Winter 2020

SJSU ERFA News, Winter 2020

San Jose State University, Emeritus and Retired Faculty Association

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I am happy to report that the ERFA Executive Board is regularly meeting on Zoom to think up ways to promote connections among retired faculty. I conducted one of these meetings from the attic of my daughter’s house in Los Alamos, New Mexico, where I had traveled to welcome a new grandson into the world. As long as we can get connected to the grid, we can participate in Board meetings by Zoom from almost anywhere!

Zoom. The timing couldn’t have been better. It’s a wonderful invention that we all depend upon. Zoom. It’s a name that sounds like a child’s toy or a breakfast cereal, but it has become a verb, an adjective, and a proper noun. I read today that it made founder and CEO, Eric Yuan, a billionaire last year. He is one of 614 American billionaires now. In contrast, 20M people lost their jobs at the start of the pandemic and 13M are soon to lose their extended benefits.

Over 4,000 SJSU students were homeless at the start of the pandemic. Most of these are living out of their cars, and some are benefiting from the new food pantry in the student union designed just for them. What a challenge to be a student in these difficult times, or to be a faculty member trying to teach these students from a distance! Still, most of the students will get a leg up from their university experience, and it will be transformative despite the problems. Many of you as retired faculty members are chipping away at some of these intractable problems, and we would like to know more about your projects, your attempts, and your successes. ERFA through its newsletters and Zoom meetings is a way to share ideas, join forces, and stay connected.

We added to the successful Zoom “college reunions” that many of you attended by hosting webinars and conversations before and after the November election. Garrick Percival and Mary Currin-Percival from the Political Science Department were our invited speakers. An engaging forum followed each presentation with questions about the polling, the effectiveness of political activity, the prospects for the Georgia run-off elections, and the challenges faced by the new administration. Chris Jochim has put a recording for each of these webinars on YouTube, and the webinars are discussed elsewhere in this newsletter. Looking ahead, we will host our annual Holiday Party on December 9 at 4:00 PM. Carmen Sigler and the Program Committee have arranged an on-line performance of the SJSU Choraliers. “See” you there.
President’s message . . . (continued)

As we began to hold meetings and make decisions on Zoom during this pandemic, we realized that we had moved a step beyond our ERFA constitution which didn’t allow for on-line decision-making. It was necessary to propose some amendments that acknowledge our current situation and provide some guidance for the association during future emergencies. At our request, Dave Elliott kindly drafted these amendments with the advice of committee members Carol Christensen, Bethany Shifflet, and Jo Bell Whittlach. The proposed amendments will be included in a future edition of the newsletter and voted on at the annual meeting in the spring.

The statewide Emeritus and Retired Faculty and Staff Association (ERFSA) has also been meeting by Zoom. Our representatives to ERFSA, Joan Merdinger, Nancie Fimbel, and Chris Jochim are representing us at these meetings and reporting on the status of ERFSA’s efforts to advocate for us with PERS and other state entities.

Finally, we have recruited some additional members to the Executive Board who are Zooming with us each month. Jackie Snell will no longer serve on the Membership Committee because she has been elected Vice President and President-Elect. Steve Branz will be her replacement. Beth Von Till has also joined that committee to work on recruitment of new members. Carol Christensen has requested to step down as Webmaster, and Bethany Shifflet has agreed to transition into that role this year. Billy Campsey has been nominated to replace Abdel El-Shaieb as Treasurer, as Abdel transitions out of that role. Joan Merdinger will chair the Faculty Awards committee this year, and Elba Maldonado-Colón will be the Chair of the Nominations Committee. We thank all those who have served and will serve the association.

As you can see, we’ve made a few changes that have allowed us to adapt to the pandemic conditions, but as always, we enjoy your participation and invite your suggestions. Zoom. Zoom.

Tax Deductible donation for ERFA Faculty Awards

By Joan Merdinger

As we approach the holiday season and the end of 2020, your ERFA Board is making its one appeal of the year to request that you make a donation to the ERFA Faculty Research and Creative Activity Award fund. This fund, created by the ERFA Board in 2014, is deposited in the SJSU Tower Foundation and administered by the Tower Foundation, which is a 501C (3) organization. As a result, all donations to the ERFA Faculty Research and Creative Activity fund are tax deductible.

On behalf of the membership of ERFA, the Board has now provided awards of $2500 each for 14 faculty members from AY 2014-2015 to the present. The Board is currently working to provide funding for our planned upcoming awards for 2020-2021. The awards support current faculty – tenured, tenure-track and long-term lecturers – in their research and creative activities.

At our Spring Business luncheon beginning in 2015, the ERFA Board has invited the current awardees to make a short presentation to our members informing us about their work with the award support. It has been heartwarming to hear the gratitude of our younger colleagues for this important and most welcome opportunity to further their research and creative work.

Please keep the momentum going for this initiative by sending a check made out to “Tower Foundation” and on the Memo line include “ERFA Faculty Award.” Please send your check to our Treasurer, Abdel El-Shaieb, 5032 Wilma Way, San Jose, CA 95124. Thank you for your consideration of this request.
In Memoriam
Charlene Leonard (History)
Susana Liu (Library)
Double success!

ERFA Fall speaker events

By Bill McCraw

Our virtual Fall Luncheon Events were a resounding double success. The enthusiastic response to Professor Garrick Percival’s presentation on October 16, “Everything Old Is New Again: Crime Politics and the 2020 Presidential Election,” generated strong demand for an encore post-election analysis, held on November 11.

Professor Percival, Associate Professor of Political Science and Chair of the SJSU Political Science Department, on October 16 examined key factors influencing the 2020 elections, particularly public opinion, the media, political polarization, campaign financing, political parties, and campaigning styles. The lively question-and-answer session that followed his talk generated multiple requests for revisiting the topic soon after the election.

Happily, Professor Percival accepted our invitation for a follow-up presentation on November 11, this time with the special bonus of a co-presenter, Mary Currin-Percival, also an Associate Professor of Political Science. In their analysis of the election returns, they discussed shifts and emerging trends in the voting population, again resulting in an engaging Q&A session.

Fortunately, if you missed these events, you are still in luck. Both talks are available on YouTube. A search for “ERFA webinar” will bring them up.
Report on the Fall ERFSA Meeting

By Nancie Fimbel

CSU-ERFSA is the state-wide organization for emeritus and retired faculty and staff. It makes a quarterly report to the CSU Board of Trustees and has a seat on the CSU Academic Senate. It tracks state legislation, CalPERS changes, and other matters that concern retirees. (To join, go to www.csuerfsa.org. If you join, you can pay your ERFSA and SJSU ERFA dues by automatic monthly withdrawal from your pension payment.)

The SJSU representatives to CSU-ERFSA are Chris Jochim, Joan Merdinger, and Nancie Fimbel. All attended the Oct. 27, 2020 meeting held via Zoom. (The board meets twice a year, but because the April 2020 meeting was cancelled due to COVID 19, this was the only meeting of 2020.)

Romey Sabalius, a SJSU faculty member and the CSU faculty representative to the Board of Trustees, reported that there is a hiring freeze except for the faculty needed to staff the new state-mandated ethnic studies course required of all undergraduates. He also reported that CSU enrollment is up 1% this fall. Auxiliaries are down 70% because so few students are on the campuses.

For the last several years, CSU-ERFSA has been losing membership. Admitting staff to the organization, a change in the last two years, is one action taken to increase membership. Staff are not joining ERFSA at the rate hoped for yet. Campus volunteers are being sought to try to bolster staff membership. The Executive Board is also attempting to increase member benefits to attract new retirees. The Board has formed a partnership with Ambia, an insurance company that provides travel discounts as well as vision, long-term and other forms of insurance. Ambia has promised to attract new members to the Association. A new ERFSA website is the first joint project. The Executive Board is also developing partnerships with a wine company and a chocolate maker. An additional action being taken is to work more closely with the system office and campuses to receive accurate and complete retirement and contact information when faculty and staff retire. Harold Goldwhite, the Executive Director, is specifically assigned to this task.

Committee chairs reported that Optum RX will remain the benefit manager for CalPERS during 2021 and that rates for the CalPERS long-term care program are under review. The CSU Academic Senate is wrestling with the legitimacy of a campus administrator removing a faculty member’s emeritus status.

The board elected Jerry Schutte as the ERFSA representative to the CSU Academic Senate.

Call for Nominations

At the next SJSU-ERFA annual business meeting (possibly still a Zoom meeting), the Nominations Committee will present a slate of candidates to serve on the Executive Board in 2021-2022.

The elective positions to be filled this year are:

- Vice President/President Elect (to serve as President 2022-2023, and Past-President 2023-2024)
- Secretary (2-year term)
- Academic Senate Representative (1-year term)
- One Member-at-Large position (2-year term)

If you are interested in nominating a candidate for any of these positions, including yourself, or have questions about making a nomination, please email Elba Maldonado-Colón, Chair of the Nominations Committee, at elba.maldonado-colon@sjsu.edu.

Nominations close on January 19, 2021
On October 26, Charlie Faas and Vin Del Casino presented the 2020 – 2021 Budget to the Academic Senate. Here are some interesting take-aways from their presentations:

- The impact from the pandemic response will be felt for several years. We should not expect the CSU to get any additional funding from the state in the foreseeable future.
- Only the CSU System can call for furloughs. At the campus level, we are only able to do layoffs. SJSU is not planning to do that this year.
- A comparison of student fees charged by nine other comparable institutions shows that the CSU's fees are the lowest, with the average fees almost $12,000 a year compared to our fees of just over $7300 per year.

Impacts to our budget:
- We saw an $18.6M reduction in state support.
- Enrollment impacts of $16M included:
  - Loss of 500 Non-resident students and 655 Resident students ($4.2M)
  - Average Unit Load Increase ($1.1M)
  - Special Enrollment Allocation ($2.2M)
- Mandatory Costs ($2M)
- COVID-19 Impacts ($43.7M)
- Transformation 2030 ($12M)
  - Faculty Recruitment
  - Investment in Research and Innovation Infrastructure
  - Other: Faculty Startup, Website Redesign, Diversity Positions
- To cover these losses, we have used 60% of our Reserves.

CARES Act:
- Safety measures ($3,2M)
- IT for teaching online ($775,000)
- Academic Support including Lab Boxes, Teaching Online and Summer Institute ($2.6M)
- Refunds for Housing, Meal Plans and Parking ($10M)

2020-21 Targeted Reductions:
- Base Enrollment Reduction ($2.3 M)
- One-Time OE&E Reduction ($1.73M)
- One-Time Student Assistance Reduction ($1.16M)

Faculty Hiring:
- We hired 67 new Tenure Track faculty this year
- To meet the new Ethnic Studies requirement, we will begin by hiring predominantly Tenure-Track faculty as a “cluster hire” like we did for Fire Science.
- We will have until 2024-25 and we plan to implement incrementally but the final directive still hasn’t come down.
By Nils Peterson

First light and first pee arrive together. Lingering last dream. Find paper. Find pen. Drat. Find one that writes. Hesiod said first there was Chaos. Well, at least that’s something. We say, first there was not even nothing. Then the Big Bang.

Well, Not with a Bang. There was not even nothing before there was everything. Whatever will be arrived all at once in a great chord, all the notes, and all the almost-notes between.

our new sun shone out of itself in all directions its light set forth bravely into immense darkness our earth caught such a small part – yet it is the manna on which we live

Space-time curves. Beyond, nothing, or maybe the not-nothing. How far’s the edge? Close enough. How far’s the edge of your edge? Far enough? What’s there? a desolation? a forest? the sea? a heaven?

language is the straw we use to make bricks out of the clay of the world

Rain steady on the roof. Far shore lost. Sea quiet, gray, introspective – like me, I think, entering from stage left. This is what we’ve made language for, to enter the world’s drama as player, not just reflex towards food or away from the saber-tooth.
Chat Room… Special News from and about our members.

This column contains news about travels and activities taken from the membership renewal forms. Members are invited to send additional news about themselves to Nancie Fimbel at fimbeln@gmail.com or by snail mail at 239 Cypress Point Drive, Mountain View, CA 94043

- **Betty Auchard** (Associate Member): In October Betty published a new book titled *Posing Naked and Other True Tales*.

- **Anne Fountain** (World Languages & Literature ‘12): In Feb., Anne traveled to Argentina, returning home in March just in time to quarantine. In April and May, Anne and husband **Mike Conniff** co-taught a course on the Cuban Revolution for Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Santa Clara University. In April, Mike published a novel titled *The Great Panama Railway Caper*. In June Anne published two tributes to acclaimed Cuban intellectual Roberto Fernandez Retamar with whom she had a three-decades-long friendship. Retamar was the President of the hemispheric cultural center Casa de las Americas from 1986 until his death in 2019. He was noted for his poetry and essays. Mike is at work on a historical novel about Brazil.

- **Jane Day** (Mathematics ’05): Jane’s husband Walter passed in April.

- **Shirley George** (Associate Member): Bill George (School of Music and Dance ’05) died in March from surgical complications.

- **Larry Gerston** (Political Science ’09): Larry’s fourth children’s book, *Spencer Spider Meets a Bully* was published this year. He also published the 15th edition of *California Politics and Government: A Practical Approach* with Mary Currin-Percival, Garrick Percival, and Terry Christensen. Finally, after 40 years, Larry retired from his position as political analyst at NBC Bay Area Television.

- **Vida Kenk** (Biological Sciences ’06): Since June 2020, Vida has been the President of the Calaveras Big Trees Association, which raises funds to support the educational and interpretive program of Calaveras Big Trees State Park. The main income comes from the store in the visitor center, which was closed for over two months because of the corona virus. Now the store is open to 10 or fewer masked visitors at a time. Vida urges us to visit, especially to see the fall colors of the dogwood trees.

- **Manjari Ohala** (Linguistics/Language Development ’14): Manjari lost her husband John in August.

- **Nils Peterson** (English/Humanities ‘99): Nils’ collection of poems and essays *All the Marvelous Stuff* was chosen as the best book in the poetry category at the 2020 San Francisco Book Festival. The book features art by SJSU art professor Patrick Surgalski and individual art pieces by SJSU professors Harry Powers (Art & Design ’91) and Steve French (deceased) and their wives Lynn Powers and Wanda Waldera. SJSU art professor Joe Miller designed the book. Another book of poetry and essays, *The Dear Time of Our Talking*, is forthcoming. It details Nils’ work with poet Robert Bly over 30 years. In his retirement home Nils has a half-hour weekly TV show during which he reads poems and stories.

- **Joanne Rife** (University Relations ’92): Joanne says what we are all thinking: “What can I say? Going anywhere now-a-days is fraught.” Her first camping trip this summer was on August 18 to Big Basin Redwoods State Park three hours before she was evacuated with 22,000 others as the CZU Lightning Complex Fire bore down on the park. Her heart goes out to those who lost homes and she sends kudos to the brave firefighters.

- **Terri Thames** (Counseling Services ’11): Terri is continuing to explore painting with acrylics. She says it is “tons of fun and completely unlike anything I ever did professionally.”

- **Ruth Yaffe** (Chemistry ’90): Ruth reports that she still has a great dane, her tenth!
In late November of each year, every Medicare recipient receives a letter from Social Security titled “Social Security Administration Important Information.” This letter informs each recipient of the rate for the Medicare deduction from his/her Social Security monthly check to pay for Medicare Part B and Medicare Part D benefits for the upcoming year. As retirees in CalPERS, you are reimbursed each month – in your retirement CalPERS check – for the basic Social Security Medicare Part B premium. For 2020, the standard Medicare Part B premium reimbursement was $144.60 per person.

If you think you may be eligible for additional reimbursement because you have an IRMAA (income-related monthly adjustment amount) which increases your premiums due to a higher income, you must apply to CalPERS in writing, and this must be done each year. You are also able to apply for IRMAA reimbursement for prior years.

For each method of application, you need to include a copy of your November 2020 letter from the Social Security Administration which describes your benefits for the upcoming year (make a copy of each and every page). If you are married, include a copy of the complete letter to your spouse, if s/he is included in your CalPERS benefits. You can apply for your IRMAA reimbursement in one of the following three ways:

1. Mail your written request along with the required materials to: CalPERS Member Account Management Division, Attention: Medicare Administration, P.O. Box 942715, Sacramento, CA 94229-2715;
2. Fax your written request and all the required documents to the following: (800) 959-6545; or
3. Go to your individual CalPERS account and upload your required documents directly to CalPERS.

Expect a response from CalPERS within a few weeks. It will then take from 30-90 days before the additional reimbursement is reflected in your CalPERS retirement check. See Medicare Enrollment Guide, August 2020.8.1, p.16 (CalPERS Health Benefits Program, Publication HBD-65).


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**Our New Look**

You will have noticed that the Newsletter has a new look. Now that nearly all our members are receiving the electronic version, it no longer makes sense for that version to be simply a copy of the print edition. Starting with this edition, our layout man, Clyde Lawrence, will be experimenting with various formats that allow greater use of graphics, color photos, and hyperlinks.
By Lonna Smith

The Rose of Sharon bushes are still there separating the driveway from the backyard. Planted well-over 60 years ago, they have easily survived frigid cold, summer heat, careless pruning and insects.

My mother planted those shrubs not long after we moved to our house in Pittsburgh. They grew quickly, their large, thick leaves providing a good barrier between grass and pavement. Each summer, the Rose of Sharon bushes produced large, purple flowers. At first, we thought them pretty, but as the years went by, we tired of them. The petals were fleshy and messy when they dropped, and the flowers never smelled anything as sweet as a rose. When Shakespeare wrote, “That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” he must not have known about the Rose of Sharon.

When they wore out their welcome, Mom tried to get rid of them. Experimenting with one, she pruned it down to inches, and when those branches grew back and leaves started sprouting, she dug it up. A short time later, it popped back up out of the ground, so my mother dug it up again. When the darn thing popped back up, she declared, “These ugly things won’t give up. But I am.”

I guess she knew she’d met her match, but in general, Mom wasn’t a quitter. At the far end of the back yard, there was a rose garden, the kind Shakespeare wrote about. There were probably ten or so rose bushes growing out there in full sun. My mother pruned carefully, watered sufficiently and fed them well. Those rose bushes liked the sun and all the attention they got and gave her lovely blooms, but those flowers never lasted for long. You see, there were enemy forces determined to thwart my mother’s rose-growing ambitions. Mom saw the roses as potential bouquets in our living room, but Japanese beetles considered them dinner.

What ensued was truly the War of the Roses. Almost daily during the growing season, my poor mom would hike to the back 40 to inspect her troops, only to see they had already been decimated by the enemy. I remember watching from the kitchen window, and even though I was far from the battle, I could hear my mother curse as she snatched the beetles off the blooms, threw them to the ground and crushed them with her foot or a trowel. She fought the war on a daily basis, but those Japanese beetles won every battle.

Mom wasn’t the only garden warrior in the family. Dad waged his own personal campaign against crabgrass. Each thick blade was his enemy, and death the only option. Growing up in New York City, this was his first foray into grassy battle, and he soon found out that pulling the crabgrass out of the lawn was useless. “The damn stuff just grows back,” he would moan. “I guess I’ll have to get it at its root.”

Borrowing Mom’s trowel, my father went on the attack again, digging around each crabgrass settlement until our lawn looked like a minefield. Besides, the weeds just grew back. Obviously the trowel wasn’t the right armament. General Daddy might have lost the Battle of the Trowel, but the war was still on.

One day he came home, triumphant, and proudly showed us his new weapon. It was a metal rod with a handle on one end and something that looked that a snake’s tongue on the other.

“See this,” he announced, “It’s a weeder, and it’s made to cut and dig out the roots of a weed. When I stick it in the crabgrass, the forked end will slice through the roots, and it will also let me scoop them out. It won’t leave a big hole like the trowel did and it’s much more deadly.”

From then on, almost all my memories of Dad out in the yard are of him marching on the battlefield, eyes down searching for the enemy. The war was on.

First came the reconnaissance. “Aha! I spotted you. And now I’m going to kill you!” he yelled.

Next was to ready the arms. Raising his in the air while holding his precious weeder tightly, he would stare down, eyes on the diminutive enemy.

Now the strike. From high above his head, and emitting a guttural grunt, Dad plunged the weeder into the unsuspecting crabgrass, decapitating the helpless soldier and eviscerating its remains. Victorious, he would hold the fallen enemy up for all to see while addressing it directly. “I gotcha, you damned crabgrass!”

Then on he would go, eager for the next battle and sure victory only a few feet away.
As a result of the need for virtual rather than in-person communication during the pandemic, the ERFA Board has migrated all our formerly in-person programs and events to Zoom. You have probably read previous emails from Tim Hegstrom, ERFA’s President, explaining that the organization is seeking to create digital activities that will allow us to remain connected with former friends and colleagues. The program committee has already sponsored several very well-attended College and Department reunions for ERFA members. These have given us the opportunity to connect with colleagues as distant as Maine, Florida and Maui.

We are pleased that some of these College and Department Reunions are continuing on a bi-monthly or quarterly calendar. Some of you may already have participated in virtual reunions for your home college or department, and we are also thinking that it would be wonderful to reconnect with other groups of former colleagues with whom we have worked through the years. Watch your email in January for our new Zoom Reunion offerings!

Want to **Zoom** with us?

By Mary-Jo Gorney Moreno

Nursing faculty enjoy a Zoom reunion.