



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR REMINISCENCE AND LIFE REVIEW

The Center For Continuing Education/Extension - University of Wisconsin-Superior

Summer 2016

<http://reminiscenceandlifereview.org>

Message from the President

Juliette Shellman

<p>I'm honored to serve as the next President of the International Institute of Reminiscence and Life Review for the next two years. This will be a challenge on many levels especially following Dr. Cappeliez' important contributions as the previous President. Under his leadership, guidelines for the operation of the Institute were developed and adopted which have strengthened the structure and function of our organization. He presided over our very successful conference in Orlando this past fall that drew national and international partici-</p>	<p>pants. On behalf of the membership, I thank Dr. Cappeliez for his contributions and dedication to the Institute during his tenure as President. It was so good to see and interact with so many of you at the conference. Having attended many conferences, I agree with the description that Dr. Cappeliez gives regarding the openness and friendliness that makes our conference special. I hope this will not be lost as we grow in membership and programming. Much credit for the smooth functioning of the Institute and the success of the biennial conference must be</p>	<p>given to Esther Gieschen and Donna Sislo. Their dedication and hard work is responsible for much of our success. Following the adoption of new guidelines, the next step that I would like to promote is the development of a five-year strategic plan that will detail our future goals and objectives within a particular timeline. Major areas that should be considered in this plan are: 1) increasing membership, 2) stabilizing our fiscal status, and 3) increasing the visibility of the Institute.</p>
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Some thoughts on the Orlando conference...

Phillipe Cappeliez

To recall, our meeting in Orlando this past November represented our 11th biennial conference. A history in progress ... Like in the previous conferences, this last one represented a unique opportunity to broaden the scope of our interests in reminiscence and life review, and to initiate and renew friendships and collaborations. The conference was started in style with the inspirational presentation of Rick Moody. Workshops were well attended with a keen interest manifested for topics related to interventions using reminiscence and life review. Judging from the comments received at the conference, participants welcomed the variations made in the format of the conference, in particular the increased time devoted to discussions and exchanges, and the intellectual stimulation provided by the panel presentations and debate. The Orlando conference marked the adoption of the new administrative structure of the Institute. It was also the occasion to renew the membership of the advisory board of the Institute. These members are: President: Juliette Shellman; President-Elect: Gerben Westerhof; Secretary: Takeo Nagasaka; Past President: Philippe Cappeliez; Past president: Brian DeVries; Editor IJRLR: Tom Pierce; Program manager – U Wisconsin (Superior): Esther Gieschen; General members: Nobutake Nomura, Cheryl Svensson, Nicole Caza, Sharon McKenzie, Robin Mintzer, Diane Taylor, Lori Yancura, Myra Sabir. We thank these persons for their continued support and dedication to the Institute.

Participants continue to pinpoint the relaxed and supportive atmosphere of our conferences as one of the distinctive feature that draws their continuing participation. In this spirit, and in the name of the planning committee of the next conference, I invite you to provide any feedback and comments on your experience and on the program of the last conference that will make our next conference even more stimulating and attractive. I also seize this opportunity to thank all of those who contributed to the success of the Orlando conference, as presenters, participants and organizers.

Message from the President

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This plan will require a great deal of work, discussion, and collaboration with the Executive Board, Institute staff, and the membership. While this may seem like an ambitious project, it is essential that we have a roadmap to guide us for the future development of the Institute.

I look forward to working with all of you during the next two years as President and welcome your input throughout the process.

Journal News

Thomas Pierce

The Institute's peer-reviewed online journal, *The International Journal of Reminiscence and Life Review*, has just published its third issue. Research articles appearing in this issue are "Reminiscence and Anticipation: How a Balanced Time Perspective Predicts Psychosocial Strengths" by Jeffrey Webster; "Don't [Have to] Talk to Strangers: Findings from an Intergenerational Oral History Project" by Gabriele Moriello, Mary Ligon, and Katie Ehlman; and "An Implementation Study of Reminiscence in Dementia Care" by Gabrielle Ciquier and Nicole Caza. We are also pleased to include three Shared Reminiscence contributions: "My World War II Experience: Part II" by George Dubell, "Because I'm So Well Adjusted (?): Part II" by Jean Scott, and "Carl Sandburg" by David Cooley. The journal publishes contributions to research, practice, and theory as well as original reminiscences in written or audio format. The web address for the journal is: <http://www.ijrlr.org/ojs/index.php/IJRLR>. Inquiries about submissions are welcome and can be addressed to the Editor, Dr. Tom Pierce (tpierce@radford.edu).

A NEW INITIATIVE OF INTEREST TO IIRLR MEMBERS

Mary O'Brien Tyrrell

Storyboard at Oxford July 2016

While attending the annual conference of the Association of Personal Historians (APH) last autumn, several pioneers in life story work (Paulette Stevens, Cheryl Svensson, and Sarah White) decided to join forces—now named the StoryBoard Coalition—to explore what else could be accomplished in the field of life story work. Following the first meeting, I was invited to join.

We discovered an opportunity to participate in the 9th Storytelling Global Reflections on Narrative, a meeting to be held from July 10-12, 2016, at Mansfield College, Oxford, United Kingdom. The goal of this meeting is to encourage inter-disciplinary creative research in the field of storytelling narrative. As of this writing, about 70 people from across the world will be attending and this is the first time in the nine years of this conference that Americans have participated.

Titled the "Power of Sharing, Saving, and Studying Life Stories," presentations of the StoryBoard Coalition at this meeting will include:

- Guided Autobiography (GAB) as a way to self-empowerment and improved quality of life;
- The APH, a trade association, representing members in 13 countries dedicated to preserving stories of individuals, families, businesses and community groups in the form of books, audio and video recordings, online archives, and more;
- The Life Story Library Foundation, an organization devoted to capturing life stories of our time; and
- The IIRLR with its mission of developing the interdisciplinary field of reminiscence and life review through discussion and collaboration in practice, research, education, volunteer and individual applications across the lifespan.

I plan to report back to the IIRLR members through future newsletters to keep all of you abreast of the progress of our initiative.

IIRLR

International Institute For Reminiscence
and Life Review

Become a member today

- Identify yourself as a leader in the field
- List yourself and your special areas of expertise in the Registry on the IIRLR website
- Promote the services you offer under Member Services on the IIRLR website
- Become eligible for leadership roles in the Institute's advisory board, conference planning committee, awards nomination process and more
- Receive advance notice of publication of on-line newsletter and Journal
- Support the Mission of the IIRLR – advance knowledge and practice of Reminiscence and Life Review

Annual fee: \$48 US dollars
\$24 US dollars for full time students

Contact:
Donna Sislo (dsislo@uwsuper.edu) or Esther Gieschen (egiesche@uwsuper.edu) call 715-394-8170.

<http://reminiscenceandlifereview.org>

MISSION

To further define and develop the interdisciplinary field of reminiscence and life review through discussion and collaboration in practice, research, education, volunteer and individual applications across the lifespan.

GOALS

- Promote increased awareness, knowledge, and skill development in direct practice of reminiscence and life review.
- Further reminiscence and life review research activity, providing a venue for discussion of results as well as guidance for future research.
- Establish a working definition of reminiscence and life review.
- Further integrate research and practice.
- Educate others about reminiscence and life review practice, research, and ways to integrate the material in formal education, staff training, and volunteer organizations.

HISTORY

The International Institute for Reminiscence and Life Review is a program in the Health and Human Issues division of the Center for Continuing Education/Extension at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. The Center sponsored the premiere National Reminiscence and Life Review Conference in 1995.

Major leaders in the field formed the International Reminiscence and Life Review as a follow up to that conference. The Board of Directors and interested participants have met at the 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015 International Reminiscence and Life Review conferences sponsored by UW-Superior.

Book Review, by Philippe Cappeliez

Richard Campbell and Cheryl Svensson (2015). *Writing your legacy: The step-by-step guide to crafting your life story*. Writer's Digest Books, Blue Ash, OH.

Several books that purport to help you write your autobiography are already available on the market. What makes this new guide unique, dare I say indispensable, for those of us who have pondered over that highly personal project? First the book begins with a gently paced introduction to the beauty and challenge of writing the story of your life that gives the courage and the incentive to begin. It convinces the reader daunted by the task that she or he can tackle this formidable project, presenting it as a uniquely personal and creative undertaking. This section of the book addresses such topics as, among others, finding your writing style, reflecting on the objectives of the project, learning about the inner workings of autobiographical memory, and examining your fears and worries about revisiting your life. For each facet of learning it proposes an exercise to consolidate the learning, plus "warming-up" memory exercises to start the process of retrieving key memories. The method encouraged for writing your autobiography is the second major and unique feature of the guide. It invites you to write your autobiography in function of a series of themes that reflect vital concerns, instead of a classic chronological order of events and milestones. In the second and core part of the book, ten such themes are proposed, for instance, "My family, myself" and "My life goals". In addition to these themes consecutively presented in details, the authors offer a list of twenty-five other optional themes that the writer can select based on personal relevance. A distinct advantage of this approach is of course to break down the overall autobiographical project into manageable and meaningful units. Even more importantly, it provides ways to connect life events separated in time and give them a deeper meaning. The exploration of each theme is systematic and practical: a short introduction to the theme is followed by ten probing questions, an example from a participant, and an exercise to jump-start the process of writing a few pages on the theme. The authors reassert that the probing questions serve simply, but positively, as guidelines to access memories and power the narrative, implying that some questions will, to quote the authors, "resonate more than others". The third and last part of the book is devoted to formatting, polishing, and concluding the project. Tips are given concerning the final presentation medium (e.g., book, video) and ways of celebrating the completion of the autobiographical journey. In brief, this book constitutes a masterful addition to the domain of autobiographical memory writing. Its contents are solidly anchored on the long experience of the two authors in leading Guided Autobiographical groups, and in teaching the approach to a variety of students. As the authors appropriately acknowledge, the prominent contribution of Jim Birren, a pioneer in research and development of guided autobiography, who passed away just recently, is the foundation of this book.

OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTE:

8th INTERNATIONAL POSITIVE AGING CONFERENCE

AUGUST 25-27, 2016

CAPITAL HILTON, WASHINGTON, DC

International Positive Aging Conferences began in 2007 at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. Positive Aging conferences have explored topics often overlooked by professionals who respond to aging in terms of medical care or social welfare. For example, conferences have highlighted later-life creativity and the arts, life stories and life planning, wisdom, wellness and health promotion, intergenerational connections, and spirituality. Conference events have sought to be much more than a purely professional interchange, offering many opportunities for personal exchange with people of all backgrounds who are looking for a positive vision for the second half of life.

For the past four years, Fielding Graduate University, through its Creative Longevity and Wisdom Program, has been the academic sponsor of the conference. In 2016, the Washington-DC Conference host is the Society of Certified Senior Advisers. This 8th International Conference will seek to maintain the spirit of previous events, summed up by the saying of philosopher Martin Buber: "All real living is meeting."

Previous positive aging conferences have attracted hundreds of participants, with keynote addresses by Gene Cohen, author of *The Creative Age*, Bill Thomas, Mary Catherine Bateson, Richard Leider, Dick Bolles, Marc Freedman, and George Vaillant. Among the keynote speakers of this 2016 conference we will have Ashton Applewhite (critic of age-ism) and Jim Firman (head of NCOA). Also, some of the wonderful presenters are Connie Goldman, Richard Adler, and Peter Whitehouse.

For information on registration, speaker proposals, sponsorship, hotel information and more go to www.csa.us/page/PositiveAgingConf or email judyrc@csa.us or call 800-653-1785 x112

Remembering Jim

February 20, 2016

By Cheryl Svensson.

All of you know Jim as a pioneer in the field of gerontology. He was a leading researcher, a scientific explorer of aging, interested only in evidence based findings. He conducted experiments that measured the conduction velocity in the sciatic nerve of rats in relationship to age. Jim attended the first GSA meeting in New York in 1949 and later quipped, "The hotel where the conference was held has been torn down, but I'm still standing." Jim was a preeminent leader in the emerging field of aging. He wrote the very first Psychology of Aging textbook in 1964. In the 1960's he left Maryland and the NIMH for CA and a new career opportunity at USC. There he founded the first ever school of gerontology in the nation. With Jim as dean the school and gerontology center flourished and attracted the best scholars and researchers from around the world.

One summer in the early 70's, Jim took a sabbatical and taught a Psychology of Aging class at the University of Hawaii. The class consisted of for-credit students and older retirees who were part of the extended learning program on campus. As Jim told the story, the class was 'flat,' dull and not engaging. One day in frustration, he threw up his hands, told everyone to go home, write two pages on a 'branching point' in their lives and then be prepared to read it in class the next day. This was an 'ungraded' assignment. Jim said that the next day, after they had all read their stories, the class came alive. The older people were talking with the younger students; they were making connections with one another that lasted throughout the remainder of the class sessions. Jim knew he was onto something but not sure what it was. He returned to USC, gathered grad students (including his son Jeff) into a seminar class to research and study the history of autobiography, expressive writing, small group process, etc. From this he created Guided Autobiography, a small group process method to help people write their life stories. Guided by a facilitator with priming questions based on life themes, the students write two pages at home, return to class, and read them in their small group. The reading and sharing life stories in the small group is where the magic of GAB takes place. Jim Birren, the scientist, made a sharp turn in his own career path, a new branching point. His colleagues and peers must looked at Jim who changed from respected scientific aging researcher to soft academic interested in writing, life stories, group process and wondered what happened? Jim was unfazed.

Over the past 40 years, Jim has written three books on GAB, conducted many research projects beginning as early as 1980, and written countless articles. In the late 90s, a group of friends and colleagues of Jim's gathered around him at UCLA, by then he had retired from USC (a word Betty always said Jim knew how to spell but didn't know what it meant.) We formed the GAB workgroup (or Birren disciples when there were actually 12 of us) and sought to find ways to develop and extend GAB into new venues. We met as a group frequently and became best of friends. We created spinoff classes such as GAB II, Life Portfolio, Family History and even an online e-GAB writing class. We built a Website. We created a DVD legacy to Jim, we won the ASA award for most "Innovative Older Adult Learning Program," and Jim and I presented GAB workshops across the nation. We followed Jim's command to "Launch GAB!"

I've tried to think of how to describe my relationship with Jim. He was so much more than my friend, colleague, and mentor. I read an article about the attributes of 'highly successful people' (HSP) and found that they all 'share their dreams.' They all have a 'co-dreamer,' someone who supports, understands and provides perspective for the shared dream. It was a light bulb moment for me. That's what Jim and I have been, co-dreamers about GAB and because of this, Jim is irreplaceable for me.

It has been a blessing to work alongside Jim. And just as Jim ended every meeting with these words: Onward!

Excerpt from the eulogy by Cheryl Svensson at the celebration of the life of Jim Birren.

Certificate in Reminiscence and Life Story Work

Ten students completed the course work and capstone practicum to be the first (to the best of our knowledge) recipients of a Certificate in Reminiscence and Life Story Work. Just a few of many comments from graduates:

I feel I have a greater understanding of the challenges I could face, the warning signals I should look for with clients, and the preparations I should make for potential pitfalls.

... reminiscence is so powerful and fits so many more situations than I first imagined – working with groups, people with dementia, caregivers, children, people with learning disabilities, hearing and vision problems, etc. Now, it's my job to figure out how to best use it in my work.

The writings ... were incredibly valuable. Excellent discussion threads. I think the practical focus put us all miles ahead when embarking on this as a business.

The 2016 cohort has now completed Module 1 Fundamentals of Reminiscence and Life Review (R&LR): Theory, Research and History with Loriena Yancura, PhD as instructor. For the next eight weeks they will be learning Reminiscence and Life Review Practice and Application with Juliette Shellman, PhD, instructing.

Module 3 Developing a Reminiscence/Life Story Work Professional Practice, taught by Sarah White, long-time personal historian and past president of the Association of Personal Historians, will be completed by mid October. By the end of January 2017, another group will have completed their capstone projects and graduated!

We plan by the 2017 cohort to offer a module focused on facilitating reminiscence and life review with individuals living in long-term care settings or receiving community-based services, many of whom will have some level of neurocognitive disorder. This module will be offered as an alternative, or in addition to (whichever the student chooses), the Professional Practice module. We are particularly excited about getting the Certificate with this module available to those working as caregivers in various settings and to those doing community-based services. We believe this will be a great way to extend the benefits of R&LR to more people through direct practice and application.

For more information contact Esther Gieschen by email: egiesche@uwsuper.edu or call 715.394.8529