PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

This has been a busy, wonderful holiday season for me with lots of fun activities, including family, friends, and colleagues. One of the most festive events of the season was the RAPS Holiday party at the Multnomah Athletic Club. It was a treat to be entertained by the Youth and Ages Barbershop Quartet, eat good food, drink fine wine, and most of all, to chat with old and new friends. Thanks to Bruce Stern, President-Elect, for arranging such a terrific event. I’m looking forward to the rest of the RAPS program events of the year beginning with Roy Koch’s presentation on January 5, 2006. We hope to see many of you at the first event of the new year.

In exploring meaningful projects for our organization, we have taken some steps on the proposal brought to us by fellow RAPS member Charlie White for the PSU Informal History Picture Book. During a recent December meeting with President Bernstine, it was agreed that publishing such a PSU “coffee table” book is a worthwhile endeavor, and will have the support of the University administration. The next step for us is to develop a more detailed plan for carrying out the project which involves forming an advisory group. Producing such a book is timely because 2006 marks the 60th anniversary of Portland State, and it would be a nice addition to the celebration. By the way, did you know that the first day of classes was on June 18, 1946?

Have you looked at the RAPS Website, www.raps.pdx.edu, lately? Robert Pearson, an at-large Board Member, has volunteered to be our Webmaster. We are so pleased to have his expertise in revamping and updating our website. With the addition of a Webmaster, I think we’ve finally entered the twenty-first century! Although still in transition, the website contains information about the RAPS organization, a calendar of events, membership application, past issues of The RAPS Sheet, photos, and links to related websites. Take a look at it! Please contact us by e-mail or through the website if you have any comments or suggestions about it.

On behalf of the RAPS Board, I wish all of you and your loved ones a HAPPY NEW YEAR—May 2006 be one of the best ever!

Mary Brannan
RAPS ACTIVITIES

RAPS BOOK CLUB
Since we did not meet in December, there is no book review for this edition of The RAPS Sheet. Our next gathering will be on Tuesday, January 17th at the home of Prue Douglas to talk about Becoming Madame Mao by Anchee Min. Prue lives at Terwilliger Plaza. Call her at 503-299-4928 for directions and to RSVP. Please feel free to join us for the discussion.

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Our February selection is Eventide written by Kent Haruf, who was the author of Plainsong. Here is the back cover description for this selection:

Kent Haruf, award-winning, best-selling author of Plainsong returns to the high plains town of Holt, Colorado, with a novel of masterful authority. The aging McPherson brothers are learning to live without Victoria Roubideaux, the single mother they took in and who has now left their ranch to start college. A lonely young boy stoically cares for his grandfather while a disabled couple tries to protect their children from a violent relative. As these lives unfold and intersect, Eventide unveils the immemorial truths about human beings, their fragility and resilience, their selfishness and goodness, and their ability to find family in one another.

Mary Brannan

RAPS HIKERS
We have agreed to continue our 2006 hikes on the fourth Friday of the month. On Friday, January 27th, we will hike some of the small loop trails in the Tualatin Hills Nature Park and Interpretive Center. Meet at the interpretive center at the park entrance off Millikan Blvd. at 9:30 am. The address is 15655 SW Millikan Blvd. We will be planning our next few hikes while having our sack lunch. Please bring some suggestions. Confirm your participation with Larry Sawyer by the Thursday before the hike. (503-771-1616 or larry_sawyer@comcast.net).

Larry Sawyer

RAPS BRIDGE CLUB
In December, the Bridge Group met at Maxine Thomas’s home. Before getting down to business, we joined in a cut-throat white elephant gift exchange and still had enough energy left to play bridge.

Our next meeting will be at 1:30 pm on Tuesday, January 10th, at the home of Colin and Pat Dunkeld, 7610 S W Miner Way, Portland. The group is open to all RAPS members. If you would like to come, please call 503 292 0838 no later than Friday January 6th to make sure there is room and for directions if needed.

Colin Dunkeld

RAPS PROGRAMS
Our January Program will take place Thursday, January 5th at 1:00 p.m. in 333 SMC. Our featured speaker is Provost Roy Koch. Roy will first speak about his experiences and plans as the new University Provost and then move into a presentation on the topic of sustainability. This subject and related set of government, corporate, and personal initiatives are crucial to the long-term survival of our planet. His remarks should provide additional insights into what is being done and what still needs to be done.

On Wednesday, December 14th, RAPS members and their guests celebrated the holiday season at a dinner held at the Multnomah Athletic Club. We began with a social hour, followed by dinner, announcements, and entertainment by the barbershop quartet, Youth and Ages. Sixty to seventy members and guests attended.

Bruce Stern

Youth and Ages perform at the RAPS Banquet
OUR TRAVELING RETIREES 1 - THOMAS PALM TOURS EASTERN EUROPE

The travel brochure invited us to cruise the Danube River to be “among the first Americans to glimpse [the] re-emerging nations”: Hungary, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro, Bulgaria and Romania. In September 2005, we accepted. Lufthansa’s direct flight from Portland to Frankfurt made the heart of Europe accessible; comfortable trains took us on to Budapest by way of Vienna.

Vienna has its well-known historical attractions, but the highlight for us was the harvest festival at the palace square, the “Wiener Heldenplatz.” Thousands of Viennese streamed through the farm exhibits. (Wood carvings by power saw made us feel at home). At a large tent, the “Bierzelt,” we had “seconds” on the thick, greasy sausages and cold beer.

Budapest’s “Dohany utcai” is the second largest synagogue in the world. The building, designed by non-Jewish architects, features elements of both a Christian cathedral and an Oriental mosque and a huge (non-orthodox) organ. During the Nazi occupation, the building was used as Gestapo headquarters; it escaped Allied bombing only because the main floor was simultaneously a concentration camp.

After boarding our ship, the “River Adagio,” we arrived in Vukovar, Croatia. The town is largely in ruins, a legacy of the Croatian-Serbian war of 1991-95. What was the war about? The proffered “rationales” ranged from “land grab” to “a war to prevent an illegal secession,” to “religious disagreements” to “historically established bad habits” to “we really don’t know why.” With the recent arrest of the Croatian general, Ante Gotovina, the issue of crimes committed in that war continues to make headlines.

In Novi Sad, Serbia, the interesting feature was the bridge that wasn’t there; NATO bombing destroyed it in 1999. A string of ship carcasses across the river now serves as a temporary road bed, but it blocks the river traffic. Ships wanting passage must schedule for the one time per week when a section is moved aside. Belgrade, one of Europe’s oldest cities, is interesting for its Kalemegdan Castle, the “?” tavern, (when the Church objected to the “Holy Virgin Tavern,” it was renamed “?”) and the museum to Josip Broz “Tito.”

In Bulgaria, the highlight of our visit was a bus tour to the villages of Veliko Tarnovo and Arbanassi. In an Orthodox church “no higher than a man on a horse, “ we were treated to an outstanding amateur quartet singing a capella. Since their bass said he liked my voice, I bought their CD – Western salesmanship has come to Bulgaria.

In Romania, we approached the old Greco-Roman harbor at Constanta by Danube/Black Sea Canal. It was dug under the Ceuescuse regime – mostly by political prisoners. The harbor itself is second in size only to that of Rotterdam, but inactive – idle cranes and not a ship in sight. Romania remains one of the poorest countries in Europe; the economy is in transition to a market-base. Constanta has a strategic location between the ports of northern Europe and the markets to Eastern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Asia, but, partly because of war and political instability upstream, the potential of the Canal has not been realized. In the rush to privatize, the Romanian regime had sold off its merchant marine.

The trip ended in Bucharest. Here, the dictator Ceuescuse made a last attempt to calm the mob calling for his exit, but to no avail. He was helicoptered out of the city, but captured, tried and shot, along with his wife. Ceuescuse left a “Peoples Palace,” a building with the second largest footprint in the world after the Pentagon. After the revolution, it was proposed that the grotesque structure be blown-up, but not enough dynamite could be assembled. The locals wonder how to make any money from it.

At our farewell dinner, the four Oregon couples finally got together for a portrait after a most interesting trip.

Thomas Palm
Last year my friend, Clyde Kellay invited me to attend the November 2005 international conference in São Paulo, Brazil by Friendship Force, a world-wide exchange club. I wanted to go to São Paulo because I had not been there since performing with the Robert Shaw Chorale and Orchestra in 1964 and because I publish some compositions of four Brazilian composers, three in São Paulo and one in Curitiba. This would be an opportunity of seeing one of them for the second time and the other three for the first time. The musical portion of the trip will be the subject of a later RAPS Sheet article.

Friendship Force International is a world-wide, people-to-people organization to foster international good will and peace through meeting and living with people of various places and cultures. At the convention I met members from North, Central and South America, Europe, China, Japan, Russia and Africa. Workshops were designed to foster international friendships. The conference ended with a huge banquet, where everyone was greeted at the door by a "caiparina", a local drink made of cachaça (a sugar cane brandy) lime, sugar and ice. Long tables of food and endless glasses of Brazilian wine were followed by a lavish samba show, complete with wonderfully scantily-clad beauties and a "batucada", a drum group that accompanies the samba parade.

After the conference, most delegates went to various cities for a four- or five-day home-stay, with Brazilian families. Clyde and I were bussed to Jundiaí (pronounced June-gee-a-EE), a city north of São Paulo. There we were entertained by club members with banquets, tours, parties, and sight-seeing. Their Friendship Force members were out-going and proud of their city. I overcame language barriers with a few known phrases, hand gestures and a lot of smiles. I had taken a conversational Brazilian Portuguese class at PCC and spent many hours listening to language CDs. It was possible for me to make myself understood almost everywhere we went. Many Brazilian FFI members speak at least a little English.

Our home stay was with a 33-year-old English teacher, who lives with his mother in a modest home. Our host’s mother married a widower with seven children, and they, in turn, had seven more. When the mother celebrated her sixty-fifth birthday, almost all the children were there with their children, along with relatives, neighbors and friends. One son and his wife prepared a traditional churrasquería with more meat than most US families eat in a year.

After leaving our Jundiaí friends, Clyde and I took a six-hour bus trip to Curitiba in one of Brazil’s marvelous double-decker buses. The lower level is first-class with near bed-size reclining seats. The upper level (steerage) is luxurious by our standards and very clean. But passengers are subjected to terrible American movies, and there is no way of shutting off the sound as there is with earphones in airplanes.

Curitiba is a city of some 2.7 million inhabitants, but much quieter than São Paulo. I had long wanted to see it, especially since there is a wonderful train ride from it down the escarpment to the coast. We managed to take a tour that took us down by train and back up by bus with a visit to two absolutely beautiful colonial towns.

The São Paulo bus station is the largest in Latin America with at least 76 bus bays. All were completely full, and a long line of buses waited their turn at the bays. We managed to get a bus to the international airport. The long flight from São Paulo to Atlanta seems endless.

The Portland/Vancouver chapter of Friendship Force will host a group from Brasilia the end of July. If you are interested in joining this fascinating organization and/or participating in the July experience, please talk with Alice Yetka, Maxine Thomas, or me, or log onto <www.friendshipforce.org> for more information. Also, a Brazil night is being planned for the middle of January (time and place to be announced). This is the first of a two articles by Gordon Solie on his trip to Brazil.
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Last fall I wanted to confirm the date and time of Marc Feldesman’s RAPS presentation, and I could not quickly find my copy of The RAPS Sheet. It occurred to me that this information must be on our web page calendar. Upon accessing our web page, www.raps.pdx.edu. I was disappointed however. It was way out of date, so that I had no access to a current calendar of events. I expressed my dissatisfaction with our web site to President Mary Gordon Brannan. She assured me that it was on her “to-do” list. She addressed the issue with the Board, and Robert Pearson, our Board staff representative, volunteered to be our webmaster. He is a retiree from the Office of Information Technologies.

Even though most of us do not use the site, in this day and age it is necessary for us to have one. A poorly maintained site can give a viewer a poor impression of our organization. Robert has updated our website and made it easier for Darshana, our office manager, to keep the calendar up-to-date. Along with information about RAPS, you can now find on it the calendar of events, view the 2005-6 Board members, and read the present and past RAPS Sheets. I encourage you to look at our web site and make suggestions to Robert for improving it even more.

Thank you Robert!

Larry Sawyer
RAPS member

Mark Your Calendars

Be sure not to miss the following event sponsored by RAPS.

Thursday, February 16, 2006, 1:00 p.m.

Featured Speaker: Detective Bill Johnston

Topic: Identity Theft

New Members of RAPS

We welcome these new members of RAPS:

Catherine Oelheim, Admissions

Richard Dewey, Environmental Professional Program