We have just completed another successful semester of workshops thanks to the extraordinary work of our workshop leaders and co-leaders, and OLLI office staff. And long before the current semester ended, the office staff and curriculum committee members have already been planning for the spring, 2017 semester. It won’t be long before the registration process will begin again.

The curriculum committee met twice during the month of November to continue discussing the work of sub-committees, and to hear presentations of new workshops for the spring. We will list the new offerings in the next issue of The Chronicles.

The OLLI chorus has finally been formed! Auditions were being held November 28, 30 and December 5 for the conductor to identify voice ranges for everyone who wished to be part of the Community Choral group. A select group will be identified from the Community Choral group to sing the National Anthem at CitiField this spring. Choral members can be in both groups. Plans are under way for both groups to sing at some special events at the end of the semester.

We hosted a special event at the Stony Brook Innovation Lab in early November that Assistant Dean Carolyn Jankowski had arranged. Students guided us around to explain how they use materials in the lab to create projects they have designed. There will be several more special events this spring: a lecture series with several doctors and a nutritionist arranged by Doris Weisman; a program of poetry reading/singing along with an accompanist hosted by Betsy Palmedo; a French foreign film series put together by Tasha Greenberg; and the CitiField event put together by Ira Kurtzberg.

One of our committee members, Elio Zappulla, has offered to write biographies of some workshop leaders in an effort to learn more about them. We anticipate having one of these in each issue of The Chronicles. Look for “Profile of an OLLI Leader”, namely Bruce Stasiuk, on page four in this issue.
This semester The Art Wall in room SBS S102 was one of the best yet. The wall featured the efforts of members in painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, carving and stained glass. **Faye Graber**, Chair of the OLLI Arts Council, conducted the reception and enlightened us with her sophisticated Commentary on the works. **Mel Lantz** curated the Art Cabinet containing woodworking, stained glass, ceramics and sculpture.
Years ago, there was a cartoon in The New Yorker which depicted three people waiting on the 14th Street subway station. The caption was a quote reading “Due to an incident at the Bergen Street station, everything has changed and nothing will ever be the same.” The cartoon captured an undeniable truth: change is the only constant in our lives.

That truth becomes harder to accept as we become older – we long for status quo and predictability, for repetition of the good patterns in our life. But the increasing complexity of the world will not allow for stasis, and we must fight rigidity because rigidity causes unhappiness.

Take the stock market, for instance. When I worked for Standard & Poor’s in the early ‘80s and even when I consulted for the company in the late ’90s, its analysts were fairly accurate in their predictions of market trends and individual stock performance. Not so now for S&P or other equity market experts. There are daily predictions of crashes. Look what happened after the Brexit vote.

If I listened to weather predictions, I would have cancelled a dozen golf dates this year. Changes happen too rapidly for even the most sophisticated technology. Patterns of the past in many areas of our lives have disappeared. As the Nobelist poet Yeats wrote in 1919:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned…

John F. Kennedy said “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.” The ancient Greeks knew that once you step into the river, both you and the river are changed forever.

Speaking about ancients (and Nobelists), Ann and I went to a Bob Dylan concert in Forest Hills this past summer. Compared to so many other musicians, Dylan is ancient, but so was this audience. Dylan is the master of change – not only music styles (folk to rock to blues to zydeco and more), but change within his own songs. This upsets a lot of people. I used to be one of them.

They want him to sing fifty year old songs exactly the way he originally recorded them. He’s different, the world’s different. The lyrics he composed back then may have no meaning now to himself or his audience. His mood may have shifted the way he performed “Simple Twist of Fate” on August 10th in Scranton to how he performed it at Forest Hills. Ironically, one constant on the Dylan tour these days is the Oscar-winning song “Things Have Changed” from the Michael Douglas movie Wonder Boys.

Sinatra fans embrace the fact that the Chairman may have issued a dozen different recordings of a song over his long career. Each version has its own special magic. I can preach acceptance of change, but at the same time confess that I struggle with it. My body will not do the same things it did five years ago and some days it’s hard to acknowledge that and adjust to it. My mind doesn’t grasp new concepts nearly as quickly, and I forget names and words more than I’d like to. And even change – quarters, dimes and nickels – ain’t what it used to be.

So this Buddhist approaches a food truck, looks around, and then says to the vendor “I’ll have one with everything.” The vendor hands him the sandwich, and the Buddhist gives the vendor a $20 bill. He waits and waits and finally asks “Excuse me, but where is my change?” The vendor tells him “Change comes from within.”
Bruce Stasiuk has been teaching OLLI classes for several years. Although his course titles vary, each one deals primarily with novel ways of thinking. His courses are extremely popular.

He was born and raised in the Bronx. As a youngster, he played baseball for the Yankee Stadium Little League team. He was also coached in springboard diving for two years. During his teens, his family moved to Lake Ronkonkoma. He attended Sayville schools where he was a very fine athlete – playing basketball and football. He played league baseball in the summertime and was selected, upon graduation, to be the catcher on the Ronkonkoma Cardinals team, playing along with Carl Yaztremski. However, at age 17 he had a tragic accident on a trampoline that led to his being unable to walk without crutches.

Bruce completed his high school studies while a patient for ten years at the New York State Rehabilitation Hospital. Afterwards, he attended Suffolk Community College, and then completed his BA at Dowling College. (Revelation: I was fortunate enough to have Bruce as a student in a couple of classes about half a century ago when I taught at Dowling! He was a delight!)

He began his career by teaching graduate classes at Dowling, where he also received an MA degree. In 1966, he became an upper grade elementary school teacher in the Comsewogue, LI, district, where he remained for decades. Bruce was very popular with students and staff and was a highly successful teacher.

After his accident, he met a young woman, Gina, who would soon become his wife. She has worked in a variety of positions at Stony Brook University. Bruce and Gina joined the Citizens Exchange Corps for which they spent time in the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War. After retiring from Comsewogue, Bruce did some substitute teaching. Later, he obtained a position as a LIIPS (Long Island Institute of Professional Studies) instructor for schoolteachers.

He has a wide variety of interests and is quite knowledgeable about many subjects. This has made his OLLI classes very attractive. The many OLLI members who have taken his classes have been deeply impressed by his ability to think in unusual and original ways and to transfer that ability to many of them.

Bruce is very happy to be teaching OLLI courses, and OLLI is extremely pleased to have him associated with the organization.
Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could; some blunders and absurdities have crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense.

----Ralph Waldo Emerson