

THIS MONTH AT OLLI NOVEMBER 2018

by Joe Bailey



The Fall term is in the book. The Wyoming Methodist Church has worked out well for us and I think for them also. Close and ample parking and handicap access are great. Having their parking lot full lets the people passing by know that something is going on here and that has to be good for the church.

This is the first term that I have taken classes in Lewes. Their building is called the Fred Thomas Building and it is an old school. For those of you new to Delaware and only know of du Pont as a powder and chemical company they were also a family who did a lot for Delaware. Pierre S. du Pont saved an arboretum that had been neglected near Kennett Square, PA and made it into Longwood Gardens. It is in Pennsylvania but has strong ties to Delaware and the University of Delaware. The highway that runs the length of the state was long known only as the du Pont Highway. The family built a number of schools in the state. The Negro or colored schools as they were called were far inferior to the white schools. Pierre du Pont built eighty schools for the better education of these children. The Fred Thomas Bldg. was one of these schools. It was named for Fred Thomas a black teacher, principal, and community leader in Lewes.

Back in the late 1950's and early 1960's there was a television show called *The Naked City* Each episode ended with the line; "There are eight million stories in the naked city. This has been one of them."

The couple pictured here is Celeste and Lance Curley. We met in Caroline Baxter's "Delawhere?" class and they are new to the Dover OLLI. This is the only class the Curley's were taking. Like most of us they are lifelong learners. Celeste is from north Jersey, moved to New York as a young girl and grew up there. She and Lance lived in Ontario, Canada before moving back to New Jersey and finally to the Ponds at Bayberry a 55 Plus community near Middletown.



Celeste has a storyteller's gift that will keep the listener interested. Lance was a member of the Peace Corps and served in Iran. He is the only Peace Corps member I have ever met. I mentioned this fact to Gerri and Phil Stephenson the couple sitting in front of me in Dan Pritchett's class on RFK that I was taking in Lewes. The Peace Corps came up because of Eunice Kennedy Shriver's husband, Sargent Shriver who started it.

Gerri said that Phil had been in the Peace Corps and that there were about twenty retired members living in Sussex County that got together occasionally to socialize. I passed on the contact information for the group to Lance. There are far fewer than eight million stories at OLLI and this has been one of them.

Here is another one. There is a good chance that if you grew up in this part of the country you have visited Arlington National Cemetery. Pat Weaver's Documentary class had a segment on it. There is a lot of history and ceremony that goes with this sacred place that honors our war dead. If you visit here you are never alone. Someone is always on duty. If a close family member is buried here you have

a contact person that you can talk to.

When the film ended even those who had visited Arlington were moved by the honor and respect shown. One of our members, Mary Tarr broke the spell when she said, "My husband is buried there." I think that made it more personal to us all.

Mary has been a member here for quite a while. I have been in several classes with her over the years. It's possible to be in class with Mary and not know it. She is quiet and sits in the back of the room and never creates a disturbance. I can't imagine that as a kid in school she was ever sent to the principal's office or even kept in at recess. Then again neither was I. I can't tell you five things that you didn't know about Mary, but here is one. I have been in a couple of writing classes with her and she is a good writer. You are on your own to learn four more.

The end of term luncheon was held at the Wyoming Methodist Church. Once again Rosemary Engle and her crew hit it out of the park. The church has a great area in which to hold the luncheon. Each year the attendance seems to get better. Despite the miserable weather a lot of people showed up. I even saw some of the church staff there. They have been so welcoming to us that it is nice to be able to give back a little bit.

Each year the displays from the creative classes amaze me. The artwork is produced by amateurs. Really, it is. Because my wife is one of the knitters I get a first hand look at what goes into that. Our son stopped over one evening and saw the beautiful green wool socks his mother was knitting for my birthday gift and said to her, "You know Mom, you can buy those." Looking at the Einstein coat project it is clear that Kathleen Dunn has total confidence in her own ability and the skill of her students.

In our lifetime most of us have had some connection to war. War destroys lives, bodies, minds, and property. We have not seen war on our soil but some of our members have felt its effects on their homelands. Sometimes I think our government would like to forget about the veterans but there are people like Jim Brown who won't let that happen. Jim is a Vietnam combat veteran who sets up a display table at some of our events as a reminder that war is hell. Those who die in the protection of our freedom are but a fraction of war's casualties.

On a brighter note some of our instructors shared a preview of things to come. We seem to be adding members which will add courses and hopefully inspire more members, both of OLLI and the Kent County area to teach. Speaking of teachers, Bob Heifetz gave a wonderful talk on the subject. When Bob talks about teaching you can feel his passion. When you sit in a class he is teaching you can feel his passion. I am hesitant to heap praise on our teachers for fear of missing some of their great works. Regardless of the careers we had it is likely that ten to fifteen percent of the people we encountered were awesome and ten to fifteen percent were at the other end of the line with a core seventy percent that were the key to meeting the set goals. We all remember teachers who have made a positive difference in our lives. They may have been professional teachers, or mentors, or friends with a skill to pass on but we learned from them. And we will never forget them. Of the thousand or so students that Bob taught I am sure many would say "Mr. Heifetz was the best teacher I ever had." For all of you professional teachers who loved your job and gave it your best every day, know that thousands of students are saying that you are the best teacher they ever had. You are combat veterans in the war on ignorance.

I have been an OLLI member for six years. As a young man I was never a highly motivated student. As an OLLI member I can't learn enough. For all of you past teachers, present teachers, and future teachers at OLLI thank you for sharing your precious gift. As we sit around the campfires in the afterlife it is the teachers who will have the best stories to tell.

I will close this month with a thought I had about Betty Ipnar. All of us who knew her were saddened by her passing. I believe many people know when they are getting near the end of life's road. For those who had the privilege to know Betty and work with her you know that she was a person of strong will and character. It is my understanding that she died on the way to the hospice center. I can imagine that her last thought might have been something like this, "Driver I prefer to leave with my dignity intact, so if you don't mind you can drop me off at the next corner."