OLEI Writer's Workshop Veteran Publishes New Book
Mary K. Jensen leans on OLLI for inspiration

Mary Jensen is hard to pin down. The recent wave of requests for interviews, book signings, and press junkets have flooded her personal calendar and made “spare time” something of the past. Since the publication of her second book, Rudy’s Rules for Travel, Jensen has enjoyed critical acclaim and is in demand. What started as a series of short essays that she intended to self-publish, morphed into an autobiographical expedition released this year by She Writes Press—an award-winning hybrid publisher for women authors—based in Berkeley, CA.

In anticipation of a local book signing with Jensen at the end of the month, OLLI Program Director Ann Nikolai met with Mary to learn more about the concept for the book and OLLI’s motivational role in bringing it to life.

AN: How did you find the discipline to bring your favorite travel stories together in book form?

MJ: I talk about this in the Acknowledgements section of the book. After Rudy’s death, Tales and Memories, his account of his young years, sat on my bookshelf, trying its best to move me to action. I had promised him I would someday add the story of our marriage and our journeys, but for a time illness and grieving were not compatible with writing. My Irish mother taught me the value of superstition, and I developed a mighty one that said, “If only I am in a structured writing class, I will be structured. I will write.”

AN: You’ve been a member of Jim Smith’s Writer’s Workshop for several years. Tell us the story of how you made this connection.

MJ: I came early one fall day to register for OLLI classes, only to discover that the writing class was already filled. I approached the instructor, Jim Smith, just as Martha Roggli, a woman I had never seen before and whose name I knew only from her name tag, took my arm and pleaded on my behalf: “This is my dear, dear friend (she looks at my name tag) Mary, and we both have to have this class!” She went on to tell him we both had major projects underway and that he should open a new section. I have a major project underway? Two classes a week for Jim? Martha went on: “Wait until you see how well behaved we are!” And Jim, the warm-hearted soul, capitulated. I owe them both for their gifts of structure and faith, and each of our Wednesday Morning Writers for their faithful editing and loving encouragement.

AN: I understand you ran into more obstacles after that year, and that other OLLI members encouraged you.

MJ: Right. After that first year in class, I had a second, more vicious battle with breast cancer and the side effects of its treatments. I had just about forgotten my writing goal when Elisabeth Stewart called and encouraged me to come back to class. I did eventually, and adopted for myself a Two Page Rule. I guessed that I could at least write two pages a week and in time that would be my book. It turned out to be true.
Mary will be signing books Saturday, April 28, 11am to 2pm at ABC Books, 950 Mangrove Avenue. All proceeds from the sales of the books at the event will be donated to local scholarships. Come make dreams possible and meet this wonderful author. For the full story, visit booksbywomen.org.

**ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**

**Year-end highlights, budget recap, and strategic planning set tone for new fiscal year**

Eighty members attended the OLLI Annual Business Meeting earlier this week at the Chico Masonic Family Center. Program Director Ann Nikolai shared highlights of this 2017-18 fiscal year, which ends June 30. She also presented the budget and fee schedule for next year. Her presentation focused on three historic cost drivers and OLLI's strategic approach over the past five years to transitioning to a fully self-supported program from one heavily subsidized by the office of Regional & Continuing Education.

Advisory Council Chairman Mike McCluskey followed the numbers with the results of the fall Shaping the Future survey, where members had the opportunity to weigh in on areas of the program that matter most to them. Mike and his strategic planning task force are in the final stages of drafting a five-year plan, which will be available to members upon completion. The plan incorporates the major takeaways from the survey.

*A more detailed review of the meeting will be shared with all members at the end of the month, including the new fee schedule.* Many thanks to the staff and volunteers who invested time and expertise in preparing for the meeting. Thanks also to those who attended for your ideas and positive comments during and after the meeting.

**OLLI SPRING LUNCHEON NEXT MONTH**

**Peer Leader appreciation focus adds flare to annual spring event**

Every spring we thank our volunteer instructors by buying them lunch and singing their praises. Come join us on **Wednesday, May 9, from 11:30am- 1pm,** for an event celebrating the people who make OLLI possible by sharing their time and energy to create our wide-ranging classes. Reserve and pay for your lunch [online](#) or print a [reservation form](#) to mail into the office or drop off at your convenience. Peer Leaders have received a separate invitation with special instructions for their complementary ticket. **RSVP deadline is Monday, May 1.** Share something you’d like a peer leader to hear and we’ll read it at the luncheon.

**THERE IS STILL TIME TO PURCHASE GALLERY PAINTINGS**

Haven’t made a gift to OLLI this year? Now you’ll get one in return!

OLLI member Susan Proctor’s beautiful paintings will be coming down soon. Now is your chance to own one for just $300! You’ll also help us meet our fundraising goal because Susan is donating all of the proceeds to OLLI! Thank you, Susan, for your generosity and your great talent, and of course we encourage everyone to [check out the paintings](#) in our abbreviated “catalog.”

For those reading the printed version of this bulletin, printed copies are in Bradley 2 (bulletin board) and the OLLI office. Please call the OLLI office at 898-6679 for details.
**BUS TRIP COMING UP**

Legion of Honor Presents *Truth and Beauty: The Pre-Raphaelites and the Old Masters*

**Pre-Trip Lecture:** June 27, 1-2:30pm, Craig Hall Gordon 1  
**Bus Trip to Museum:** June 30, 7:45am to 8pm  
**Price:** Members: $90 Non-Members: $100

In the middle of the revolutionary 1800’s, a group of painters looked back to the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance to find inspiration for their earthy, sensuous paintings that pushed back at the industrial Victorian world they lived in. This exhibit brings the paintings that were made and the classic paintings that inspired them together side-by-side to help us to better understand what some call the first modern art movement.

**Sign-up deadline is May 30.** See our [secure online registration form](#) to get started!

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**THAT'S A WRAP!**

Fourth Annual OLLI Play Festival a resounding success

What a gift to be able to discover or renew a passion later in life. Some members of the delightful *April Fools & Follies* show had never been in a play before! We were the appreciative audience to their hours of creativity and hard work. Our special thanks to all of our OLLI members who gave their all at four performances last week; to the CSU, Chico Theater Department and their talented faculty and students; to Lara Tenckhoff and Sarah Blackstone, for their invaluable help and mentoring skills; to the office and volunteers who worked behind the scenes to keep the production on schedule. See you next year!

**SPEAKING OF WRAPS…**

Shifting seasons bring unpredictable classroom temps

*Wear your layers to class at Craig Hall as we transition to warmer weather.* The AC system is now turned on and it can be a bit enthusiastic as the weather tries to make up its mind to be warm or cool. Just remember to take those layers and water bottles with you as you exit. That way you don’t lose them to the Lost & Found box located in each room that winds up as a charity donation at the end of each semester.

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**OLLI WILL MARCH IN PIONEER DAY PARADE ON MAY 5**

Join OLLI in celebrating what Chico does best!

**Looking for something to do on Saturday, May 5?** Want to join fellow OLLI members for an organized stroll along the Pioneer Day Parade route? We’d love to have you and are looking for volunteers to march and to staff the OLLI booth at the Chico City Plaza. The parade starts at 10am with activities in the Plaza to follow.

Call the OLLI office at (530) 898-6679, if interested.

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**SPRING 2018 CALENDAR**

Mark your calendars!

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<td>May 9</td>
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<td>Spring Classes End</td>
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<td>Summer Class Preview (Chico Masonic Family Center)</td>
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HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE?

If you have something to say, a photo to share, or a question to pose to the editor, you can submit information using our new “OLLI Newsletter Submission” form.

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