



Stuff Worth Knowing!

1

LIFEtimes

Gail Agor, Editor

agorgail@gmail.com

In this Issue

**From the
Desk of the President**

LIFE needs YOU!

Historical Memory of UCF
Dick Tucker

Bite Sized Science

**February 18 will be a BIG
day for UCF Baseball**

**Gerontology Committee
Update**

Steven Altman
Beth Barnes

Help Wanted!
Curriculum Committee

LIFE Trippin' Update

LIFE Out Loud (LOL)

Travel in the Time of COVID
Diane Wink

UCF Celebrates the Arts

This is the time of year that our members think LIFE is winding down for the year... NOT SO! This is the busiest time of year for the organizational staff and volunteers!

The LIFE

Board of Directors is deciding on next year's budget, the Nomination Committee is recruiting new board members to replace those whose terms are up, Membership is ramping up into full "Renewal Mode!" Of course, the Curriculum Committee is hard at work, already looking for exciting possibilities for the new year that begins in August! Our LIFE Trippin' Committee is making a list of hot spots for fall (and spring) member fun! The Public Relations Committee is promoting outreach programs so other seniors in the Central Florida community can learn about the wonderful advantages of being a LIFE member! I am proud to be a member of an organization that supports, not only its members with outstanding benefits, but one who supports the education of students and departments with scholarships, grants and other donations. LIFE members...as a part of a community that supports LIFElong Learning...YOU are INCREDIBLE! -Gail





Greetings LIFE members! Well, we are off to a great start for the Spring Term. We started with a wonderful historical first with a great presentation by UCF President, Dr. Cartwright. We've already had a number of excellent speakers this term some of which I'll mention below. I encourage all of our LIFE participants to complete the speaker evaluation survey each week to help us in our future scheduling which has already begun for next Fall. Over the first 3 weeks for which I have data, we've only averaged 60 people completing the survey....it only takes a couple of minutes to do so please let us know how you have enjoyed the presentations. Of those who did complete the survey for the first 6 sessions, the responses have been quite positive with an average of 93% checking the high positive ratings for the evaluation questions [what we refer to as the Total Value score]. The very highest rated sessions were the President's talk [99%], Zac Zacharias's talk on the history of Florida Forts [98%] and Dr. Clark's talk on Hidden Florida History [99%]. 58% of the participants over these 6 sessions watched the talks "in person" with the remaining 42% of participants watching the "live stream" or "you-tube recording." We've also had some great Trippin' events with tours of Leu Gardens and the Dr. Phillips Steinmetz Hall;

several more are planned during this Spring Term. 254 LIFE members have signed up for Trippin' experiences since the Fall...another wonderful benefit of LIFE membership.

I think most LIFE members are aware that LIFE has a formal "Partnership Agreement" with UCF. The second 10-year agreement was signed by President Hitt and UCF Leadership in 2014. That agreement details how both UCF and LIFE benefit from the partnership and serve both LIFE members and the UCF community. A few examples include - UCF has pledged in this agreement to provide LIFE with a place to meet on campus and an office for our leadership. We've had very consistent priority for use of the Pegasus Ballroom on Tuesday mornings free of charge for many years.... the largest meeting space on campus that is normally rented out for thousands of dollars per use. Plus, now we've been able to obtain top rate technical support from the Student Union staff which has allowed us to expand our program delivery to both live streaming and youtube recordings. Additionally, our membership gets UCF parking hangtags at 1/10 the rate that UCF students pay, plus a UCF LIFE Student ID that gets us Library access and admission to almost all athletic events, except football, as well as many arts events free or at reduced cost, etc.. As part of the Partnership Agreement, as well as our LIFE ByLaws, we pledge to provide a minimum of 50% of our excess income [i.e., revenue after fixed expenses] to be distributed to UCF in the form of research grants to faculty and students, appreciation awards to UCF Colleges and other units who provide space and support to LIFE. LIFE also pledges to provide at least 50% of our speakers from UCF Faculty with all speakers receiving an honorarium from LIFE. Our Partnership Agreement with UCF is unique in terms of other senior learning organizations across the country

From the President; cont.

and has provided the basis of a wonderful and beneficial relationship to both LIFE and UCF.

We are rapidly approaching the time for Membership renewal and recruitment of new members. You will hear more about this in the coming weeks. I hope you value your LIFE membership as much as I do. I'm always excited for the interesting learning experiences that LIFE offers and have found throughout my LIFE membership that most of the presentations that I think I won't be particularly interested in were nevertheless excellent experiences from which I learned new things. That's the point of LIFE- Learning Institute for Elders. Our operational costs have increased significantly over the past several years since our last dues' increase 2 years ago in 2020. During this time the significant increase in membership and the complexity of running an organization of 800 members, LIFE began to move from a totally volunteer organization to one with key paid staff. Three years ago, we hired what has become an indispensable Executive Director, and expanded our ability to offer participation through both in person and virtual options, while maintaining our commitment to give back to UCF. For example, LIFE has given an average of over \$56,000 in grants and awards to UCF entities each year. Thus, the Board of Directors of LIFE have voted to increase dues for 2022-2023 by \$25.00. The \$225.00 individual membership means you are getting, on average, 54 outstanding presentations each year for about \$4.00 each, or less than a \$.50 increase per presentation. Plus, you get members' only, field trip experiences, many of which are free of charge, and many, many other opportunities to attend UCF arts, athletics, etc. events at no additional cost. LIFE membership continues to be an incredible, outstanding value. Thank you for your continued support for LIFE at UCF!



LIFE needs



LIFE at UCF is looking for dedicated members to serve on the LIFE at UCF Board of Directors. LIFE's Board guides the direction of the institute and focuses volunteer effort toward achieving LIFE's strategic objectives.

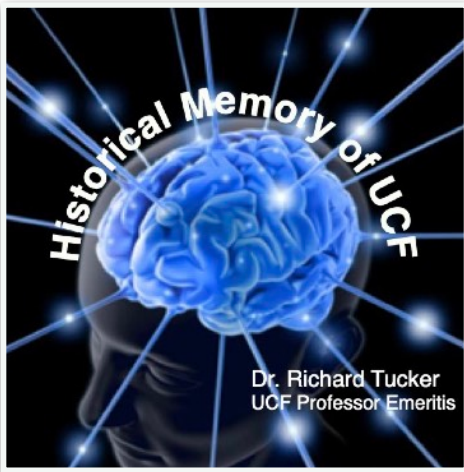
There are 3 simple requirements:

- A LOVE of LIFE at UCF and a willingness to help steer the institute to greater heights!
- Ability to attend one Board Meeting per month (typically the first Monday of each month)
- Willingness to serve on one of LIFE's 6 standing committees.

Each Director is eligible to serve two, three-year terms and the upcoming terms begin in June, 2022.

Please consider this opportunity to help guide LIFE at UCF and continue our 30+ year record of providing quality Lifelong Learning to Central Florida's seniors!

Email life@ucf.edu if you're interested.



In a previous newsletter article about the history of LIFE at UCF, a brief mention was made that room availability on campus finally led us to meet in a theater, Cinema 7, located in a shopping center directly across Alafaya Trail on University Boulevard. That shopping center has since been torn down and replaced by a housing complex, parking garage and restaurants. In 1994, LIFE at UCF had about 175 members and it met on Tuesday, as it does now, but it also met on Thursday mornings. There was no classroom on campus that was available to accommodate the LIFE program. Thus, we found various meeting places, including a room in the original Arena, now located directly behind, and attached to the Additions Arena, where faculty would congregate just before commencement ceremonies. It barely could hold all those attending. At that time, UCF had over 20,000 students and was in urgent need of more classroom space, particularly larger lecture halls for classes between 8 a.m. and noon. Several portable classrooms were added but none were large enough for LIFE classes.

Then an opportunity arose. I was in the shopping center across from UCF picking up a pizza. That popular pizza place was located very near to Cinema 7, a complex of seven

in the ticket booth at Cinema 7. A lightbulb went on. I went to the ticket booth and asked what time the theater opened. I was informed the ticket office had just opened. So, my next question was: Would the theater be interested in opening from 8 to noon M-F to accommodate UCF lecture classes? The response; "Maybe, but you need to talk to the manager." I took that possibility to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Provost's Office. I did ask that if these immediate large classrooms could be arranged, would they devote one of the classrooms on Tuesday and Thursday mornings for LIFE? That immediately started a productive discussion with Undergraduate Studies and the Provost's Office and Cinema 7. Arrangements were made in Spring term, 1995 for six of the "classrooms" to be used for scheduled UCF classes, and the 7th for LIFE. The LIFE Board was very open to this although it would require setting up some AV equipment; something that we had to do anyway for the meeting places on campus. The other advantage was that there was a large parking lot in the shopping center, and arrangements were made for parking passes approved by Cinema 7.

It is important to note that at that time, there was **NOT** a formal "partnership agreement" between LIFE and UCF, just a strong commitment to have this program at UCF. Part of that understanding

When LIFE at UCF...cont. on next page

was that UCF would provide meeting space for the classes. Although they negotiated a financial arrangement with Cinema 7 to “rent” the theater, there was no expectation that LIFE would have to “pay their share” for our space. (I still cannot get specific info. on the total amount paid, but it was over \$10,000 per semester,)

Because the student use would change throughout the morning, we asked that we be assigned the theater that was the greatest distance from the lobby entrance. We set up a table in front of the doors leading to the theater and brought in whatever AV needs we needed. At that time, very few presenters were using Power Point (note that Power Point was originally created for Apple computers). Instead, they either had slides on a carousel projector, or they used transparency slides on an overhead projector. Occasionally, presenters didn’t use any visuals, a rarity now for LIFE presentations. We brought in a microphone and a small amplification system that was adequate for that theater of 200 seats; we even brought the necessary extension cords.

LIFE students began arriving about 8:30 a.m. and announcements were made at 8:50 a.m. Obviously, there were fewer announcements at that time. Presentations were made for 45-50 minutes and then Q&A followed. Given the size of the auditorium, and the acoustics, we did not use a mobile microphone for the questions. There was a 30-minute break between presentations and members went primarily to the McDonald’s that was directly due east across the parking lot on Alafaya Trail.

Most of the presenters at that time were UCF faculty although we did also have some Central Florida professionals. At that time, we were still scheduling some “series” lectures where the same presenter would lecture each week for anywhere from 2-4 times, or the same general topic was

addressed by multiple presenters.

As noted in an earlier article on the founding of LIFE, classes were presented two days a week, on Tuesday and Thursday from 9-11:30 a.m. For the first several years, we did add members, and a small percentage did not renew. When we asked the non-renewers why they wouldn’t continue; the reason was NOT related to the quality of the presentations. It was related to being too busy to devote 2 mornings a week to the classes. After considerable discussion by the Board, they voted to reduce the classes to just once a week, Tuesday, and reduce the dues to \$115 from \$150. That resulted in many fewer non-renewals. New member applications continued to come in, but typically only to raise the total membership by 25 each year.

In 1999, we were informed that Cinema 7 would be closing by fall, 2000. We began scrambling around to find suitable on-campus space for LIFE classes. However, there was still no classroom space available. We began to look at other off-campus space, including at the nearby Unitarian Church, located on McCulloch Road. Fortunately, we realized that the Pegasus Ballroom, which was built after the Student Union opened, was scheduled to be completed by that time. Since the Student Union was built using student-designated appropriations, only student events could be conducted in the Student Union without fees. The exception was for faculty/academic events. To compensate for faculty/academic use, the Provost’s Office, and Academic Affairs, pays an established “usage fee” to the Student Union. We get to use the Students Union, mostly Pegasus Ballroom, without charge because we are associated with an Academic Unit. In 2000, Dr. Kathryn Seidel, Dean of Arts and Sciences, was our academic sponsor. She requested to the Provost’s Office for permission for LIFE to hold their classes in the Pegasus Ballroom, the largest space on campus, and one that could NOT be used for regular classes.

When LIFE at UCF wasn't exactly AT UCF, continued



A side note: In case you are not aware of the cost of use of the Pegasus Ballroom, when we make our reservations, we get an invoice showing the cost. That cost is listed currently as \$2,300 for every time it is reserved. Because we have an academic sponsor, that cost is reduced to net zero. On very limited occasions, we may have to use the Cape Florida Ballroom on the 3rd floor, or even fewer times, the Key West Ballroom on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Both of those ballrooms are smaller than the Pegasus Ballroom and the rental fee is somewhat less. Given that we schedule the Student Union each week throughout the academic year, for a total of 30 weeks, you can see that the total cost would be well over \$60,000. I note this to show you a portion of what LIFE receives because of our partnership agreement with UCF.

As soon as we relocated to the Student Union, membership went up dramatically, and even forced us to limit membership and start the “waiting list”. Most of all, we were now, once again, fully

LIFE AT UCF!!

Editor's note: Dr. Richard Tucker is a UCF Professor Emeritus. For many years he served as the LIFE Board of Directors' liaison and now, STILL, is an active member of LIFE. He is also the one for whom we have to thank for establishing LIFE at UCF. With his blood, sweat and tears, (and TOTAL dedication) LIFE has passed its 30 year anniversary. Thanks, Dick, for being the guiding light that has led us to where LIFE at UCF is today!



**Physical
Therapy**

BITE-SIZED SCIENCE

Science is presented to the public in a manner that is dense and confusing. At UCF, Doctor of Physical Therapy students take advanced coursework in research methods to ensure that they can clearly convey complex scientific information to patients and their families.

Join us on **Tuesday, April 19th at 8:45am** in the Pegasus Ballroom as students from the UCF Physical Therapy program give short and lively presentations. Topics will blend scientific concepts, as well as physical therapy and exercise research. An interactive poster Q&A session will commence at 10:00am. Email matt.stock@ucf.edu with questions.



February 18, 2022 will be a big day in UCF baseball

-Diane Wink



There will finally be a brand new score board on which you can actually see the game statistics and highlights. It will also be the start of what is hoped to be the first full baseball season since college athletics literally shut down during the 18th and final UCF baseball game of the 2020 season (a 2-3 loss to Miami) which left the team with a 15-3 record. This was followed by a limited 2021 season which ended with a painful 7-8 loss to USF in the conference championship game.

Opening day this year will be special for another reason. As fans fill the seats while batting and fielding practices wrap up and the infield is prepared for the opening pitch, the coaches will head out for the pre-game meeting with the home plate umpire. After a COVID oasis the Siena Saints and their longtime coach, Toni Rossi, will be back to UCF.

The Siena College baseball team is no stranger to UCF baseball fans. The Saints' first visits were long ago and the team returned many times before becoming a regular opening day opponent in 2012. Since 2002 UCF won 44 of the 46 games played with Siena - some by HUGE margins.

Tony Rossi, Siena's long time coach - now in his 52nd season - has been with them for all but their earliest seasons. Their visit to us is usually part of a road trip with stops in Florida and other states with no snow on the field. In 2013 a Siena / UCF tradition began as Siena's baseball coaches, staff and team leave the cold of Loudonville, NY (in the Berkshires,) to head for Central Florida and the opening day of baseball at UCF.

The games are always fun for many reasons beyond the play on the field. There is the joy of the being back to baseball and it is always wonderful to see the *Saints* and Coach Rossi once again. However, those games are often played in cold (sometimes 50!!) frigid weather during which UCF fans have to bundle up with whatever winter wear and blankets they can find.

The Saints also seem happy to be here. There are stories of players creating snow angels in the lush grass of the baseball field. Heard of at least one long, grueling bus ride with a stop in Jacksonville for a welcome to Florida meal after escaping a snow storm. Bet team members enjoyed peeling off their jackets and sweaters because it was so hot - probably 50!!

As Siena reports on their web site: "Siena will open at perennial American Athletic Conference contender and 2021 runner-up Central Florida. The season-opening three-game weekend series begins on Friday, Feb. 18 at 6:30 p.m. in Orlando." Hope to see you there.

Admission free with your LIFE at UCF student ID

GERONTOLOGY COMMITTEE UPDATE

- Bill Myers, Committee Chair

The Gerontology Committee wants to bring LIFE members, up to date with one of the most significant programs we have. As you are no doubt aware, **LIFE at UCF** is proud to sponsor two yearly gerontology research grants.

The main one is the **Richard Tucker Gerontology Applied Research Grant** program, which provides significant funds to students and faculty at UCF to support this field of study. The grants are provided to promote all aspects of UCF research relating to the scientific study of the social, psychological and biological aspects of aging. As such, these grants are intended to *provide incentive for and recognize Gerontology research studies*, areas of great interest to our members. The amount of these awards is determined each year by the LIFE Board of Directors and depends upon revenue from your membership fees and other donations from LIFE members and others. The Gerontology Committee, which is made up of 8 volunteer LIFE members, is in the process of accepting applications for 2021-2022 Richard Tucker grants. The deadline for submission is February 8, and the committee plans to review and submit its grant recommendations to the LIFE Board by the March Board meeting.

As stated above, LIFE wants to encourage all types of research covering all aspects of aging, which, unfortunately, is what all we LIFE members keep doing. Last year, grants were given to researchers trying to understand why certain therapies have not been working in the treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease.

Another study targeted microRNA's, which are involved as regulators in a wide range of human body processes such as cell proliferation, differentiation, apoptosis, and tumorigenesis. The grant recipient sought to use microRNA-449 as a therapy for slowing or stopping the natural aging process.

Money was given to a researcher who planned to set up community-based end-of-life education program for Spanish speaking older adults. The last grant went to a researcher who was developing ultrasound treatments for osteoporosis.

Several awards were given in 2019-2020 for studies into ways to better understand the nature and treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

Other researchers focused on improving investment decision-making in older adults and what the economic burdens from falling were on older adults and how they might be mitigated. **Gerontology Update, cont next page**

Gerontology Update, cont.

We members of LIFE can be justifiably proud of the work being done by UCF faculty and students in the area of gerontology, and especially in the hand we have given some of them to help them work to improve our lives. The committee looks forward to a future newsletter article in which we will let you know what research proposals have been awarded LIFE monies.

LIFE at UCF

Disability, Aging & Technology Undergraduate Scholarship

Annually, the Learning Institute for Elders at University of Central Florida (LIFE) awards two (2) \$1000 scholarship awards to UCF undergraduate students engaged in studies relating to the social, cultural, psychological, and biological aspects of aging.

Through the generosity of our members over \$4000 has been donated during the past year.

Please consider contributing to this scholarship fund when you renew your LIFE membership in the spring.

The LIFE at UCF scholarship ensures the growth of research and a talented workforce that contributes to the health and wellbeing of the elder community.

Steven Altman

11

- Beth Barnes



UCF's Third President. Dr. Steven Altman connected UCF to Orlando businesses and the community. This is the third in a series of profiles of early presidents of UCF written by LIFE at UCF member Dr. Beth Barnes.

DR. STEVEN ALTMAN was inaugurated as UCF's third president in the late fall of 1989. He had previously served as president of Texas A&I University and as an administrator and faculty member at Florida International University. Although his tenure at UCF was short — less than two years — he contributed to the university in several significant ways.

His inauguration came 10 months into his tenure as president, and by his own count he'd made "91 speeches and 246 off-campus visits under my belt." The high-energy president had already set about developing relationships between the university and the city of Orlando and its business community. Those relationships would ultimately result in valuable partnerships and gifts to UCF. Although the groundwork had been laid before President Altman's arrival, Al and Nancy Burnett endowed a \$1 million accounting chair early in his presidency. They continued to make substantial gifts that contributed greatly to the fabric of the university, including endowing The Burnett Honors College and giving the naming gift for the president's home, the Burnett House, which was built solely with donor funds. In 1990, General Mills es-

tablished the nation's first endowed chair in restaurant management at UCF, and a chair in nursing was endowed at the Daytona Beach campus by the Bert Fish Foundation.

President Altman had said that his vision of UCF "is a great urban university, serving and leading the public in our large and important region." To that end, he oversaw the development of a strategic plan to help guide the university. He encouraged research as well as competition for national research funding. He also developed plans to encourage enrollment growth, and within two years the student body increased from almost 18,000 to more than 21,000.

Dr. Altman reflects, "Faculty and staff believed an integrated strategic plan would improve UCF's chances of success. Their commitment and will to create something special helped define the direction the institution should take." He notes, "The strategic plan we developed became the foundation for the expansion of degree programs and facilities for years to come, and was an important contributor to UCF's pre-eminent role today."

During Dr. Altman's tenure, UCF was named a Florida "best buy" by Barron's Educational Series, the UCF film program began, UCF football moved to Division I-AA, construction began on the Student Union, and proposals were developed for five additional residence halls.

Amid some controversy in 1991, he resigned, and Chancellor Charles Reed appointed Dr. Robert A. Bryan, former interim president of the University of Florida, to serve as interim president of UCF.

After leaving UCF, Dr. Altman and his wife, Judy, moved to Los Angeles where he worked as a consultant, lending his expertise in strategic planning, investment banking, and organizational development for health care, technology and educational firms. He later became president at the New School of Architecture and Designing in San Diego. He says, "I returned to higher ed because I love the campus environment. As a small school ready to make the leap to an institution of distinction, New School was a special opportunity, and I'm enjoying it."

We've had significant enrollment and quality increases, and our students compete well nationally. They also study for a semester or two in Italy or New Zealand, where they are able to spend time immersed in an international curriculum."

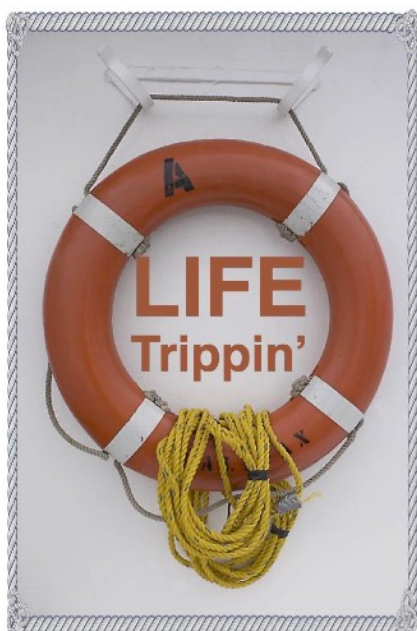
When asked about UCF, Dr. Altman says, "I continue to follow the progress of UCF and am so proud of the enthusiasm, commitment and accomplishments of the university. A special congratulations to those faculty and staff who made it happen." He continues, "Dr. Hitt has done a fabulous job bettering UCF. The institution is doing things we only dreamed about during my time there."

Dr. Beth Barnes, UCF Vice President Emerita, served on President John Hitt's leadership team until her retirement in 2008. Barnes retired as Vice President and Chief of Staff. She is a charter member of the UCF faculty and a member of LIFE at UCF. We thank UCF Pegasus Magazine for permission to republish this article from the Spring 2013 issue.

HELP WANTED

Curriculum Committee

Wanted: curious intellectuals who like challenges, are good at solving puzzles, working alongside likeminded If that fits your description, you're a prime candidate for LIFE's Curriculum Committee. Contact committee chair Rich Sloane at richardtsloane@gmail.com, if you're up to the challenge of serving on the Curriculum Committee. In the meantime, if you'd like to nominate a speaker for one of LIFE's presentations, simply use the nominating form at <https://life.ucf.edu/curriculum/suggest-a-speaker-members/>. LIFE has hosted many great speakers who have come to us from nominations made by the membership. So let us know who you may have heard speak elsewhere and who made a positive impression on you. Till then.



LIFE is Trippin' on! We are proud for the trippin' events we have offered LIFE members this year! ...even though "dry season" rain forced the cancellation of 2 events...actually, it's really THREE since the rescheduled boat trip also and a bout of bad weather. UNBELIEVABLE! For those of you who want to take to the water, we have booked two boats for a cruise along the waterways of Mt. Dora. That Trippin' is scheduled for April 27th...but before that, we have two fabulous trips coming up. First will be an exclusive tour at White Oak Conservation Center. It's a bit of a drive, but is proving to be popular and if you want to go, I suggest signing up TODAY. Deadline for registration is February 26th., if you miss out, sign up on the waitlist...you never know. The link to signup for the Trippin' is: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/life-trippin-white-oak-conservation-tour-tickets-191352519537>

April 1st is another day to mark on you calendar. We have an afternoon tour of the Orange County Courthouse! It's going to be a cool Trippin'!

Neither the Mt. Dora or the Orange County Courthouse Trippin' Events are "live" yet. Watch/listen for announcements so you don't miss out on the exclusive, LIFE member only, events.

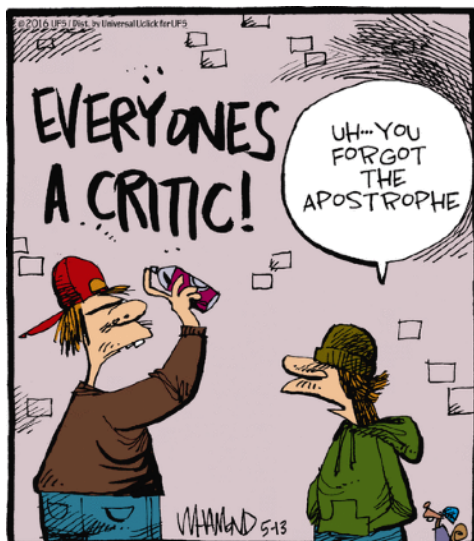
**LIFE members,
February 4th,
at the new, beautiful and
AMAZING,
Steinmetz Hall at The Dr.
Phillips Center for the
Performing Arts.**

**What an amazing two-
hour tour of the facility!
Thanks to Kathy
Ramsberger and her staff
for a MUCH-better-than-
expected morning!
WONDERFUL**





Really?
I took a photo of
This sign which was on
The bathroom door at
The Valley of Fire, Nevada.
-Gail



10 REASONS WHY ENGLISH IS WEIRD

- 1) The bandage was wound around the wound.
- 2) The farm was used to produce produce.
- 3) The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- 4) We must polish the Polish furniture.
- 5) He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- 6) The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- 7) Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
- 8) A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
- 9) When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- 10) I did not object to the object.





Travel in the Time of COVID No question, travel in the “Time of COVID” is Different!

-Diane Wink

Our December 2021 tour of Mexico was a go even as omicron rose its ugly head. We knew traveling during COVID had risks and would impact our experiences and heard some cautionary tales. Our usual pre-trip activities included perusal of case counts locally, and in our destinations in Mexico (they were MUCH lower there), vaccination requirements, and COVID testing rules of the US and Mexico. We repeatedly asked each other “should we go?” as we packed multiple cloth and N95 masks, hand sanitizer plus extra doses of our prescription drugs, over the counter cold medicine, a bit more clothing than usual, additional books on our Kindles and developed a plan of what we would do if one or both of us had a positive result and had to quarantine before the return home.



COVID vaccination, documented by our original vaccination card, was required to fly, though not to enter, Mexico. At the airport, fellow travelers were masked and social distancing was clear until boarding lines formed. Then, after getting a hand sanitizer packet, folks sat - sometimes elbow to elbow with a perfect stranger.

The crew made the now routine reminder to keep masks on unless sipping a drink or taking a bite of food and the pre-safe flight safety information included an additional reminder that, if oxygen was needed during the flight, you needed to take your mask off before putting on the oxygen mask.

Two flights later we were in Mexico where we were introduced to what we quickly learned were extensive anti-COVID actions in the cities (Oaxaca, Pueblo and Mexico City) we would tour - masking, temperature check and hand sanitizer (sometimes done by the same machine), shoe cleaner matts and, occasionally, a body spray down on entry to a building.

This was done *everywhere* - hotel entrances, museums, ancient archeologic sites, small stores and very crowded markets - temp, sanitizer, spray down, keep your mask on. There was no question those Mexican states and their citizens were taking COVID very seriously. Not only were there reminders to mask-up *everywhere*, most *everyone* from toddlers to older adults, including folks casually walking around, individuals doing manual labor, students, performers, friend groups, even Santa and store mannequins - were not only masked, they were properly masked. There was social distancing



every place - from the ATM to the museum admission line and for church seating. Tape (often blue) marked floors and often blocked off every other sink and toilet stall. Most made sense.



Yes, some COVID protection measures were tiresome. Picture taking with a smart phone unlocked using facial recognition was annoying - it was necessary to either, briefly, pull your mask down or type in the password to open the camera! It was also harder to insert the whisperer device's ear piece with mask bands in place and even a bit harder if you wore glasses. However, social distancing was easier since the whisperer device eliminated the need to stand in a group near the guide to hear them!

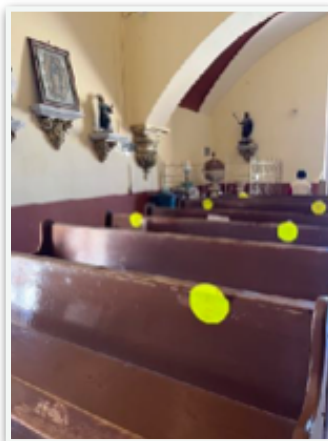
The Mexican cities we toured were clearly open to tourists.



Everyone welcomed us and, while not good for the vendors, we toured and shopped in smaller crowds. There were occasional issues with reduced hours, limits on number of tourists at a time as well as closures without notice but they Some risks remained unavoidable. Travel was by bus which, while not full, was still a bus on which we occasionally traveled for many hours. Masks were required but was impossible to be sure everyone kept them on. While many meals were in outdoor settings, social distancing was not always possible and we were unmasked as we ate and talked.

An elephant in the room was knowing a negative COVID test was required to board a flight back to the U.S. and a positive required immediate start of isolation. One tour member did test positive. She was immediately moved to the hotel's isolation floor. We were told the tour guide and company would help her navigate the isolation process and reschedule her return home.

Check in at the Mexico City airport for the flight to the U.S. was smooth if you had readily available: your ticket, your passport, the original of your COVID vaccination card AND documentation of a negative COVID test dated within a day of departure with all the required, but not clearly advertised, details. Once in the gate area, we saw a final step in Mexico's war against COVID - staff wearing full body protection roaming the departure lounge to spray disinfectant on the seats and other furniture.



P.S. For another story about travel to Mexico, part of which mirrors our positive experience, see this CNN article <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/mexico-tulum-guadalajara-trips-pandemic/index.html>



April 5–16 at Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts

[Click here to learn more](#)

Every year, UCF brings its best and brightest artists to Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts for a large-scale celebration of the things that make our world more interesting and innovative. This year, UCF Celebrates the Arts is bigger than ever, with a multi-day production of *Shrek The Musical*, concerts in the new Steinmetz Hall, lectures and discussions, multimedia events, chamber music, an expanded visual arts presence and more surprises to delight you.

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

UCF Celebrates the Arts, a festival showcasing creativity, innovation and collaboration from Orlando's hometown university, occurs annually at Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts in April. The event is hosted by the UCF College of Arts and Humanities and features the faculty and students from the School of Performing Arts and the School of Visual Arts and Design, as well as work from the humanities departments and other units from around the university. Partnership, one of UCF's long-standing values, is brought front-and-center at UCF Celebrates the Arts, with many events showcasing the collaborative nature of the university and demonstrating how UCF is both in and of the Central Florida community.

For tickets. <https://www.drphillipscenter.org/events/>