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Remembrance of Things Past

Inside: Arlene Okerlund tells how she put some sparkle in her life (page 4) and Jim Asher gives helpful hints on how to write a memoir (page 5).

A Newsletter of the San Jose State University Emeritus and Retired Faculty Association



At the Fall Luncheon . . .

SJSU ERFA President, Jill Cody and special guest and luncheon speaker, Larry Gerston enjoy a moment at the Fall Luncheon. Gerston spoke on the eve of the presidential election, offering insights and analyses of the political forces arrayed for the climactic battle of the campaign.

April 5: Save the date

By Don Keesey (English)

For this year's Spring Excursion we will be taking a bus to the de Young Museum to see "The Girl with the Pearl Earring: Dutch Paintings from the Mauritshuis." (The Mauritshuis contains the world's greatest collection of Dutch masterpieces and, while undergoing remodeling, is temporarily allowing these works

Go along with the group!



to be exhibited elsewhere.) The full exhibition, which has 35 works from the Dutch Golden

Age, including five by Rembrandt, is making only two stops in the States. So, short of traveling to The Hague, this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see most of these paintings, including the famous "Girl with the Pearl Earring." Your ticket will also get you into a companion exhibition, "Rembrandt's Century," which has 200 seventeenth-century works from the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts collection, including 60 Rembrandt etchings. (You can find further details at www.deyoungmuseum.org.)

In February we will mail a flyer, including a reservation form. Meanwhile, mark your calendars for April 5th.

calendar

Friday, April 5, 2013
Spring Excursion
de Young Museum
San Francisco

Friday, May 10, 2013
Spring Luncheon
The Villages
Speaker: TBD

University & Academic Affairs News

A visit by new Chancellor Timothy White this Spring**By Peter Buzanski (History)**

Much as the faculty and staff at SJSU might wish to be working at an independent university, the reality is that we are part of a 23 unit system headed by a Chancellor's Office which exerts power over all branches, much of which is unwelcome. At the moment the system is headed by a new Chancellor whose initial impression, system wide, has been very favorable. One project the new Chancellor, Timothy White, has announced is his desire

to visit all of the CSU campuses, and it is quite likely that SJSU will be visited by him this Spring.

The Chancellor's Office, like most bureaucratic organizations, is easily influenced by public events, to which it often responds without careful scrutiny. I refer here to the latest Chancellor's Executive Order 1083, issued in mid-January 2013. This new order states that "every CSU employee is now a mandated reporter for suspected child abuse or neglect." To implement this requirement the

Chancellor's Office is developing training courses and everyone working for the CSU must comply by the end of January 31, 2013. At that time every employee will acknowledge that he/she understands when reporting is required, the abuse that must be reported, and what is not child abuse. The report prescribes a form that must be completed when an incident is reported. The only category exempted from these requirements is that of volunteers, a term that may involve members of our organization, among others who volunteer services without compensation.

Now that Proposition 30 has passed in California one should not jump to the conclusion that the budget deficit for the CSU has eased. In fact, as a result of negotiations with the Governor, the Trustees are now required to refund the additional tuition fees for Fall, 2012 students, fees that were to be continued into Spring 2013. Although the CSU no longer faces the \$250 million trigger that would have gone into effect had the tax increase not been passed, the net loss to SJSU still amounts to \$9.3 million. At this writing there has been no word as to how the administration will deal with this large sum. The one possible bright spot in this dreary financial situation is that the Governor has promised to increase the CSU budget for 2013-14 by, as of yet, an undetermined sum. On the other hand, the state's legislative analyst proclaimed the Trustees' 5% increased enrollment projection to be unwarranted, given what the analyst explained as the inefficiencies of the universities. Instead, he suggests more instruction be given online.

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SJSU ERFA Officers, 2012-2013**President** -- Jill Cody**Vice Pres.** -- Carmen Sigler**Secretary** -- Irma Guzman-Wagner**Treasurer** -- Abdel El-Shaieb**Members at Large** -- Marian Yoder
Cindy MargolinSusan Meyers
Academic Senate -- Peter Buzanski**Past President** -- Dennis Wilcox**Ex Officio Members****Newsletter** Gene Bernardini (Editor) and Clyde Lawrence (Layout/Design)**Membership** Wayne Savage **Consolations** -- John Pollock**Activities** Dolores Escobar-Hamilton **Archivist** Lonna Smith
Beverly Jensen **CSU-ERFA Reps** Don Keeseey
Joan Merdinger Bob Wilson**ERFA Member-at-Large**--Adnan Daoud**Webmaster**--Carol Christensen**SJSU ERFA Office****MacQuarrie Hall 438D****email: lonna@pacbell.net • Telephone (408) 924-2478****Visit the SJSU ERFA Website at www.sjsu.edu/emeritusfaculty**

Views and opinions expressed in this SJSU ERFA Newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the editor or of San Jose State University.

University & Academic Affairs News

Budget woes lead to quotas and online teaching

Continued from Page 2

The new, widely reported pilot program of online instruction that SJSU has begun with Udacity (a private, online educational system out of Stanford) may result in some cost savings, but so far the faculty remains wary.

While no students were new admits for Spring 2013, SJSU was given the same quota of students for 2013-14 as during the past three years, namely 21,045 full time equivalent students. However, the Board of Trustees had adopted a budget proposal for 2013-14 that foresees an enrollment increase of 5% plus a faculty salary increase of 3.5%, a paltry sum given that most faculty have had no increase for up to five years. Note that this is only a budget proposal; the state legislature and the governor will act on the proposal later this year. If the enrollment increase is actually funded, then SJSU will be given its share of additional admissions.

New administrators are now appearing. University Advancement has replaced Nancie Bussani with Christina Schultz, who came with outstanding accomplishments at the University of Southern California, and Dixie in Utah. A new dean for the College of Engineering, Dr. Andrew Hsu, will appear in February. He comes from Wright State University, in Dayton, Ohio. He has a Ph.D. in Aerospace Engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology and has a very respectable record in publishing research papers in his field.

The Academic Senate passed a few noteworthy policy recommendations which the President signed quickly. One such policy replaces an earlier

one enacted in 1999, regarding allegations of misconduct in research. The earlier policy was found insufficient by the federal government, and since all federal funds were at stake, the new policy, using to a large extent the language required nationally, is in the new policy. After much discussion, both in committees

and on the floor of the Senate, a new policy recommendation passed concerning the evaluation of teaching effectiveness for all faculty. In order to save funds and conserve resources, student observations on teaching effectiveness will now be administered online instead of on paper forms

After viewing a recent set of photos of the Normandy invasion, John Pollock (English) remembered a poem he had written shortly after visiting its historic sites. Here it is:

The American Cemetery at Normandy
is waiting for a poem.
It has been waiting for a long time.

Its granite markers stand in perfect order,
row after row after row of them.
Their white color, purity itself.

The American Cemetery at Normandy
is patient, patient as eternity.
It is as quiet as death.

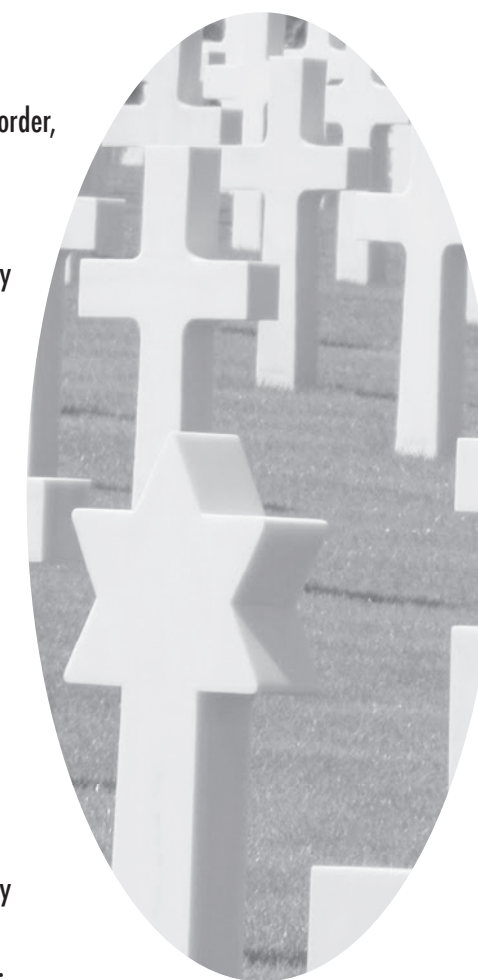
This is the image of prayer
when prayer rises to absolute,
perfect gratitude.

One hesitates to speak
in such a place as this, where
all language is inadequate.

Indeed, the silence here
is ineffable, enormous,
larger than the world.

The American Cemetery at Normandy
is waiting for a poem.
And this, sadly, is all that I can offer.

-John Pollock



Remembrance of Things Past

Sharing memories with our members . . .

A Second Career

**By Arlene N. Okerlund
(English/Dean, H&A/AVP)**

"It's loud. It's brassy. And it's happy. Just like the people who play it." That's what I tell my friends about my love of playing the banjo. Most would rather not know about my second career. In their minds, the banjo is definitely *déclassé*, an opinion that amuses me in its assignment of musical instruments to a sociological stratum.

From the first time I heard a banjo at the annual carnival in rural western Maryland where I grew up, I loved the sound of the instrument. With no movies, theater, or television in town, the carnival--sponsored every June by the volunteer fire company as its principal fundraiser--was the social and artistic event of the year. For an entire week, every evening featured live music--usually a fiddle, several guitars, and a bass. When a banjo showed up, the music sparkled.

That memory never left me. While a graduate student at the University of California, San Diego, I once walked by a pawnshop in downtown San Diego where a banjo hung in the window displaying a price tag of \$35.00. I stopped and stared. It cost way more than I could afford at the time, but something about it intrigued me. When my husband sailed off to Vietnam, I went back to the pawnshop just to see it again. In a rare instance of irrational impulse shopping, I bought it. The banjo hung on my kitchen wall where it remained,

untouched, for 36 years.

Teaching and administration at San José State University offered no time even to think about playing a banjo. But in the year 2000, I took early retirement to write a biography about Elizabeth Wydeville, a medieval English queen. That Labor Day weekend--the first Labor Day in years that I was not grading freshman composition essays--I read an article in the *Los Gatos Weekly* about a banjo "Jubilee" in Palo Alto, CA, sponsored by the Peninsula Banjo Band (PBB).

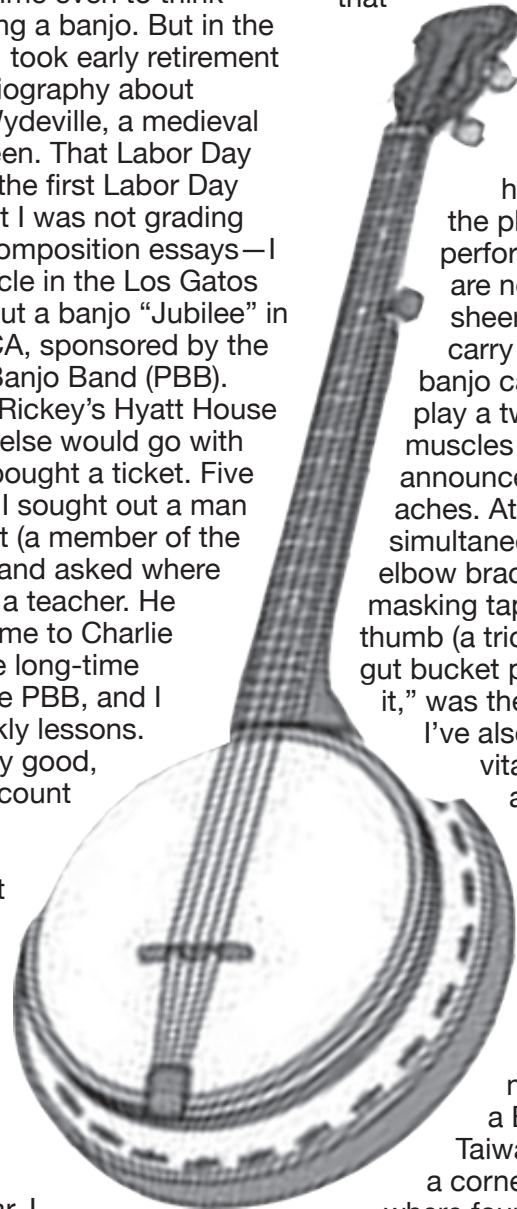
I drove to Rickey's Hyatt House alone (who else would go with me?!) and bought a ticket. Five hours later, I sought out a man in a red vest (a member of the host band) and asked where I could find a teacher. He introduced me to Charlie Tagawa, the long-time leader of the PBB, and I began weekly lessons. I wasn't very good, but I could count to four (4), the basic requirement for strumming back-up rhythm. A star was definitely not born, but I was having fun.

After a year, I passed the audition that allowed me to sit in the back row of the band as a rhythm

player. Daily practice has produced improvement, although I'll never be a good tenor banjoist. Fingers that

first start fretting notes at age 62 don't improve as they pass 74. But I'm learning a lot. Most important, I have learned about the physical demands of performing music. They are not trivial. Beyond the sheer strength required to carry around a 19-pound banjo case and the energy to play a two-hour gig, unknown muscles suddenly appeared, announced by cramps and aches. At one point, I was simultaneously wearing an elbow brace, a wrist wrap, and masking tape to stabilize my thumb (a trick I learned from the gut bucket players). "Play through it," was the advice of Charlie.

I've also tuned in to the vitality of making music, a passion central to the lives of so many people. Everywhere. Gamelon players in Bali and drummers in Botswana display a palpable joy in simply making music. One Saturday morning while visiting a Buddhist temple in Taiwan, I was drawn to a corner of the courtyard where four string players had gathered, sans audience, playing just for fun.



In Croatia and Montenegro, everyone seemed to make music. On the streets of Split, groups of a cappella singers gathered on street corners, happily harmonizing as shoppers lingered to listen. At a local concert, six musicians played homemade stringed instruments carved from single boards. Holes drilled into solid planks functioned as resonators. One evening in Kotor, a dozen women--all of whom had just left their day jobs--visited our boat, arranged themselves in two rows with a conductor in front, and delivered a stunningly beautiful vocal concert. At the end of the first song, my travelling friend leaned over and whispered, "I know what you're thinking. She conducts just like Charlene Archibeque." They were that good.

Playing tenor banjo has allowed me to join the fun. I like playing the music that I had forgotten how much I love: "Beer Barrel Polka," "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee," "I want a girl just like the girl..." ad infinitum. And it reminds me of Shakespeare's cautionary insight:

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems,
and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:

Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

[Merchant of Venice, 5.1.83-88]

Remembrance of Things Past

Sharing memories with our members . . .

Tips for writing your memoir

By James Asher (Psychology)

One of the purposes of our section on *Reminiscences* is to encourage our members to seriously consider writing down their experiences and sharing them with others. Last year, Jim Asher wrote a 260-page memoir of his life, called *Growing Up in Norman Rockwell's America* (which you can find at www.tpr-world.com). It's a sentimental journey into the 1930s, 40s and 50s which brings back the colorful people and events that shaped his life. Here is what he learned writing his memoir, which may be helpful to you in writing your stories.

Writer's block

Just thinking about writing a memoir triggers something in one's brain that whispers, "You can't do it! Your memory of people and events is sketchy at best. It won't work! Don't bother trying!" I discovered that those messages are an illusion. Just sit down at your computer keyboard and type anything you can remember about an earlier event and something magical will happen. A static scene will suddenly morph into a kind of motion picture replaying exactly what happened in real time with the actual conversations of people involved. All you have to do is observe the action, and write what you are hearing and seeing and feeling.

Do some research

Don't hesitate to enhance the event with some research. Little-known vignettes intrigue readers and add enormous value to the memoir. My own memoir includes little-known details about the Korean War, including some about General Douglas MacArthur. He made an unforgivable blunder that escalated a brief "UN police action" that was being successfully concluded into a major war with China that continued for three years with the sacrifice of more than 50,000 Americans. But for all that, MacArthur was always a "soldier's soldier." His motto was, "Don't hit 'em where they are; hit 'em where they ain't." For example, if the Japanese were on the east end of an island, MacArthur would land his troops on the west end with the comment, "Let them hack their way through miles of jungle to get to us. We'll be rested and waiting."

To find out more about MacArthur I interviewed a colleague who served with him in the Philippines. His story: The general came aboard a battleship to review row after row of soldiers standing at attention. He paused in front of a master sergeant who had once served on his staff. MacArthur not only remembered the sergeant's name, but the names of his children. That incident impressed everyone who overheard the conversation, and those who heard about it later. These are the little-known details that are of keen interest to a reader.

How candid should you be in writing your memoir?

My editor cautioned me often, "Do you really want to be this candid?" Whoa! Am I disclosing too many intimate details of my life? If so, what should be withheld? There is a delicate decision-making process every step of the way. After all, I don't want to damage people I have known by revealing secrets best left untold. If I reveal a secret, how can I disguise the identity of the persons involved? All of these issues make

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Chat Room . . .

Special news from and about our members.
Edited by Gene Bernardini

This edition contains news about travels and activities taken from the membership renewal forms. Members are invited to send additional news about themselves to Gene Bernardini at geebernard@comcast.net or by snail mail at 775 Seawood Way, San Jose, CA 95120

• **Gus Lease** (Music, '93) is still teaching a class at SJSU, his 63rd year of teaching. Gus continues to participate as a delegate or board member of several organizations. These include the NEA, CSEA, the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi and the Calif. State Retirees Association. He sang at the opening ceremonies of three of the above-named annual conventions and, as usual, performed at the fall welcoming days on the SJSU campus.

• **Jack Kurzweil** (Electrical Engineering, '01) says, "I know I did things this past year, but I can't remember just what they were."

• **Marjorie Fitting Gifford** (Mathematics, '92) is still a perennial student, having taken a six-week summer course on information systems and being duly impressed with the new social media of Facebook, Twitter, Linked-in, etc. She recently became a registered tax return preparer and is now an enrolled agent qualified to represent taxpayers before the IRS. Her mother died this year, just short of her 101st birthday, and though Marjorie claims to be slowing down a bit, she still enjoys walking on the beach, playing bridge, being a docent at the local Botanical Gardens and serving with Rotary. She lives on the island of Kauai, and continues to issue an open invitation to SJSU-ERFA members to come visit her for a few days or nights. Just let her know when you want to come.

• **John Matson** (Biological Science, '07) and Sharon Parsons (Teacher Education, '09) visited the wine regions of Italy in 2011. (Sharon is a member of the European Wine Bloggers.)

Meanwhile, John recently published two peer-reviewed research articles on the community structure of small mammals in the highlands of Guatemala.

• **Ada Loewer** (widow of Robert Loewer, Marketing, '89) spent several weeks last summer in Indiana, visiting her son's family (including her only grandchild, seven-year-old Amelia) before taking a side-trip to Michigan. At home, Ada remains active, making items for the San Jose Museum of Quilting and Textiles. She also creates cards featuring lace, and lace-trimmed sachets, for the Lace Museum in Sunnyvale.

• **Jerry Kemp** (Audio-Visual Education, '88) writes that he "enjoyed reading the last issue of the Newsletter—especially the reminiscences by Gordon Greb and Peter Buzanski." He asks if there might be interest in an article about his experiences at SJSU from 1958-88, helping faculty with new methods as SJSU went from a "college" to a "university." [The answer is always "Yes." Everyone's reminiscences are welcome and will be taken seriously.]

• **Kay Burdick** (widow of Charles Burdick, History) has moved from Ferndale, in N. California to the Ojai Valley, in S. California. She moved to be nearer her three daughters and is living in a senior living complex called the Gables of Ojai.

• **Ruth Yaffee** (Chemistry, '90) is still traveling. This past fall she took a cruise around New England and the Canadian Maritime Provinces. And, as always, she's still raising Great Danes: "Kyra" is her tenth.

• **James Freeman** (Anthropology, '02) has just completed a 36-

minute documentary called *The Myth of the Buddha's Birthplace*. It's about people from the Indian state of Orissa who believe that the Buddha was born in their village and not in Nepal as most experts believe. The villagers have created an origin myth connecting themselves to the Buddha. Working with Jim was his son, Karsten (a filmmaker) and Dr. Annapurna Pandey, who teaches in Humanities at SJSU and grew up near the village where the video was shot. The video has been accepted in several film festivals and information about it can be found at www.themythofthebuddhasbirthplace.com

• **Kim Unlik** (Recreation & Liesure Studies, '11) has returned home to Ohio after spending the winter in Albuquerque, Tucson and Palm Springs. During that period he completed his assigned chapters in a management textbook and acquired source material for his column published in a monthly parks and recreation magazine.

• **Caryl Hinckley** (widow of Ted Hinckley, History, '90) finally sold her house in Chesley, Washington, and moved to Bellingham. She says, "For four years I owned two houses, three cars and belonged to two university retiree's associations. Now I'm enjoying activities in only one: the Western Washington University Retiree's Association. I miss my friends in the History Dep't. at SJSU and would love to see some of you up here."

• **David McNeil** (History, '05) keeps busy traveling. He enjoyed a tour of north and south India last winter, then spent part of the spring at his home in Tuscany.

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Chat Room

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He also planned a road trip to Yellowstone in the summer.

• **Lonna Smith** (Secondary Ed/LLD, '04) went with her whole family (husband, son, daughter-in-law and baby grandson) to Ohio to celebrate her mother-in-law's 90th birthday. From there, she and husband Michael went on to NY City for theater and museums.

• **Howard Shellhammer** (Biological Sciences, '96) spent a week in London with his son Tom, who is a brewing expert at Oregon State. They attended a black-tie gala in historic Guild Hall and visited a number of historic pubs when his son was not in meetings. [That had to be tough!] He returned to King's Canyon Nat'l Park in July to check up on research plots he's been monitoring for 45 years.

• **J. Michael Sproule** (Communication Studies, '01) participated in the Breaux Symposium on Propaganda Studies hosted by Louisiana State University in March, 2012. His seminar papers will be part of a forthcoming LSU Press book.

• **Jose Villa** (Social Work, '92) and his wife, Clare, had an article published in *Why We Came to Santa Fe* (Pennywhistle Press). It tells the story of the their restoration of an old, crumbling adobe house. Their friends, their eight children and 13 grandchildren, all helped and continue to maintain the 120-year-old adobe. They were inspired by the words of Jose's father, Encarnacion, who used to say, "La tierra es su hogar" ("The earth is your home").



Memoir tips

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writing a memoir more dangerous than writing a novel or a non-fiction book.

Tell them something they didn't know

There is nothing more exciting than a fresh look at something that is ordinary and familiar. Those unique bits of information that we accrue over a lifetime transform every person into what my dad liked to call, "a walking university." There follows some examples from my own life. One of my sisters revealed this personal observation: "When money changes hands, behavior changes." Jacqueline Kennedy once said, "If you don't make it with your own kids, nothing else counts." One of my own favorite stories: In college I was driving my car on a double date. My best friend in the back seat was making amorous moves on his date. She became indignant and scolded him harshly: "You should be ashamed of yourself!" My date, sitting next to me, turned her head and said gently, "Don't fault him for being a man." That impressed me.

An interesting technique

My editor's mother, Edith Robertson, recommended a strategy for recovering the details of the family history. She found that just asking her mother to tape-record her remembrances was not enough. People tend to freeze in front of a microphone. Edith discovered that if she played the role of interviewer asking questions, the information flowed from her mother. Later, she listened to the tape-recordings and wrote the stories into a book, which she published as *Life on a Missouri Farm*.

You didn't mess with Mrs. Robertson

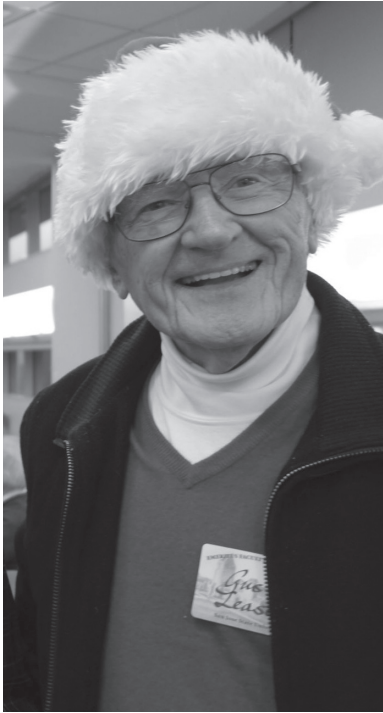
Edith also wrote a memoir called *Stopwatch Teacher*. Before she became a teacher in middle age, she nurtured dozens of foster children in her large home and instructed her own children to call her "Edith" so that the foster children would not feel second class. When she was 50, she returned to school to get a teaching credential and taught 4th, 5th, and 6th grades for the next 30 years. Since she was such a tiny woman, many of her students were taller, which might have presented a discipline problem, but she had the reputation of being able to handle difficult students. One of the secrets she revealed: She rehearsed her son, Jon, who was in the same grade as her students, to enter her classroom on the first day, say something smart to her, to which she responded by slapping his face—with a sound that echoed off the walls along with a loud warning, "Don't you ever talk to me like that, young man!" The stunned students whispered to each other, "You don't want to mess with old lady Robertson." You never know what people will tell you in their memoirs.

Do you really want to go quietly into that good night?

When we're gone, do we really want our great grandchildren to look at photos of us and ask, "Mom, who is this person?" The mother responds, "That's your great grandmother." Then, "Mom, what do you remember about her?" "Honey, I don't remember much." Each of us has an interesting story to tell. Future generations want to know what we were about. It may be a virtue to be unassuming while we are alive, but it leaves no traces or lessons-to-be-learned once we are gone. Now's the time to give others something to learn and something to remember us by.

Yes, Santa was at the Holiday Celebration . . .

That's Gus Lease in his furry Santa hat at left



And so was . . .

Phyllis Keeseey, Pat Strandburg and Ann Williams.



Return Service Requested

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