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From the Director: Denise Klein

2022 Member Input Gatherings

In late August, four gatherings attended by a total of 47 people, were held under the auspices of our Member Input Task Force, led by Board member **Ann Lawrence** (with **Audrey Hansen** and **Nancy Robb**). The discussions were successful enough at generating both positive and critical feedback that they will be repeated at least once during 2023 and in subsequent years.

Answers to the two questions posed by facilitators **Debbie Ward**, **Charles Heaney**, and myself will be both acted upon and reported on. They will also serve as input for further strategic discussions by our Board of Directors:

When considering joining WH, what were you hoping for? Answers fell broadly into the two expected categories of building community with others and getting help when it's needed. We learned that members' expectations had been largely satisfied—even dramatically exceeded, though a few were concerned that some members are not engaged.

What more do you want? Answers here fell into 4 broad categories. These are listed below, with at least one example for each:

Tweaking what we have: Keep the phone tree going, no matter what. Share cultural experiences and eating together with others. Travel with like-minded people. Assume that members are interested in Board deliberations and materials. *I appreciate opportunities to talk with members of the Board... Nancy Hooyman [Board President] exchanging her ideas is so refreshing.*

Have more face-to-face activities and make more and deeper connections with others: *I want more interesting events, not just in emails...friends. I want more things to do and people to do them so I get out and about, making plans and understanding options.*

Engage in activism and projects together: *I want to work with others; have a costume ball; maybe raise money; do activism as a group; contribute to the community as a whole.*

Policy/Membership: More men, more younger, active people joining. More intergenerational activity (*I spend too much time in age-segregated environments.*)

Reflections on Ageism

By Nancy Hooyman, Board President

Ageism is the one form of discrimination we all



experience. It's based on chronological age and the stigma that our society attaches to being old. It's problematic because it legitimizes and sustains inequalities between groups based on age. It occurs at the societal and individual level where we have internalized society's negative stereotypes about aging. It's subtle but insidious. Often we may not be aware of ageist behaviors or attitudes. We may not always be able to name it, but are uneasy when we experience it.

20 *Wider Horizons* members met via Zoom in June for a discussion of ageism with myself, **Bob Anderson**, and **Debbie Ward**. An energizing and thought-provoking discussion, addressing four questions, is summarized here.

A recent experience/interaction with ageism that members had with another person or social institution:

- Being spoken around or over based on perceptions of age.
- Being offered help without being asked if we would like it (though we agreed that accepting help with grace is part of positive or conscious aging). We need to differentiate ageism from a younger person being genuinely helpful.
- "You look so much more youthful when your hair is like that (e.g., dyed)."
- Categorizing people into three categories: youth, middle age and "Gee, you look so good for your age."
- Overall, members feel that *Wider Horizons* offers them a sense of purpose and a perspective of positive aging that helps them overcome many of the negative effects of ageism. There was a strong sentiment that "we should keep doing what we are already doing."

Instances of our own internalized ageism:

- Immediately noticing when we are the oldest person in the room.

- Not wanting to use a cane, walker or wheelchair because "that makes me old."
- Saying "I can't do that [activity] because I'm too old."
- Joking about senior moments.

What are the implications of ageism for *Wider Horizons*? Do you think it important for *Wider Horizons* to confront ageism? If so, what can we do individually or as an organization?

- Use the approach of thinking about all the advantages gained from being older.
- One member has created the term *Wisegagers* to reflect the positive attributes of aging, etymologically linked to words like wit, wisecrack, wisdom, and wizard. She has calling cards with the label that she shares with her older friends to use. She encouraged members to "have fun with their age."
- Within *Wider Horizons*, create more opportunities to experience purpose, which is central to conscious or positive aging.
- For some members, purpose is connected to contributing to others. However, it is important to recognize that purpose is an individual matter, not necessarily associated with a busy life of accomplishments, physical agility or heroics, but determined by each person to determine what is meaningful to them at this phase of life.
- Ask members to share specifically what they are doing to stay healthy intellectually, socially, and physically (e.g., specific exercise, where, when, cost, willingness to have someone go with them).
- In terms of intellectual health, offer a program similar to one started by **Ellen Berg** where people agree to read 3 to 4 short articles or watch short videos and have a structured discussion of them.

If you would like further opportunities to advance the conversation about combating ageism and fostering purpose within *Wider Horizons*, please contact Nancy Hooyman (hooy@uw.edu) or Denise Klein (denise@widerhorizonsvillage.org).

How We Gathered This Summer



Emily Martinez, Chris Morris, Terry Sheets playing bridge....Bridge Group now to meet monthly at Aegis Lake Union where players Sandra and Charles Wheeler moved this month



Yvonne Bonnette, Denise Klein, Ann Lawrence sharing dessert at Nick's (Valerie Yockey's son's restaurant)



Charles Heaney, John Barber, Dave Darragh, Emily Martinez at Janet Tufts' Dabob Bay Cabin



Bruce Davis and Scott Dills at a Kubota Garden Walk



Gay Hoerler, Ann Lawrence, Emily Martinez at a Happy Hour on Deirdre Cochran's Houseboat



Monthly Happy Hour at Jimmy's

One Small Step—Building Connections Across the Divides



By Kay Beisse



One Small Step is a new member-led initiative that grew out of the work of the Democracy Action Group (DAG). Co-facilitated by **Audrey Hansen** and **Sue Lerner**, DAG meets regularly to share information and engage in strategies that are designed to strengthen our democracy. Last spring, a DAG subgroup—**Judie Messier, Julie Anderson, Bob Anderson, and Kay Beisse**—formed to explore strategies for building bridges across the stark political divisions that threaten our democracy. Over time, this Steering Committee has grown both in numbers and in its enthusiasm for **One Small Step**.

One Small Step grew out of StoryCorps, an ambitious oral history project launched in 2003. Many of us have enjoyed the thoughtful, from the heart, StoryCorps conversations featured regularly on NPR. StoryCorps' mission is to preserve and share individuals' stories to build connections between people and, through these connections, create a more compassionate and just world. StoryCorps promotes the value of listening to understand versus listening to respond (or rebut) and the principle that everyone has a story and everyone's story matters.

Created in 2021, **One Small Step** brings together people with different political views to engage in respectful, personal, and meaningful conversations. These structured conversations are not meant to be debates over politics, beliefs, or personal choices. Instead, they're a chance to share the personal stories and experiences that helped shape who we are, including our political beliefs.

Here are some examples of questions used in these conversations:

1. Can you recall your earliest memory of politics?

2. Could you briefly describe, in your own words, your personal political beliefs?
3. Was there a moment or experience in your life that helped shape your beliefs?

To date, 22 *Wider Horizons* members have participated, or are scheduled to participate, in a conversation. 16 more members have expressed interest in learning more about **One Small Step**. That total of 38 is a remarkable "uptake" for such a new program!

Some participants have commented that the format is simple and straightforward and does not require a lot of preparation. For others, these conversations have been a wonderful way to get to know other villagers for the first time and/or at a more personal level.

Others have found that **One Small Step** provides much-needed practice in talking about their own political beliefs and in listening to understand the political beliefs of others. Still others are eager (and ready) to have such conversations outside of *Wider Horizons*, for example, with family members and those in community groups who hold political viewpoints very different from their own. The Steering Committee plans to solicit villagers' suggestions for local groups we could approach to engage with us in **One Small Step** conversations.

The Steering Committee hosted a one-hour introduction to **One Small Step** for *Wider Horizons* members on Saturday, September 17. If you missed that meeting and want to learn more about this exciting program, feel free to contact any member of the steering committee:

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Adventures in Taos

By Ann Lawrence

Our flight departed to Albuquerque very early in the morning which meant we were landing in the hot and dry Southwest even before noon! This made for a quick, energetic start on our first day as we (Charles Heaney, Gay Hoerler, and me) headed for our home base in Taos. The drive to Taos was through high beige-colored countryside with a sky that went on forever. I'm sure you can imagine the adjustments we made along the way to how many layers of clothes we were wearing, the sunglasses we needed to wear even inside buildings, and also the effect of the altitude (over 7,000 feet) on our activity level.



The Rio Grande looking North

When I'm traveling in countryside such as the Southwest, I'm always aware of its monumental structure. Also, its history is always present in the indigenous and Spanish names of the towns and roads. For example, the road we took followed the route of the old Santa Fe Trail. Plus, we saw places like Chimayo and Truchas, and of course, Los Alamos! Some of our visible Colonial history goes back to the mid-1500's, while other impacts are much more recent. We were also being constantly reminded of our geographical history as we drove through the Rio Grande Gorge and then into the town of Taos.

Over the next seven days we slowly explored a number of the old historic homes in Taos such as the Mabel Dodge House, the Nicolai Fechin House, and

the home of Millicent Rogers. Each was very special and gave a sense of the amazingly rich cultural life that was present in Taos in the early 20th Century. A number of very wealthy individuals came to Taos at that time because they had tuberculosis. They bought land and brought others with them and Taos became a hub of creativity, which it still is.



The Mabel Dodge House

We took our time exploring small galleries, looking at shops with all sorts of rocks and fossils, and also admired the work of local jewelers. One of my particular favorites is Lyle Wright who has his own studio on the Plaza. We also visited a small market where women from the Taos Pueblo were selling their crafts, and it was so interesting to visit with them. The Pueblo itself was closed due to COVID. We took our time in all these places to talk to the owners and listen to their stories about the current life and politics of the town (and pueblo). The destructive forest fires were certainly an immediate concern, as was the general affordability of their housing.



Gaye and Ann with Jeweler Maria from the Taos Pueblo

Of course, we ate very, very well! We had the help of Jacob Crisp, who is the Director of the Village in Taos, similar to ours. We all had breakfast the first morning and he was a font of information, not only about the way their Village in Taos differed from

ours, but which restaurants he recommended. We made good use of Jacob's information and were never disappointed in the food, or the quality of service.

We had fine dining at Lambert's; farm-to-table dining at The Farmhouse (best kale salad ever); and our choice for local cuisine was the Guadalajara Grill where we saw parents with their families, hungry and tired firefighters, and people just wanting an overflowing plate of huevos rancheros. (Note: this spot has absolutely the best flan!). A special review of where to find fine ice cream in Taos is worthy of another article.



Final meal together at restaurant Sabrosa

We were surprised at the rather random hours and days that restaurants and museums were open for business and tried to check what was open and how fast we had to move in order to get to our destination in time. Not surprisingly, there were times when we just didn't move fast enough!



The Nicolai Fechin House, now a Museum

So you can see that this adventure we had together in Taos was a complete success. It was unhurried. It was fun. We learned so much. And most of all, we want to go back!

Wider Horizons Purpose: How are we Doing with That?

By Bob Anderson



At the beginning of this year, the Board wanted to dive deeply into understanding and clarifying the purpose of *Wider Horizons*. In keeping with our culture as a member-centered organization, the Board first sought input and feedback from all members by soliciting comments in writing, through focus groups, and at a January all-member Zoom meeting. We asked ourselves the following questions:

1. What is the main reason you joined *Wider Horizons*?
2. Have you found it or something else valuable?
3. Why is what you found important to you?
4. What is the purpose of *Wider Horizons*? Why does it exist?

We got some great feedback, and **Denise Lishner**, with assistance from **Denise Klein** and **Debbie Ward**, fashioned the following Statement of Purpose:

By sharing our knowledge, experience, and talents, Wider Horizons is cultivating a caring community where social connections, stimulating activities, and mutual support enable us to feel a sense of security and belonging and live more fully—the hallmarks of aging well.

In July we wondered how we were doing on achieving this purpose and, at a July Zoom gathering, asked members to tell us. Here is a recap what we heard at that meeting:

- *One person shared that becoming a member of WH had truly changed her life, giving her a new source of social connection that has made all the difference for her.*
- *Others commented on appreciating the culture of WH that encourages and allows people to be*

themselves, as involved as they would like to be, and to be comfortable with that.

- Some made a point to highlight the sense of trust evident in the organization and the quality of leadership that encourages and embraces member involvement.
- One attendee simply said that her expectations of membership were surpassed and a lot more unexpected benefits had emerged.

Virtually all of the comments reflected an affirmation of the goal of the Purpose Statement: **"to enable us to feel a sense of security and belonging and live more fully."**

Speaking for the Board, we know we would love to hear your ongoing thoughts on how we could more fully realize our **purpose**. Would you please look at the 4 questions above and send a note to me (bobanderson6760@gmail.com) with your thoughts? Let's keep this conversation alive so we can truly say we are listening to each other and growing in our connections and satisfaction with this amazing community called *Wider Horizons*!

How About Thousands for Tribute?

By Denise Klein



Little did a previously unknown donor know what he was setting in motion when he contributed \$5,000 last year to honor **Paul Beck**! That gesture kicked off a robust program set up by our great Fundraising Committee (**Bob Anderson**, Chair; **Susan Adler**; **Ann Lawrence**; **Barbara Oswald**; and **John Rochford**).

The results (year-to-date) exceed \$10,000! Who donated? Whom or what did they honor? We received tributes from 40 members and 15 non-members, for a total of 55 people donating in this fashion. **Allan Blackman** was honored at the time of his death; **Denise Klein** for her 80th birthday; **Denise Lishner** and/or the Housing Task Force for our marvelous *Housing Handbook*.



The Housing Options Task Force celebrating with Denise Lishner, Chair. From left, Denise Klein, Deirdre Cochran, Denise Lishner, Ann Lawrence, and Marge Lepley. Not shown, Alline Thurlow

One member honored both of her deceased parents. And last, but certainly not least, 6 members honored other members on a special occasion or for their individual contributions: **Julie Anderson, Joan Bergman, Audrey Hansen, Ann Lawrence, Sue Lerner, Bill Lippe, and Donna Sunkel.**

Profile of Denise Lishner

By Tom Heller

To walk into Denise's house is to walk into a work of art. Before getting to the front door you've already been greeted by a Buddha sitting with a blue jay in a lotus blossom in his lap and a blue bird at his feet, ceramic versions of a dog, a rooster, a pig, five birds on a branch, and more. At the top of the staircase a sign of protest against ICE—"No more detainees." Then on entering the house, a house Denise has occupied for 45 years, art fills every corner and every wall—from beautiful treescapes in oil and watercolor, to NYC as seen through a taxi window in a rainstorm...plus Japanese and Chinese scrolls, statuary, pottery, and gorgeous carpets and furniture.



The house was busy with people as well. Denise's Chinese UW grad school tenant was packing to move to Ohio; her 6'4" UW assistant football coach tenant came into the house having just sent his visiting wife back to South Carolina, and Denise's

visiting cousin and her husband also tromped through the living room having taken up temporary quarters in Denise's dining room. In the midst of all this sat Denise, 11 days post knee replacement surgery, the picture of composure.



Denise Lishner several years ago with two of her many Chinese housemates and two beloved dogs (now deceased)

Denise describes herself as having “a lot of joie de vivre,” a trait to which everyone who knows her can attest. That joy has been hard won. Born on the Upper East Side of Manhattan on the border of Spanish Harlem to an opera singer father and a card-carrying Communist mother, Denise was too young to remember her parents splitting up when she was one. But from then till she was eight she saw her father just once a week, remembering now how she longed to see him. She would eagerly await the annual performance of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* on NBC in which her father had a key role. She described him as a charming, beautiful person, but selfish, and, in many ways, weak.

Meanwhile, her mom introduced her to left wing politics at an early age with participation in civil rights marches and boat rides with Pete Seeger. When she was 12, following a road trip with her mother by bus from NYC to Mexico City during which she saw with her own eyes the racism and profound poverty of African-Americans in the southern U.S., Denise traveled by herself to Lincoln, Nebraska, where her father had moved 4 years earlier. She was shocked to find that her father had

a secret family, including a wife and three sons (and later a fourth). Her father asked Denise not to reveal this to her mother or her grandparents, who died never knowing they had grandsons. Denise refused to lie to her mother. For her father to have kept this from Denise and her mother Denise experienced as a betrayal. She longed for reconciliation.

Escaping the upheaval of her home life following high school, Denise found refuge at the University of California, Berkeley, where she lived for nine years in the 1960's. She thrived there, and following graduation stayed on doing alcohol research in their School of Public Health. After failure of a romance in 1975, Denise moved to Seattle, where her father had come to teach music at UW, moving in with him and subsequently into her current house. She earned an MSW at UW and did delinquency and drug research for nine years. She then joined the Seattle Public Health Department, where she modestly reported having conducted a study that identified a great deal of needle sharing among heroin addicts in Seattle, resulting in the instituting of needle exchange centers in the city. She went on to work for 24 years in the Family Medicine Department at UW, becoming an indispensable support to the research activities of Family Medicine faculty. While she loved her work at UW, had she truly pursued her passion, it would have been as a film director. Her home was the site of a feature film this past year, and Denise has been an extra in a number of Hollywood films.



Denise as Puck in the Somesuch reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Despite the disarray of her family of origin, Denise has a strong sense of family loyalty. Her desire for reconciliation led her to ask her father in the last six months of his life to write a letter of apology to her mother for the secrets he kept from her. That letter, her mother told her, enabled her to love again. Despite growing up in totally different circumstances, Denise has nurtured a loving relationship with her four half-brothers and has been instrumental in helping one of them out of homelessness while being helpless as another spiraled from drug addiction to suicide last year.

“I’m very open. I don’t like to keep secrets perhaps because my dad kept so many. I’m pretty compassionate maybe because I’ve been through so much. I don’t like chirpy-chirpy talk. I like honesty.”

What a gift it is to have Denise Lishner as a vital member of the Wider Horizon community!

From the Shadows of Sorrow, an Abundant and Generous Life: A Portrait of Tom Heller

By Denise Lishner



Tom Heller was born into a Jewish family that endured great suffering, losing their homes, ability to attend university, livelihood and sense of safety because of the advance of Hitler and the 1939 Nazi annexation of Czechoslovakia. Tom’s father Paul (with Tom above) had just graduated medical school in Prague when he was arrested and spent almost six years in concentration camps. He survived only when after 3½ years he was transferred to Auschwitz, and, instead of being selected for extermination, was chosen to staff a labor camp clinic. Following liberation at the war’s end, it took months to gain entry first to England; then, finally, to the U.S. where he arrived by cargo ship in April 1946.

He was met at the New York harbor by Liese Florsheim, a German Jew he had met and secretly loved while both were students in Prague. They married four months later, moving first to Washington, D.C. where Tom and his sister were born, and then to Chicago, where he settled his family in a suburb that turned out to be racist. He became a prominent medical school professor and researcher, but the trauma of his past haunted him, and despite the trappings of success, he always doubted himself. Tom’s mother often covered for him when after dinner instead of engaging with Tom and his sister, Caroline, he would go upstairs to his study to extend his work day; “he lost six years in concentration camp; he’s trying to catch up.” Tom felt protective of his parents, sensing their fragility (his tears welled up here).

Tom felt different from others because he was Jewish, non-athletic, highly cultured, a “goody two-shoes,” and an academic overachiever, for which he was bullied. But he found deep support from, and was profoundly influenced by, the Unitarian church, participation in civil rights rallies in Chicago, and witnessing from ten feet away in a Westside Chicago neighborhood a speech by Martin Luther King that Tom described as life-changing. As Tom became more involved in civil rights and anti-war rallies and marches, his father worried for his safety.

These commitments strengthened Tom’s sense of his self and values. He majored in philosophy, tinkered with the idea of studying acting, traveled in Europe and then went to medical school. He thought of being a psychiatrist, but his passion was for providing care to people in crisis or who lacked access to care, so he chose a primary care specialty.

He met his exuberant wife Lynn through his sister while both were volunteering at Hull House in Chicago, though they realized they had gone to the same Unitarian family camp as children. A road trip to Colorado, a mountain hike, and a later chance meeting at a mass demonstration in New Haven to “free Bobby Seale” and protest the invasion of Cambodia put Lynn at the top of Tom’s potential girlfriend list. Their relationship flowered months

later in Chicago during Tom's first year of medical school. They have been together ever since.



After completing his residency in Internal Medicine, Tom practiced in Appalachia, later moving with his growing family to Seattle to do a public health/geriatric medicine fellowship and work at Harborview. In 1983, and for nearly 17 years thereafter, he served at the Pike Market Clinic, fulfilling his passion to help people who were without a doc and in dire need. The clinic served an elderly population living in subsidized housing in the Pike Place Market neighborhood. When these elderly people died, their lives were celebrated. As times changed and AIDS became an emergent medical crisis, the clinic became a center for care and treatment of people living with HIV, which became Tom's primary clinical interest.

Tom and Lynn were always interested in working globally. When their children were grown, Tom secured a position with the CDC in Cambodia, assisting the Cambodian government in establishing treatment services. For a year Lynn and Tom worked in a distant province, where Tom helped incorporate AIDS treatment into clinics and Lynn taught English to landmine victims. That year they lived a primitive existence with water (accompanied by fish, frogs, and rats) pouring through their home during the rainy season. This was followed over the next ten years by AIDS work in Ethiopia and South Africa. Tom felt he was making a meaningful contribution in an area in which he was an authority.

But the richness of his career was secondary to his passion for his family, two sons (Gabe and Noah) and one daughter (Hannah), all living on the East Coast, all very accomplished in their chosen fields, and five grandchildren, whom they adore. The most recent, Uma (left), was born two days before my interview with Tom.

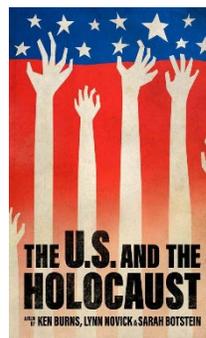


I asked Tom, who has helped so many underserved patients, what retirement was going to feel like. He paused before he answered. He is pursuing many activities including learning to play cello, contributing to efforts to mitigate climate change, Common Power, theater groups including *Somesuch*, and talks about the Holocaust to 8th graders and high school seniors, speaking to them of what hate can do.

Yet he admits to feeling unanchored. This man who has given so much to communities in need, who is a person with intellectual curiosity, a loving father and grandfather, a warm and compassionate person, an activist—perhaps feels like his father that it is never enough.



Tom as the Sea Captain in the *Somesuch Players* Reading of *12th Night*



You can watch this excellent six-hour Ken Burns documentary for free either on KCTS or if you get a 7-day subscription to PBS Documentaries via Amazon Prime. Our all-member Zoom on Thursday, September 29, will have a discussion of the program as one of the discussion options.