



Energy and excitement on campus are growing as OU's favorite fall tradition, Homecoming and Reunion Weekend, draws near. This year's celebration on October 13-14th will be particularly jubilant as it marks Oakland's 60th anniversary! Join fellow Pioneer Club members for a complimentary reunion brunch in the Oakland Center on Friday, October 13th at 10 a.m. Reminisce about the good old days, hear remarks by President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, and get an update on all of the exciting things happening on campus. RSVP to oupioneerclub@oakland.edu or (248) 370-4389 by October 2nd. For the full schedule of activities, [click here](#). Check out 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.

Golden Opportunity

Do you have a great idea for a future Pioneer Club event? The planning committee needs your help! The group meets on a monthly basis to discuss campus happenings as well as organize activities for Pioneer Club members. If you are interested in joining the planning committee or would like more information, email oupioneerclub@oakland.edu or call (248) 370-4325.

Newsworthy

School of Music, Theatre and Dance

Oakland University's Board of Trustees recently voted to approve the creation of a School of Music, Theatre and Dance (SMTD). This move follows a consistent expansion and transformation of programs offered by the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance over the past 32 years. SMTD will be housed within the College of Arts and Sciences. To learn more about this exciting development, [click here](#). For details on the 2017-18 performance season, [click here](#).

Honors College

For the fifth straight year, OU's Honors College had a record number of freshmen join its ranks this fall. Approximately 450 students, representing all areas of study, comprise this year's class. This is more than a 10 percent increase over last year. [Click here](#) for the full story.

Remarkable Rankings

For the second straight year, Oakland University was awarded the highest possible ranking for veteran-friendliness by the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency. The organization recently published its 2017-2018 list of Veteran Friendly Schools, which recognizes institutions of higher learning for dedication to student veterans and dependents utilizing their G.I. Bill and other educational benefits. For more information, [click here](#).

Campus Pride Index, the leading national nonprofit organization for student leaders and campus groups working to create safer, more LGBTQ-friendly learning environments at colleges and universities, recently ranked OU as the most LGBTQ-friendly campus in Michigan. [Click here](#) to read the full story.

Pioneer Profile

Brian Murphy

By Gerry Coon



Brian in the new car that was delivered the same day as the baby grand piano. A happy man!

Professor Emeritus Brian Murphy classifies himself as a "second generation Pioneer," citing Gertrude White, Rosalie Ficker, Bob Hoopes and Tom Fitzsimmons as the first generation. But there was no generation gap when the second generation (Brian, Helen Schwartz, Bob Eberwein, Jane Donahue and others) arrived. From elegant high teas at the White residence, where eloquent discussions of 18th and 19th century literature were the order of the day, to riotous drum/piano jazz sessions at the Murphy's, the combined staff of the Department of English was a serious but fun-loving group, full of enthusiasm and collegial energy.

Brian arrived at OU in 1969, straight from his doctoral studies at the University of London, after finally opting for a degree in English rather than Music or Politics. He had decided early on, while campaigning for his father, that he was not cut out for politics, and later reluctantly conceded that, while he was passionate about music, he was not going to be really successful at it as a career. He devoted himself to his chosen field, writing his dissertation on "The Political Novels of Disraeli and Trollope."

During the three years he was in London, Brian also wrote film reviews for *Films and Filming*. So, when Bob Eberwein decided to experiment with classes on film at OU he found a ready cohort in Brian Murphy. Together they taught film classes and constructed a preliminary syllabus for film studies in the English Department. (Bob went on to be one of the foremost authorities on film studies, and the film studies program is a popular one at OU.)

A charismatic instructor, Brian states that he has always considered it an honor to stand in a classroom. He claims to be a "romantic hedonist," and once advised a commencement group to, "...live your life in such a way that you have fun—I have." He feels he has done that at Oakland University by "...taking what is and making it my own."

Performing was never out of Brian's mind, and, as an actor in several OU theatre productions, he starred in three Shaw plays (*Candida*, *Man and Superman*, and *Pygmalion*) all directed by Adeline Hirshfeld-Medalia, and *Equus*, directed by Tom Astin.

A true Pioneer, Professor Murphy likes to get involved with progressive programs, help get them started, then hand them over to a successor. He became very interested in what Dr. Manuel Pierson, then Associate Director of Upward Bound, was doing in the Pontiac Schools—encouraging the students there to entertain thoughts of college and coming to OU after high school graduation by immersing them in the exciting world of academia. Brian and his wife, Toni Sanchez, became involved with Dr. Pierson's program, turning it into an annual affair, with a trip to the Stratford Shakespeare Festival as a culminating experience. "Taking two busloads of high-schoolers on a trip like that is sometimes frightening, but it always seemed to turn out all right," he admitted. This outreach program morphed into the Department of Pre-College Programs, and Brian moved on.

Around the middle of his career, Professor Murphy took on the challenge of directing the Honors College for, it turned out, seventeen years. This gave him an opportunity to explore the world of politics again, meeting with human relations committees, school superintendents, CEOs and other local dignitaries. Most important to this pioneer was the opportunity to do things in a new way. He is proud to have been part of "one of the secret civilizations in the university—people trying stuff out."

"Secret civilizations" is one of the topics in Brian's one published work of fiction, *The Enigma Variations*, published by Scribner in 1981. The book idea rose from the juxtaposition of Brian's work on a committee on student conduct deciding a case of the "he said/she said" genre on campus, and an appreciation of the musical works of Elgar. Brian's other major published work is non-fiction; it is a Starmont Readers' Guide dealing with the fictional work of C. S. Lewis. Though he has achieved his life goal of publishing one non-fiction and one fiction book, he continues to write and search for agents and publishers for his plays and fiction—including a novel about Detroit.

Getting a publisher these days is nearly impossible if you are not a "famous" writer, but Brian has been very successful in writing plays during his retirement. He has written two full length plays and many short ones and has found a willing producer in New York at the 52nd Street *Medicine Street Theater*. "It's a great thrill," he says, "to sit in a darkened theater and see your words come to life on a stage in front of you."

Brian continues to share his literary knowledge beyond the classroom. He facilitates several book clubs and often lectures for the Society of Active Retirees (SOAR). "It's amazing," he says. "We put out a flyer and literally hundreds of people show up." Personally, I'm not surprised. I attended one of his Shakespeare lectures at the Rochester Hills Public Library and was enthralled.

Retirement also offers new opportunities for family activities. Their daughter, Lauren, and his son, John, and John's wife and three children visit once during the summer. Every night the house rocks with music, with everyone playing an instrument or singing. Once each winter, they meet again somewhere out West for Grandma's Ski School. Toni has taught everyone, including Brian, how to ski and they are all enthusiasts. Adding to the family fun this year will be Lauren's wedding on New Year's Eve.

"This has been the summer of weddings," Brian commented, and began to list them all, including Nicole Freeman's, this year's recipient of the Mark Murphy Scholarship for photography studies that the Murphys established in honor of his deceased son. "We're often invited to former students' weddings," says Brian, "and it's also a thrill when occasionally a student will come up to me and tell me how much he or she enjoyed my class."

As for the music, he's still at it. Though he started as a drummer, and now plays nearly every Friday with an OU group (calling themselves The Mongrel Dogs Who Teach), he also greatly enjoyed taking part in Dave Daniels' conducting class. He also plays the piano almost every night on a new baby grand piano, a birthday gift from Toni. He finds the instrument a bit intimidating; "I think it deserves a better player than I am," he says modestly. But, hey, he's having fun, and living life well.

Gerry Palmer Coon served as administrative assistant and adjunct faculty member in the School of Education and Human Services from 1971 to 1991. She retired after eleven years as co-editor of Rochester OPC's (Older Persons' Commission) quarterly publication, Vintage Views, and is 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.

Upcoming Events

School of Music, Theatre & Dance

[Click here for performance schedule!](#)

Campus Farmstand

Thursdays, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., July 13th - October 12th

Outside Kresge Library

Produce available for sale from the Campus Student Organic Farm

[Click here for more info!](#)

Ethics of Depiction: Landscape, Still Life, Human

September 9th - November 19th, Tuesday - Sunday: Noon to 5:00 p.m.

Opening Reception, September 9th, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

OU Art Gallery

Free Admission

[Click here for more info!](#)

2017 Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15th - October 12th

[Click here for more info!](#)

Nukes and Your Future: A Student and Community Forum

Tuesday, October 3rd, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Room 1050, Human Health Building

Free admission

[Click here for more info!](#)

Influences of Political Change on Hong Kong Schooling

Wednesday, October 4th, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Room 271, South Foundation Hall

Free admission

[Click here for more info!](#)

Shear Madness

Select dates and times, October 4th – 29th

Meadow Brook Theatre

Ticket prices vary

[Click here for more info!](#)

Taiwan at the Crossroads

Thursday, October 5th, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Room 156, North Foundation Hall

Free admission

[Click here for more info!](#)

Bullets Over Broadway

Select dates and times, October 5th - 15th

Varner Recital Hall

Tickets \$20

[Click here for more info!](#)

Art and Art History Lecture Series:

Lucille Tenazas, Judd Family Endowed Fund Lecture

Wednesday, October 11th, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

OU Art Gallery

Complimentary

[Click here for more info!](#)

Joy James Williams Lecture:

Britt Rusert presents from her book "Fugitive Science: Empiricism and Freedom in Early African American Culture"

Thursday, October 12th, 5:00 - 6:30 p.m.

Laidlaw Room 208, Oak View Hall

Complimentary

Please RSVP to **Michelle Brennecke** and include "Joy James Lecture" in the subject line. Limited seating is available!

[Click here for more info!](#)

2017 Homecoming & Reunion Weekend

October 13 - 14th

Campus Wide

[Click here for more info!](#)

Pioneer Club Event: Retiree Homecoming Brunch

Friday, October 13th, 10:00 a.m.

Oakland Center

[Click here to RSVP!](#)

History Comes Alive Lecture Series

"An Oral History Workshop"

Speaker: Dan Clark

Wednesday, October 18th, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Gold Rooms B & C, Oakland Center

[Click here for more info!](#)

2017 Maurice Brown Memorial Poetry Reading - Lorna Goodison

Tuesday, October 24th, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Oakland Room, Oakland Center

Free admission

[Click here for more info!](#)

Free Fridays – Meadow Brook Hall

Friday, October 27th, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Self-guided House tour with live organ music and Halloween activities

Meadow Brook Hall

Free admission, reservations not required

[Click here for more info!](#)

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.