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Retirement Association of Portland State

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The RAPS Sheet

The newsletter of the Retirement Association of Portland State

JANUARY 2023

Retirement Association of Portland State

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William Comer, professor of Russian and director of the Russian Flagship Program, will speak to RAPS about the war in Ukraine on January 19.

Insights on the Ukraine war through 10 maps

AS THE ONE-YEAR anniversary nears of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, RAPS members will get a unique perspective on "Putin's War" at the January meeting when William Comer, professor of Russian and director of PSU's Russian Flagship Program, speaks on "Ground War: 10 Maps for Understanding Russia's War in Ukraine."

The meeting will begin at noon Thursday, January 19, in 333 SMSU, with a light deli lunch, followed by Comer's presentation shortly after 12:30 p.m.

Comer received his B.A. in Russian from Middlebury College in Vermont and did his graduate studies in Slavic literatures at the University of California, Berkeley, majoring in Russian literature and minoring in Polish.

Completing his doctorate in 1992, he started his academic career at the University of Kansas in the Department of Slavic Languages, teaching courses in Russian language and culture. He came to Portland State in 2014 when Sandra Freels, founding director of the innovative Russian Flagship Program, retired.

Comer has published widely on Russian language and cultural topics. His current research focuses on the learning

Report coming on results of scholarship challenge

THANK YOU SO MUCH to all of the RAPsters and their friends for generously donating to the Robert Vogel-sang RAPS Scholarship. It looks like the challenge grant was successful again! We will report results later in January.

In the meantime, Happy New Year to all, and think about how your generosity will help PSU students now and in the future! Cheers!

—Pat Squire

and teaching of Russian, especially in the areas of vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension.

He is co-author of *Mezhdu nami* (*Between You and Me*), an online, open-access textbook for elementary Russian, which was recognized with an award from the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages in 2017.

CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's a new year, but it's the same old COVID

HELLO FELLOW RAPSTERS. Welcome to 2023. I hope the new year brings you hope, health, prosperity, and satisfaction. Obviously the last few years with COVID and its variants have been difficult for all of us. The reality is, however, that it will be with us for a while. In the meantime I hope you will exercise caution and use safety measures.

I know some, including one physician friend, who say masks are useless. I've been in stores, on airplanes, attending concerts and Trailblazer games, and I am amazed at the high percentage of people who walk around maskless as if the regular flu and COVID were not here.



All I know, living in a world of probabilities, is if masks protect us even 40 percent of the time, I am going to wear them to cut the odds of me getting it and possibly infecting others. I see taking these precautions as an IQ test. You can fill in the blanks...

Our December events, a tour of the Jordan Schnitzer

art gallery and our annual holiday party, were great successes. A big thank you is due to Dawn White and Pat Squire for their wonderful programming and to Nancy

Eriksson and Ansel Johnson for their considerable efforts to make the holiday party so enjoyable.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of you for donating to our "enhanced" scholarship drive. If you are not aware, Pat Squire again worked with an anonymous donor to match your end-of-year donations to the fund.

On February 16 our 2021-22 scholarship recipient, Jett Koda, who is now graduated and working in end-of-life care, will be the featured speaker at our monthly RAPS program.

Given the rapidly changing COVID environment, we will be making near game-time decisions about whether the programs will be in person or on Zoom. We'll let you know in advance.

Our program this month will be on January 19 and will feature William Comer, who will discuss his thoughts on the Russia-Ukraine war. I know you'll not want to miss his insights.

Wishing you all peace and happiness!

—Bruce Stern

Living in a world of probabilities, if masks protect us 40 percent of the time, I am going to wear them to cut the odds of getting COVID.

Upcoming RAPS Events

FEBRUARY

Thursday, February 16

"Facing the Mortality Reality: An Open Conversation Discussing Death as a Means to More Deeply Appreciate Life," presentation by Jett Koda, RAPS's 2021-22 scholarship student, now graduated and working as a medical social worker. Presented over Zoom.

MARCH

Thursday, March 16

Annual spring potluck in 333 SMSU followed by presentation in 225 Lincoln Hall by Kelley Nassief, new opera program director, and PSU opera students singing excerpts from the spring opera, Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

APRIL

Tuesday, April 18

President's Annual Luncheon for Retired Staff and Faculty, hosted by President Steve Percy. PSU Ballroom.

RAPS Group Reports

Book Group

THE BOOK GROUP met on December 20 and discussed David Gergen's *Hearts Touched by Fire: How Great Leaders are Made*. Overall we did not like the book as much as we had hoped. We agreed that it seemed "flat" and limited in its depth. It read almost like a handbook or manual.

We then spent our discussion trying to figure out why we had not liked it. Eventually we decided that we were the wrong audience for the book, not being likely to want to claim leadership positions in our retirement years.

We thought younger readers, involved in seeking leadership positions, might appreciate it more—but then we realized that the stories of contacts with current leaders were stories of contact with people of our generation and would be less interesting to younger people. We finally decided that we were as receptive an audience as the book was likely to find, as a common quality noted in great leaders was a depth of knowledge. All were readers.

We will next meet on Tuesday, January 16, still via Zoom. We will discuss *The Cellist of Sarajevo*, a novel by Steven Galloway. Well reviewed, it is the story of a group of strangers whose lives intersect in war-torn Sarajevo, and how their sense of humanity is changed by their wartime experiences.

The Book Group meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 1:30 p.m. Traditionally we have met in the homes of various members; currently we are using Zoom for our discussions and plan to continue in this way for a time. All RAPS members are welcome to join the group.

—Joan Shireman

Bridge Group

THE BRIDGE GROUP has begun playing in person, after a long pandemic hiatus.

We need additional players; do you want to join us? We really could use some more players, and we promise not to bite any new players.

We need to establish a suitable time to meet. Which days and weeks work best for your schedule?

I would like to hear from any interested RAPS members, or others you know who might want to play in our group. The Bridge Group does not require RAPS membership. Your



Hikers Terrie Bitton, Mary Lane Stevens, Tom Hard, Pati Sluys, and Deve Swaim at the Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park in Oregon City during a hike in November.

friends and relatives would be welcome to join us. Please rattle your social and family networks to see if you might be able to shake loose a bridge player or two.

Please contact Steve Brennan, 503-889-0146. My email address is: the.steve.brennan@gmail.com.

—Steve Brennan

Hiking Group

THE HIKING GROUP will meet in early January to schedule hikes for the year. If anyone wants to hike with us and has ideas for hikes, please contact Tom Dieterich at tgdieterich@earthlink.net.

—Tom Dieterich

Preserving the history of the College of Education

Do you want to remember the name of a College of Education favorite colleague, when a specific program started, or whose grant funded a new program? You can find this and more on the College of Education's Milestones <https://www.pdx.edu/education/coe-milestones>.

The COE Milestones is a chronology of the COE's people and programs from 1948 to the present. It is the culmination of a vision to preserve and celebrate the COE's history.

Beginning in 1999, Dean Phyllis Edmundson formed the History Task Force, whose founding members included Alma Bingham, Steve Brannan, Ulrich Hardt (chair), Maxine Thomas, and Barbara Wiegele. Building on the task force's initial work, in 2005 the COE faculty approved the formation of the COE History Preservation and Celebration Committee (HPCC) as a COE standing committee under Interim Dean Carol Mack.

A major accomplishment of the HPCC was the completion and display of the Dean's Gallery—portraits of the COE deans along with their notable achievements.

Another remarkable undertaking of the HPCC was the COE Milestones project. The committee envisioned the Milestones as a timeline listing the history of COE's programs. From 2006-08, committee members gathered school-wide and departmental information from current and retired faculty, staff, and administrators to draft COE and departmental milestones. The committee encouraged all departments (i.e., Counselor Education, Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Policy, Foundations, and Administrative Studies [later renamed Educational Leadership and Policy], and Special Education) to develop departmental milestones. Steve Brannan, committee co-chair, led the initiative and drafted milestones documents for the Special Education Department and the COE.

When the HPCC stopped meeting in 2011-12, the goal of preserving the COE history did not die. In summer 2015, Cheryl Livneh, retired associate dean for outreach, accepted the invitation of Dean Randy Hitz and Associate Dean Micki Caskey to serve as the COE historian. Her major task was

updating the COE Milestones from 2007 to present—a process that entailed (a) gathering information from the departmental milestones documents; (b) organizing the milestones content into major categories by year; (c) developing a set of appendices to accompany the Milestones, and (d) verifying the accuracy of the milestones. The verification process required review of the PSU Bulletins, PSU Telephone Directories, and consultation with COE retired faculty, staff, and administrators, as well as PSU leadership. The Milestones, posted to the COE website, is the culmination of the collective energies of the COE Task Force, HPCC, recent efforts, and many others. For the latest iteration, a special thanks to Pati Sluys, retired chief financial officer; Cristine Paschild, head of Special Collections and university archivist and her staff; Steve Harmon, retired curriculum coordinator; and Val Katagiri, editor.

Some of the exemplary alums included in the Milestones are pictured below.



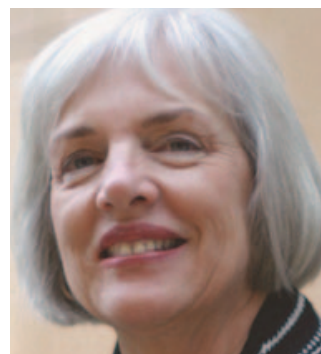
Lizi Aguilar-Nelson
2005 Oregon Elementary
Principal of the Year



Gustavo Balderas
2019 Oregon Superintendent
of the Year



Judy Bluehorse Skelton
2014 Outstanding Teacher Award,
Oregon Indian Education Assoc.



Linda Gerber
Former president, PCC-Sylvania



Larry Sawyer photograph

RED POSSE—About 40 members of RAPS gathered at Augustana Lutheran Church in Northeast Portland on December 8 for the RAPS Annual Holiday Brunch. The annual gathering included a variety of food, drinks, and . . . this group of RAPsters, who seemingly agreed beforehand to celebrate the event by donning red apparel, which made the event even more merry and bright.

In memoriam: Kofi Agorsah, 1944-2022

KOFI AGORSAH, professor emeritus of black studies and international studies, died in Ghana on August 3, 2022, at the age of 78.

Professor Agorsah, who served as chair of the Department of Black Studies, received a bachelor's degree in 1971 and a master's degree in African archaeology in 1976 from the University of Ghana. In 1983 he completed a Ph.D. in archaeology at the University of California, Los Angeles.

According to a remembrance written by Candice Goucher, a colleague of Professor Agorsah at Portland State, published on the website of The International Association for Caribbean Archaeology, he first worked as a tutor and teacher in geography at a teacher training college in Ghana in the 1960s. Professor Agorsah's early experience in archaeology came in the 1970s when he became a research assistant to Bernard Golden of the British Institute during the excavation of Fort Orange in Sekondi, Ghana.

"Kofi was quick to appreciate the role of the archaeological record in rewriting the history of the new nation-state of Ghana," Professor Goucher wrote.

In 1976 Professor Agorsah completed his M.A. on the archaeology and oral traditions of the Begho area, working with Professor Merrick Posnansky, who later moved to the University of California, Los Angeles, taking Professor Agorsah with him as a graduate research assistant. After completing his Ph.D., he became senior lecturer in the Department of Archaeology and curator-in-charge of the Museum of Archaeology at the University of Ghana. In 1987 he joined

the University of the West Indies, Mona, teaching and developing archaeological training programs.

After joining Portland State in 1992, Professor Agorsah's teaching, consulting, and research projects took him to West Africa, South America, Mauritius, Brazil, Suriname, and many other parts of the world. His scholarship includes classic works in the fields of Maroon heritage studies; African cultural adaptation and resistance studies; dozens of book chapters; edited, co-edited, and single-authored books; and peer-reviewed articles.

Professor Agorsah worked for many institutions and organizations, including the African Burial Ground Project of New York; The International Association for Caribbean Archaeology; the African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica; Jamaica National Heritage Trust; the Caribbean Studies Overseas Program of Portland State University; Earthwatch Institute; National Geographic Society; and the National Science Foundation. He was a visiting professor at the University of Cape Town (2000) and Fulbright Senior Scholar at the University of Cape Coast (2007-2008).

"His stories from the field mesmerized and inspired many students and colleagues alike," wrote Professor Goucher. "Kofi was a generous collaborator, a brilliant and hardworking scholar, and a kind and humble human being."

Professor Agorsah is survived by his wife, Monica; sons Patrick and Delali; daughter Yaavic (Victoria); son Maxwell; five grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

In memoriam: Tomáš Svoboda, 1939-2022

TOMÁŠ SVOBODA, the French-born Czech composer who served Portland State for three decades as a professor of music, died November 17 in Portland. He was 82 years old.

In an article in *Oregon Artswatch* following Professor Svoboda's death, Brett Campbell wrote, "With the passing of Tomáš Svoboda last week, Oregon contemporary classical music loses its most powerful voice, and one of its most generous musical mentors... (T)he esteemed composer and pianist enriched Oregon arts through a wide range of evocative, moving compositions and the generations of students he taught and composers he inspired with his high artistic standards."

Professor Svoboda was born in Paris on December 6, 1939, to Antonin and Mila Svoboda. He spent the war years in Boston, where he began his musical education on the piano at age three. In 1946 his family returned to Prague, where he continued his music studies. He entered the Prague Conservatory in 1954 as its youngest student.

In 1962, after graduating from the Prague Conservatory, he entered Prague's Academy of Music. His family fled Czechoslovakia for the United States in 1964, and two years later—after marrying his fiancé, Jana Demartini, who also escaped Czechoslovakia—Professor Svoboda enrolled at the University of Southern California as a graduate student. He received a master's degree with honors in 1969 and moved to Portland the following year with his wife and young son, Martin, to join the music faculty of Portland State, where he taught composition and music theory. He retired from

full-time teaching in 1998 and was promoted to professor emeritus.

Professor Svoboda composed more than 200 works, including six symphonies; orchestral, choral, and vocal works; and diverse works for large and small ensembles, string quartets, and solo instruments, especially piano. There have been more than 1,200 performances of his music. But in his *Oregon Artswatch* remembrance, Campbell pointed out that Professor Svoboda's contribution transcends his compositions. "Along with his many PSU students, Svoboda played a crucial role in founding one of Oregon's most vital artistic institutions, Cascadia Composers, and fighting to guarantee that it welcomed a broad range of composers and styles," he wrote. "His open-minded, anti-elitist stamp ensured the organization's continuing growth, vitality and inclusiveness."

In the same article, Bryan Johanson, professor emeritus of music at Portland State, said, "One memory I will always cherish is Tom playing piano at my wedding. It was 1989 at the First Unitarian Church. Tom played Handel, Gibbons, Bach and improvised some very lovely entrance and exit music. After the ceremony Tom came to Victoria and me and apologized for 'dropping fist-fulls of notes. The floor beneath the piano will need to be cleaned.'"

In 2012 Professor Svoboda suffered a major stroke. According to his website, tomassvoboda.com, "(Although) he never lost his positive outlook on life, sense of humor or determined efforts to recover enough to compose again, it was not to be."

A celebration of life with music will be held in 2023.

In memoriam: Arnold D. Pickar, 1927-2022

ARNOLD D. PICKAR, whose Portland State career began in 1963, died November 29, 2022, at the age of 95.

A professor of physics, Professor Pickar was born in Brooklyn, New York, on June 24, 1927. He joined the U.S. Merchant Marine as World War II was winding down and in 1948 graduated with a bachelor of science degree from the United States Merchant Marine Academy. In 1951 he completed a bachelor's degree at Cornell University and received a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in 1951. Upon his retirement from Portland State, he was promoted to professor emeritus.

He was an active member of Mazamas and scaled many of the Cascade Range peaks. He was a member of the First

Unitarian Portland, which he joined when he moved to Portland. He remained deeply involved with the church for the rest of his life.

Professor Pickar is survived by his wife of 51 years, Ann; daughter, Jennifer; and son, David.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, January 24, at First Unitarian, 1211 SW Main Street, Portland.



1979

PSU Digital Archives Gallery



1964

PSU Digital Archives Gallery