President’s Message

One of the stated objectives of RAPS is to “promote the welfare of retired personnel” and, another is to “encourage communication among its members.” For most retirees, the question raised by retirement becomes not how to use all that newly found free time but rather how to find the time to do all the things that you now want to do? Still granting the scarcity of time as the basic problem, it would nonetheless be advantageous for the membership of RAPS as a whole and for individuals as well to increase communication and the spirit of community among the RAPS members. How might this be done?

After a life of reading, doing research, writing and teaching students, why should we let all that knowledge dissipate and go to waste? A possibility is to use that knowledge to now teach one another. I would like to direct this column toward that task. In this context, if you have read a book which you feel might be of interest to other RAPS members, why not write a page or two to spread the good news as to the merits of the book. This also opens up the opportunity for all of us to be informed about other areas of knowledge given the wide variety of disciplines covered by RAPS membership. This might also generate interest in joining the book club currently being formed by Mary Gordon-Brannan, the present President-Elect of RAPS.

Still speaking about books and knowledge, one of the best programs on TV for those who have cable is called “Book TV C-Span2” on channel 25. This program is on weekends (Saturday, Sunday and part of Monday) and offers 48 hours of continuous book reviews. On any Friday, you can check the web site, BookTV.org, and get the complete program of books and authors that will be covered on any given weekend (note that the times given are ET). June and I tape the particular book reviews, usually an hour long, that appeal to us and then we watch them at our leisure. The wide coverage includes the arts, history, science and political and social issues from the right to the left. And not only the books covered, but the range of celebrities and scholars, Nobel laureates, and on, allows you to have these very interesting people come right into your living room and entertain and inform you, and, at times, at very high levels of erudition.

Also, if you have had a recent travel experience, since “To Travel is Better Than To Arrive,” you might wish to share your experiences with the RAPS membership. Why did you take the trip and was it fun? Did you learn anything about the history, the arts, and culture of the places...
you visited. What can you tell us about the cost, best hotels, or restaurants and problems or regrets? Your responses to all of these questions would be of interest to our fellow RAPS members. This might lead to a separate column in the RAPS Sheet, subject to the discretion of the editor, John Cooper.

Finally, in the future I would like to present in this column both sides of important controversial issues. Of course, those with opposed ideas would be given space to argue them. For example in the next RAPS Sheet, I will spell out the opposed positions concerning globalization, including what is meant by globalization, what the force is behind globalization, and how globalization can be viewed as a positive and a negative. Your response on any of the above should reach me (e-mail raps@pdx.edu) by the second Friday of the month in order to be published in the next issue of the RAPS sheet.

Richard Brinkman

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**Our Active Retirees: Deanne Westbrook**

Deanne Westbrook, Professor Emerita of English, has continued an active career as scholar and teacher since her retirement. She published a book on the English romantic poet Wordsworth, *Wordsworth’s Biblical Ghosts*, as well as scholarly articles on writers of the Romantic era. She is currently working on an article about the influence of Milton on romantic notions of inspiration.

Deanne’s other passion is baseball, and she has joined that to her love of literature. She published a book on baseball and myth while still a full-time professor, and she has since published an article on “God, Gambling, and The Game” in a collection entitled Baseball/Literature/Culture. Another article, “Aging, Anxious, and Apocalyptic: Baseball’s Myths for the Millenium,” will be published early next year in an anthology titled “American Mythologies.” The PSU community will have the opportunity to hear her at the upcoming PSU Weekend in the fall term, when she will give a talk on “Baseball, Literature, and Gambling.”

Retirement has not meant an end to her teaching career or her service to the university. She has continued to teach two of the most popular courses offered by the Department of English (popular, no doubt, because she teaches them), “Greek Mythology” and “The Bible as Literature.” She has also offered courses in Milton, the Romantics, and critical theory, as well as providing uncompensated advising and examining of graduate students.

Deanne earned both her B.A. and M.A. in English from PSU before earning her PhD from the University of Oregon. In fact, she was a student in my class on T.S. Eliot in my first year at PSU. I saw very quickly that she had an outstanding intellect. While at PSU, she earned prophetically the Nina Mae Kellogg award as the outstanding senior in the English department.

Lest anyone think that she lives entirely in the ivory tower world of books, she recently did a fair amount of the labor involved in remodeling her kitchen.

John Cooper

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**Notice to Contributors**

Because Jill Shelan, our office manager works on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I want to be able to get copy to her on Tuesday so that she can get it back from the printer and get it in the mail by Thursday.

I am therefore changing the deadline for copy to the last Thursday in the month. That will give me the weekend and two days to prepare copy for the press. I understand that delays are sometimes unavoidable, and I will always try to work in late copy.

I also want to thank all contributors for their willingness to provide copy promptly.

John Cooper, editor
**RAPS ACTIVITIES**

**Annual Summer Picnic: 2004**
Fifty-five (or more) persons—RAPS members, spouses, and friends—attended our organization’s Annual Summer Picnic held on Wednesday, August 18, 2004, at Willamette Park, a premier example of the City of Portland’s naturally beautiful public parks. The weather proved to be delightfully appropriate for the event, notably full sun with lower temperatures than the scorchers that had afflicted us earlier in the week. A pleasant breeze coming off the river provided a comfortable atmosphere and perhaps warded off some of the anticipated invading insects.

Potluck picnics seem to work for us, and the groaning food tables afforded a variety of traditional summertime food items. Changing food preferences have made it impractical to cook the traditional American picnic fare, e.g. hamburgers and hot dogs. Likewise, dissimilar beverage tastes make it imperative to rely on the BYOB device for liquid refreshment. Those forgetting to bring something to drink always can be fully confident that some kind colleague will bring an over-supply for sharing.

As long as the present arrangements committee operates, the brand of coffee to be served will always be “illy,” the world-class product of an Italian company based in Trieste. To be sure, American coffee has improved dramatically in recent years, but Italian coffee will always set the highest standard. In other words, leave your percolator and canned coffee at home!

A minor glitch confronted some of us who arrived on time and found no parking spaces adjacent to the picnic tables. The Parks Department had allocated to boaters parking spaces previously committed to us. This awkward situation had to be resolved by some shuttling back and forth and even illegal parking, but after an hour or so plenty of space became available.

From a historical perspective, over the years we have used some other very fine picnic sites, such as at the Arboretum, Champoeg State Park, and a park in Dundee. However, Willamette Park’s convenient location seems to work well. Also, scheduling picnics in mid-summer seems to enable us to take advantage of better weather. In breaking with past practices, the arrangements committee opted not to set up traps to capture the neighborhood yellow jacket population. The results did not seem to be much different from what has occurred in the past.

Suggestions for changes and improvements will always be welcome. As a cautionary note, remember that doing so might lead to your appointment to the arrangements committee!

Vic and Beryl Dahl

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**Bridge Club**
The October bridge session will be held on Tuesday October 12th at Willamette View, 12705, S.E. River Road. To RSVP and ask for directions, phone Irene Place at 503-652-6528 or e-mail her at irene@wvresident.org.

Willamette View is composed of several buildings. Look for the tall one with the drive-through portico set back from River Road. Check in there with the receptionist who will direct you to the Court Building’s entrance. Our bridge group is meeting in the Court Family Room, just inside the entrance to the right. Bridge starts at 1:30 pm.

Colin Dunkeld

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**Book Club**
Our next meeting of the RAPS Book Club will be on Tuesday, October 19 at the home of Felicia Wirtz at 1:30. Call Felicia at 503-628-2252 for directions and to RSVP. The book selected is *Aging Well* by George E. Vaillant. It is a book that was recommended by Marvin Kaiser, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, when he presented on the topic of aging during last year’s lecture series. The book is in paperback and is a best seller that “reveals the scientific secrets to ensuring that our golden years are truly golden. Based on the longest and most complete study of adult development in the world, *Aging Well* draws from the individual histories of 824 men and women from a variety of backgrounds to illustrate the most important factors involved in reaching and enjoying a happy, healthy old age” (retrieved 8/31/04 from Amazon.com).

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Book Club  continued from p. 3
A review of the book by Amazon.com (8/31/04) follows:

“We all need models for how to live from retirement to past 80—with joy,” writes George Vaillant, M.D., director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development. This groundbreaking book pulls together data from three separate longevity studies that, beginning in their teens, followed 824 individuals for more than 50 years. The subjects were male Harvard graduates; inner-city, disadvantaged males; and intellectually gifted women.

“Here you have these wonderful files, and you seem little interested in how we cope with increasing age ... our adaptability, our zest for life,” one of these subjects wrote to Vaillant, a researcher, psychiatrist, and Harvard Medical School professor, about how he was using this information. Vaillant took this advice to heart. In *Aging Well*, he presents personal narratives about people from these studies whom he interviewed personally in their 70s and 80s. He describes their history, relationships, hardships, philosophies, and sources of joy. We learn their perspectives and what makes them want to get up in the morning.

We also learn what makes old age vital and interesting. Vaillant discusses the important adult developmental tasks, such as identity, intimacy, and generativity (giving to the next generation), and provides important clues to a healthy, meaningful, satisfying old age. Health in old age, we learn, is not predicted by low cholesterol or ancestral longevity, but by factors such as a stable marriage, adaptive coping style (the ability to make lemonade out of life’s lemons), and regular exercise.

Vaillant is empathetic and sometimes surprisingly poetic: “Owning an old brain, you see, is rather like owning an old car.... Careful driving and maintenance are everything.” He freely includes subjective observations and interpretations, giving us a richer picture of the people he interviewed and insights into their lives. *Aging Well* is recommended for readers who are interested in learning about the quality-of-life issues of aging from the people who have the most to teach.

This book should provide fodder for much discussion. Please join us.

Mary Gordon-Brannan

Mystery Book Review

Professor of English Reveals Murderous Intent

Professors of English not only get murdered frequently (in fiction of course); they also commit murder (also in fiction). One prime example is Oakley Hall, until recently a Professor of English and director of the writing program at University of California at Irvine. After a long career as a teacher and mainstream novelist, Hall is now writing a series of detective novels using the real-life writer, Ambrose Bierce, as his sleuth. The fourth title in his series, *Ambrose Bierce and the Trey of Pearls*, has just appeared (2004).

As a serious novelist, Hall is well-known for his western epics, *Warlock* (1958) and *The Bad Lands* (1978), though his most popular novel is probably *Downhill Racers* (1963) because of the film version with Robert Redford. In recent years, as he coasts toward retirement, his work has taken a lighter turn in the form of mystery novels set in San Francisco in the 1890s. He uses the author and investigative reporter, Bierce, as the solver of crimes in this setting.

Bierce (1842-1914?) was born in Ohio, served with distinction the Civil War, worked as a reporter in England, and, in 1875, went west to San Francisco to work on a newspaper there. In 1887, he joined the staff of William Randolph Hearst’s *Examiner* and worked for Hearst in San Francisco and New York. The last part of his life is a mystery in itself. He went to Mexico in 1913 to cover Pancho Villa’s raids. He sent letters from Chihuahua on December 26, 1913, then disappeared and was never seen or heard from again. It is assumed that he was killed in one of Villa’s battles, but no evidence has ever been found.

His literary remains were published in a twelve-volume *Collected Works* in 1912. They include his many volumes of poetry and essays as well as his major works, the Civil War stories collected as *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* and his tongue-in-cheek *Devil’s Dictionary.*

Continued on next page

Mary Gordon-Brannan
MysteryBook Review continued from page 4

Using Bierce as a central character and crime investigator is an effective device. He was witty, skeptical, and inquiring. He could see through pretense, spot phony alibis, and reject contrived evidence. His first appearance in this role was in *Ambrose Bierce and the Queen of Spades* in 1998, which was quickly followed by *Ambrose Bierce and the Death of Kings* and *Ambrose Bierce and One-Eyed Jacks*. In all of these books, he is aided by his fellow journalist and narrator of the stories, Tom Redmond, but he is the one who uncovers motives and breaks alibis, leading him in each case to the solution of a murder.

In *Ambrose Bierce and the Trey of Pearls*, Hall, as in the other books in the series, uses real events of the time as background. In this case, it is the suffrage movement, with a group of ardent feminists clashing with the city’s conservative religious leaders. One of the latter, the Reverend Devine, who has led a duplicitous double life with several women in his congregation, is murdered. A central clue is a box of pearls found among his effects. Bierce learns that they were rewards that Devine gave to his women friends.

The plot allows for many comments, mainly satirical, about the role of women in the society of the time, both in and out of marriage. The always-cynical Bierce notes conflicts among the suffragettes over their role in marriage. He exchanges barbs with his fellow journalist and novelist, Gertrude Atherton -- another historical character in the book -- who expresses her own cynical attitude: “Divorce was certainly more honorable than a loveless marriage, and, if divorce was impossible, there was always murder.” There is indeed always murder in Hall’s entertaining novels. It the plots are not terribly strong, the books are absorbing in their use of historical events and of details of newspaper work in the Hearst environment. Bierce is a judicious investigator and an entertaining companion, brusque and opinionated, but charismatic in fiction as he must have been in life.  

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‘Discover’ PSU Weekend on November 5-7

Emeriti and Retired Faculty and staff are cordially invited to this year’s PSU Weekend, November 5-7 on campus. Dayton Duncan, renowned Lewis and Clark scholar and co-producer with Ken Burns for the PBS Series “The Journey of the Corps of Discovery,” will give a keynote speech on the leadership style of the two explorers on Saturday. Many of the 25 seminar sessions that day will highlight Lewis and Clark topics, including talks by Chet Orloff and Pat Courtney Gold, a Wasco artist from Warm Springs. Other presentations range from a post-election “analysis” by cartoonist Jack Ohman to Low Carb Diets by Diane Stadler of Oregon Health & Sciences University.

On Friday there will be a Preview Night Party at the Oregon Historical Society with keynote speaker Duncan. Consider visiting the historic photo exhibit at the Simon Benson House, RAPS campus home, on Saturday. You can root for the Viking football team in their game against Idaho State late Saturday afternoon. On Sunday, you can see a slide show lecture by intrepid traveler Rick Steves (sponsored by the PSU School of Business Administration).

All Saturday seminars and several other activities are free of charge. There is an admission fee for the Saturday keynote presentation: $30 includes lunch, $12 is for lecture only. The Preview Package on Friday evening is $100 and includes preferred seating at the following day’s luncheon.

For more details about PSU Weekend, go to the PSU Alumni Association Web site at www.alumni@pdx.edu or call the PSU Weekend hotline at 503-725-4949.