



Elder Creativity

Can old people be as creative as young people? Can a person become creative at an advanced age? Can creative activity influence the health of the elderly? These are questions that may arise from the conjunction of the words *elder* and *creativity*.

In recent decades the paradigm of aging has changed. Aging had generally been considered a decline, a loss of health and abilities, and it was even treated as a disease. The evolution in attitudes about later life has brought about a greater emphasis on the *potential* of these stages of development and how to maximize it. Studies on the role of creativity in the lives of the elderly by specialists in geriatrics and by psychologists conclude that the answer to all three questions above is “Yes!!”

A look at the careers of artists in many fields will confirm that creativity does not fade with age. Georgia O’Keefe, Richard Strauss and Alan Alda are just a few among myriad examples of those who have continued to create through advancing age, often in surprising new ways. Sometimes losses stimulate a creative coping response that opens new horizons, such as Matisse’s later works accomplished when arthritis confined him physically. Unable to hold a brush, he developed his “jazz series” of bold cut-outs, and designed the mural and windows for the Venice Chapel with a brush tied to his hands. Gay Hanna, director of the National Center for Creative Aging and also a sculptor in stone, says, “...there may come a time when I’m not going to be strong enough to carve stone. So I may switch to clay or drawing.” Who will be among the ranks of those like Ben Franklin, Claude Monet, and Agatha Christie who compose, invent and create throughout life?



The artist known as Grandma Moses began painting at age 76. While she is one of the better known “late bloomers,” she is certainly not alone in initiating a new creative endeavor late in life. Gene Cohen, MD, PhD, author of a key study on elder creativity and two books, and central in promoting the new paradigm of potential in aging, posits a developmental stage that he calls “liberation.” This phase, he writes in *The Mature Mind*, usually occurs during the late fifties to early seventies. It is characterized by experimentation and innovation, and possibly fueled by an “if not now, when?” feeling, a confidence and sense of freedom to act according to one’s needs, and full or partial retirement that affords time to try new experiences.

Partly due to Cohen’s research, arts organizations and programs for seniors have sprung up across the country. Retirees are discovering new talents and interests in art, music, writing, dance, and even film-making. Art With Elders (AWE), a program sponsored by a California organization called Eldergivers, is an example. It offers art classes for seniors and arranges for exhibits to display their work. According to the website, the curiosity, wonder, and urge to explore and create that are the best characteristics of childhood can be rekindled through experimenting with art. This echoes what George Vaillant, MD, another researcher and writer in the field of adult development, writes in his book *Aging Well*: “Retirement should be at least as fun as fourth grade.”

The positive impact of participation in the arts on seniors' health has been conclusively documented in the two-year study conducted by Gene Cohen and sponsored by National Endowment for the Arts and George Washington University. In 2001, three hundred volunteers aged 65 to 100 (average: 80) were divided into two groups. Members of the Control Group continued their normal activities and were free to socialize or attend classes and events as they wished. The Intervention Group attended weekly classes that also required practice or homework between classes as well as regular performances or exhibits. All subjects were interviewed in detail at the outset, after one year, and after two years.

At the end of two years the two groups showed significant differences in key health indicators. The Intervention Group reported

- Significantly better overall health.
- Significantly fewer falls and less hip damage.
- Significantly fewer doctor's visits.
- Diminished use of medications.
- Diminished vision problems.
- Significantly better scores on the Geriatric Depression Scale and the Loneliness Scale.
- Increased involvement in activities.

Their health had improved or stabilized. The Control Group experienced "normal decline." In terms of health care issues, those who engaged in the arts had fewer illnesses and injuries and more independence, i.e. reduction of the risk factors that drive the need for long-term care. A theory proposed for some of the differences is that creative engagement gives a sense of mastery, which boosts the immune system. Cohen also proposes that new neural pathways are forged, continuing positive development in the brain that counteracts possible diminishment of brain function. Details can be found at www.nea.gov/resources/accessibility/can-Rep4-30-06.pdf.

Perhaps the biggest payback of creative effort, though, has to do with quality of life even apart from health. In 2004 Baltimore's American Visionary Art Museum showcased elderly artists of "late onset creativity" alongside works of Grandma Moses. One painter, a former patent attorney, said, "I'm 73, I've had about every illness you can imagine. I feel good. I'm happy every day."

By Kathy Mellstrom

CVEC Course Descriptions—Fall 2011

Brynhild Rowberg, Northfield, History and More

This course is designed for lovers of Northfield who want to learn about the city's history, see its historic houses and hear about



their past inhabitants. There will be tales of the earliest settlers, personal recollections of Northfield's Civil War veterans, as well as some of the numerous "characters" who enlivened the city's past. Did you know that Carleton College once had a professor who was a king, who strode about town in a flowing cape? That a St. Olaf professor and music critic, recalled from his student days in Leipzig going to hear Brahms

conduct the city orchestra? There will be stories of some of the families important to Northfield history: the Norths, the Ames, the Nuttings, the Skinners, the Delancey's. Did you know that Delancey Street in New York's Greenwich Village and Delancey Court in Northfield are named for the same family? Answers and much more will be found in this course. It will include bus tours of the city and the college campuses.

Brynhild Rowberg was born in Northfield in 1917. She graduated from St. Olaf College, started working for the Department of State in 1941, entered the Foreign Service in 1945, worked in various cities in Italy until September, 1945 when she began work in Vienna in the Office of the Political Adviser to the Commanding General, US Forces in Austria. She served in embassies in Prague, Athens, Saigon (commissioned as Vice Consul and Secretary in the Diplomatic Service in 1956), in the Department of State in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Consul in Bremen, political officer in the Office of Korean Affairs, military assistance officer in Taipei. She retired in 1973 due to severe hearing loss, and has been resident in Northfield since 1977.

Richard Collman, The Pipe Organ: King of Instruments

The pipe organ has a long and illustrious history which parallels the course of western civilization as we know it. This course will look at the pipe organ from earliest times and will acquaint us with

sounds and sights of the instrument. The course will include an "organ crawl" to various organs in Northfield, a possible visit to an organ factory, interviews with organists, and a mini-recital. No musical experience is necessary.



Richard Collman is a retired minister-musician in Northfield who has served in various capacities over the years to interpret the pipe organ to all ages. He started the Northfield Noontime Organ Recitals five years ago and also accompanies the I Cantanti Choir on piano or organ at their concerts.

Hartley Clark, The Arab Revolt Against Misrule, 2011

Starting in January, 2011, over a dozen self-immolations in Arab nations prompted masses of citizens to demonstrate peacefully against misrule. Hundreds of demonstrators are said to have been killed

by governments choosing to resist. This course deals with the twenty or so



nations across North Africa and the Middle East that have seen demonstrations and will center on the following questions: How have Arab nations been governed? What did the demonstrators

want? What led to the eruption? Can the international oil trade be disrupted? What has been achieved? What price have the demonstrators paid? Should powerful nations and organizations intervene?

Hartley Clark, Ph.D., is Prof. Emeritus of International Relations at Carleton College, where he taught from 1955 until his retirement in 1991. The nine CVEC courses he has taught include “Oil and International Relations in the Middle East;” “The Arab-Israeli Conflict;” “The War in Iraq;” and “Insecurity and Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.”

Robert “Obie” Holmen, Communities in Conflict: the Politics behind the New Testament Canon.

The Jerusalem temple was destroyed by Roman armies in 70 CE in response to Jewish civil war and rebellion. In the generation before the war, Paul of Tarsus sought to expand the Jesus movement into the Greco-Roman world despite the apprehensions of the original Jewish community of Jesus' followers. In the generation after the war, the compilers of the gospels interpreted the events of Jesus' life and death through the lens of post-war accusations, suspicions, and circumstances. Communities scattered by war competed with each other and with the



fragment of Jewish religion that emerged as rabbinic Judaism, all claiming to be the righteous branch and true heirs of the divine promise. This course will explore this 1st century history and the communities in conflict that produced the core documents of the New Testament canon.

Robert "Obie" Holmen is a former trial attorney with a BA degree from Dartmouth and a JD degree from the University of Minnesota. He has also pursued post-graduate religious studies with the Benedictines of St. John's Abbey and University in Collegeville. His debut work of historical fiction, *A Wretched Man, a novel of Paul the apostle*, was released in 2010.

Gary Wagenbach, The Cannon River Valley: a History of Landforms, Human Occupation, and Contemporary Water Quality Issues.

How can we leave the rivers of the Cannon Valley in good shape for our grandchildren and their grandchildren? With that question in mind this course explores the land and rivers in our area, their deeper and more recent geologic history, settlement history, selected water quality issues, and a vision for the future. Two class field trips anticipated. Participants, individually or in small groups, will be asked to take exploratory trips on their own.



Gary Wagenbach taught biology and environmental studies at Carleton for 39

years. During his time at Carleton he actively used the outdoors as a classroom directing multiple ecology-oriented courses in the BWCAW of Minnesota, Bermuda, California, New Zealand, Australia, and Tanzania. Recently he served as a consultant to Lumbini Academy, located in Yangon, Myanmar, helping with K-12 curriculum development. Research interests include water quality issues and threatened species of freshwater mussels.

Jim McDonnell, Irish Song and Story

I am utterly unqualified as a musicologist, but I love Irish music and have a large collection representing its many forms and moods: elegies, love songs, dances, airs, marches, drinking and political ballads, and religious music. I know a lot about Irish fiction, long and short, that features music or deals with situations which overlap with those reflected in the music: exile, nostalgia, blackguarding, match-making, love both requited and unrequited, etc, etc.



Jim McDonnell retired from Carleton College in 2007 after teaching there for 38 years in the English Department. His chief literary interests are Irish Literature and Shakespeare. He visits Ireland almost every year.

Stephen Kelly, Jazz: The First Hundred Years. This course will explore the music of the great performers of

jazz through its rich tapestry of styles from the levees of New Orleans to the lofts of SoHo. Reading knowledge of music is not required.



Stephen Kelly retired in 2011 after teaching music history at Carleton College for thirty-seven years. He has been a Fulbright Scholar and has published work on medieval music, medieval monasteries, jazz history, and teaching. In addition to teaching jazz history for twenty five years, he plays sax and clarinet in Occasional Jazz.

Bruce Roberts, Church, Aging and Well-Being: It-Takes-a-Village!

As men and women retire and age, their church can serve as a powerful social institution that (1) brings them together with others they care about, (2) engages them meaningfully in contributing to the life of others, and (3) sustains their well-being. But does yours? We will stitch together our changing and seemingly unconnected “stories” -- of feelings, events, beliefs and expectations (at church) as we look for patterns. I will link our shared contributions with research from community, social, clinical, cognitive and positive psychology and neuropsychology.



Bruce Roberts is a Professor of Psychology Emeritus from St. Olaf Col-

lege. He and his colleague, Howard Thorsheim, have completed a number of research projects with church congregations, including a three-year National Institute of Health grant that included 10,000 people in 24 Minnesota congregations. The questions asked in their work also apply to other social institutions such as retirement centers and nursing homes.

Bob Flaten, Great Decisions Topics For 2011

The Foreign Policy Association proposes the following topics for next year's discussions: Rebuilding Haiti, U.S. National Security, Horn of Africa, Responding to the Financial Crisis, Germany Ascendant, Sanctions and Nonproliferation, the Caucasus, and Global Governance. Guest experts will be invited to address several topics.



Discussions will be led by Ambassador Robert Flaten, continuing a CVEC series which is also sponsored by the Minnesota International Center.

Robert Flaten served as the American Ambassador to Rwanda from 1990 to 1993. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1994 after assignments in France, Pakistan and Israel and the State Depart-

ment in Washington. He is past Chair of the Executive Committee of the Nobel Peace Prize Forum and Ambassador in Residence at St. Olaf College.

Jim Cederberg, Nuclear Energy: Its History and Use

From the discovery of radioactivity in the 1890s through the development of nuclear weapons during WW II and the recent disaster in Japan, the story of the human exploration and use of the energy contained in atomic nuclei will be explored in this course. Suggested reading will be Richard Rhodes' 1986 book, "The Making of the Atomic Bomb," which won a Pulitzer and National Book Award. Participants will be invited to share any experiences from their own lives with the wartime nuclear bombs, the cold war arms race, or nuclear power reactors.



Jim Cederberg retired from the Physics Department at St. Olaf in 2006, where he taught most of the classes in the department at one time or another over a 42 year span. As a part of the teaching program he worked with undergraduate students on experimental research into the structure of the electric

and magnetic fields acting on the nuclei of the atoms in molecules.

Keith Harrison, From Chaucer to W.S. Merwin: Eight Great Poems. We will read eight poems taken from the whole range of English and American Literature and discuss them in depth. Because poems often reveal their meaning when they are read aloud, the class will include readings by members of the group who feel comfortable with this idea. We will probably disagree sharply on certain matters, and that will be very useful because sometimes different interpretations of a poem can bring out surprising nuances that can be overlooked in a solitary reading. Among the authors we'll look at will be Shakespeare, Robert Lowell, Seamus Heaney and W.S. Merwin.



Keith Harrison taught English at Carleton - where he was also Writer-in-residence and editor of *The Carleton Miscellany* - for almost 30 years. He has written a dozen books of verse and translation and his version of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, first published by The Folio Society, is included in Oxford's World's Classics. A New & Collected Poems (1962-2002) called CHANGES

was published in 2002. Many of his recent poems are set in the countryside around Northfield.

Almut Furchert, Hildegard von Bingen on Health, Healing and Well Being

In this course you are invited to journey into the life of a fascinating woman who was not only a monastic leader but also an inspiring theologian, philosopher, composer, and naturopath. In this four step journey we will first get a glimpse of monastic traditions in medieval times, secondly explore some of Hildegard's spiritual writings, thirdly read into her medical work, and last but not least emerge with an overview of some of her music. We explore each area while asking how Hildegard's integrative understanding of the world could impact our modern understanding.



Almut Furchert is a German licensed psychologist, philosopher, and Adult Educator (Humboldt University, Berlin and Jesuit School of Philosophy, Munich). She came to Northfield as a Research Scholar with the Hong Kierkegaard House Foundation at St. Olaf College in 2005. Almut does scholarly work

Class Schedule September 12 – November 4, 2011
(Registration Begins August 15, 2011)

Title of Class	Professor
<u>Time of Class</u>	<u>Location</u>
Northfield History Monday 9:30 – 11:30 am	Brynhild Rowberg Nygaard Theatre, NRC
The Pipe Organ – King of Instruments Monday 1:30 – 3:30 pm	Richard Collman United Methodist Church
The Arab Revolt Against Misrule Tuesday 9:30 – 11:30 am Tuesday 1:30 – 3:30 pm	Hartley Clark Weitz Center for Creativity Weitz Center for Creativity
Communities in Conflict: the Politics behind the New Testament Cannon Tuesday 9:30 – 11:30 am	Robert “Obie” Holmen Northfield Senior Center
The Cannon River Valley Tuesday 1:30 – 3:30 pm	Gary Wagenbach Northfield Senior Center
Irish Song and Story Wednesday 9:30 – 11:30 am	Jim McDonnell Northfield Senior Center
Jazz: The First Hundred Years Wednesday 9:30 – 11:30 am	Steve Kelly Village on the Cannon
Church, Aging and Well-Being Wednesday 1:30 - 3:30 pm	Bruce Roberts Village on the Cannon
Great Discussions: Topics for 2011 Thursday 9:30 - 11:30 am	Robert Flaten Northfield Senior Center
The Making of the Atomic Bomb Thursday 9:30 - 11:30 am	Jim Cederburg Village on the Cannon
From Chaucer to W.S. Merwin Thursday 1:30 – 3:30 pm	Keith Harrison NRC Fireside Room
Hildegard von Bingen on Health, Healing and Well-Being Friday 9:30-11:30 am	Almut Furchert Three Links Great Room

REGISTRATION FORM
2011 CVEC FALL TERM CLASSES
September 12 – November 4, 2011
Registration Begins August 15, 2011

Complete the form below and bring or mail to: Cannon Valley Elder Collegium,
 @Northfield Senior Center, 1651 Jefferson Parkway, Northfield MN 55057

Include course fee of \$50.00 or check the financial assistance box. Books, printed materials and travel when specified for a class, are extra and optional.

Name(s)

(A) _____

(B) _____

Address _____

City _____

Telephone _____

E-mail Address _____

(To be used only for CVEC activities)

Check if you need financial assistance _____

Check if this is your first CVEC class _____

Included is a tax-deductible gift of _____

Register Early to Avoid Being Disappointed

A registration box will be available at the Northfield Senior Center beginning August 15, 2011. All registrations must be accompanied by a check unless financial assistance has been requested. If you must mail your registration, send it early enough to arrive by August 15. All mail and box registrations received by the end of the first day (Aug 15) will be treated as arriving at the same time, and random selection will be used to fill courses if necessary.

Please register by September 2, 2011. If the class for which you register is oversubscribed, you will be notified immediately, so you may register for another course. After September 2, cards will be mailed to confirm course registration. If a course fills prior to Sept 2, cards will be mailed immediately to the class members.

Class availability and enrollment numbers will be updated daily on the web page: WWW.CVEC.ORG. The Registration Book at the Senior Center also provides information on class enrollment.

MEMBERSHIP FUNDING: The difference between CVEC's tuition revenue and total cost has been bridged by member contributions and grants. Because many volunteer their time, our administrative costs have always been minimal. Tax deductible contributions are needed and greatly appreciated.

For class selection, in the first column indicate person A, B or both, and in the second column indicate your choice with X. You may register for more than one course by writing another X next to the second course, and including the tuition for each course.

A/B X

___	___	Northfield History
___	___	The Pipe Organ
___	___	The Arab Revolt (9:30)
___	___	The Arab Revolt (1:30)
___	___	Communities in Conflict: NT Cannon
___	___	The Cannon River Valley
___	___	Irish Song and Story
___	___	Jazz: The First Hundred Years
___	___	Church, Aging and Well-Being
___	___	Great Discussions: Topics for 2011
___	___	The Making of the Atomic Bomb
___	___	From Chaucer to W.S. Merwin
___	___	Hildegard von Bingen on Health, Healing and Well Being

Cannon Valley Elder Collegium Goals

Our Purpose:

- To provide a content oriented study experience for elder students with senior faculty.

Our Program:

- CVEC focuses on a desire for life-long learning
- The courses of study are selected to provide rich academic experiences in the liberal arts
- Most of these studies will take a seminar format with learners actively participating in research and dialogue
- CVEC welcomes younger registrants (under 50) on a seat-available basis
- Previous formal education is not a requirement

Our Policies:

- Class size is generally limited to 15
- Most classes will meet 8 times, once/week
- Classes are 2 hours/session
- Financial assistance is available for registrants who can not afford the fee (Check above)
- Students may withdraw from a course before the 2nd class meeting and request a refund

Questions concerning registration should be directed to:

David Halsor, Operations Director

713 Highland Ave, Northfield, MN 55057

507-645-6052

dhalsor@rconnect.com

Cannon Valley Elder Collegium
1651 Jefferson Parkway
Northfield, MN 55057

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From the Director: This issue of the newsletter heralds the 14th academic year of the Collegium, and some things are old: many of your favorite teachers are returning, with a continued high quality of courses, continued growth of our membership, and continued bargain rates of tuition, which remain exactly the same (\$50 per course) as they were at our beginning in 1997. However, some things are new. You've perhaps noticed that this issue of the Newsletter is a bit larger, 10 pages instead of 8, and that's because we again have a very full schedule of 13 courses this fall, with five new faculty who deserve extra text to introduce them. We of course are delighted with these additions to our roster of faculty.

You may have noticed another change. We will, for the first time, be presenting a course in the newly-remodeled Carleton facility known as the Weitz Center for Creativity. This center promises to be a major step forward in Northfield's long history of education, not only for its traditional undergraduates, but also for Northfield residents, not only for those interested in the traditional arts, but also for those desiring to keep up with the exploding field of media studies. But don't just take it from me: go to <http://carleton.edu/> and type "Weitz Center" into the search box. There you can open a virtual tour of this facility. State-of-the-art technologies will be found in every corner of this center, including the cinema theatre, where we will stage Hartley Clark's course, an extremely timely review of the bewildering activities now occurring in the Middle East. (We will probably not need all 250 seats for this course, but only the first four rows.) Visitors to the center will appreciate the central location of the center on Union Street, the handsome coffee shop, and the ample parking. Even if one does not register for Hartley's course, local citizens will surely want to visit the first exhibition at the center, modestly entitled *Seeing is Knowing: The Universe*.

As always, we will rely on your advice and ideas on how we can do things better as the year progresses. Ed