



THE PIONEER CLUB
STAY
INVOLVED.
CONNECT WITH FORMER COLLEAGUES.

Students, faculty and staff are still flying high following President Hynd's recent inauguration. It was wonderful to see so many of you participate in this historic event for Oakland University. [Click here](#) to view photos of the inauguration. See what's happening at OU with the latest [campus news](#) and [calendar of events!](#)

Group Lunches

The group meets the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 1:00 p.m. at Nick's Country Oven in Rochester (Adams and Silverbell). These lunches are very casual, so please stop by when your schedule permits.

Expression of Gratitude

Following his inauguration, President Hynd sent a heartfelt note to students, faculty and staff. Here is an excerpt of what he wrote to the campus community:

"Thank you for making Inauguration Day so special for the University and memorable for Alison and me. It was an absolutely amazing day from beginning to end, and we have received numerous accolades. The spirit and pride that was demonstrated by everyone merely confirms what a truly wonderful place Oakland University is. I am so honored to be here.

It was remarkable to witness and be a part of such an extraordinary and historic occasion put together and supported by so many outstandingly talented individuals who came together for the greater good of OU."

Historical Gem

Many of you are probably familiar with the mace that is carried by an appointed university marshal during commencements, convocations and inaugurations, but do you know how the mace came to be part of Oakland University's history? [Click here](#) to learn more about this ceremonial symbol and its long-standing tradition at OU.

Inside|Out Art

We have been fielding questions about the artwork that was recently installed on the grounds of the Great Estate. Meadow Brook Hall is participating in the Detroit Institute of Arts' (DIA) Inside|Out program which brings high-quality reproductions from the DIA's collection to outdoor venues throughout metro Detroit. To learn more about how you can view replicas of some of the world's finest masterpieces while strolling the grounds and gardens of the mansion, [click here](#). The exhibit runs through July 16th.

Newsworthy

The future looks bright for the 47 students who crossed the stage during Oakland University William Beaumont (OUWB) School of Medicine's first-ever commencement ceremony on May 15th in the Athletics Center O'rena. OUWB leaders, public officials, distinguished visitors, and families and friends were on hand as graduates marked an important milestone in their personal and professional lives. [Click here](#) for commencement photos.

Pioneer Profile

By Gerry Coon

George Coon, Professor Emeritus, SEHS, and his wife, Gerry Palmer Coon, formerly Administrative Assistant in SEHS, were international travelers even before their retirement in 1992/93. When they began planning their post-retirement travels, they decided they wanted to stay active and involved in learning. Elderhostel (now re-named Roads Scholars) became their first choice when choosing a travel organizer.

The trips that interested the Coons most were the service programs, where participants are assigned to researchers from various institutions to help them with the grunt work of their investigations. Their Elderhostel Service Projects took them to many out-of-the-way places, including 100 miles up the headwaters of the Amazon to survey pink river dolphins with scientists from Texas A & M, followed by a trip to the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu. Another trip took them to a Howler Monkey Preserve in Belize to help researchers determine the effects of tourism and clear-cutting for farming on the monkey and avian populations. During a two-week preservation project on the Battleship Missouri, docked in Pearl Harbor, George operated a jackhammer on the deck, replacing the wooden divots that cover the metal fasteners that hold the teak deck to the main structure. Gerry spent her session sanding and varnishing the oak grids designed to keep the captain's feet dry in blustery weather.

The couple signed on for a project on Midway Island that advertised for writers, and found themselves and two other would-be writers re-glazing windows for the preservation of a naval building and painting and preserving artifacts from World War II. That trip was memorable because they were there

during the hatching of the albatross chicks from 500,000 breeding pairs, for a total of 1.5 million birds on the island. At night, they joined another group on the island to help band the Bonin petrels that return at night to their nests in tunnels that may be three feet deep and nine feet long. (Dug with webbed feet.)

In 1996, the Coons volunteered for a week of bone-jarring service in an open boat on the Pacific Ocean with researchers from the Cascadia Research Collective in Olympia, Washington, photographing and identifying humpback whales in the breeding/birthing grounds off the southwestern coast of Costa Rica. Because the Elderhostel Service contract requires the researchers to provide instruction as well as service opportunities, 8 hours of surveying on the ocean was followed by lectures about aquatic mammals. The Coons found the research and accommodations so fascinating that they volunteered for six more sessions with Cascadia Research in succeeding years.

In addition to their Elderhostel trips, George and Gerry, dedicated wildlife enthusiasts, arranged to visit the polar bears in Churchill, Canada; the Wildebeest migration on the Masai Mara and the Serengeti in Africa; and Guanacos and Magellanic Penguins in Patagonia, Chile. While in Chile they visited Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world. Then, a 2,000-mile plane trip from Santiago landed them on Easter Island for a week-long holiday.

When they no longer felt they had the energy for service projects, the Coons opted for river cruises. They toured the ancient monuments along the Nile from Abu Simbel to Alexandria. They cruised the inland waterway along the fjords of Norway from Hammerfest (purported to be the northernmost city in the world) to Bergen, Norway. A European river cruise started in Budapest and ended in a fascinating visit to Amsterdam that included the first and largest commercial flower market.

In between these exciting trips, George managed to write and publish three books. The first was an autobiography called *Bert's Boy: Growing up During the Depression and World War II*. This was followed by two sports trivia quiz books called *Stump Howie* and *Stump Howie II*. All are available through Amazon.com.

Active octogenarians, the Coons continue to write, volunteer at the Older Persons' Commission in Rochester and work at home on their hobbies of photography, stained glass and quilting. Now, they let the animals come to them at their condo on the bank of Paint Creek. There they are visited regularly by mink, beaver, groundhogs, muskrats, a great blue heron, a multitude of songbirds and, of course, many deer.



Working to preserve the famous anti-aircraft gun that was used to protect Midway Island during World War II.

After all is said and done, however, the most magical trip of all was an Elderhostel-organized trip to Rome, Italy.



REFLECTIONS

*The past is not another country
here in Rome
And Rome is not another city—
only Rome*

*A million fountains nourish life and
love in Rome
A thousand churches rise above the
fires of Rome*

*Raphael and Michelangelo still
live in Rome
Traviata, Tosca and The Pines all
sing in Rome*

*Byron, Shelley, Keats and Wordsworth still
speak of Rome
And pilgrims from all nations come to
walk in Rome*

*Protestant, Catholic, Atheist and Jew
believe in Rome
For Rome is not another country
Rome is home.*

Gerry Coon 2008

Gerry Coon retired from the Reading and Language Arts Department in the School of Education and Human Services. She is a co-editor and writer for the Rochester OPC (Older Persons' Commission) newsletter and a member of the Pioneer Club.

Pioneer Profile is a feature that appears monthly in the Pioneer Club eNewsletter. If you are interested in being profiled or sharing suggestions on fellow retirees to showcase, please provide your contact information and details to us at oupioneerclub@oakland.edu.

Save the Date

- Homecoming Retiree Reunion Brunch - Friday, September 18th

Stay tuned for more information!

Upcoming Events

DIA Tour

Thursday, July 30th at 10 a.m.

Meet at Anibal House

[Click here to rsvp!](#)

About the Pioneer Club

The purpose of the Oakland University Pioneer Club is to provide social and educational opportunities to OU retirees and their spouses. It is our hope that this group will serve as a way for you to reconnect with former colleagues as well as maintain a relationship with OU. As a retiree, you remain a valued member of the University community.