

Newsletter
Spring 2011
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2010-2011

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VISTAS VIEWPOINT

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The cast of the Short Plays: Ray Stone, Phil Wilcox, Ethel Scar, Wayne Hoffman, Jan O'Dowd, Judy Mack, Charlie Schneider and Sally Wilcox

WINTER SOCIAL AT STELLA MARE—DIANE WOLF

Laughter, lots of laughter is what I remember most about the Winter Social. Ray Stone produced and Phil Wilcox directed four ten-minute plays that were perfectly suited to our audience. The players, Wayne Hoffman and Sally Wilcox in *Please Have a Seat and We Will Be with You Shortly*; Judy Mack and Charlie Schneider in *An Honest Arrangement*; Ethel Scar and Phil Wilcox in *Post-Its (Notes on a Marriage)*; and *I'm Herbert* with Ray Stone and Jan O'Dowd. All did a great job of acting. Everyone had such a wonderful time that we hope to have a similar program for the 2012 social. Special thanks to Ray and Phil for giving us all so much laughter.

VALLE VERDE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

VISTAS owes much to the Valle Verde Retirement Community. The majority of our seminars are held there at no cost and we are able to store our equipment in their closet. Refreshments are provided at a nominal cost. In that spirit the Board has presented donations of \$500 each to their employee scholarship fund and social room renovation fund.

DUES

Recently a "dues letter" was sent to all on our mailing list. If you did not receive one and wish to become or remain a member of VISTAS, please use the form on the back of this newsletter. To get the full benefit of your membership add or renew now. Our fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. Your dues fund, among other things, this newsletter, social events (in part), administrative support, badges, computer equipment, Internet access, office supplies, telephone, VISTAS website, brochures, etc. Pony up now, you'll be glad you did.

THEATRE IN THE MAKING—RISA BRAININ

UCSB Professor Risa Brainin brought a new play to life before the eyes of a small group of VISTAS theatre lovers. Pre-play activities included 1) a first reading by the student cast of *Biederman's Match*, a musical adaptation of Max Frisch's *Fire Bugs*, at the UCSB Performing Arts Theatre; 2) a meeting with Professor Brainin on how the play was developed, her directorial style, and other background information; and 3) a chance to watch the intricacies of a technical rehearsal. Everyone attended the play and finally there was a post-play session where Professor Brainin exchanged comments and critiques with the class. A great experience and the student cast was terrific!

SPEAKING OF WONDERLAND—PETER BEURET

Peter Beuret gave a reprise of Lewis Carroll's work for 37 VISTAS members and members of The Graduates. Peter noted that *The New Yorker* informs us Kate Middleton's art-history thesis at Marlborough College was titled "*Angels from Heaven: Lewis Carroll's Photographic Interpretation of Childhood*."

CLOCK ROOM REVEALED—DAVID BISNO

One lovely afternoon in April VISTAS members enjoyed a special program on the new Bisno/Schall Clock Museum at the Courthouse. Gathering in the impressive Mural Room for an orientation by David Bisno, we learned what a treasure we had ticking away for so many years. David explained the mechanism of the clock and how the gallery came about as a result of his VISTAS class, *It's About Time*.

A visit to the tower followed, with David explaining the various components of the clock. Docents were available to talk about the Courthouse and refreshments were served on the balcony. Later, we visited the "art studio" in the basement where Ed Lister is completing the new mural soon to be installed in the clock room. David enthralled the group with a description of the important landmarks in the history of horology and timekeeping so artistically depicted on the mural.

TRACING OUR DNA—DON O'DOWD

In January, Don O'Dowd returned to present a two-session seminar on *Human Migration*. Two previous VISTAS seminars on the subject in 2005 and 2006 had been enthusiastically received. *Human Migrations Redux* focused on new developments in this field, based mainly on masses of DNA evidence and better understanding of climates in the distant past. Over 50 attendees were caught up in the fascinating story of how the earth was peopled; a number of them sent away to have their DNA analyzed to trace their own origins.

SHORT STORY SEMINAR—GENE WALLER

A group of fourteen energetic readers sliced, diced, dissected, analyzed, criticized and praised three famous short stories: *Youth* by Joseph Conrad, *The Dead* by James Joyce and *The Rich Boy* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Everyone contributed insights and opinions with Gene Waller providing background and guiding the lively discussions. There was never a lull in the three-hour sessions even during the refreshment breaks. We came away with an increased appreciation for the short story genre and for the value of careful reading and re-reading to unlock the deeper meanings of a work of literature. We all endorsed a repetition with a new lineup of stories for next year with Gene again leading the way. Watch for an announcement of dates if you are interested in participating.

MAO TO NOW—KATY DREW/PETER KRUSE

In 1958 Katy Drew at one year old accompanied her family to China and lived there until well after university. The child of an American economist employed by the Chinese government, she was raised by a Chinese nanny and attended Chinese schools. While Katy was in elementary school Mao's Cultural Revolution was instituted with disastrous consequences for the country and in particular her generation. Formal schooling stopped for several years and the family ended up being confined to a hotel for a few years. During the seminar Katy was available to answer a myriad of questions and shared stories of what growing up in China was like for an American at that time. Peter Kruse supplied extensive background on the period before, during and after Katy's stay in China. She concluded the seminar by providing us a sumptuous Chinese meal from China Pavilion. The whole seminar was a memorable VISTAS experience.

MODELS OF DEMOCRACY—PAUL WARWICK

Paul Warwick, Professor at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, gave an excellent two-session course covering the different versions of democracy as they exist in the world today. The needs and preferences of country citizens result in how different types of democracies strike different trade-offs. Costs and benefits associated with each trade off were evaluated.

SPEAK UP CALIFORNIA

As part of our efforts to keep informed, VISTAS invited representatives from CA Forward to share their advocacy efforts. They are encouraging grass root efforts to bring more citizens into planning the future of California. Those who attended had a chance to speak up on key issues.

RIVERS OF THE WORLD—WAYNE HOFFMAN

This popular seminar featured seven presentations in three sessions, all by VISTAS members: Sue Mellor, Charles Schneider, Gretchen Bercaw, Barbara Krahn, Ray Stone, Phil Wilcox and Ed Vernon. Each presentation was well-researched and well-received by an audience of close to fifty. One presentation was particularly timely: “The Great Flood of the Mississippi River in 1927” was given on the very day that flooding on that same river was breaking those 1927 records. It wasn’t planned that way. Barbara Krahn must be given thanks for coming up with the Rivers of the World idea many months ago.

CALLING ALL PHILATELISTS—JAN O'DOWD

Are you (or were you) a stamp collector? Does the history of postage stamps (U.S. or international) grab your fancy?

The Curriculum Committee would like to gather a group of stamp enthusiasts to discuss the possibility of developing a seminar on some aspect of philately that would appeal to the general membership as well as to long-term hobbyists. If you would be willing to explore the topic, please reply to VISTAS Lifelong Learning by mail, phone or Email (contact info on Page 1 of this Newsletter).



ATOMIC FISSION MADE EASY—DAVID BISNO

With David Bisno at the podium, the wonders of U-238 and U-235, the physics of splitting the atom, critical mass, etc., suddenly become somewhat comprehensible. As a “master of storytelling” he brought out the drama of brilliant minds in conflict with the events circling around them and their own personal foibles. We learned that even well-meaning, highly educated scientists are human and subject to uncertainties, ambition, mixed loyalties and prejudice. At the same time we learned to admire the courage and humility mingled with extraordinary brilliance in the person of Lise Meitner, all subject to her vulnerability in a society with everything stacked against her. By the end of the class we may not have been able to create our own nuclear bomb, but we certainly did respect those who did.

CREATION OF THE PANAMA CANAL

George Frakes has done a masterful job of presenting this seminar, along with the enthusiastic participation of Barbara Krahn, Ernie Marx, Sue Mellor, Ivan Momtchiloff and Don O’Dowd.

NEED A BADGE?

Contact VISTAS@silcom.com

STALIN: THE COURT OF THE RED TSAR— PETER KRUSE

Veteran VISTAS seminar leader, Ted Anagnoson, led 16 spirited students in a five-session fantasy romp behind the scenes of high politics in the upper reaches of power in the Soviet Union controlled by Stalin. The seminar was based on the seminal work by Simon Sebag Montefiore. The fantasy portion of this was not the facts cited after meticulous research into Russian archives, unpublished memoirs and interview with the children of many important figures of the Stalin era, but rather the manner in which this vast and important country was run by the Georgian peasant.

TECHNOLOGY NOW—WAYNE HOFFMAN

VISTAS has recently purchased a new Windows-based laptop computer. It was reasoned that members who have desktop computers at home are reluctant to do presentations because they simply cannot haul their desktop to the theater, and furthermore they don’t want the hassle of borrowing a laptop from someone. So, they don’t do presentations. This laptop will provide a means for these members to come forward to do presentations, a clear benefit to VISTAS.

The presenter has two choices for his/her presentation. For a simple slide-by-slide presentation the presenter may use Windows Slide Show. This feature is a part of Windows 7 (and all previous Windows operating systems). For a more complex and visually stimulating show a presenter can use PowerPoint.



To keep track of the computer’s logistics and scheduling, we have a “computer custodian;” Wayne Hoffman has volunteered for the job. John Calandro will continue to help presenters get wired-up and computer-ready just prior to their presentation.

Guidelines for computer use were recently sent out via e-mail to all VISTAS members.

KEEPING IN TOUCH



Do we have your Email address? If you are not receiving regular Email announcements from VISTAS then we don’t have it. Just send an Email to vistas@silcom.com and we will happily add your name.

Also, If you would like to dispense with paper flyers, let us know and we will send you flyers through Email only.

