New literary & art review showcases the works of Osher Lifelong Learning students

Description

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A suburban yogi signs up for a spiritual experience, but gets a little more spirit than heâ??d bargained for. A young man hitches a ride from an older Texan in 1968 and prepares himself for the inevitable clash of viewpoints. A young woman from Indiana who settled in San Francisco in 1968 remembers her precarious living situation and the influence of Stephen Gaskin, a bona fide guru teaching a class at San Francisco State.

Home page of Vistas & Byways literary periodical.

These are some of the stories you will encounter in the sixth issue of Vistas & Byways, a twice-yearly publication by members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at San Francisco State

University. An online periodical of membersâ?? writing and visual art, the magazine highlights fiction, non-fiction, poetry, interviews, painting, collage, and photography.

As you might tell from the stories mentioned above, this Fall issue includes a retrospective on 1968. In the poetry section, several writers have experimented with haibun, a Japanese form that incorporates haiku. Lighter weight fare includes odes to the slash, pigeons, an inspiring street sign and Peoples Park in Berkeley. The visual arts section contains a photo essay of 1960s Berlin, paintings and collage.

We recently talked to V&B Founder Mike Lambert, Editor-in-Chief Charlene Anderson, Webmaster Jane Goldstein and Fiction Editor Don Plansky.

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The staff: Poetry Editor Angie Minkin, Webmaster Jane Goldstein, Fiction Editor Don Plansky, Nonfiction Editor Mary Heldman and Editor-in-Chief Charlene Anderson. (Photo by Mary Hunt)

Lambert, a retired telecommunications engineer, was the prime mover behind the formation of V&B. When he and his wife retired and were living in Lake Wildwood near Grass Valley, he helped set up some Osher Lifelong Learning Institute courses through Sierra College outside of Sacramento. In a writing workshop, he noted how interesting the stories by his fellow senior citizens were.

Mike, what gave you the idea of starting a literary review in the first place?

â??I had never even seen a literary magazine, but after doing some research, I discovered a few online and thought we could publish one ourselves. The Wildwood Review published 17 quarterly issues between 2010 and 2015 with 12 to 18 contributors in each issue.

â??So when my wife and I decided to live full time in San Francisco, I checked out the OLLI program at SFSU and took a writing course in summer 2015 from Sarah Broderick. After about 3 classes, I was so impressed with the quality of the writing that I thought we could start a literary review in San Francisco. When I called a meeting of people interested about 12 showed up!â?•

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Editor-in-chief Charlene Anderson continues the story.

â??At that first meeting, Mike asked us all to give him a brief rundown of any relevant experience we may have had. At the next meeting, I found myself the chair of the editorial board!â??â?? Anderson has a masterâ??s degree in English and published a novel, â??Berkeleyâ??s Best Buddhist Bookstore,â?• in 2001. While her career as a grant analyst for the University of California-San Francisco had been stimulating, she had always wanted to be a writer. Retirement gave her the opportunity.

â??V&B is an outlet for my own writing and artistic endeavors, and itâ??s great to work with a team of talented collaborators.â?• Anderson notes the sixth issueâ??s â??beautifulâ?• visual content, and credits webmaster Jane Goldstein with upgrading the look of the reviewâ??s website.

Jane, did you come into this project with web editing credentials?

â??No! I was computer literate. I had a lot of work experience at the IRS using business applications to develop training materials, informational flyers, presentations, and forms, and Iâ??d messed around a bit with Photoshop for fun. Translating that to designing and building a 70-plus page website has been quite a journey for me, really tough for a while, but now a testament to the joy of lifelong learning.â?•

How did V&B come to have so much visual content?

â??Richard Simmonds and I came up with the original plan for the first issue to take photographs of the Bay Area as a unifying theme, and weâ??ve continued to do that. A couple of issues ago, there was an attempt to try to illustrate each written work with its own photo, but itâ??s really hard to find photos that fit such a diverse range of subjects and genres. I believe some photos were even taken from the web.

A selection from Bill Carpenterâ??s â??Berlin: A Photo Essay.â?• The photos were taken 50 years ago.

â??This is a magazine about us, it really should be by us; everything should be by us. This 6th issue has added unifying colors and themes to the website, which really enhances the literary and visual work of the review. I think the visual elements help us build an identity, which increases readership, and thatâ??s hard to do in this competitive world.

â??But we couldnâ??t have gotten this far without the other editors and writers who helped put the review together. For instance, Don Plansky, the fiction editor, has been here since the very beginning. In addition to editing, he pulls the production together with his professionalism and humor. Heâ??s provided the glue that keeps the editorial board together.â?•

One of a collection of digital images in Pamela Pittâ??s â??Homage to Psychedelic Art.â?•

Don, how have you kept busy with the review for six issues?

â??My career as a freelance journalist and publicist helped with the initial setup of the web content.â?• It also helped with naming the publication, writing the Focus section, which talks about each issueâ??s theme, clarifying submission guidelines and attending numerous editorial board meetings where each submission is discussed and voted on for approval. He says,

â??There was one meeting in the beginning that only Charlene, Jane and I were able to attend and I told them Charlene was Vistas, Jane was Byways, so I must be the ampersand.â?•

And, oh yes, he also regularly submits material to each issue. â??Iâ??ll keep on volunteering till we run out of talented writers who want to be published,â?• he said and added, â??Iâ??m always surprised that each issue features new work by OLLI members that I havenâ??t met before, in class or at an event. So far weâ??ve published 68 authors!â?•

Mike, weâ??ll come back to you for the last word. What is the biggest obstacle you see ahead for the Vistas & Byways Review?

â??Manpower. Jane has done a terrific job of refining the website, but itâ??s now very labor intensive. Weâ??ve added so much photography, which looks great, but itâ??s a lot of work to format and upload to the website.

â??V&B is pretty close to an exotic website with this issue; the other online magazines that weâ??ve researched, like the Baltimore Review and the Shenandoah Review, have nowhere near the bells and whistles that we have now. And 90 percent of the 200 or so literary reviews out there are still available only in print versions!

â??So we hope that weâ??ll keep getting interested volunteers, not just for the editorial board but also to keep up the web work. Itâ??s such a great place for seniors to get something published!â?•

To find out what classes OLLI offers this spring semester, visit www.OLLI.sfsu.edu.

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1. All Posts

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