “shipshape.” In Building P-4, that translated into general maintenance and transportation.

After entering the white, wooden, double doors surrounded by rows of small window panes, there was a wide “ladder” that led up to the second “deck.” That’s where the new Commanding Officer, Captain Earl Preston “Buddy” Yates, the Executive Officer, Commander Charles R. Smith, and others, including Commander Long, the Operations Officer, planned the organization of the ship, oversaw the final months of this multi-million-dollar construction project, and scheduled all the events in connection with the high-profile and highly emotional commissioning ceremony. The ceremony would take place fewer than five years after the assassination of President Kennedy, about five months after the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and barely three months after the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and her two young children, Caroline and John, were scheduled to attend. Senator Edward Kennedy and former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara were scheduled to speak.

My concerns were mundane. I had a large office on the first deck filled with a desk about the size of a ping-pong table and a couple dozen enlisted men who were assigned to clean and repair the building and drive trucks and vans between our building and the construction site at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company.

I used to sit at my desk beside an open window. The drivers would pull up to receive final instructions before starting their drive to the ship. I often wonder whether the folks at McDonald’s got their idea from our setup at P-4.

I had a lot of help, but none greater than from a short, rotund sphere of a man named Donny Bishman, though protocol forbade me to utter his given name. Bishman wore four diagonal red service stripes on his sleeve below the rate, or rank, insignia of a Petty Officer Second Class. Those service stripes meant he had served in the Navy for more than 16 years. The fact that they were red, rather than gold, meant that he had fewer than 12 consecutive years of good conduct. That was confirmed by the fact that most sailors in the Navy for that long rated several ranks higher. One suspected Bishman had had run-ins with higher authority and had been bumped up and down the rate ladder more than once.

He had a round ruddy face with a broad ready smile, and a gravelly voice that indicated he would be a great guy to have a beer with—lots of guys probably had. I was never quite sure how he spent his nights, but I knew his days belonged to me and the jobs we had to do. I told him what and who needed to be delivered to the ship, and he got the driver and the van and was on his way. I told him what need to be cleaned or repaired in P-4, and before you knew it, the job was done.

A couple of weeks after my arrival, Commander Long asked me to join him on a walk through the building. It was a square made up of four enclosed wings surrounding an open courtyard in the center. The front wing contained offices, but the three others—the sides and the back—were long, empty spaces that had not been subdivided.

We walked into one of the side wings. Commander Long gestured towards the emptiness. His smiley face was scrunched up like Bert Lahr’s, the cowardly lion, but, showing no fear, he said, “In a month, there will be 200 sailors here for the School of the Ship.”
I said, “Yes, sir. What is the School of the Ship?”

He said, “We’re gonna have classes for those sailors, get them ready to go aboard ship, ready to go to sea. And I want you to get these spaces ready for them.”

“How do you mean, get them ready, sir?”

“Mr. Krebs, I want you to build classrooms, three in each wing.”

“Yes, sir. Any suggestions about how I might do that?”

“You’re the First Lieutenant. I’m sure you can do it.”

“Yes, sir. You mean, build walls and doors in here?”

“Yes, Mr. Krebs. And fill the rooms with desks and chairs for the students.”

“Yes, sir. I mean what do I use to build the walls? Where do I get the stuff? Who do I use to do the work?”

“Figure it out, Mr. Krebs.”

“Yes, sir. When does it have to be done?”

“Within four weeks.”

“Yes, sir. I’ll try.”

“Mr. Krebs, you will get it done. These classrooms will be ready ... or ... I’ll slit your throat.”

Oh! I thought.

His eyes flashed lightning; his smile beaming, but hard as a knife. He walked away.

Oh!

I was stunned. Not a consequence I was accustomed to contemplating.

Did he mean it? Could he possibly have meant it? Of course not. He couldn’t have meant it...literally. But, damn, he did seem serious ...

I had no clue what to do. But I knew I had Bishman.

When I told him what we needed to do, he burst with that laughter born of drinking and smoking, the kind that quickly cascades end over end into barely controllable coughing. “Oh, don’t worry, Mr. Krebs, we’ll take care of it.”

Bishman then introduced me to the fine Navy art and custom of “cumshaw,” the skill of some old salts to get things done for free, usually through some sort of bartering. Bishman had access to all the sailors he needed and found a way to get the lumber, the tools, and the hardware to get the job done. He knew sailors in other commands on base and on other ships in port. They all knew someone who needed something, who had something to trade, and who was willing to make a deal.

Soon the long empty spaces were filled with workers measuring and cutting and hammering. Walls going up, doors going in, and paint applied. Desks and chairs were found and delivered. By the end of the month, each of the three wings had three classrooms—nine in all. Exactly as the Commander commanded.

My throat remained intact.
Through it all, Bishman cautioned me not to ask any questions. He merely said, “Mr. Krebs, tell me what to do, and I’ll get it done.”

I thus learned another fact about Navy life: The officers may give the orders, but the sailors make it happen.

Osher Students Make Teaching a Treat

by Charles Ray
rayca7@yahoo.com

When I received the first invitation to talk to Osher Lifelong Learning Institute students in a Diplomatic Hotspots class at the Montgomery County Campus in 2012, I accepted because the subject, Zimbabwe, was one I cared a lot about. But, having not been in a classroom for a number of years, I was also somewhat anxious. I also didn’t know at the time what the demographics of the class would be.

When I walked into the classroom and saw that most of the students were considerably older than I—and I was 67 at the time—I became even more nervous.

Accustomed to classrooms of bright-eyed youngsters who, despite thinking they’re the smartest things on the planet, usually knew next to nothing about the topics I lectured on, I had a moment of panic when I realized that there would be students in the Osher classroom who probably knew even more about the subject than I did.

It turned out that I was right. There were a couple of people in that particular class who’d visited Zimbabwe when it was still Rhodesia, and who were relatively familiar with the country’s current history. The same situation in a classroom full of younger students would have been a challenge; a challenge in that you can be sure at least one would have made an effort to show off this superior knowledge to the discomfort of the teacher. When I taught photography at Los Angeles City College’s Seoul campus in the 1970s, it always happened. There would be at least one student who by virtue of having taken two or three snapshots thought he knew more than I did, and attempted to demonstrate that fact to the class.

Osher students, I discovered to my delight, are mature in more than mere years, though. Instead of trying to show the lecturer up, they offered observations that added immeasurably to the discussion. Even when someone disagreed with something I said, that disagreement was always stated in an agreeable manner.

I’ve done several Diplomatic Hotspot presentations since, on Cambodia as well as Zimbabwe. I’ve discovered that I’d missed being in a classroom. The give and take with students is one of the most invigorating experiences for me; almost as much as jumping from an airplane from 10,000 feet (which is something I did in a prior life).

I also conduct a workshop on professional writing each summer for a group of undergraduates who are interested in applying for the US Foreign Service, and, while they’re bright, energetic, and respectful, they can’t hold a candle to the Osher students I’ve encountered in the hotspot lectures, and in my class.
on American Diplomatic History. Whether it’s been at the Montgomery County Campus, King Farm, or in Columbia, the students I’ve had the privilege to work with are the kind of people that make teaching worthwhile.

These students, unlike many of today’s younger students who are studying in the hopes of scoring a high-paying job, and would often rather be anywhere else but a classroom, Osher students, mostly retired people, are in school because that’s where they want to be. I do occasional lectures to government employees on leadership and management, and one of the core leadership principles I stress is devotion to lifelong learning. I now have a real life example to give those groups when I meet them.

When I retired from government service, other than the occasional consulting job, and my writing, I worried about finding enough to keep myself occupied. That has turned out to be an unnecessary worry. Having to face a classroom full of students with the rich life experiences of the average Osher student means that I have to really be on my game. The amount of research and preparation necessary to make sure they get their money’s worth every time I take the podium is not insignificant. But, it’s not drudgery. I find it among my most enjoyable activities, and that I learn something new in every class.

For any teacher wanting to experience the joy of teaching, I can say without hesitation, that lecturing Osher students has to head the list. There is life after retirement, and I’ve found it with them.

I first joined Osher in the spring of 2014. I attended the new member orientation and volunteered for the Journal Committee. With my background as an English teacher, I felt that was appropriate, and the duties of the committee members looked easy enough for someone who had just joined. That summer Kathy Cooke called and asked me to do a phone interview with Jim O’Hara and write an article for the Fall/Winter issue. The next thing I knew, I was asked to be the chairman of the committee! I first managed the Spring/Summer 2015 issue.

When I looked into the history of the Journal, I discovered that Leight Johnson had been the chairman of the committee almost since its inception: “Seventeen years and not once a raise in salary. Ah, but the power and prestige.”

The publication now known as the Journal began on December 16, 1985, as Evergreen Society News. Members could enroll in two non-credit courses per year through the School of Continuing Studies. There was a lunch-time lecture series and a field trip to the Federal Reserve Bank. The newsletter grew to four to six pages and became Evernews under the leadership of Kathy Porsella. It contained news about members, trips, and events. Jo Brennan led the staff in 1993.

Leight Johnson was a sales engineer for Honeywell for 36 years, moving from Connecticut to Philadelphia and finally to Baltimore and retiring in 1986. He had a summer and ski season home in Vermont, where he had met his wife Shirley waiting in line at a ski lift. Leight skied from the time he was 15 to his 85th year when he needed a hip replacement. He and his wife had five children. Leight is a family name, passed down from his grandfather and through the generations to his grandson.

In 1995 Leight and his wife joined the Evergreen Society. Janet George and Leight volunteered for the newsletter committee at the request of Jo Brennan. When Jo Brennan died, Leight and Janet inherited the job. When it became apparent that the publication was
not really a newsletter, the name was changed to the Evergreen Journal in 1991. Two eight-to ten-page issues were published yearly. The masthead was changed over time, becoming the *Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Johns Hopkins University Journal* in 2008.

Leight has always been a member of the memoirs class, from which he took many of the articles for the Journal, and he himself wrote a humor column “On the Leight Side” from which he once sold a rhinoceros horn, offered a class in religion by the Dalai Lama, and cautioned writers, “Never use a preposition to end a sentence with.” The memoirs class initially had an instructor, but when Margaret Osborn left, Leight ran it himself for 10 years. It is now a member-led class.

Leight moved with his wife to Glen Meadows retirement community and became the editor and photographer for their monthly Messenger, which is both a newsletter and a journal with a humor column by its editor.

You can still find him “Leightening” up the memoirs class in the basement of Grace Church. Stop by and thank him for his years of illustrious service and he’ll assure you that “you aren’t as bad in person as people say you are.”
Meet Osher at JHU Assistants

**Caitlin Lewis** joined Osher at JHU as a program assistant in May 2014. She worked at the Montgomery County campus and assisted Osher at the Asbury and Ingleside program locations as well. Caiti is currently enrolled at JHU pursuing a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) with a focus in Finance and Marketing. Caiti has accepted a position with the Johns Hopkins University Biophysics Department as a Budget Analyst. This move will take her to the Homewood campus in Baltimore for both her work and her studies. A graduate of The Georgia Institute of Technology, Caiti was a student athlete swimming distance events for the Yellow Jackets, and a swim coach for Rockville Montgomery Swim Club’s National Training Group.

**Michael Pawela** is a program assistant working for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Johns Hopkins University. Michael works at the Montgomery County Campus, and assists at the Asbury and Ingleside program locations. He also processes registrations for all of Osher’s locations.

Prior to coming to Johns Hopkins University, Michael studied at the University of Maryland College Park and graduated in 2015 with a Bachelor’s degree in Criminology. In addition to working for Osher, Michael is also a library assistant for the Montgomery County campus at Johns Hopkins University.

**Masooda Shairzad** first joined Osher at JHU as an intern and was hired full-time in June 2015. She earned her Business Diploma in 2003, from Richmond Upon Thames College London, England and made the United States her home in 2003. She supported her family for a few years and returned to school, where she earned her BA in Communications with a minor in Psychology, from the University of Maryland College Park. Masooda has supported both the Columbia and Montgomery County campuses handling registration, classroom reservations, AV set up and assisting members and faculty. She currently works at MCC and provides back up support in Columbia. She lives in Rockville, MD where she is active on the Middle Eastern American Advisory Group (MEAAG) for city of Rockville and Multicultural Affairs committee for city of Gaithersburg.

**Lianna Meiburger** is a program assistant who joined Osher in October 2016. She works at the Baltimore and Columbia locations. Lianna graduated from the University of Maryland, College Park in May of 2016 and earned a Bachelor’s degree in Kinesiology. Prior to joining Osher, Lianna worked at Germantown Physical Therapy as a therapy technician. When she is not working, Lianna enjoys spending time outdoors, exercising, and going to sporting events.
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NOTICE
The Osher Journal is published for the entire Osher at JHU community. Articles from all members are welcome, subject to editorial review. To submit a story or article, send it by email to linda@middlestadt.net, or by hard copy to the above address.

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