Member Spotlight: John and Shirley Byrne
Contributed by Terri Tower and Jack Walstad

OSURA members Jack Walstad and Terri Tower interviewed John and Shirley Byrne in early March, shortly after the publication of John’s book, “Undercurrents.”

A picturesque home in the hills, two exquisite grand pianos being tuned, a refrigerator covered with original artwork, and cream and sugar served in a silver tea set - what a lovely welcome we received when we arrived at the Byrne home to interview John and Shirley on a pleasant day in early March.

Typical of their gracious and generous personalities, the Byrnes offered us a tour of the house, including John’s art studio and Shirley’s music room. They served us coffee and cookies during our interview at the dining room table, featuring bonus views of birds and squirrels at their feeders on the outdoor patio. It was a perfect setting to probe their remarkable history together.

Continued on page 3

Women’s Basketball Event
Contributed by Terri Tower

If you would have told Scott Rueck in October that his OSU women’s basketball team would be in the NCAA Elite Eight at the end of the 2017-18 season, he might have looked at you as if you had just arrived from another planet.

“Like trying to herd cats,” is how Coach Rueck described some of the early team practices. Scott talked to 60 enthusiastic OSURA members at the February 16 dinner prior to the Beavers vs. Bruins game, sharing his observations about the year’s challenges and opportunities.

Continued on page 5
Renew Your Membership!

Being an OSURA member is a great way to stay connected to OSU and friends at the university. The Oregon State University Retirement Association (OSURA) promotes engagement among OSU retirees and between retirees and the University by providing information, programs, scholarships and volunteer service opportunities that contribute to a rewarding retirement and that support the University’s mission.

Full membership in the OSU Retirement Association is open to all retirees from Oregon State University! Becoming a member is a great way to stay involved in the life of the university. Our members make possible many important programs for students and retirees.

Memberships are $20 individual/$30 household and checks can be made out to OSURA/OSU Foundation. Membership forms can be found on our website at: osura.oregonstate.edu.
Member Spotlight: John and Shirley Byrne
Continued from page 1

Much of John and Shirley’s personal and family history is expertly chronicled in “Undercurrents,” John’s recent memoir that’s become a local bestseller. We don’t intend to recount that material, just suffice it to say that the book captures much of their life together and the many challenges, adventures, and accomplishments they faced along the way. Read the book!

As the four of us sat around the table, our ‘interview’ became more like a conversation with friends, with topics ranging from Scrabble to the Iditarod to saving the world’s oceans. John and Jack talked about self-scoring baseball games - Beavers are a favorite for both - while Shirley and Terri traded ideas on the best opening lines of novels. Shirley’s was the opening line in Marquez’s “One Hundred Years of Solitude;” Terri opted for Melville’s “Moby Dick.” Both John and Shirley are avid readers and active members of a book club. James Joyce’s “The Dubliners” was at the top of their current reading list.

When asked about some of their favorite international travel places, the Byrnes named Wager Bay on Canada’s Hudson Bay, the Connemara area of western Ireland, Spain’s Andalusia region - and for John, the South Pacific island of Raroia, where he worked for several months in 1952 as part of a research team studying the coral reef atoll.

Their trip to Wager Bay exemplifies the Byrnes’ adventurous travel spirit. Located in Nunavut, Canada’s northernmost territory, Wager Bay is a remote spot on the west side of Hudson Bay, about 66 degrees latitude. Nunavut is the only region in Canada not connected by highway to the rest of North America. John and Shirley traveled by small aircraft, eventually arriving at their destination in a twin otter (a two-engine propeller airplane designed for short take-offs and landings) that landed on a gravel berm. When they took walks, their guide carried a shotgun in case they had to fend off wild animals. They saw a number of polar bears, fortunately none of them in attack mode.

John and Shirley like flying in small aircraft. They both took flying lessons and earned their private pilot licenses at the Corvallis Airport in the 1960s. Shirley described a solo flight when she became very worried in unexpected rainy weather, didn’t know what to do, and couldn’t establish radio contact with flight operations. After that flight, she said “that’s it, no more,” but continued flying anyway. Both John and Shirley stopped flying after their move to Washington, DC in 1966.

During the course of their busy lives, John and Shirley managed to raise four children. When they first arrived in Corvallis in 1960, they had three girls in diapers - Donna the oldest at 23 months, and the seven-month old twins Karen and Lisa. With no diaper service in Corvallis, John quipped, “our washing machine died after one year.” Son Steven was born in Corvallis in 1962. All four of the Byrne children graduated from Corvallis High School, attended college at various places, and moved on to productive careers. Donna became an attorney, Lisa an artist and art teacher, Karen an accountant, and Steven an engineer and inventor.

Continued on page 4
Member Spotlight: John and Shirley Byrne

Continued from page 3

Many of their favorite outings with their children revolved around ski trips in the winter and camping in the summer. Their camping adventures throughout Oregon became treasured memories for all the family. The Byrnes have grandchildren in Arizona, Florida and Toronto, Canada.

Music has always been a common thread in John and Shirley’s life together. John had learned saxophone in high school and played in a dance band after he graduated. Shirley was raised in a “musical family,” surrounded by parents and grandparents who played the piano and organ, joined choirs, and sang along with opera music at home. One of her grandfathers even played piano for silent movies for awhile. Shirley had been playing the piano since she was five and had taken formal lessons for 20 years by the time she met John in 1953.

John tells a wonderful story in his book about how he met Shirley “on a dare” when they were both graduate students at the University of Southern California (USC). At the time, John was working on his PhD in marine geology and Shirley was studying for her masters in music. She had graduated from Whittier with a general elementary school teaching credential and a special secondary credential for music education, and was teaching fourth grade while working on her masters. Her masters degree was put on hold while raising a family and supporting John in his career moves. But she persevered, proudly earning her Master of Music degree in 1979 from the University of Oregon.

In addition to her prior elementary school music teaching and accompanist work, Shirley has taught private piano lessons for over 40 years. Currently she teaches 11 students a week - all adults. She says she’s really fortunate to still be teaching at her “advanced age,” and that the “connection with people and music is marvelous!”

When showing us the music room in their house, we commented on how lucky they were to have found a house with a “music conservatory” large enough for two grand pianos. John and Shirley both laughed and pointed to where the original wall had been, indicating where they had added onto the house.

While Shirley practices and gives lessons in the music room, John often finds himself downstairs in his daylight basement art studio. After John retired from OSU in 1995, he was able to pursue one of his lifelong goals - to take up painting. It’s hard to miss his brightly colored bird paintings that adorn all sides of the Byrnes’ refrigerator. He works primarily with acrylic paints and has shown some of his work at casual venues in our local area. John enjoys “Art Critique Group” monthly sessions, getting together with other local artists for comment and support.

John’s advice to OSURA members and other retirees is advice that both he and Shirley have taken to heart. “Get a hobby. Do what you’ve never had time to do, it doesn’t matter what it is.”

Original artwork on the Byrne’s refrigerator.
Women’s Basketball Event
Continued from page 1

He praised the young women on the OSU team for really coming into their own as the season progressed, especially noting the leadership role that senior starter Marie Gulich assumed.

OSURA member Susan Poole introduced Coach Rueck, mentioning how the entire Rueck family is involved with the game of basketball. In his subsequent remarks, Scott quipped about the “sheer torture” of watching his daughter’s 5th grade team play ball. Luckily for Scott, those same girls could grow up to be NCAA stars.

After piling up baked potatoes with goodies from the Forks and Corks Catering buffet, OSURA attendees were “carbed up” and ready for the game, helping to cheer on the #13 Beavers for a thrilling 67-64 overtime win over #9 UCLA at Gill Coliseum. More than half of those attending the OSURA dinner were season ticket holders, some also members of The Rebounders, the booster club for OSU women’s basketball.

Door prize drawings for Beaver basketball t-shirts and donated gymnastics tickets topped off the dinner program. Special thanks go to “Rebounder” Susan Poole for organizing the door prize drawing and making the arrangements for Coach Rueck.

Although she was not present at the event, Kathy Heath was recognized by several OSURA speakers for the many years she diligently organized the women’s basketball and gymnastics events for OSURA members. “This year it took six of us to do what Kathy managed by herself,” said Program Committee co-chair Terri Tower.

As one of Scott Rueck’s former teachers, Kathy has been instrumental in recruiting Scott as OSURA’s annual guest speaker for the women’s basketball event, beginning with his first season as Head Coach in 2010-11 and now making his 8th consecutive appearance as the event’s speaker. “I really like this group,” he says of OSURA, “you represent all of what’s best about Oregon State.”

OSURA President Tom Plant scores a t-shirt in the door prize drawing.

Ann and Bill Smart are first in line at the baked potato bar for the February women’s basketball event.
Past Presidents Luncheon
Contributed by Jack Walstad

Sixteen past, current, and incoming presidents of OSURA met at Elmer’s Restaurant for their 6th Annual Luncheon on March 22, 2018. Their presidencies dated back to 2002-03 when OSURA originated. These luncheons provide an opportunity to renew friendships and share mutual experiences in governing OSURA. They also provide insight and suggestions for recruiting new members and leaders, enhancing OSURA’s profile and outreach, communicating efficiently with our membership, and promoting support for student scholarships. Immediate past president, Jack Walstad (2016-17), organized the session, and current president, Tom Plant (2017-18), gave an update on OSURA activities for the year. Others present included: Les Dunnington (2002-03), Jean Peters (2003-04), Bill Brennan (2004-05), Ken Krane (2006-07), Kathy Heath (2007-08), Bill Smart (2008-09), JoAnne Trow (2009-10), Susan Poole (2010-11), Terri Tower (2011-12), Jim Krueger (2012-13), Tom Savage (2013-14), Gerry Olson (2014-15), Gordon Reistad (2015-16), and Chris Mathews (2018-19). David Eiseman (2005-06) was traveling and unable to attend.

Women’s Gymnastics
Contributed by Terri Tower

If you think this year is good, just wait until next year. That was part of the message that Gymnastics Associate Head Coach Michael Chaplin delivered when he spoke with a group of 40 OSURA members following the January women’s gymnastics meet against Stanford.

Michael shared behind-the-scenes details of some of the performances we had just seen at the meet, talked about rating of difficulty levels and judge’s scoring, and gave us a sneak preview of recruiting efforts and what to look for next year, particularly with the addition of elite gymnast Jade Carey to the Oregon State team.

Continued on page 9
Jim Krueger organized another successful OSURA Travel Share program on March 15, 2018. About 30 OSURA members heard an enlightening presentation by Gordon and Mary Ann Matzke describing their recent trip to Ethiopia. Their illustrated talk covered many remarkable sights in this northeast corner of Africa, including village scenes, ancient monuments and castles, underground churches, and agricultural landscapes. Cultural history, contemporary improvements, and exotic meals were featured throughout their presentation. It was an amazing adventure through this religiously diverse, culturally rich, and rapidly emerging African country.
undercurrent (n); a current of water below the
surface, moving in a different direction from any
surface current.

An undercurrent is movement and activity below
what’s typically seen by a casual viewer. In humans,
like water, these undercurrents are the stories
under the story.

Emeritus OSU President John Byrne wisely chose
this word for the title of his recently published
memoir, “Undercurrents,” in which he tracks
hundreds of these “under” stories - the people,
the choices, the circumstances, the discussions,
the decisions, the outcomes - that shaped his
long and esteemed career.

Why write a book? His answer, “I wanted to leave
a record.” Indeed, John leaves quite an impressive
record - a prodigious compilation of detailed
moments and experiences beginning with his
early childhood and educational experiences and
continuing through his career as a marine geologist,
oceanographer, university teacher, administrator,
government agency director, and ultimately
university president.

His book has been many years in the making. John
says it started as two or three separate writings -
personal and family life, education and university
career, and government agency work. Eventually he
blended it all into one work that included elements
of each area.

John submitted the first full draft to the OSU Press
in 2014, but was advised that it was too long. So he
worked for another three years with a professional
editor who helped him pare it down to a manageable
publication size, and “Undercurrents” made its
debut in February this year (2018). A copy of the
full document, including the 64,000 words cut from
the original, is kept in OSU’s archives.

John’s recollection and documentation of detail
is remarkable. When asked how he kept track of
so much information through the years, he names
numerous sources - personal journals, a memory
book, letters, written records, formal documents,
meeting minutes. “As a university president,” he
adds, “you have to pay attention to the record.”

Although John is probably best known for serving
11 years as Oregon State’s president, he identifies
teaching as his most personally satisfying
accomplishment during his career. His most valued
award is the Carter Award for Outstanding and
Inspirational Teaching, awarded to him in 1964 by
students in the School of Science.

"Undercurrents" is available for purchase through
the OSU Press and at Grass Roots Bookstore.
Women's Gymnastics
Continued from page 6

Many of us were surprised to learn that college gymnastics coaches now start scouting potential recruits when girls are only in 7th grade. According to Coach Chaplin, college gymnastics has been gaining stature over recent years. Once considered the poor sister in the world of competitive gymnastics (that focused on the Olympics and other national and international competition), college programs have become more attractive for young women who want both educational and gymnastics experiences.

In his introduction of Coach Chaplin, Bill Smart noted “this was the first time ever” that OSURA was able to enlist one of the active coaches as a guest speaker, because this year we held the dinner and speaker event after the meet instead of before. The gymnastics coaches have so many responsibilities for setting up equipment and apparatus before a meet, it precludes their involvement in anything else. Michael was quick to point out that having this after-meet speaking obligation gave him a good excuse to get out of the usual work of dismantling all that equipment.

OSURA marked another first in holding the post-meet dinner at the Hilton Garden Inn instead of one of the usual campus facilities. We were able to buy drinks from the bar and socialize in the lounge area before moving into the University Club room for the program and spaghetti dinner buffet catered by the Hilton Garden Inn.

The Beavers ended a very successful season at the National Women’s Gymnastics regional competition in Raleigh, NC in early April. We can’t wait to cheer on the Beavers next season! 🏀