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SJSU ERFA News, Late Spring 2009

San Jose State University, Emeritus and Retired Faculty Association

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The Year In Review

By Don Keesey
(English)

At our annual spring luncheon held on May 8 at the verdant Villages, some 85 members and guests heard San Jose State President Jon Whitmore describe developments in his first year on campus. Despite the universal budget woes and the problems of over-enrollment, President Whitmore gave an upbeat assessment, noting student participation in community service, improvements in student-athletes’ academic performance, and plans for a new Student Union building. He expressed interest in exploring ways EFA could further its goal of helping members maintain ties with the university.

Equally successful was our early April excursion to the new California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park. Fifty members and guests filled the largest bus we could find and spent the day exploring the myriad exhibits in architect Renzo Piano’s innovative building. Those who tried the Academy’s upscale restaurant, the Moss Room, said the food was excellent. These events follow our well-attended Holiday celebration in December and our Fall luncheon where we heard Eric Vettel, SJSU alumus and now Executive Director of the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library, describe recent discoveries in a speech that reminded us how fascinating a...
President’s Message

The Year In Review

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subject history can be. The success of all these events is largely due to the work of our diligent and experienced Executive Board. I must mention, in particular, our Newsletter editor, Gene Bernardini, and our Academic Senate representative, Peter Buzanski. In addition to performing their assigned tasks superbly, both have stepped in many times in the past year to tackle those emergencies that always arise. Their efforts and those of the entire Board have made my job as president not only easy but enjoyable. At the May 8 business meeting we elected a new slate of officers, and I pass the gavel to the capable hands of Bobbie Gorenberg confident that most of the Board members will be staying on and that we’ll see the usual schedule of events next year. We may also see some different things, and here is a chance for you to weigh in. Bob Wilson is heading a committee to review our Constitution and By-Laws to see if any updates are in order. And Bobbie Gorenberg will chair a committee to look into how well we are meeting our stated goals. These include helping retired faculty keep in touch with one another and with the university, securing the status, rights, and privileges of emeritus faculty, and contributing to the university mission. Could we be doing different things or additional things to meet these goals? If you have any suggestions, please pass them on to the respective chairs.

To end on a more disquieting note, while our local Association is ticking along nicely, on the larger scene the news is not so good. Two threats to public employee benefits are emerging from the shadows of the current economic meltdown. Keith Richman is back with an initiative to limit public employee pensions to 50% of final salary. Even more ominously, a Southern California CPA named Paul McCauley is sponsoring an initiative to change the state constitution to allow cuts to current retiree benefits. It’s called “pension reform.” I’m told that this has little chance of passing and no chance of surviving a legal challenge. But then, I was also told that the executives at Wells Fargo knew how to run a bank. You can check the details of these and other initiatives and bills that might affect retiree benefits at the CSU-ERFA website (www.csuerfa.org). And if you’re not a member of CSU-ERFA, consider joining. The organization’s dues are modest and its purpose—to defend the benefits of retired faculty—is more important than ever. These days, eternal vigilance may be the price of solvency.

The Year In Review

We want you to submit! To our newsletter. The EFA News is always in need of fresh material and we want to print your stories, reminiscences and thoughts on all things, old and new. Just write it down and send it in. We reserve the right to edit, primarily for space or clarification, but our primary aim is to share experiences with each other, simply and directly. In whatever form you choose, we’ll accept your submission.

Why not start now? Think about it—though not too long—and submit!

Gene Bernardini
(geebernard@comcast.net)
775 Seawood Way
San Jose, CA 95120
Seen at the Spring Luncheon . . .

At left are Colleen Bickman, Jennifer Whitmore and Peter Buzanski.

Below are Charlene Archibeque and Evelyn Neufeld

At left are Arlene Okerlund, Rob Moore and Mary Bowman

At left, Dennis Wilcox talks with Sebastian Cassarino.

Above are Bobbye Gorenberg and Lonna Smith
By Lonna Smith
(Secondary Education/LLD)
“The problem with this place is that everyone’s too yuppie.”
Yuppie? My mind did a double take. San Jose State, where almost two-thirds of the students are from minority cultures and where huge numbers spoke a language other than English at home, was hardly a haven for yuppies.

I looked intently at the young woman standing next to me. Her light brown hair framed a pretty but troubled face. She was solidly built and looked athletic.

I searched Leanna’s eyes, vainly trying to understand her. She was this semester’s enigma. Sullen in the back of the room, she never raised her hand nor offered comment and, if called on, gave only perfunctory answers.

I had wondered if Leanna’s reluctance to participate revealed a lack of understanding until I read her first piece of writing. It was, in a word, brilliant! I had never seen a student paper this good. If she hadn’t written it in class under my watchful eye, I would have been certain it had been plagiarized.

Curious, I grabbed Leanna after class in hopes of learning more about her. “Leanna . . .

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Sharing memories with our members . . .

Old Lace and My Maiden Great-Aunts

By Robert Loewer (Marketing)
When I was growing up in Buffalo, NY, two maiden great-aunts were very much a part of our family. My father was their favorite and only nephew. Each Sunday the ladies took the street car downtown, where they transferred to another line that brought them to our house. They did this regularly, except when it was our turn to visit them for Sunday dinner. The aunts were sisters of my grandmother. A bachelor brother had died some time before. I had never met the man.

(I continued from page four)

participate. Although she made no friends among her peers, she began to contribute to class discussions, which served to validate my high opinion of her intellect.

One day, she pulled me aside. “I don’t know how much longer I’m going to be here,” she whispered furtively.

“What do you mean?”

“The gang comes down from Richmond every weekend and takes me away. They don’t want me to come back.”

“Can’t you make that decision yourself, Leanna?”

“Not really. The gang is very powerful. They’re telling me I don’t belong here. They need me in Richmond. You don’t know what it’s like. One day I’m just going to leave with them.”

“But you’re beginning to like it here. And you’re doing so well in your classes. And what about your grandmother?”

“I know. I keep thinking about her. But the gang is telling me to leave. You don’t know their power.”

One day, Leanna arrived too late to talk before class. One look at her and I knew something was wrong. She slumped into her chair, avoiding my eyes. Her voice was silent during discussion, and I doubted if she was aware of anything going on in class. Later, while her classmates were working independently, I pulled her into the hall.

“Leanna, what’s wrong?”

“Nothing. I have to take care of it myself.”

“What do you have to take care of yourself?” I asked.

“No. It’s my problem. No one can help me. I got myself into it, and I have to take care of it myself.”

“Leanna, look at me. Look at me now!”

Her eyes met mine. They spoke fear. I continued.

“I care about you, and something is terribly wrong. Tell me now!”

Her eyes filled with tears, which spilled over onto her cheeks. “I’m pregnant.”

I took Leanna in my arms and held her while she sobbed. After a minute or two, she composed herself.

“Is your boyfriend a student here?” I asked.

“No. He’s still in high school. But now he’s in jail. He’s waiting to go on trial for attempted murder. Now do you see why it’s my problem?”

When the class was over I took Leanna to my office. She kept repeating, “I got myself into this mess, and now I have to get myself out of it.”

“Do you know how to get out of it?”

“No.”

“Well, I know what you can do. We have excellent pregnancy counseling here on campus. Will you let me make an appointment for you?”

“You would do that for me?”

“Yes. I’ll make the call now.”

Within minutes, she was on her way to see the pregnancy counselor. The next week, she came to class looking visibly relieved.

“The counselor really helped,” she told me. “I’m fine now.”

I didn’t ask any questions.

A week or so later, Leanna stopped to talk after class. “They’re coming down here every couple of days now. They want me to leave this place. They’re powerful. One day they’re going to take me away, and I won’t be back.”

I never saw Leanna again.

Leanna . . . 1993
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.

• Jose Villa (Social Work, ’92) writes that he and wife Clare “celebrated 53 years of wedded bliss” this past year. They now have four grandkids in college.
• Caryl Hinckley (widow of Ted Hinckley, History) has recently moved into downtown Bellingham, WA, with a home at the top of the Taylor Ave. hill that provides a view of Bellingham Bay to the west and Mt. Baker to the east. She also appreciates being close to Western Washington University and other cultural venues. “Y’all come see me some time,” she writes.
• Lee Walton (Kinesiology, ’96) continues to successfully coach Master’s Water Polo teams. In April of last year he coached the Men’s Masters team to its second world championship title in Perth, Australia. In June, his 55-plus team won their third consecutive National title and his 60-plus team won their first National championship.
• Dick Ellefson (Geography, ’99) maintains an ambitious schedule of travel. Last year, he and wife Arlene drove to Fort Benning, GA, where Dick gave a presentation at the Infantry School. (Patton was once stationed there, and Omar Bradley was its Commandant.) They then traveled through all of Florida: down the Gulf Coast, through the Everglades, on to Key West, then up the east coast to Miami, the Kennedy Space Center and finally to Jacksonville, from where they headed west, toward home. A 7000 mile driving trip!
• Sebastian Cassarino (Foreign Languages, ’92) made his annual summer trip to Italy for one month. He visited with his sister, his nieces and their families, and some old friends.
• Bennie Keith (widow of Lowell Keith, Elementary Education) writes, “I am still here. I enjoy playing Bridge, reading, and hearing from friends.”
• Jean Beard (Biology/Sci.Ed, ’05) has been serving on the Academic Senate’s Heritage, Preservation and Public History Committee. Its current project is to inventory all campus items of historic interest—

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In Memoriam

◆ Jack Eliot Fink (English, ’80) died on March 23, ’09 at a care facility near his home in Menlo Park. Born on March 25, ’17, Jack received his BA in 1939 and MA in 1940, summa cum laude, from Washington Univ. in St. Louis, where he also instructed in English. He was fluent in French, Italian, Spanish and German and became a violinist with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. He came to Stanford in 1949 to study for his Ph.D, at the invitation of Prof. R.F. Jones. While there, he received a Fulbright Scholarship to study at the Sorbonne and completed his Ph.D. in 1954. His doctoral dissertation was on French-English Literary Relations in the 17th Century. He began teaching English at SJSU in 1954 and helped establish the Humanities Honors Program, in which he taught for years. He was an inveterate joke teller, and laughed as easily at the jokes of others as at his own. He married Maxine Hunt, an elementary school educator, in 1957, and during their sabbaticals in 1962 they circumnavigated the globe. After retiring, he played violin in the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra, attended theater and concert performances, and played tennis and skied. He is survived by his wife, and a niece and nephew.

◆ Lowell Walter (Academic Counseling, ’83) died on March 27, ’09 in Rocklin, CA. Lowell was born July 23, 1920 in Owanka, South Dakota. He was married to his wife Bonnie for 58 years. He came to SJSU in 1958 and served in the Office of Academic Counseling and Testing. After retiring, he moved to Washington State from 1988-99, then returned to California. He is survived by his only child David, who lives in San Jose.

◆ William Swanson (Electrical Engineering) died of cancer on April 3, ’09 at his home in Daly City, CA. Born in Minneapolis, on July 10, 1934, Bill took his B.A. and M.S. degrees in Electrical Engineering in 1955 and ’57 from the University of Minnesota, and a second M.S. in Environmental Engineering at Stanford in 1976. He was a highly regarded teacher among undergraduates and taught a wide variety of subjects. Known for his integrity and gentle demeanor, he had a puckish sense of humor and loved puns, puzzles, games, poetry and music. He was awarded several National Science Foundation Fellowships. He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Lynda Weisberg Swanson, and by two daughters from an earlier marriage.
More
Chat Room . . .

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not just buildings.

- **John Matson** (Biological Science, '07) was the team leader for field research in the cloud forests of Guatemala last year. He also decided it would be his last year of FERPing.
- **Alvin Beckett** (Accounting, '82) who now resides in Davis, CA, writes that "Thanks to the EFA and Faculty Wives newsletters, to Washington Square magazine and other SJSU publications, and to our LIVING friends, we continue to feel close to those whom we enjoyed knowing during our 50 years in San Jose."
- **Abdel El-Shaieb** (Management, '06) bicycled on the AIDS Life Cycle tour from SF to LA in June, '07. It’s a 545-mile ride which took 7 days, and for which he was able to raise over $2900.00 in support of AIDS research. He rode the tour once before in '06 and intends to do it again this year.
- **Marjorie Fitting-Gifford** (Math/Computer Science, '92), who resides in Hawaii, would like to be informed well ahead of time about EFA events so she can coordinate her travel plans. (To meet that need, we now announce upcoming events in our Calendar on the first page of the Newsletter and also send out email reminders in advance. In addition, EFA has a website which is kept current: [www.sjsu.edu/emeritusfaculty/].)
- **Nancy Cooper** (English, '89) announces that she lost Andy, her husband of 66 years, in December, '07.
- **Phyllis McCallum-Koch** (widow of Bill McCallum, Biology) reports that she took a fall at her church last year that required 24 stitches in her hand. She stayed home for a while under 24 hour care—which put her play reading on hold.

Penelope

This time, it is Penelope who goes off while Odysseus stays home to mind the kingdom, not to a war, but to the wedding of a special girlhood friend married off to a barbarian to seal a treaty. Then things kept coming up, for twenty years – not monsters so much, though sometimes monstrous things. This is a life, after all.

The god she angered was Zeus who preferred that women stay at home, but he largely ignored her having his own affairs to tend to. So, mostly she lost her handmaidens through natural causes, cholera, accident, love. She lost none to Scylla or Charybdis, giving herself time to sail around. The sirens? They ignored her. No need to waste music on a sister. Oh, yes, there was a man on whose island she spent some time. Though it was clear he was no immortal, sometimes he made her feel as if she might be.

Towards the end, tired of the gypsy life, she traded her last jewel for passage home. The curious Phoenicians thought this dusty, graying woman claiming to be queen a little daft as they rowed her ashore, but queen she was, for an old woman curtsied and an old dog, for once not barking, stretched out its gray head. At the palace, she found her husband besieged by women wanting to be queen.

Odysseus had been faithful in his own way, favoring one woman, then another, weaving relationships at night which he undid in the morning. He had always expected his wife to come back. At her entrance, the suitors sniffed at this unlikely female, but when the king rose and bowed, they turned, gathered perfumes, robes, ornaments, and scattered like bats at dawn to isles where royalty might be a little less canny. That night, the wife and husband lay down in their ancient bed each wondering how much they should say to each other.

--Nils Peterson
By Peter Buzanski

All through the year, the Senate’s four policy committees work through and deliberate contentious issues which usually end in recommendations that are voted on in the April and May meetings, making those the most interesting to observe by policy wonks. The April meeting was a perfect example, with not a single Senator present being able to fall asleep. Surely the most important of the measures passed was the policy recommendation pertaining to the First Year Experience (FYE).

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The goal of the FYE is to increase the retention and graduation rate of entering freshmen. An earlier version of this effort, begun in 2002, was the Metropolitan University Scholars Experience (MUSE), which created a series of general education certified courses, taught in small classes (twenty students maximum). Each course was discipline oriented, yet designed to socialize entering freshmen in what it means and what is required to be a university student. But the unwillingness of many faculty, departments and Academic Senators to approve such a wholesale mandatory requirement made the goal unattainable. By the fall of 2008, this specialized series of courses reached no more than about 35% of students who entered SJSU in fall 2008. Nonetheless, statistics compiled since the beginning of MUSE show the success of these introductory courses. A Senate report stated that for the cohort entering in fall, 2007, “the one-year retention rate for students completing a MUSE course was 6.5% higher than those who did not take any FYE course (83.8% vs. 77.3%).” It further claimed that “enrollment in a MUSE course is associated with higher 1- and 2-year retention rates across remediation status and ethnicity… and there is also evidence indicating a positive impact on graduation rates and time to graduation.”

For the past several years the goal was to require every entering freshman to enroll in such a designated course. But given the current budgetary restraints and continued faculty reluctance, the Senate has abandoned its efforts to make MUSE type courses mandatory. Instead, the Senate has approved a multi-faceted scheme for the development of FYE courses with a wide variety of patterns, to enable as many departments and programs who wish to develop MUSE courses to do so. Learning outcomes for the proposed courses, course criteria and sample course models, are all contained in the policy which the Senate approved. The hope is that FYE courses “will provide data to help the Academic Senate make decisions about FYE courses in the future.” The second and perhaps equally important policy enacted by the Senate was one simplifying the General Education Guidelines. Far too many departments, programs, and entire Colleges at SJSU have been complaining about the general education guidelines, yet edicts from both the Chancellor’s Office and Western Association of Schools and Colleges require onerous provisions for annual assessments of general education certified courses. The new policy adopted by the Senate simplifies in measurable ways these requirements. By linking the processes to the five-year Program Planning cycle, the annual assessments may be one or two page reports.

President Whitmore reported that the CSU Trustees are supporting the proposed measures to be voted on at the special May election because each measure impacts the CSU Budget, which is already depriving the system of huge sums. Incoming California tax revenues are billions short of anticipated amounts, undoubtedly resulting in further cuts to the CSU appropriations.

Whitmore also announced his unwillingness to interview candidates for the office of Provost during the summer when faculty are unable to be present; therefore he will appoint an interim provost who will serve until January 2010 by which time the search should be completed.

Finally the Office of Faculty Affairs announced that a malfunction in the scanning process of 85,000 Students Opinion of Teaching Effectiveness survey forms in Fall 2008 requires them to be rescanned. The faculty most affected thereby are those in their first, third, and fifth year of evaluation, and as a result of this serious situation, all of those affected will be reevaluated.
Late Spring 2009

Academic Senate 2008-09: The Final Session

By Peter Buzanski

As usual, the final Senate meeting of the year is filled with important accomplishments, emotional farewells for departing Senators and Administrators, and the election of the new team for the ensuing year. This year’s concluding session was no different, including the emotional farewell of Carmen Sigler whose retirement is effective August 1. Carmen has been at SJSU for twenty-two years, from faculty member in the College of Humanities and Arts, to Dean, and finally, Provost and Academic Vice President. The Senate wished her well with two standing ovations. President Whitmore announced that a search committee to fill the Provost's position will be formed but candidates will not be brought to Campus until the fall semester, giving faculty an opportunity to interview them. In the meanwhile, Gerry Selter, currently the Executive Assistant to the President, who has been at SJSU since 1968, first as Professor of Chemistry, then as Dean of the College of Sciences, will be the Acting Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

President Whitmore first discussed the bleak financial picture facing the CSU and SJSU, which will be worse if, as expected, the Governor’s propositions are defeated in the special election. He then emphasized the importance of “Sustainability” as one of the key goals for the University. Whitmore's remarks were followed by a lengthy, illustrated talk by the Sustainability Task Force, which had been charged with furthering this worthwhile goal. The Task Force found that of all CSU campuses, a number appear to be leading in sustainability, a smaller number have not dealt with this goal, and a middle group falls in between the two. SJSU belongs to that middle group but aspires to join the leading group. The Task Force report contains a fourteen point program, which EFA members interested in the details can find in the Executive Summary on the SJSU website.

The important policies passed by the Senate included a nine page Policy Resolution dealing with grading symbols, drop and withdrawal policies, and assignment of grades and their appeals, including changes of grades which may affect the integrity of the academic record. The lengthy title of this policy resolution alerts readers to the fact that this was a very controversial measure, portions of which were made necessary by Executive Orders of the Chancellor. On this final reading, which was based on previous revisions, the Senate added amendments which improved the policy.

Less controversial were policy recommendations on priority registration, which passed easily, and, finally, on Strategic Planning. The goal of the latter was to streamline the strategic planning process. The hour being very late, the Senate adopted this recommendation with almost no debate.

In the first act of the 2009-2010 Senate, Michael Kaufman (Physics), the Vice Chair the previous year became the Chair of the Senate. In the elections for Chairs of the four policy committees, four female candidates were chosen. When Kaufman’s term as Chair expires, either in 2011 or 2012, the Senate may be a virtual matriarchal body.

Oh, those Heavenly choirs . . .

By John Pollock, English

Our late night flight from New York to San Francisco included a brief stopover in Las Vegas. After a number of passengers disembarked there, a herd of about 15 loud, unkempt, twenty-somethings clambered aboard to replace them. Pushing and shoving their way down the aisle, the new arrivals grabbed empty seats wherever they could find them, shouting merrily to one another as they settled in for the flight. Assuming they were slightly inebriated escapees from a local gambling joint, my wife and I gritted our teeth in anticipation of a noisy, unpleasant final leg to our journey.

But as our plane began taxiing for takeoff, the rowdy group fell totally silent. Then, very quietly at first, and gradually more and more loudly, they began singing, in perfect harmony, the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s Messiah. As the plane soared up and into the night sky, they sang exultantly. When they concluded their impromptu recital, the rest of us burst into enthusiastic and grateful applause.

Turns out our fellow travelers were members of a choral group from Chico State returning home after a classical music competition in Nevada, not quite the drunken revelers we’d first taken them for. I guess there’s a moral here somewhere: something like “don’t be hasty in passing judgment on folks you don’t know.”
Old lace and great-aunts with elderberry wine

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and what the play was about.
A short time later my high school English teacher assigned each of us to choose a play to read. I was only too happy to go to the school library and hunt for “Arsenic and Old Lace” by Joseph Kesselring. I enjoyed the play tremendously, breaking out in laughter at the plot and the old ladies who were the central characters in the story.

It turned out that Joseph Kesselring had married my father’s cousin. He could very well have visited my aunts and their brother and gotten his inspiration from them. While they had no window seat in which to hold bodies, they did have, like the protagonists, a carafe of elderberry wine always on the sideboard. Even now, some seventy years later, whenever I hear of a production of “Arsenic and Old Lace,” I wonder whether my great-aunts were the actual models for the play. And I sometimes wonder what their reaction would have been to being portrayed as serial killers. I think I know.

The gift that keeps on giving

(Continued from page one)
came to SJSU in the mid-1950s and passed away just two months ago. He also left a bequest to the university. He and his wife Maxine established three endowments: one a scholarship for English majors, one a gift to support the Humanities Honors Program, and another for the School of Education. These will become available at the end of Maxine’s life.

If you are interested, you can get information on how to set-up an endowment or leave a gift to SJSU by contacting Tina Daniels, Director of Planned Giving at 408-924-1123 or email tina.daniels@sjsu.edu.

Jack Fink (English/Humanities), the son of immigrants from Poland, that she considers beneficial to faculty, staff and students; second, the endowment is to honor her parents, Peter and Edna. Both grew up in the Depression and couldn’t afford college. Peter only had an eighth grade education and Edna completed high school, but they made sure Pat got a college education. The endowment is Pat’s way of expressing her gratitude for all they did, and she thinks of it as “vicariously sending my parents to college.”

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