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Retirement Association of Portland State
(RAPS)

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RAPS Sheet, Summer 2021

Retirement Association of Portland State

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The RAPS Sheet

The newsletter of the Retirement Association of Portland State

SUMMER 2021

Retirement Association of Portland State

Portland State University—RAPS
Post Office Box 751
Portland OR 97207-0751
Campus Public Safety Building
Second Floor, Room 212
SW Montgomery at Broadway

Office Manager

Eben Yemoh
Telephone: 503-725-3447
Email: rapsmail@pdx.edu
Office hours: Suspended
Campus mail: RAPS
Web: www.pdx.edu/raps

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RAPS gears up with fall programs

Four programs—plus the Summer Picnic—are set as RAPS kicks off the 2021-22 program year. Mark your calendars and join your fellow RAPSters in person or on Zoom! Summer Picnic details are at the bottom of this page.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

Guided tour of Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA) featuring an exhibit on the French-American artist Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010).

Although best known for her large-scale sculpture and installation art, Bourgeois was also a prolific painter and printmaker. Fariborz Maseeh Hall (formerly Neuberger Hall).

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21

“Inside ‘The Cube’: PSU’s Idea Lab for Innovation and Entrepreneurship,” presentation by Juan Barraza, director of Student Innovation, PSU Center for Entrepreneurship (PSUCE), and

two students in the program speaking on the center’s activities and how the students brought their ideas to fruition. Room 333 SMSU.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18

“Acting on Equity and Racial Justice,” presentation by President Steve Percy and Ame Lambert, vice president for Global Diversity and Inclusion, on the University’s efforts to combat racism and advance social justice across campus. Room TBA.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9

Annual Holiday Party, Augustana Lutheran Church, NE Portland.

Mark August 19 for RAPS picnic

ALL RAPS MEMBERS and their families are invited to the RAPS Summer Picnic, the annual kick-off for the RAPS program year. And with the pandemic (hopefully) easing, the picnic is back this year at its usual venue, Willamette Park, 6805 SW Macadam Avenue.

The picnic will be held on Thursday, August 19, beginning at noon, at the park’s Picnic Shelter A.

Please bring a salad or a dessert to share and a beverage of your choice; the permit for the picnic allows alcoholic beverages. RAPS Board members are in charge of entrees, tableware, napkins, tablecloths, and bottled water.

Metered parking is available at the picnic site. Both the shelter and the site are accessible to people with disabilities. The park is also served by buses 35, 36, and 99. Willamette Park stops are 3620 and 3622.

Please call Nancy Eriksson, 503-913-7200, if you need more information.

CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

After a year of haggis, let's enjoy better fare

WELL, TO SAY THAT the past year and a half has been unique, scary, and challenging is probably a gross understatement. I saw a cartoon recently that said, "If the year 2020 was a food truck it would serve only haggis."

I am proud to say that RAPS did not fold its tent during this time but offered programs preceded by social get-togethers via Zoom. Although Zoom is no substitute for face-to-face social interaction, it has been a decent substitute while we've been keeping safe.



Given the results of our recent member survey (see page 6), it looks like the clear majority of us want to return to meeting in person on campus starting this fall term. For everyone's safety we request that members and guests who visit our events be fully vaccinated. The survey results also reflect that we prefer having a light lunch before our on-campus programs. Our first luncheon program will be in October.

Our next event will be our annual summer picnic to be held Thursday, August 19, at Willamette Park. This will

give us a chance to catch up with each other and meet new friends in a casual social setting.

On Friday, September 10, RAPS will sponsor a guided tour of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art in Fariborz Maseeh Hall (formerly Neuberger Hall). Additional details about this event and the August picnic are on page 1.

As many of you know, I have been active in RAPS since retiring in 2003. I have served as program chair, membership chair, and president. I am happy to return to the board once more and have a chance to work with Pat Squire as co-president and the talented membership of our group. Dawn White, Program Committee chair, has an impressive lineup of programs for the 2021-22 academic year which are diverse in content – something for everyone.

I look forward to interacting with all of you in person. If we have not met, please introduce yourself so that I can get to know you.

All the best,
—Bruce Stern

New manager takes the reins of RAPS office for 2021-22

THE NEW RAPS OFFICE MANAGER is Eben Yemoh, who takes over from Samantha McKinlay. Unlike McKinlay, who was forced by the pandemic to operate almost entirely from home, Eben will open the campus RAPS office when he arrives in Portland in September. Hours will be announced in the September *RAPS Sheet*.



Eben formally took the reins June 15, a week after accepting the job, and settled in quickly. He and his wife, Aliana, are still in Eugene, where he completed a bachelor's degree in general science with minors in chemistry and anthropology at the University of Oregon.

Born in Accra, Ghana, Eben came to the United States when he was 18 years old. He attended Lane Community

College in Eugene, where he received an associate's degree, before transferring to UO.

Once settled at Portland State, he will pursue a Master of Public Administration degree with an emphasis in health administration.

"I thought RAPS would be a terrific opportunity," said Eben, explaining that RAPS dovetails with his experience at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UO. The institute offers lectures, courses, and study and discussion groups on a wide range of topics to adult learners.

After completing his degree at Portland State, Eben and Aliana hope to stay in the Pacific Northwest. "We really like Oregon," he said. "We're big into the outdoors, and everything we need is here."

RAPS Group Reports

Book Group

DO YOU WANT to know how to call a mule team? Just ask any member of the RAPS Book Group, and we will be glad to tell you. The Book Group in May read Rinker Buck's *The Oregon Trail: A New American Journey*, a memoir of a journey from Missouri to Oregon, made about five years ago. The journey was fascinating, as the author and his brother, in a wagon drawn by mules, tried to find and follow the ruts of the original wagons on the Oregon Trail. Their intent, to the extent possible, was to experience the journey as it had been originally. We had a wonderful discussion, recalling favorite parts, discussing the writing skill of the author, and wandering into Oregon history. A number of group members had ancestors who came west on the Oregon Trail, and after reading the adventures of this trip, we decided it was a wonder that anyone made it across.

In June we read and discussed Lisa See's novel *The Island of Sea Women*. Set on an island off Korea in the tumultuous years following the Second World War, it spans generations and is the story of the friendship of two women, both deep-sea divers, working in a culture where the women are doing dangerous physical labor and the men are taking care of the children. The women's relationship is complex and impacted by the dangers of the work they do. The culture they are living in is also complex and in the midst of rapid change. We had the sense of having experienced a very different way of life, directed by common emotions.

In July we discussed *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need* by Bill Gates. This is a grim and fascinating book, as the author outlines the vast difficulties that confront us if we are to avoid a global rise in temperature, with its attendant disastrous effects. Gates is not sparing in outlining the changes that need to be made and the difficulties in achieving these changes. One emphasis is on the need to make climate-friendly energy economically attractive. Another is on the critical role research and development will play. And a third is the short time frame left to us. Our discussion was intense, probably in part because it occurred in the month after our record-breaking temperatures, while fires were burning in Southern Oregon and floods were devastating Europe, illustrating the message of the book.

In August we are going to read *Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell, and in September *The World That We Knew* by Alice Hoffman, two novels for summer reading. In October we will return to nonfiction with Walter Isaacson's *The Code Breaker*.

The Book Group meets the third Tuesday of each month, traditionally in the homes of various members. Currently we are using Zoom for our meetings. Any RAPS member is welcome to join the group.

—Joan Shireman

Bridge Group

PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC shutdown, the Bridge Group met in the afternoon on the first Tuesday of each month. Play began at 12:15 p.m. and finished by 4 p.m. We met in Smith Center, and we had a set of about 10 regular players. Most months we had two tables but some months we could only get one table.

We need to decide when to resume our monthly meetings. I believe PSU will open rooms in Smith Center this September. I need to determine the level of interest in the RAPS Bridge Group.

- Do you want to join us?
- Do you have thoughts about continuing to play bridge with RAPS at PSU?

I would like to hear from any interested RAPS members or others you know might want to play in our group.

Please contact Steve Brennan at 503-889-0146 or by email at the.steve.brennan@gmail.com.

—Steve Brennan

Hiking Group

ELEVEN HIKERS TACKLED Tryon Creek State Natural Area on June 22, where they encountered dogs—all of them properly leashed—as well as red huckleberries, wild black-



Hikers encountered ripe salmonberries during the Tryon Creek hike on June 22.

berries, and ripe salmon berries. The group finished hiking shortly before noon and retired to a large covered shelter to enjoy sack lunches and two bottles of sparkling wine to celebrate the return to a regular hiking schedule.

The Hiking Group is presently planning hikes on a month-to-month basis. A hike on a trail off Highway 35 on the east side of Mt. Hood was scheduled for July 27.

Please contact Larry Sawyer at 503-771-1616 for further information about the Hiking Group.



Nancyland

Thirty RAPS members and guests toured one of Portland's most whimsical gardens on July 15.

Nancyland, created and tended by Portland State retiree Nancy Goldman, is a celebration of gardening and creativity. It is filled with surprises—a supermarket cart, a toy railroad car, a birdbath planter. A pebble mosaic on the sidewalk parking strip draws your eye with a pipe wrench, a combination lock, and a carpenter's combo square. Nancyland encompasses both the front yard and the much larger backyard, where you can wander by various shrubs and trees to the back fence, sit in an old chair next to a metal sculpture, and take it all in.



Spring election puts new faces on RAPS Board

Co-President

BRUCE STERN is making a return engagement at the helm of RAPS. A former president who served in 2006-2007, he was elected co-president in the spring election.

A professor emeritus of business administration, Stern retired from Portland State in 2003 after a career that included both the Earl Wantland Outstanding Business Professor award and the Branford Price Millar Award.

Stern initially became involved with RAPS after attending a few of the monthly programs, eventually becoming president. After his term was up, other activities—including stints at the Oregon Food Bank, PSU Bookstore, Oregon Jewish Museum, and the Oregon Holocaust Resource Center—pulled him away from RAPS.

“I attended a few events here and there, but I thought it was in my past,” Stern said. “Then Steve Brennan brought me into the Bridge Group, of which I was a loyal member until the pandemic. I got back into the RAPS programs, and I really enjoyed the people. It’s really about the people.”

Stern says that among the challenges that RAPS faces is encouraging people to go to campus for RAPS programs and reaching out to those who recently retired.

“People have this image of downtown as not being a safe place,” Stern said. “What they don’t realize is that the problem is farther away (from campus) and the problem is at night. We have to show them that it’s not much different than it was 18 months ago.”

Stern believes the key to attracting recent retirees to RAPS is personal contact. A letter alone, he said, won’t do it. “There needs to be some personal contact in addition to a letter,” he pointed out. “Without that personal touch, it’s really hard to reach people.”

Stern joins Co-President Pat Squire on the board and succeeds Steve Brennan. He will serve for two years.

Members-at-Large



CHERYL LIVNEH, who served Portland State for 28 years as a professor of education and as an associate dean of both the Division of Continuing Education and the College of Education, joins the board as a member-at-large.

Livneh, who retired in 2015, said fellow education professors Dave Krug and Steve Brannan encouraged her to get involved with RAPS. “I was always interested, but I babysat on Thursdays (when board and

general meetings occur) and so it never really worked out for me,” she said.

While RAPS didn’t initially work out, Livneh became involved with many other community organizations, including volunteering in Beaverton Public Schools, an environment familiar to her from her days as a middle school English teacher and counselor.

“RAPS is the only formal way of keeping connected to the University,” said Livneh, pointing out that many faculty members were deeply involved with PSU during their careers. “It wasn’t just their department or school or college—they were involved in many aspects of the University. RAPS is the main vehicle for maintaining that connection.”

Another aspect that draws Livneh to RAPS is the value it puts on preserving Portland State’s history. As a professor, she helped put together a history of the College of Education, resulting in a document of more than 150 pages. If the time and effort isn’t taken to record an organization’s history, she points out, “it will just disappear.”



MICHAEL TAYLOR joined the RAPS Board this summer as a member-at-large. A social worker for more than 50 years, Taylor joined the School of Social Work faculty after completing his Ph.D. at Portland State in 2002. Taylor was active in teaching and service across campus, and retired as associate professor of practice emeritus in 2019.

“RAPS is an opportunity for retired employees to have a voice,” said Taylor, who was involved with faculty governance and the faculty union during his PSU career, while off campus he was active in the Democratic Party.

Many of Taylor’s colleagues, including Eileen Brennan, the History Preservation chair, and her husband, Steve, have been involved with RAPS. It was Steve, the outgoing co-president, who approached Taylor about joining the board.

“Connections are important,” he said, “and RAPS provides that opportunity. Without it, your connection to the University just fades away.”

Taylor pointed to the proposed redesign of the Park Blocks as among the issues that should spark RAPS members to speak up.

The plan, which has drawn opposition from many quarters, would make significant changes to the Park Blocks, which run some 12 blocks north from the Portland State campus. According to an *Oregonian* story, the city estimates the project would cost up to \$47 million.

In memoriam: Joseph Poracsky, 1945-2021

JOSEPH PORACSKY, who served Portland State for 31 years as a professor of geography, died April 8, 2021, in Lawrence, Kansas. He was 75 years old.

Professor Poracsky was born June 21, 1945, in Brooklyn, New York. His parents were Andrew and Mary (Anzalone) Poracsky. He attended Waterford High School, Waterford,



Connecticut, then entered Clark University, where he played on the varsity basketball team, earning a bachelor's degree from Clark in 1968. Professor Poracsky earned a master's degree from the University of Maryland in 1981 while serving in the Navy and the Navy Reserve.

In 1984 he was awarded a Ph.D. from the University of Kansas.

Professor Poracsky joined Portland State in 1982, teaching cartography, remote sensing, and urban forestry. He served on and chaired the Portland Urban Forestry

Commission. When not in the classroom, Professor Poracsky enjoyed traveling to Italy and the Oregon Coast, following the University of Kansas basketball team, and listening to Bruce Springsteen, Fleetwood Mac, and Van Morrison. He also coached the Lawrence Boys Club basketball team in the early 1980s.

He is survived by his wife, MJ Riehl, of Portland; stepsons, Troy and Darren; his sister, Fran (Michael) Hastedt, and brother, Rocco, both of Connecticut; and his first wife, Laura Stull, and daughter, Kristina; son, Rome; daughter-in-law, Nikki; and four grandchildren, Finley, Sawyer, Ayden, and Sydney, all of Lawrence. He was preceded in death by his parents and sister-in-law, Barbara Musorofiti.

Remembrances may be made to the Douglas County Visiting Nurses Association and the National Audubon Society and may be sent in care of Warren-McElwain Mortuary, 120 W. 13th Street, Lawrence, KS 66044. Online condolences may be sent to www.warrenmcelwain.com.

Survey shows most RAPSters ready for return to normal

AN ONLINE SURVEY of RAPS members conducted last spring showed that most want to resume attending RAPS activities in person. A total of 26 RAPS members responded to the survey.

Sixty-two percent said they planned to attend the RAPS Summer Picnic on August 19. All but one who were planning to attend preferred the potluck format where food is shared.

Most respondents (76 percent) also planned to attend Thursday member meetings on campus beginning fall term, while the remaining 24 percent preferred to attend by Zoom. Of those who planned to attend on campus, 84 percent preferred the format where the event was preceded by a buffet lunch, with the remaining 16 percent wanting to have the event follow a lunch break where members brought their own food.

Six members who were planning to attend by Zoom offered some indicators of when they would be comfortable returning to in-person meetings:

- When the county allows indoor gatherings at 50 percent occupancy:2
- When all metropolitan counties are moderate or low risk status for a month or longer:3
- When a majority of adults in metropolitan counties are vaccinated to prevent COVID-19:6

Members also offered suggestions for the resumption of RAPS programs and activities, and topics that might be covered in member events. Several wished to have activities like hiking and bridge resumed early in fall. Several mentioned their wish to have meetings focused on key PSU topics like supporting BIPOC students, assisting homeless students and staff, the art displayed in PSU buildings, and perspectives of leadership team members.

Several members advocated for a return of the PSU opera preview; meetings focused on science and engineering; lectures on economy, politics, history, and culture; and consideration of the economics of aging. Local issues were also mentioned as potential RAPS events: city of Portland challenges along with potential solutions, and a preview of the 2022 Oregon Governor's race.

When asked for ideas to have RAPS promote better member connections and involvement, individual survey participants advocated for: setting up a phone tree with colleagues, meetings combining Zoom and face-to face formats, having some meetings focused on engaging in discussion about key topics, and mailing materials to members who prefer paper to online format.

One member offered: "Don't rush the return to campus; allow the educational return to occur before ours."



Your gift keeps the *RAPS Scholarship* ‘in business’!

Since 2011 RAPS has awarded a scholarship every year to a student whose interest is focused on an aspect of gerontology. Some recipients have **focused on health care**, others on the **economic and social challenges of old age**.

One of the sources of funding for the scholarship has been the holiday party bake sale. Another source has been the door prizes that we have used to encourage donations at each general meeting. And of course, the biggest source of funds has been the donation from Colette Tours in which RAPS members participate.

2020 and 2021 have been different. We did not have a holiday gathering last year. No in-person activities meant no door prizes. No travel meant no income from Colette Tours. We have been **limited to appeals such as this one** if we are to sustain RAPS ability to award a scholarship each year.

More than ever, we need your help to continue awarding scholarships. **Please consider a sustaining gift to help us “stay in business.”**

Thank you!

—Joan Shireman

RAPS Scholarship Donation Form

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