

OU Pioneer Club E-Newsletter January, 2018

We hope 2018 is off to a happy and healthy start for you and your family! The Pioneer Club kicked off the New Year with a bang. More than 70 attendees came out for lunch at the Oakland Center followed by an exciting OU Men's Basketball game at the O'rena on January 7. If you took any pictures that day, please forward them to oupioneerclub@oakland.edu and we will post them for all to see. Check out the latest campus news and calendar of events!

Unofficial Pioneer Club Events on the Horizon

As you plan your monthly calendar, the Pioneer Club Planning Committee has chosen two unofficial activities that might be of interest. These events are informal and retirees are responsible for purchasing their own tickets as well as providing their own transportation to and from the venues. Spread the word and enjoy an evening out with your former colleagues:

The School for Scandal

Thursday, February 1st, 8:00 - 11:00 p.m.

Varner Studio Theatre

Tickets \$15 (senior discount available - up to 20% off)

[Click here for more info!](#)

Tenderly: The Rosemary Clooney Musical

Thursday, February 15th, 8:00 - 10:00 p.m.

Meadow Brook Theatre Tickets \$28 (20% discount available at the box office to all OU retirees - not valid for online purchases, exclusions apply)

[Click here for more info!](#)



In Memory of Gerry Coon

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the death of Geraldine "Gerry" Palmer Coon, who passed away on January 9, 2018. We thought it would be a fitting tribute to Gerry if we showcased her life, as she has been a faithful member of the Pioneer Club since its inception. She played an integral role in furthering the club's mission to keep OU retirees connected with the University and the community. Since 2014, Gerry interviewed fellow retirees for the popular Pioneer Profile feature in our monthly eNewsletter. Gerry was a talented writer and her much-anticipated profiles offered readers a delightful glimpse into the lives of our retired colleagues. [Click here to read some of her Pioneer Profiles.](#)

Gerry joined the School of Education and Human Services as an Administrative Professional in 1971. She served as an administrative assistant and adjunct faculty until her retirement 1992. Gerry taught English as a second language in Guizhou, China on two separate occasions, and was on the first team that represented OU in the summer of 1988. She also taught courses in Yorkshire, England.

After her retirement, Gerry traveled the world with her soul mate, husband George Coon. She touched down in six continents and touched the hearts of those she met. As a fitness aficionado, she climbed Ayers Rock in Australia, the foothills of Denali in Alaska, Mount Kenya in Africa, and walked a portion of the Inca Trail in Peru. She swam with whales off the coast of Costa Rica and with piranhas in the Amazon River. When she wasn't traversing the globe, Gerry worked out three days a week at OU's Rec Center with the "Fit for Life" group.

Gerry was an accomplished author, editor, teacher, poet and photographer. Her interest in children's writing led to more than twenty articles in the field and the coauthoring of a textbook series. She was also a dedicated community servant. As a volunteer, she helped restore the teak decks on the U.S.S. Missouri in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; glazed windows at the U.S. Naval Base on Midway Island; and helped with whale research in the Pacific Ocean near Costa Rica. Her volunteering was not limited to exotic places, however. She often dressed as a witch at the local Halloween Hoot or could be seen teaching children how to use a washboard or walk on stilts at the Pioneer Harvest.

During her retirement, Gerry took pleasure in co-editing Vintage Views, a quarterly publication of the Rochester OPC (Older Persons' Commission); she served as co-editor for eleven years. And, she enjoyed interviewing former colleagues for the Pioneer Club's electronic newsletter.

Angie Schmucker, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations, fondly recalls how Gerry came to write her enchanting articles about OU's retired faculty and staff. Angie met Gerry many years ago through the School of Education and Human Services, while attending retiree breakfasts. "Along the way, I became friends with Gerry and George, particularly since we were both season ticket holders at OU basketball games," Angie remembers with a smile. As Angie started thinking of ways to help all retired OU employees coalesce as a formal group on campus, she realized she needed to tap into the Coons' talents and connections. Gerry said "I'm not a joiner" when Angie asked if she would sit on a committee for the Pioneer Club. But, Gerry loved writing and Angie was fortunate enough to have read her columns for the Rochester OPC.

It took little convincing to ask Gerry to meet with fellow retirees (many of whom she did not know) and get the scoop on what they had been up to in retirement. She took her camera whenever she could meet them in person and always captured, in words and in images, a great perspective on our retirees in the Pioneer Profiles. Angie believes Gerry's profiles are the reason everyone took the time to open the eNewsletter each month. "Folks wanted to know what their friends and former colleagues were up to. And, Gerry told them in the most endearing way possible."

Gerry interviewed Sandy Fick, retired clerical-technician in Academic Affairs and current member of the Pioneer Club Planning Committee, along with Sheryl Clark Klemanski, retired administrative professional in Academic Affairs, for a joint profile in 2015. Sandy remembers meeting at Gerry's home. "We sat

outside, had tea and coffee cake, and it was very relaxing. She had a way of making us feel very comfortable. Gerry was a very gracious hostess.”

Sandy and Sheryl also had the opportunity to see all of the beautiful photographs Gerry had taken during her many world travels. Sandy notes that the way she had them framed, and the varying sizes of the photographs, really brought the images to life. Reminiscing, Sandy adds, “Not only did she take beautiful photographs, Gerry had the knack to display them very professionally.”

In addition to her husband, Gerry leaves behind three children, Kathy Cole (Doug Baker), Melissa Zuber (Ray Grzywacewski) and Al (Mary) Palmer; and two step children, David Coon (Ann) and Mary Ellen (David) Gaikema, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, all of whom she was deeply proud and justly boasted about them.

Many of us reconnected with Gerry and George at the Retiree Homecoming Brunch back in October. We will all certainly miss the fine work Gerry did for the Pioneer Club, but we will miss her as a person even more. Outgoing, adventurous and friendly, Gerry left an indelible mark on all those who knew her. On behalf of the entire Pioneer Club, we extend our deepest sympathies to the Coon Family. Rest in peace, Gerry.

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!](#)

Nana’s Naughty Knickers

Select dates & times, January 10th - February 4th

Meadow Brook Theatre

Ticket prices vary

[Click here for more info!](#)

At Your Service

January 11th - February 18th, Tuesday - Sunday: Noon to 5:00 p.m.

OU Art Gallery

Free Admission

[Click here for more info!](#)

Muslim and Civil Rights - Panel Discussion

Tuesday, January 30th, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Banquet Room A, Oakland Center

Free admission

[Click here for more info!](#)

The School for Scandal - Unofficial Pioneer Club Event

Thursday, February 1st, 8:00 - 11:00 p.m.

Varner Studio Theatre

Tickets \$15

[Click here for more info!](#)

Disturbing the Peace

Film Screening presented by Department of Political Science

Thursday, February 8th, 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Room 190, Hannah Hall

Free admission

[Click here for more info!](#)

Nurturing Your Romantic Relationship For Parents and Caregivers of Individuals with ASD

Presented by Terri, Orbuch, Ph.D., Department of Sociology, OU

Thursday, February 8th, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Gold Room C, Oakland Center

Free admission

Please RSVP by emailing or call 248-370-2424.

[Click here for more info!](#)

“Downton Days” : A Servant’s Life Living History Tour at the Great Estate

Select dates and times throughout February beginning 2/10

Ticket prices vary

Meadow Brook Hall

[Click here for more info!](#)

History Comes Alive Lecture Series

“Humanism and Medicine in the Italian Renaissance”

Speaker: Craig Martin, Ph.D., Department of History, OU

Tuesday, February 13th, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Gold Rooms B & C, Oakland Center

Admission is free, but reservations are requested.

To reserve a space, call (248) 370-3511 or email jkessler@oakland.edu.

[Click here for more info!](#)

Tenderly: The Rosemary Clooney Musical

Select dates & times, February 14th - March 11th

Meadow Brook Theatre

Ticket prices vary

[Click here for more info!](#)

Nick's Country Oven - Retiree Group Lunch

Wednesday, February 14th, 1:00 p.m.

4972 N. Adams Rd. in Rochester (Adams and Silverbell)

Pay your own way

Tenderly: The Rosemary Clooney Musical - Unofficial Pioneer Club Event

Thursday, February 15th, 8:00 - 10:00 p.m.

Meadow Brook Theatre

Tickets \$28

[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 retired OU faculty and staff. Spouses, partners, widows and widowers of OU retirees are also welcome as well as former long-time employees who are now retired, and part-time faculty and staff who devoted a significant portion of their work life to OU and are now retired. 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.

OU Pioneer Club

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