

OSURA News & Views

Spring 2011

Spotlight: Bob Becker

[This is the third in an occasional series profiling OSU retirees who have made noteworthy achievements subsequent to retirement. Earlier profiles featured Ken Hedberg and Emery Castle.]



Bob Becker can be seen around town lately wearing his favorite baseball cap. The image of a beaver on the cap isn't particularly surprising. What is surprising is that the letters on the cap do not spell out O-S-U; they spell M-I-T. It turns out that OSU isn't the only school with the industrious beaver as a mascot. And Bob, although a solid OSU Beaver fan, is exceedingly proud of the accomplishments of his grandchildren, two of whom are

currently enrolled in MIT academic programs. More about them later.

Robert R. (Bob) Becker has experienced a very successful academic career of his own. The son and grandson of Lutheran ministers, Bob was born 88 years ago in Rabbit Lake township, Minnesota, about five miles from the metropolis of Aitkin. The family soon moved to North Dakota, where Bob went to school through two years of junior college. His interest in chemistry began at age 12, and he developed the goal of becoming a college professor during high school, when he discovered the special appeal of how biology overlapped and intersected with chemistry. A fellow student with a Harvard background pushed Bob in that direction, and he soon found himself with a scholarship to Harvard. But the year was 1942. After just one semester, Bob volunteered for the Army Air Corps, where he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1944. When the war ended, it was back to North Dakota to finish college, followed by graduate degrees in biochemistry at the University of Wisconsin, where an enduring special interest in protein chemistry blossomed.

Professionally, Professor Becker was one of the first to chemically modify proteins by attaching polypeptides to native proteins, thus enabling the study of changes in their physical and biological properties. This capability is significant because of its immunological and enzymological ramifications, e.g., resistance to disease. Bob has also been able to demonstrate some of the properties which lead to aggregation of proteins, which is ultimately deleterious, as in the case of Alzheimer's. He has done a great deal of collaborative work, with funding for his own research from sources including NSF, NIH, and the Atomic Energy Commission. Two sabbatical leaves stand out in Bob's

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President's Message

This message comes with special greetings to each of you, on behalf of the OSU Retirement Association Board. Your board represents you and others with interests in



OSURA programs, services for members, events and volunteer opportunities. I can assure you that the members of the Board and the OSURA Committee Chairs are providing excellent leadership.

I am happy to announce that a new standing committee is the **Golf Committee**. The annual OSURA Golf Tournament

has achieved wonderful success. In order to provide more support, there will be a board representative for Golf. It is hoped that this wonderful fall tradition will continue and hopefully may spark new fall kick off events. Mark your calendars for September 13 at Trysting Tree. Remember that the day concludes with a dinner for golfers and others and will include a guest speaker.

OSURA Members have been, and continue to be, busy people! Events this year have included a fall trip to Hazelnut Hill Farms and, in early winter, an active evening of Bollywood Dancing, along with sampling Indian appetizers. The **Program Committee** brought these events to you. A pre-play social was held for members and guests prior to the OSU Theatre production of "Glengarry Glen Ross". There have been pre-event dinners prior to select OSU Gymnastics and Women's Basketball competitions.

Member Services has coordinated multiple events, including one last November entitled "Is the Recession Really Over? How Does That Impact Me?" A program in January was "The Future of Higher Education". Next planned, for May 3, is a Pre-Retirement Program, from 2 – 5 p.m. in the MU Journey Room. The program, facilitated by Clara Pratt and Peter Bloome, is geared for faculty and staff who plan to retire in the next few years. This is among our most popular events. Please encourage OSU retirees-to-be to attend. No R.S.V.P. is required. A provocative program called "Preparing to Care," dealing with death and dying, is also being planned.

Our **Volunteer Committee** has coordinated OSURA volunteers for two OSU Flu Clinics, University Day and four days of Career Fairs.

Membership. Our membership is at a high over the past few years, thanks to response by you, our members! With increased membership (324) and generous additional donations to our OSURA Scholarships (over \$2,000), there was an increase in the amount of OSURA Scholarship distribution, now up to \$3,000 per year. Come to the OSURA Annual Meeting to hear from this year's recipients and meet the students.

In the OSURA newsletter last fall, I prompted you to save the dates May 18-19 for the NW Regional Meeting of University Retirement Associations regional meeting. A dinner is planned for conference attendees, and OSURA members are invited. See elsewhere in this newsletter for further information.

Our annual meeting, planned for Wednesday, May 11, will be a time to reflect on successes of the prior year and to celebrate the coming 10th year of OSURA. New retirees will be welcomed!

When asked, "What are the best ways to stay connected with OSU colleagues from the past and to make new connections?" I answer, to attend programs and events and to volunteer. "How can I best become informed about OSURA?" Go to <http://oregonstate.edu/osura>. There you will find the latest news and archives, as well as retiree resources and a calendar of events.

We offer our continuing grateful acknowledgement to OSU University Advancement for seeing the value in our organization with their ongoing financial and staff support. Kate Sanders is our OSURA office manager, from University Events. Truly, we are a better organization with her exemplary skills. Shelly Signs has been most valuable to us this year as well.

Last fall, I said that great organizations thrive when many members participate, and I invited your call to action. Your involvement has been, and is, vital to our mission. I appreciate and applaud each of you who have been part of OSURA. I hope you have found, and continue to find, OSURA programs, events, tours and entertainment interesting and enriching for you and your spouse, partner or guest, along with volunteering opportunities. And to you who are wishing to become more involved, we welcome you!

A handwritten signature in orange ink that reads "Susan Poole". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Poole, President of OSURA, 2010-11

POWERED BY ORANGE

Sister Organizations Invite Participation

OSURA and its members are rightfully proud of the broad range of programs, activities, and services offered by OSURA itself. But several other organizations also concern themselves with issues and interests pertaining to retirees and/or offer programs of interest. Highlighted here are three such organizations: AROPE, OPRI, and Triad. Each one invites membership and participation by members of OSURA.

AROPE (Association of Retired Oregon Public Employees).

AROPE's motto is "Good associations, good fellowship, good information." It is a locally based organization, with most members residing in Benton or Linn Counties. The stated purpose of AROPE is "to enhance the economic and social welfare of persons having retired" under PERS. The group sponsors speakers in line with this purpose and currently meets for lunch and a program six times per year, on the second Tuesday of every other month. Programs are informal, and interaction is encouraged. Members are particularly interested in legislative actions that affect PERS retirees, as well as local issues of an educational nature. All PERS recipients and their spouses are welcome to join, with annual dues at \$6 per year (or \$20 lifetime). Further information can be obtained from Gerry Olson, at 541-752-0210 or g.olson1@comcast.net.

OPRI (Oregon Public Retirees, Inc.). OPRI serves as the primary political/judicial action arm for PERS retirees, with activities directed toward safeguarding the interests of current and future PERS retirees. OPRI has approximately 8,000 members

statewide (and beyond) and is guided by a board of directors representing employees of state and local government, local school districts, the courts, and higher education. The organization was founded in 1991 in critical response to a legislative decision to tax the pensions of PERS retirees. Since that time, OPRI has been instrumental in filing numerous court challenges to legislation and rules adversely affecting PERS and its retirees. The organization also contracts with a lobbying firm to represent active and retired OPRI/PERS members before the legislature and with the PERS agency itself. Membership is \$10 per year (or \$75 lifetime). For further information and membership forms, see the OPRI website at opri.org.

Triad. Although created primarily for the use of active faculty members, Triad welcomes OSU retirees as members and guests. The name "Triad" derives from the group's three grounding values: fellowship, service, and cooperation. For 85 years, this organization has provided OSU faculty and staff the "opportunity to gather over a meal to share fellowship, discuss the challenges of the day, celebrate success, and learn something new." Engaging speakers offer presentations on a wide range of topics. The group generally meets for lunch on Thursdays at noon in MU 109. Membership cost is \$40 per year. Further information, including program schedule, is available on-line at people.oregonstate.edu/groups/triad or by contacting Nick Houtman at 541-737-0783.

Please consider exploring membership opportunities with any or all of these organizations. All three need, and would appreciate, our support. Why not enjoy what they have to offer? 🏛️

Notes from the Editor

This issue marks the end of my six year stint as editor of *OSURA News and Views*. My hope is that I have approached the fine precedent set by Ron Lovell and that you have found our publication to be readable, interesting, accurate, and helpful. Our layout design has certainly changed and modernized over the years, and there have been a few special innovations, such as the "occasional series" of profiles of prominent OSU retirees and the regular OSU Trivia entry. I wish to thank the three superb layout designers with whom I have worked -and without whom these newsletters would be impossible. Most recently my great thanks go to the incomparable Kate Sanders. Thanks also to each of six assemblies of board members for their cooperation and support and, especially, to a succession of six outstanding OSURA presidents.

My editorship has been a privilege and, for the most part, a pleasure. The past two years, however, have been hampered by a series of medical crises which have been far from enjoyable. The incident that started it all leads me to exercise the editorial license of delivering a heartfelt public health message as a parting word. In May 2009, while vacationing in Spokane, I suffered the rupture of an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). Only later did I learn that very few people survive such an occurrence. In my case, an efficient ambulance trip and an all-day surgery performed by a marvelous surgeon left me precarious, but miraculously alive.

There have been a series of complications since then, along with seven more surgeries and three months in a nursing home. But I am now back to many of my previous activities and duties, with a whole new appreciation of life and living.

The real point here is not about me but about YOU. The thing is: this entire unpleasant ordeal could have been avoided. The presence of an abdominal aortic aneurysm can be easily, painlessly, and inexpensively detected through a simple ultrasound procedure. If you are over 60 years of age and if you have not already done so, please, please, PLEASE hasten to your primary care physician and request that an ultrasound be scheduled. If an aneurysm is discovered, its size will be noted and you will be tracked to ensure that it does not enlarge to the danger range of 5.5 cm. If growth continues, a much simpler, proactive surgery can be elected, thus avoiding the systemic catastrophe I have experienced as part of the price of staying alive.

Please heed my heartfelt advice. Meanwhile, my six years of editorship now come to an end. Thank you for your readership and for the many kind and supportive comments received over the years. I look forward to seeing many of you around and about Corvallis as we continue to harvest the blessings of retirement in this wonderful setting.

Gary Tiedeman, *OSURA News and Views Editor*, 2005-2011

Trivia:

Which OSU alum was the voice of the "practical" pig who built a house of bricks in the Disney film *Three Little Pigs*, as well as the voice of both Sleepy and Grumpy in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*? (Hint: He also barked as Pluto and co-wrote the lyrics to "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?") The answer can be found on our Web site: oregonstate.edu/osura

What's Happening? Save these Dates

May 3 Pre-retirement Program

3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Journey Room, Memorial Union

May 11 Annual Meeting

OSU Foundation Board Room
2:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
RSVP@oregonstate.edu
541-737-4717

May 19 Kathleen Dean Moore

Willamette Room,
CH2M Hill Alumni Center
See "Regional Meeting" article on pg. 5

June 10 Campus Clean-up

Contact Terri Tower if you would like to help clean up our campus prior to commencement. tktower@peak.org

June 11 Commencement

Would you like to volunteer?
Call 541-737-6439 or e-mail
sierra.whitlow@oregonstate.edu

September 13

8th Annual Golf Outing
See below for more information.

Annual Meeting

This year's OSURA Annual Meeting will be held from 2:30-5:00 p.m. on May 11 in the Board Room of the OSU Foundation, located at 35th and Western. (Ample parking is readily available.) OSU President Ed Ray will be featured speaker at the event. President Ray will discuss the new OSU divisional structure and will review and update the abundance of building construction currently so evident around campus.

Other activities will include a brief business meeting and the traditional announcement of the Volunteer of the Year Award and this year's winning recipients of OSURA scholarships. In recognition of OSURA's arrival at the ripe, young age of ten years, there will be a special recognition of the organization's founding members. Also, the Nominating Committee will present its slate of nominees to fill newly vacant slots on the OSURA Board of

Directors. Nominees are: Sue Borden and David Chilcote (each for three-year terms) and Mary Ann Roberts and Tom Savage (each for two-year terms). Additional nominations may be made from the floor.

The annual meeting will be convened by outgoing OSURA President Susan Poole. At a suitably dramatic moment, Susan will "pass the gavel" to her successor, approved at the April 1 meeting of the Board of Directors along with other new officers. OSURA board officers for 2011-12 will be: President, Terri Tower; President-Elect, Jim Krueger; Secretary, Gerry Olson; and Treasurer, Carroll DeKock.

Please set aside the afternoon of May 11 for this annual opportunity to spend time with OSU friends and acquaintances, to enjoy the tasty treats provided by Valley Catering, and to learn of some of the latest developments at good old OSU. We'll see you there. 🏛️

Campus Clean-up

OSURA will once again offer its services for campus litter clean-up on the Friday before Commencement. The date and time for this year's clean-up event is Friday, June 10, from 2:30-4:30 p.m. You can sign up at the OSURA Annual Meeting, or you can contact OSURA Volunteer Coordinator, Terri Tower, at tktower@peak.org.

The Volunteer Committee still needs more "grabbers" to pick up litter. These grabber tools are often used in hospital or rehab programs for people recovering from joint or other surgeries. If you happen to have one that is not being used, please loan or donate it to the clean-up cause. Bring it along to the Annual Meeting, or arrange for pick-up by contacting Terri at the above e-mail address.

Fall Kickoff: Golf and Games Day!

Mark your calendars now for Tuesday, September 13, and join the fun for OSURA's Fall Kickoff Event, "Golf and Games Day," to be held at the Trysting Tree Golf Course and Clubhouse.

This event, an expansion of the annual Golf Tournament, will include golfing, dinner, a guest speaker, door prizes, and activities for non-golfers, such as board and card games. Planning is underway, and anyone

who would like to help with either the golf tournament or the games is encouraged to contact the OSURA office. The Fall Kickoff is a collaborative effort by the Program and Golf Committees and the OSURA board.

Sign-up information will be available at the May 11 OSURA Annual Meeting. More announcements pertaining to the event will follow during the coming months.

Event Recap: Bollywood

On January 19, about a dozen OSURA participants enjoyed learning about India, its music and dance and the Indian film industry based in Mumbai, and then got an energetic workout learning some dance moves.

The instructor, Neha Neelwarne, is a native of Mysore, South India, and a senior in Finance in the OSU College of Business. She works at the Women's Center as the Marketing Coordinator and is passionate about women's



empowerment. She also teaches the Bollywood Faculty/Staff Fitness Class twice a week. In her free time she enjoys reading world literature, watching crime shows, and has recently taken up boxing!

To see a flash dance she put together on the OSU Quad in Fall term last year, follow this link: LIFE@OSU >> <http://bit.ly/bnr83D>

Maybe we retirees weren't quite as coordinated as the students, but we had a great time!

Regional Meeting Coming Soon!

All OSURA members are invited to join other retirees from universities throughout the Pacific Northwest for dinner and featured speaker Kathleen Dean Moore on Thursday, May 19 in the Willamette Room of the CH2M Hill Alumni Center. Cost for the dinner is \$20 per person. A social gathering, with no-host bar, begins at 6:00 p.m., with dinner to follow.

Moore is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at OSU, Director of the Spring Creek Project for Ideas, Nature and the Written Word, and author of several highly acclaimed, award-winning books of essays. She will speak on the topic of her latest book (co-edited with Michael Nelson of Michigan State University), *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*. This provocative collection of essays related to human ethics and a changing planet provides material for engaging discussion and conversation. Moore's other books are *Wild Comfort*, *The Pine Island Paradox*, *Holdfast*, and *Riverwalking*.

The Thursday dinner will be the closing activity for the Northwest Regional Meeting of University Retirement Associations,

hosted this year by OSURA on May 18-19. This group meets once a year, rotating from one host campus to another. This will be the first time that OSU has hosted the event. Next year's meeting is slated for Spokane, Washington, with hosts Washington State University and Eastern Washington University.

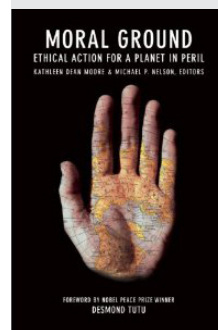
The primary purpose of the gathering is to share information and ideas. Discussion sessions will focus on issues common to university retirement associations, such as funding, membership eligibility and recruitment, organizational structure, institutional affiliation and support, programs and activities, and state/regional political issues relevant to higher education. Most attendees will be lodged at the Hilton Garden Inn. Thursday discussion sessions will be at LaSells Stewart Center, and the closing dinner, as noted above, will be in the Alumni Center. OSURA-sponsored delegates for the regional meeting are board members Jo Anne Trow, Susan Poole, Terri Tower, and Jim Krueger and Planning Committee members Kathy Heath and Jean Peters.

OSURA members can sign up and pay for the May 19 dinner event at the OSURA Annual

Meeting on May 11 or can mail checks to: OSURA, University Events Office, 205 Adams Hall, Corvallis, OR 97331. Checks should be made payable to: OSU Foundation/OSURA. Please write "Regional Meeting Dinner" on the note line and indicate the names of the persons attending. Deadline for sign-up is May 12. 🏠

"... humans are part of intricate, delicately balanced systems of living and dying that have created a richness of life greater than the world has ever seen.

Because we are part of the Earth's systems, we are utterly dependent on their thriving."



Introduction, *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*, p. xix

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wealth of rich memories. One was at Brookhaven National Labs and included giving a course in protein chemistry in the Oak Ridge-University of Tennessee graduate program. The other, at the University of Washington, included a memorable dive in the Alvin research submarine.

Prior to arriving at OSU, Bob taught for eight years at Columbia University and worked as a biochemist at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. It was during the Columbia years that he met Mary, a graduate student with an equivalent enthusiasm for the study of proteins. They were married in 1956 and have worked together professionally and domestically ever since. One daughter, Nancy, is an Assistant Vice President/Publisher at Prentice Hall. The other daughter, Janet, is Professor of Geophysics at the University of Hawaii. And then there are those five wonderful grandchildren. Sophia, the eldest, graduated from Yale with a double major in Physics and Mechanical Engineering and is now a graduate

student in physical oceanography at MIT. Little sister Anna is a sophomore physics major at MIT, while cousin Jenny is a freshman at Auburn in marine biology. Jenny's younger siblings Katie and Jeff are waiting in the wings. In addition to their academic prowess, all five are accomplished athletes.

Bob Becker's faculty service to OSU has been beyond noteworthy. He was one of the early Presidents of the Faculty Senate, and he has been a leader in AAUP, the Association of Oregon Faculties, the Board of Intercollegiate Athletics, and countless committees, task forces, and advisory groups. Awards received include the College of Science's Carter Award for Outstanding Teaching, the Ritchie Distinguished Professor Award, the OSU Alumni Association Distinguished Professor Award, and the Curtis D. Mumford Faculty Service Award. Since his retirement in 1989, Bob has been an officer and leader in several retirement organizations, including the board chairmanship of Oregon Public Retirees, Inc. He has also been active at state

and national levels of the American Heart Association and has worked from the 1970s onward on behalf of anti-tobacco legislation at both state and local levels. In the latter connection, he is a proud recipient of the Maurine Neuberger Award for Distinguished Career Achievement.

Since his retirement, one of Bob's most exciting experiences was a teaching assignment (in graduate biochemistry) at Ocean University in Qingdao, PRC. Bob still pays daily visits to his office on campus, although he confesses that the visits are largely for social purposes. He says he is "having a ball" watching the arrival and progress of new biochemistry/biophysics departmental faculty. He enjoys bowling, and he is an avid member of a "reading group" which includes seven other notable OSU retirees. Bob and Mary find pleasure in spending time at their cabin near Sisters (built from a kit, with major help from family, grad students, and friends) and in the quiet pastime of feeding the ducks on the banks of the Willamette. After such a long, active, and productive career, a bit of relaxation is certainly well-deserved. 🏠



OSU Retirement Association

Oregon State University
205 Adams Hall
Corvallis, OR 97330

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I/We would like to renew/begin a membership with OSURA. Please enclose the membership fee of \$20 for each person. Donations above \$20 are gladly accepted and may be specified to go to the Scholarship Fund. Please make checks payable to OSURA. Membership year runs from July 1 - June 30.

OSURA Annual Dues: \$20 per member

Annual Dues: _____

Scholarship Fund: _____

Total: _____

Name _____ Are you a spouse/partner of a deceased OSU employee? Yes

Department _____ Retirement Date _____

Spouse/Partner _____

Department (If the spouse/partner is an OSU employee only) _____ Retirement Date _____

Address: _____ Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail The BEST way to receive notices and event announcements!

Please return this form to OSURA, 205 Adams Hall Corvallis, OR 97331. For questions call: (541) 737-4717 or E-mail: osura@oregonstate.edu.