Emerities Newsletter, Summer 2011

Georgia State University Emeriti Association

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This was to be a moment to treasure – reaching the crest of Heartbreak Hill while running the Boston Marathon. Now, with 21 miles down and just five to go, that was not going to happen.

I staggered into the Red Cross Station atop Heartbreak Hill and, with the support of the staff, sank into a plastic chair. Wrapped in a Mylar blanket and shivering, I remembered that I had promised to write a story for Emerities about my grand adventure – some adventure!

Running the Boston Marathon was a Bucket List event for me. The Boston Marathon is the oldest continuously run marathon – 115th running in 2011 – and one of the few events in which an average Joe can compete with the world’s best. One must qualify for Boston, and less than 10 percent of marathoners meet entry standards. In 1981, I finished the Huntsville Marathon in just over three hours – my personal best – but still a minute and a half too slow for Boston’s age-based qualifying time. Years went by and there were the inevitable changes. What speed I had ebbed away; it took longer to heal from injuries; and my coordination, flexibility and balance quietly eroded.

(I fantasized about putting memorials around Sandy Springs where I had done face plants over the years.)


I was able to defer my eligibility for one year – 2011 would be my last shot. I trained carefully, nursing my foot, but making certain I had sufficient miles of preparation. It seemed to rain a bone-chilling downpour every Saturday morning this past January, but I knew runners up North were getting out of their warm beds to run in even tougher conditions – so I ran. Normally, marathon-training programs call for about three months of intense preparation, with five 20-mile runs spread over a few months. I did all this and more. I never felt more ready.

So many things can go wrong at the last minute, yet the flight to Boston was smooth. I ate carefully, slept better than expected and woke refreshed and eager to a clear, cool April 18 - Marathon Day. My only concern was a slightly upset digestive system a day earlier that now seemed to be under control.

The smiling and high-fiving with spectators during my first six miles quickly ended as my legs suddenly got heavy and I was making multiple bathroom stops. And though I was taking water and Gatorade at every opportunity, dehydration set in. I knew I was in trouble, but stubbornly pushed on, finally stopping when I realized that I was unstable even when walking – Heartbreak Hill. I had never failed to finish any race until Boston.

The night before the marathon I had read that one of life’s biggest challenges is getting to the starting line of whatever we want to do. That has become especially true as I get older. A week after returning from Boston, my son and I submitted our applications for the New York City Marathon.
I have had an interest in foreign languages since childhood. As a small child, some of my very first words were Spanish. This probably stems from having a Spanish-speaking au pair, Criselda, who was later a Wave in the U. S. Navy during World War II. She wrote to me in Spanish several times during the war, and to this day I remember how the need to conjugate verbs gradually dawned on me from her letters.

My interest in Russian probably came from the fact that my grandmother lived in a little town in Texas inhabited by a large population of Czech-speaking immigrants. There, one could readily hear Czech, which features many of the rich consonant clusters typical of Russian, another Slavic language. So the interest in Russian passed to me through Czech, I think, and this interest prompted me through the years to seek ways to interact with the Russian language.

After retirement I decided to review the one year of Russian I had taken as a University of Texas undergraduate in 1951. This I did at Georgia Tech in their over-62 program, which waives tuition and fees for Georgia senior citizens who attend state university courses on a non-credit basis. After finishing the first two years at Georgia Tech, I inquired about continuing to study Russian without credit at Emory University, which has a long-established Russian department with a wide range of Russian course offerings, and found out that doing so would indeed be feasible. In the fall of 2011 I will be at Emory starting my fifth year of Russian, putting me well on the way to fulfilling my life-long wish to learn Russian.

I am looking forward to further interaction with the language when I travel to Russia in the summer of 2012 accompanied by my nephew, a career officer in the U. S. Army.
LEON HURLEY RETIRES AGAIN

Leon Hurley, professor and associate dean emeritus of the College of Education, retired this month from the Coordinating Committee of the Emeriti Association. Leon joined the Coordinating Committee shortly after it began in 2002. Although GSU emeriti now take it for granted that an emeritus representative will sit on the presidential platform at commencement, Leon started that tradition and was the first emeritus to accompany the presidential party to the graduation ceremony. Leon also served as secretary of the Coordinating Committee for several years. He was recommended for Association chair many times but always declined. Leon had a special talent for greeting emeriti as they entered an event and for selling them emeriti T-shirts. We are grateful for his many contributions to the growth and development of the Emeriti Association.

In his years at Georgia State, Leon served as chair of the Department of Special Education (now Educational Psychology and Special Education) for 15 years and then as an associate dean. He was also an active member of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission Ethics Committee examining allegations of misconduct by public school teachers and administrators.

JERUSALEM: THE CITY OF HOPE
by Eugen Schoenfeld

I long dreamed to visit Jerusalem, especially after having survived the Holocaust. I never had the opportunity until 1973, when “Professors for Peace in the Middle East” asked me to join faculty from around the world on a visit to Israel. I was impatient, and it was a long flight, but finally the captain announced, “We are approaching Israel.” Some stood and cheered, some attempted to dance the “horah,” and there was I with tears in my eyes. “I am home,” I said to myself.

I spent a week visiting the land, but now it was time for Jerusalem. The group was scheduled to meet the leaders of the land: Begin, Rabin, and others, but first I felt compelled to visit the Kotel – the Western Wall, the Wailing Wall, the remnant of the ancient Holy Temple.

I walked to the old city and for a while stood in the yard overlooking the ancient stones. At one side of the wall stood the Chassidim in black beaver hats, reciting their prayers with a concentration that made them oblivious to the joyous singing of a group in whose midst were a young boy being carried on his father’s shoulder and a man carrying Torah, clothed in an Eastern-style garment with a large silver crown and breast-plate. They were on their way to participate in the boy’s bar mitzvah rites.

To the right of the men, the women were cordoned off as required by Talmudic law in a place of worship. Their dress indicated a great geographical and cultural diversity. There were European, Yemenite, North African and Middle Eastern Jews creating a cacophony of language sounds co-mingled with the happy shrills of the female relatives of the bar mitzvah boy. This was not, by any means, the quiet that usually marks a holy and sacred place. This place was alive with the joyful sound of people who after 2,000 years of adversity found themselves physically, emotionally and politically free.

Slowly, and I must confess, with great trepidation I approached the wall. I am a secular person, yet I was overwhelmed by the historical sanctity of the place. I came to touch the “Kotel” to experience the history of my people, to express my love of this oft-maligned, tortured and sacrificed people of whom I am an intrinsic part. I lightly touched the wall, fearing of what it might do to me. Perhaps it was merely a self-fulfilling prophecy, but what I experienced was a communion with a historical transcendent. I was transported as if by magic into another realm. In my vision I was surrounded by Moses, the teacher of all teachers; David the sweet singer of Israel; there were Hillel and Shamm, the two great scholars of the Tanaic period; and there were rabbi Akivah and Bar Kochbah, the revolutionary fighters for Jewish independence. And there also stood my hero, the great Jewish dissenter, Elishah ben Abooyah, who dared to question the meaning of ritualism, who because of his challenge to beliefs and ritual laws was named in the Talmud as “The Different One.”

There I stood in the midst of my history, together with people from the ancient and near past, including my family and the people of my hometown who were killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Surrounded by my people, I felt as most Jews do – not only as a survivor of the Holocaust, but as a member of a people who refuse to die.

A POEM FOR MARK
by Gene Hollahan

Eugene Hollahan, professor emeritus of English, and his wife, Carol, are proud of their son, Col. Mark Hollahan, USMC, Chief of Staff, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), at Camp Leatherneck in Afghanistan.

Mark’s Mother’s Day greeting to Carol, by Skype, was featured on WAGA-TV this spring. Mark enlisted in the Marines while at The Citadel and served in Operation Desert Storm. Gene wrote this poem when Mark was in Desert Storm (published in Weber Studies 13.2):

**VERY LAWRENCE, SO TO SPEAK (Col. M.R.H., USMC)**

Yucca, Yucca, Yucca japed the desert when you jeeped from Capistrano to Quantico, between duty on the west coast and the east. I shotgunned for you. That is, I dozed, nightmaring the wild bunch, the dirty dozen, wilding Las Cruces and Silver City. I went along for the ride, so cactus and sagebrush composed my closeups and middle distance. Your sand hills were my Death Valley dunes. My element was Mohawk and Cochise, my medium ersatz shale, flint, jasper, and tourmaline. True grit or false grit? I dubbed the whole scene, cactus, mesquite, sagebrush, spongy succulents, with healing properties from Paramount’s back lot.

The wide absences were Tombstone, Dry Gulch, and Bowie. Lizard and horny toad thrived at Growler Pass and Silver Bell. Desert rats owing survival to an oasis dreamed blue eyes in a downpour at Mexicali. Some auteur or other supplied the script. I plumed myself filmic and germinal, uttering a grammar of Hollywood glamor until I heard the yucca’s mockery, slapping, slapping, slapping like broken film. You had it in you to laugh in its teeth, fresh from Arabia Deserta and directing traffic to the score of Saddam’s torch song at Sabriya. You were the authentic iron man, coast to coast like Runyon’s character in one unbroken line.
Missy Cody, the Activities Subcommittee chair, is planning activities for the calendar year and invites your input. Please send her an e-mail at mcody@gsu.edu and let her know your interests and/or sign up to serve on her subcommittee.

Plans so far are to recruit experts to speak on topics about which emeriti have expressed an interest: memory and aging, fitness after 50, new technologies and history in Atlanta. A tour of GSU facilities is also in the works.

Possible excursions in the planning stage are: Theatrical Outfit play with discussion and/or speaker (Freud’s Last Session or A Wrinkle in Time); Nacoochee Village (wineries, Nora Mill and Willows Pottery); Kaleidoscope Shop (featured in last newsletter) and Stone Mountain Art Incubators.

The Authors Series will continue with quarterly meetings. Additional special interest groups may also come to fruition.

FUTURE EVENTS

Specific events scheduled or to be scheduled are:

SEPTEMBER
- **Monday, September 19**
  11:30 a.m., **Student Center**
  Provost Palm will open our academic year with her annual State of the University message and the introduction of new emeriti.

OCTOBER
- **Friday, Oct. 28**
  **Time, Location TBA**
  GSU’s Human Resources Department will sponsor informational session on the 2012 Board of Regents benefits package.

NOVEMBER
- **Speaker or Theatrical Outfit**

DECEMBER
- **Holiday Party**

JANUARY
- **Dr. Rajeev Dhawan**
  Economic Forecaster

FEBRUARY
- **Valentine’s Day Party**

On Sept. 8 the Emeriti Authors Series will feature Eugen Schoenfeld, who will discuss his autobiography, “My Reconstructed Life.” It is the intriguing story of Gene as a young boy from a close-knit family in the Carpathian shtetl of Munkacs who experiences some of the most difficult times of the 20th century in Hitler’s Europe.

Constructing new plans for a future after war led Gene to the United States, an education and a distinguished career as a professor of sociology, including chairmanship of the GSU Department of Sociology.

Join your colleagues on Sept. 8 for this presentation in Library South on the 8th floor at 10:30 a.m.

SUMMER AUTHORS SERIES
- **CHARLES WILLIAMS**

On June 9 Professor Emeritus Charles Williams discussed his book, “The Crash of TWA Flight 260.” He presented spectacular photos taken of the crash site atop a granite spire on Sandia Mountain in 1955 and again in 2005 when he revisited the scene with descendants of some of the crash victims. He described the unusual aspects of the crash and the ensuing dangerous and arduous victim recoveries.

The five-year investigative efforts of a fellow pilot absolved the Flight 260 crew from blame for the accident. Charles found that, even after 50 years, crash victims’ family members were relieved when he answered questions about their loved ones.

A 1996 Congressional act addressed issues of emotional trauma caused by air crashes and led to the founding of the Atlanta-based Family Assistance Foundation, which sends first responder care team volunteers to disasters around the world.
Brian Gary Armstrong, professor emeritus of history, died on May 26. He was at Georgia State from 1967 until he retired in 1998. He served as professor, department chair, and assistant dean. A graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, he was president of the Calvin Society and the International Congress for Calvin Research. Brian was a historian of early-modern Europe. He published extensively, was active in many professional societies and was a well-liked teacher, committed to his students and his scholarly research. He served as an elder at Chapel Woods Presbyterian Church for many years. Kind, gentle and compassionate, he was well-liked, admired and respected by all who knew him.

Clyde W. Faulkner, dean emeritus of the GSU College of Arts and Sciences, died on April 9. Clyde graduated from High Point College and Duke University Divinity School and received his Ph.D. in sociology from Emory University. He had a distinguished career as professor and administrator at Georgia State University and retired as dean emeritus of the College of Arts and Sciences. Clyde was an avid Duke basketball fan, and enjoyed travel, golf, reading, fishing, dog-sitting, roller coasters with grandchildren and, most of all, spending time with his family and friends. Clyde was a competent and highly regarded dean at GSU. He was always jovial and good-natured, and we will miss him.