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The RAPS Sheet

The newsletter of the Retirement Association of Portland State

OCTOBER 2020

Retirement Association of Portland State

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Oh, the stories they wrote!

KATHRYN AND JOHN KIRKLAND

retired from PSU in August 2019 with a combined 62 years of service writing stories about PSU people, programs, and history.

The Kirklands share some of those stories Thursday, October 15, at the monthly member meeting with a presentation entitled “Behind the Headlines: Reflections on *PSU Magazine* Cover Stories.” The meeting will be presented via Zoom, the video conferencing platform that allows members to participate using their computers, tablets, or smart phones.

John Kirkland was first to join Portland State in the spring of 1987, as a freelance writer. A few months later Kathryn joined the Office of Publications as editor of *Currently*, the faculty/staff newsletter, and *PSU Magazine*. John subsequently became a staff member in the Office of University Communications.

Over their three decades at Portland State, the Kirklands contributed to more than 100 issues of *PSU*



PSU Magazine cover, fall 1994.

Magazine (renamed *Portland State Magazine* in 2007). John wrote dozens of the magazine’s cover stories and many other feature stories. As editor, Kathryn’s responsibilities included choosing the cover art for each issue. Their presentation to RAPS will include a look at some of the most memorable covers and the stories behind them.

The Zoom meeting starts at noon on October 15 with the “Zoom Room” opening at 11:30 a.m. to enable RAPS members to log in ahead of time and visit with each other. RAPS will provide the link to join the meeting several days in advance of the event.



John and Kathryn Kirkland

CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

RAPS embraces online meeting technology

NEWS FLASH: You can teach retirees, even those uncomfortable with newfangled technology, how to use computers to participate in virtual meetings.

I spent my working career writing computer software. I began programming computers while studying engineering in college. I was never a “hardware



person.” I have never been an early adopter of new gadgets. I kept using my flip phone for years, only getting a smart phone late in the cell phone game. My wife and I purchased a new television in April. Neither of us has yet

programed our Xfinity remote to actually talk to our computer for some pretty basic functions (volume control, power on/off, mute, etc.). I still rely on my children (who are in their 40s) for technical support when it comes to smart phones and social networking applications.

I have been seen as computer literate but still empathize with my age cohort. Many of us perceive technology as tricky and hard to manage. I understand that some portion of our RAPS membership is not comfortable with personal computers, email, online banking, social networking, and other tools in common use in the 21st century.

As my co-president, Pat Squire, discussed in the September *RAPS Sheet*, we are facing challenges because of attempts to keep ourselves and others free from COVID-19. The majority of RAPS members are not willing to meet in person until it is much safer. We know even moderately sized meetings are not allowed at PSU and will not be allowed for quite a while. The RAPS Board came to the conclusion: we must have virtual events for RAPS for some

number of months into the future. We held some training for RAPS members regarding the use of Zoom. We had some eager members attend, in order to get a feel for how virtual meetings work. Retired folks can learn new technology! Can they enjoy the experience of a virtual monthly meeting?

RAPS held its September meeting with President Steve Percy on Friday, September 11. We were pleased that our RAPS members stepped up to the new world of meeting at a distance using technology. By design we had the virtual meeting open 30 minutes before the actual beginning time of the formal presentation. Thirty individuals joined the meeting; most came on the Zoom call with plenty of time to make certain their computer, laptop, tablet, or mobile phone could connect successfully to the online member meeting. We joined “using audio” and shared our video as well. Zoom turned out to be quite effective supporting social interaction. We had a good group visit before the presentation.

We had an informative presentation. The president fielded questions from the audience. Participants enjoyed themselves and are now looking forward to more virtual interaction with fellow RAPS members over the next few months of forced social distancing.

I hope you and your loved ones are doing well. The fires and smoky air all up and down the Pacific Coast have been historically bad. As I write this the air quality, at least in the Portland area, is much improved. Thank you, wind and rain. I know some of you have had to leave your homes due to Level 3 or Level 2 evacuation orders. Hopefully this newsletter finds you safely back in your home.

—Steve Brennan

RAPS Group Reports

Book Group

THE RAPS BOOK GROUP met on September 15 and, via Zoom, discussed *A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II* by Sonia Purnell. This is the biography of a woman who became the head of a vast spy ring during World War II, and was important in the French Resistance.

We were awed by her ability to organize and carry out seemingly impossible feats of sabotage and disruption in Nazi-occupied France. We were also intrigued by her inability to obtain status in the wartime agencies organizing the fight, including a reluctance to recognize her heroism after the war—a reminder of how rapidly the status of women has changed.

Our selection for October is *The Invention of Nature* by Andrea Wulf. The book is well reviewed, with many awards, and praised by a group member who has read it. It is a biography of Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), who was an intrepid explorer and the most famous scientist of his age. His work changed the way we view nature and man's

relationship to nature. We are looking forward to learning more about this most interesting man.

In November we will read *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich, the story of a struggle to preserve Native American rights to land in South Dakota. As described on the Amazon website, "In *The Night Watchman* Louise Erdrich creates a fictional world populated with memorable characters who are forced to grapple with the worst and best impulses of human nature. Illuminating the loves and lives, the desires and ambitions of these characters with compassion, wit, and intelligence, *The Night Watchman* is a majestic work of fiction from this revered cultural treasure."

Book Group meets the third Tuesday of each month, traditionally in the homes of various members. Currently we are using Zoom for our meetings and gradually becoming more comfortable with that format. Any RAPS member is welcome to join the group.

—Joan Shireman

Bridge and Hiking Groups

BRIDGE GROUP AND HIKING GROUP activities have been suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Upcoming RAPS events

OCTOBER

Thursday, October 15

"Behind the Headlines: Reflections on *PSU Magazine* Cover Stories," presented by recent PSU retirees Kathryn and John Kirkland. Kathryn is the former editor of *PSU Magazine* and *PSU Currently*; John was a staff writer in the Office of University Communications. Presented via Zoom.

(See story on page 1.)

NOVEMBER

Thursday, November 19

"The (Not So) Final Frontier: Portland State on SW 6th Avenue," presented by Bryce Henry, PSU's archivist for Architecture, Engineering, and Construction Archives (AECA). Presented via Zoom.

DECEMBER

Thursday, December 10

Annual Holiday Brunch, held at St. Augustana Lutheran

Church in NE Portland. Likely to be changed to a virtual celebration.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021

The political scene and economic climate dominate the first two presentations of 2021.

On Thursday, January 21, political science professor Christopher Shortell will discuss the outcome of the 2020 national presidential election, and on Thursday, February 18, Tom Potiowsky, retired economics professor and former economist for the state of Oregon, will bring RAPSters up to date on the state's economy.

The March meeting traditionally begins with a potluck lunch followed by a presentation by Christine Meadows, director of PSU's opera program, and PSU opera students singing excerpts from the spring opera. Will there be a spring opera? We don't know. An opera presentation on Thursday, March 18, is still on the schedule; a potluck seems unlikely at this point due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In memoriam: Basil Dmytryshyn, 1925-2020

BASIL DMYTRYSHYN, who served Portland State for more than 30 years as a professor of history, died August 27 in Salem at the age of 95.

Professor Dmytryshyn was born in Poland to Ukrainian parents, Euphrosenia and Frank Dmytryshyn, on January 14, 1925. The youngest of three children, he grew up on a farm in Barvinok and was educated both at home and in boarding schools.



PSU Archives Digital Gallery

By fall 1943, Professor Dmytryshyn was an elementary school teacher in Zyndranova, a town about two miles from the family farm. One day in mid-December, a German police officer came into the principal's office. Professor Dmytryshyn was called into the office and placed under arrest; it was part of a sweep by the Germans, who were rounding up "potential troublemakers"—teachers, students, and intellectuals. According to a memoir the professor wrote for his family, he grabbed the officer's weapons and ran.

It was the beginning of a harrowing journey that led Professor Dmytryshyn to fighting with a Slovak resistance unit, evading the German SS, narrowly avoiding a one-way trip to the Soviet Union, and, after the war ended, a long and difficult journey to the West. He eventually learned that many of those who were rounded up that December day in 1943 were shipped to Auschwitz and Dachau.

In April 1945, with the war in Europe nearing its end, his partisan group was traveling westward to Monrovia. "One day, in a casual conversation with a Soviet soldier, I told him I was a Ukrainian," he wrote in his memoir. "Next day, I was arrested." Incarcerated, interrogated daily, roughed up, and eating little, he was transferred a month later to Bratislava, where the Soviets had established a repatriation center for those who had fled the USSR. "I wasn't a Soviet citizen," he wrote, "and to this day, I don't know why I was put there."

Professor Dmytryshyn slipped out of the repatriation center and headed home to Barvinok. There, his mother and sister told him that Polish communist authorities were inquiring regularly about his whereabouts. He left and headed to the Czech border. He eventually reached Germany, where he made his way to a displaced persons camp in Mittenwald. Eighteen months later, in January 1947, he disembarked from the SS *Ernie Pyle* in New York City.

His daughter, Tania Thompson, explained in an article written in 2006 that her father learned English through "English for Foreigners" classes and "endless showings of Abbott and Costello and Hepburn and Tracy movies." After

applying to several universities, he chose the University of Arkansas, where, according to an article in the winter 1986 edition of *PSU Perspective*, he felt confident "he wouldn't run into people with whom he could speak any of the several European languages he knew." The young woman who processed his first tuition payment was Virginia Roehl. They married on July 16, 1949.

After earning a B.A. in 1950 and an M.A. in 1951 from Arkansas, he completed a Ph.D. in 1955 at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1956, after a year of postdoctoral work, he accepted an assistant professorship at Portland State.

Professor Dmytryshyn spent his career examining Russia and became a recognized authority. He published more than 20 books and more than 150 articles and reviews in professional journals around the world on diverse aspects of Russian and Soviet history. Among his books are *A History of Russia* and *USSR: A Concise History* and the source books *Medieval Russia* and *Imperial Russia*.

Research and teaching stints took him to Harvard University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Hokkaido University in Japan, and the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He was also a fellow at the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies in Washington, D.C. Professor Dmytryshyn spent 1967-68 in Germany on a Fulbright Fellowship, reviewing and assessing Slavic research and studies centers at European universities.

Back on the Portland State campus, his teaching and research earned him two consecutive John Mosser Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. In 1985, he was selected for the Branford Price Millar Award for Faculty Excellence. He retired from Portland State in 1989 and was appointed professor emeritus. His continuing research and publications were recognized by the Retirement Association of Portland State with the Outstanding Retired Faculty Award; he shared his life story with RAPS members in October 2006.

He was predeceased by his wife, Virginia, who died in 2018, and his parents and two sisters. He is survived by daughter Sonia, son-in-law Ben, granddaughter Elizabeth, grandson-in-law Kehl, and daughter Tania.

Contributions in Professor Dmytryshyn's memory may be made to the Oregon Historical Society, University of Arkansas Foundation, Portland State University Foundation, and Corban University.