President’s Message

For this edition of the RAPS Sheet, I will address two basic issues which should be of interest to the RAPS membership. The first concerns the RAPS Board as to its functions, deliberations and goals, and the second relates to Gordon Solie’s recent travel experience to Australia. Gordon is currently a Board Member serving on the Awards Committee.

The Executive Board comprises the President, President-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, and immediate Past President, together with the Editor of the RAPS Sheet, the Chairpersons of Standing Committees, and three Members-at-Large. All the powers established in the bylaws are vested in the Executive Board. The members of the overall Board, as listed on the front page of the RAPS Sheet, meet in the Benson House on the second Thursday of each month to discuss and vote on a pre-determined agenda. The agenda relates to the objectives of RAPS as set forth in the bylaws governing RAPS. I encourage you to become more active in the RAPS organization. One way of doing this is to submit a subject to be included in the agenda to be discussed by the Board via e-mail: raps@pdx.edu, or phone: (503) 725-3447.

In the last two Board meetings, among other issues, we have considered how to meet membership goals, how to develop and preserve the history of Portland State University, and how to cooperate with the PSU Alumni Association. Another function of the Board relates to the establishment of a program of activities for the RAPS membership to be followed for the year. The responsibility for the program rests with the President-Elect. In this capacity, Mary Gordon-Brannan has provided a great start with the lectures by Tom Biolsi and more recently, Gary Perlstein. The forthcoming event to be held at the MAC Club should be a super way to celebrate the Holidays.

Another function and goal of the RAPS Board is to “encourage communication among its members.” One way to do this is to share our traveling experiences with other members of our association. In this context, Gordon Solie, with his characteristic humor, has provided us with a very interesting account of his experiences in traveling down under in Australia.(page 2) If your future travels lead you to Australia, watch out, for if one of those sweet smelling crocodiles does not do you in, one of those spiders or snakes, surely will. If you have traveling experiences of interest, why not also share them with the RAPS membership? 400 to 500 words would be adequate.

Richard Brinkman
Our Traveling Retirees - Australia as Seen by Gordon Solie

After attending a music conference in Melbourne the last week of July, David, a bassoonist, Jenifer an oboist, and I embarked on a two-week trip around Australia. We are friends and musicians who had previously attended four international conferences together.

We traveled by train whenever possible. Most trains are old but well-maintained. We took the train to Adelaide and then boarded the Ghan train (named for the Afghanis who brought camels to Australia) to Alice Springs. Our train from Adelaide to Alice Springs consisted of 42 carriages (cars) - all passenger cars. The train is divided into groups of six cars, so that all services are within a short walking distance. Can you imagine having to walk through 40 cars to get a beer?

I had long wanted to visit the School of the Air in Alice Springs, which teaches by short-wave radio students from elementary through middle school who live in stations (ranches) up to over a hundred miles from Alice Springs. Parents are taught how to help their students at home, and a band of roving teachers makes the rounds of stations in four-wheel drive vehicles. Twice a year, the students are brought to Alice Springs for one week of games, singing and other activities. This is the only time they see each other and hear each other, as the short-wave radios can be used between the teacher and only one student at a time.

We took a tour to Ayres Rock and The Olgas, another geological formation. Photos cannot capture vastness of the Olgas nor its beauty. Scores of buses and scores of other vehicles of every size and shape gather there to watch the sunset. Tables are set up and wine and champagne flow. Unfortunately, it was cloudy the evening we were there, but the next morning we were bused back to see the sunrise. This time it was clear and the sunrise was spectacular.

From there we went to Darwin and spent three days in the Kackadu National Park. There we viewed crocodiles and many local flora and fauna. Australia has five of the seven most deadly snakes in the world and several of the world’s most deadly spiders. The bite of one spider can fell a horse within three minutes. You can smell a crocodile before you can see it. The smell makes a hot summer garbage dump seem by comparison like a flower garden.

We flew to Cairns and spent a day at the Great Barrier Reef, where we viewed coral, fish, and turtles from the safety of a semi-submersible boat. We then went by train to Brisbane and spent a day on Fraser Island, where we bounced around in a four-wheel bus all day. Dingoes in that area have banded together in one large gang and are attacking animals and even small children. Finally we took the train to Sydney, where we took two tours of the harbor area, one by boat and one by bus. We had only two days there before our return flight to LAX.

A word about the language. The farther you get into the outback, the more difficult it is to understand Aussies. The letter ‘i’ in English is ‘oi’ down under. So we have moight’, soight, roight, etc. The letters ‘ay’ come out ‘ie’ so the lame joke du jour is about two old gentlemen who met in the retirement home of last resort. One asks, “Did you come here to die?” The other replies, “No, I came here yesterday.”

Gordon Solie

Professor Gary Perlstein listens to a question from member of the audience during at his talk on international terrorism at Smith Center on the Portland State Campus on November 16. See an account of his presentation on page 3.
GARY PERLSTEIN DISCUSSES TERRORISM

Dr. Gary Perlstein, Clinical Criminologist and PSU professor emeritus of Criminology and Criminal Justice, presented a talk entitled “Terrorism in Today’s World” to RAPS on November 16. He has been sought by the media locally, nationally, and internationally for his expertise in both domestic and international terrorism, a subject he has studied for over 20 years.

Dr. Perlstein began by describing what terrorism is and is not. He prefers not to define terrorism. He did say, however, that a terrorist act is one that meets the following criteria: 1. it is an intentional attack on civilians, 2. it is politically motivated, 3. it is violent, and 4. it is designed to intimidate others.

He then opened up the floor for questions and comments, thus setting the format for the rest of the session. He distinguished state terrorism from terrorism from below. State terrorism is conducted by governments and is outside the scope of his discussion. In other words, terrorism occurs when a civilian is attacked and not by uniformed soldiers. He argued that an act that meets the above four criteria is a terrorist act, regardless of the merits of the cause. Using his characterization of terrorism, he provided several examples of terrorism, both current and historical, such as the Stern Gang in early modern Israel and the IRA in Britain. When asked what causes terrorism, Dr. Perlstein replied that there is no one answer. Traditionally, the answer has been poverty and lack of education. A very recent study showed that the countries with the most freedom have less terrorism, with the implication the more democracy, the better the chance to cut down on terrorism. He also noted, however, that countries with the least freedom also have less terrorism.

Dr. Perlstein gave his views on how the so-called war on terrorism is being fought, how freedom can be brought to the Middle East, how there can be peace between Israel and Palestine. He did not believe that the invasion of Iraq was an effective or justified response to Al Qaeda’s attack on the United States.

Dr. Perlstein’s presentation was well attended and produced a spirited discussion among those present.

Mary Brannan

CRIME FOR CHRISTMAS

A customary school assignment used to be an essay on “What I Did on My Vacation.” Herewith is my variation on the subject. During the recent Christmas holiday, I re-read several favorite novels about murder at Christmas -- a sanguinary subject but one whose virtues corresponded nicely with the holiday season.

First on my list was Agatha Christie’s Murder for Christmas (also published as Hercule Poirot’s Christmas and A Holiday for Murder), which has all the basic Christie elements. Rich old Simeon Lee summons all the members of his family to his English country estate at Christmas, although they dislike each other and normally do not meet. He announces that he is changing his will and is promptly murdered. Poirot, who is visiting a friend nearby, is called in to assist the local constabulary and, during a grim Christmas week, finds a murderer within the family. One of Dame Agatha’s best plotted novel, this one is notable for the way in which the author plays with her readers, giving them many obvious clues, but in such a subtle way that we hardly recognize them when we see them. A delicious holiday treat, even better on the second or third reading.

Next I read Cyril Hare’s An English Murder, a novel with a similar plot. Aging and ailing Lord Warbeck also summons his dissident family to his country estate for Christmas, only to find that their old animosities are still alive. One son is murdered and the old lord dies mysteriously while a heavy snowfall leaves all snowbound. A tangled web of deceit, revolving around intricate inheritance laws, ensues before the mystery is solved, old injustices righted, and a thaw sets in.

Ellis Peters’ The Confession of Brother Haluin doesn’t fit quite as neatly into the category of Christmas mysteries, although it does begin during a heavy snowstorm at the Abbey of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in December 1142. A monk, Brother Haluin, makes an apparent deathbed confession of a grave event in his past. He recovers and determines to make a journey of expiation and reconciliation, accompanied by Brother Cadfael, the series’ central character. The journey leads to the uncovering of treachery and deceit in the past and a murder in the present. The two monks find that by continued on p. 4
RAPS ACTIVITIES

HOLIDAY TALES: A RAPS HOLIDAY DINNER

RAPS is hosting a holiday dinner at the Multnomah Athletic Club (MAC) on Thursday, December 16 at 6:00 pm. The MAC will be festively decorated to get you into the holiday spirit. It will be a time to celebrate the evening with your friends and colleagues while enjoying appetizer canapés, a delicious dinner, elegant dessert, and no-host bar. Entrée choices include chicken Marsala and pork tenderloin as well as selections for those with special dietary need.

Following dinner, you will be entertained by Eric Kimmel who is a master storyteller and writer of children’s books. Eric earned his PhD in Education at the University of Illinois. He taught courses in language arts, children’s literature, and storytelling at Indiana University at South Bend in South Bend, Indiana and at PSU. He retired from college teaching in 1993 to become a full-time writer. His first book was published in 1974. Since then he has published over fifty titles, many of which have won numerous state awards, appeared on school and library recommended lists, and won prestigious awards such as the Caldecott Honor Medal (Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins) and the Sydney Taylor Picture Book Award (The Chanukkah Guest and Gershon's Monster). Eric travels throughout the United States and the world, visiting schools, talking about his books, and telling stories. His first love is sharing stories from different countries and cultures. People of all ages enjoy his stories and his wit. I know you will enjoy his story telling.

The deadline for signing up for this festive event is December 8. If you did not receive a flyer or need additional information, contact Jill Shellan, Office Manager at 503-725-3447.

Mary Brannan

RAPS BOOK CLUB

The next meeting of the RAPS Book Club will be on Tuesday, December 14 at the home of Mary Brannan at 1:30. E-mail Mary at brannanmg@comcast.net or call her at 503-239-1077 for directions and to RSVP. The book selected is The Teeth of the Tiger by Tom Clancy. This book was recommended by Gary Perlstein, who gave a talk on terrorism for RAPS. The book features three men, Jack Ryan and his two cousins, who are fraternal twins, one of whom is an FBI agent and the other is a marine. The three are recruited to a privately funded vigilante organization, Hendley Associates, that aims to strike at terrorists.

The January meeting is planned for Tuesday, January 18, at a place to be determined. The book to be discussed is The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini. More will be said about this book in the next RAPS Sheet, but reviewers have been praising this book.

Mary Brannan

RAPS BRIDGE GROUP

The December meeting will be at 1:30pm Tuesday December 14th at Maxine Thomas’s home. Her address is 6535 SW Canyon Court.

Please call her at 503 291 1279 or e-mail at ondangwa@yahoo.com in good time to let her know if you can come and to ask for directions. The bridge group is always open to new members, but it is important for the host to know who is coming a few days ahead of time.

Mary Brannan

Crime for Christmas continued from p. 3

facing these realities they can reach the spirit of peace with which the book ends -- a fitting resolution for the Christmas season.

Why read about murder and violence at Christmas? Because these books ultimately assert the values of the season. They begin with a breakdown of social order, but, in solving the crime, they repair that breach.

Stanley Johnson