

## EMERITUS – March 2022



### An occasional newsletter for the Emeritus Faculty Association

#### **ZOOM MEETING:**

Our next zoom meeting will be Friday, March 4, 2022 at 11:00 am. We will continue to do these meetings via Zoom. Information will be sent to your Stony Brook emails a few days prior to the meeting. Meeting information is also listed below.

#### **Join Zoom Meeting:**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://stonybrook.zoom.us/j/96931215564?pwd=SIJNclFMWGNwQnN1eSt4bWpNWUZodz09>

Meeting ID: 969 3121 5564

Passcode: 828590



Our guest speaker will be Benjamin Tausig, Department of Music.

**Bio:** Benjamin is an Associate Professor of Music with a research focus on music, sound, and politics in Southeast Asia. His second book project is nearing its first full draft: *Bangkok After Dark: Maurice Rocco and Cold War Global Nightlife*.

**Topic:** A biographical sketch of the life of American jazz pianist Maurice Rocco, who was a star of screen and nightclubs in the 1940s in the U.S. before his career declined. He then found a second act abroad, specifically in Bangkok, Thailand during the Vietnam War. His biography doubles as a chance to reflect critically on the intimate political relationship between the U.S. and Thailand during the Cold War, which made all kinds of new engagements possible -- including, for instance, the revived career of Maurice Rocco.



## **SAVE THE DATES: (First Friday of every month)**

Here is a preview of our upcoming speakers.

**2022:**

**April:** Judith Lochhead, Music

**May:** Maurie McInnis, President of SBU



## **In Memoriam:**

### **Floris Cash**

Love is a basic ingredient of Africana studies – love of the self, and love of others. Love is the real skeleton of all the fields of knowledge that coalesce to compose the studies of people of African descent. And the tradition is there to substantiate it – a tradition flourished by the greatest and the lesser-known names in the field. I call them the Ancestors as in Africana Studies there is no instituted Hall of Fame. Halls of Fame belong to the establishment, and Africana studies, from its creation as a discipline during the sixties to its manifestation today remains attached to an insurgent constituency. Ancestors: this is a name that would easily attach African modes of remembrance to the ones practiced in the Caribbean, in Haiti for instance, with the diverse practices of Black communities in the United States. Ancestors: this is also a concept in which not only Black people will find a understanding of where people of great deeds rest. In some African cultures, there is indeed a Place for Ancestors, a locus so to speak, and it is in the home. Ancestors: these are people that never go and never will because their deed resonate with the continuous flow of life, and with the materiality of people's existence. Their location, amongst the Bamileke, is the head of the bed, in the ancestral home, for ancestors are brought back home after having been buried. They become an institution in the lives of the living and are called upon when necessary.

Floris Barnett Cash was the Head of the Department of Africana Studies when I became an affiliate. I remember she is the one who encouraged me to become one. I did not know her, but as a colleague. I came to appreciate her dedication to the field, and her understanding of the fact of love is the backbone of her work – the love of Black people, the love of Africa. A connection of both is what inspired her publications and her dealing with people on campus – faculty, students, staff. For there is no testimony that came after the news of her passing, in which there was not a mention of her passionate commitment to Africana. I remember her coming during a PhD defense with a kente calf around her neck, the joy on her face surpassing that of the candidate himself after he was declared a doctor. The topic of the dissertation was pan Africanism, and it suited certainly well – but at the same time, it was an expression of what she brought to the field – love. Starting the Ghana program was no easy feat – it is never. And Floris Cash is the one who started it – bringing our students to the African continent and making sure they touch down in the locations where the core of Africana still resides. This is the backbone of what found its manifestation in the disparate venues of her research and teaching activity. For there are no branches without a tree and there is no tree without roots. And the roots, that is the ancestral place – that is the House of the Ancestors. We know that in passing Floris Cash joined their company.

## **Joseph Pequigney**

Farre Joseph Pequigney passed away peacefully at his home in Manhattan on January 19th, 2022. Joe was born in 1924 in Galveston, TX. He graduated from Notre Dame University in 1944, and earned an M.A. at the University of Minnesota in 1947. After a period in the novitiate and on the teaching faculty of St. John's University, he went to Harvard University where he earned his Ph.D. in 1959.

In 1960, Joe joined the original English Department faculty of Stony Brook University, where he taught until he retired in 1995. His early academic writing focused on Milton and Dante, but it was his teaching of Shakespearean drama and poetry combined with the experience of being a gay man that led him to his major work, *Such Is My Love*, a radical close reading of the sonnets. Although greeted with controversy at first, this book became a seminal work in Shakespeare and gay studies alike. Joe went on to write numerous articles on same-sex love as it appeared in Dante's *Divine Comedy* and English Renaissance drama, for publications like *The Dante Encyclopedia*; *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage*; *ELR: English Literary Renaissance*, and *Representations*. In 2017 he received the GALA ND/SMC Award for Distinguished Academic Achievement, honoring the fact that themes "of same sex love are today recognized and taught with greater honesty as a result" of his work. For Joe, teaching was as important as scholarship; the clarity and passion of his thought inspired generations of students, some of whom credit him with profoundly shaping their subsequent paths.

Joe remained interested in Catholic thinking throughout his life. In an unpublished article, he discussed some important discrepancies between papal discourse and the foundational writing of Thomas Aquinas which contends that "ensoulment," what makes us human, does not occur at the moment of conception.

Joe loved friends and family, European travel, theatre, food, wine, and animated conversations about them all. Joy was effusive around his table, powered by his affection, his love of sharing, his wit, and very often by his heartfelt left-wing politics. The love he radiated enriched the lives of his husband, his siblings, his 11 nieces and nephews, and their children, all of whom happily acknowledge their "Uncle Bubba's" extensive influence on their lives.

Joe is survived by his husband and companion of 53 years, Steven Mays, his sister Margaret Cashion of Jackson, MS, the aforementioned nieces and nephews, their children, and their children's children. He was predeceased by his parents Margaret Dugey Pequigney and Frank Pequigney, and by his sister Dorothy Shepherd Davison, all of Galveston, TX.

## **Melvin Simpson**

Melvin (Mel) Simpson, retired from the Department of Biochemistry and Cell Biology, died in January after celebrating his 100th birthday last July. Born in New York City, he went to City College where he was inspired by the many wonderful scientists who taught there. He graduated in 1942. After working for the Navy Ordinance Lab during the war, in 1946 he went to Berkeley where he got a PhD in Biochemistry: He continued to do research and teach at a number of schools, including both Yale and Dartmouth medical schools. In 1962, he received a lifetime award: The American Cancer Society Research professorship.

In 1967, intrigued by the offer to create a biochemistry department at a new university, he came to Stony Brook. And create he did, including not only a new department but a graduate program in

Molecular Biology. Mel's early research focused on the mechanisms of protein synthesis, first in liver slices and then in isolated mitochondria. This led him to study ribosome structure and streptomycin action. In his work on protein synthesis, Mel made the important observation that protein degradation was ATP dependent. This work was cited as critical for his research by Irwin Rose when he accepted the Nobel Prize. A former colleague summed up Mel's work. "Mel was the father of mitochondrial molecular biology" One of his other memorable research results was the discovery that early AIDS drugs were damaging mitochondrial DNA. AIDS researchers were then able to produce drugs that were less toxic. Aside from science, Mel, a lover of classical music, was a great supporter of the Staller Center. After he retired, Mel and his wife Giulia pursued a serious interest in the archeology of Mesoamerica and North America.

On a personal note, the Wishnia family and the Simpson family were close friends for over 60 years. We met at Yale, were at Dartmouth together and finally, came to Stony Brook at the same time. Our children (6 boys!) grew up together. Mel loved his family, he loved scientific research, he loved classical music, he loved a good discussion and of course, he loved a good joke. One hundred years of achievement.



### **Participate in "Documenting COVID-19: Stony Brook University Experiences"**

Stony Brook University Libraries announced the establishment of "Documenting COVID-19: Stony Brook University Experiences," a new digital archive project to collect, preserve, and publish the institutional history of Stony Brook University. The archive will primarily be formed from submissions received directly from students, faculty, staff, and alumni that document life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews, first-hand accounts, written narratives, photographs, and more will be important sources to consult in the future to study, interpret, and derive meaning from this historic time period. Members of the Emeritus Faculty Association are invited and encouraged to participate in the project. For more information, please visit: <https://library.stonybrook.edu/special-library-initiatives/documenting-covid-19/>



### **Participate in the Faculty Emeritus Documentation Project**

*In return for the light labor of arranging the calendar of speakers I claim the right to be a nag. Each month the SB Emeriti newsletter includes a plea for you to go to the Old Stony Brook memory project on the web site run by and preserved in the Melville Library's Special Collections. To date, only 19 retired SB faculty have filled out the forms designed to let you talk about the early days at SB and your retrospective views, both about what you expected (or were told) when you came and what you now have to say, looking back, on the experience. The responses are an open document and this paragraph is designed to make you feel guilty if you have not bothered to fill out the questionnaire. You can remedy this.*

*Joel Rosenthal*

In an effort to document and preserve the unique and varied experiences of the university's emeritus faculty, a questionnaire has been designed to elicit the personal reflections of faculty members':

- impetuses for accepting academic positions at Stony Brook University.
- early experiences on the campus.
- views on the evolution and growth of the institution.
- contributions to departments and to the university.
- interactions with academic and administrative leadership.
- views on the institution's role in the community (local and wider).
- assessments of the university's mission and successes as a research university.

**Your participation is vital to documenting Stony Brook University history.**

Access information about the project and the questionnaire at:

<http://www.library.stonybrook.edu/special-collections-university-archives/university-archives/>



**Events around Campus:**

- |                           |                                                                                              |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thursday, March 3, 2022:  | RENT – 7:00 PM<br>Staller Main Stage                                                         |
| Wednesday, March 9, 2022: | James Joyce's Ulysses: The First 100 Years – 1:00 PM<br>Humanities, Poetry Center, Room 2001 |
| Saturday, March 12, 2022: | GALA 2022 – Emanuel Ax – Leonidas Kavakos – YoYo Ma – 8:00 PM<br>Staller Center Main Stage   |
| Saturday, March 19, 2022: | The Hot Sardines – 8:00 PM<br>Staller Center Recital Hall                                    |

More Events and information can be found: <https://calendar.stonybrook.edu/>



**Emeritus Faculty Association (EFA) Member Update:**

The Provost's Office has updated the EFA's member list! Below is the link for the updated contact information for all members. Please take a look and let us know if you notice any out-of-date or incorrect information about yourself or a colleague, please contact Faith Mirabile at [faith.mirabile@stonybrook.edu](mailto:faith.mirabile@stonybrook.edu) with any changes. Please remember, we are **only** using your Stony Brook emails.

<https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/emeritus/members.html>



Joel Rosenthal is now chair of the Retirees Committee on the local UUP executive committee. Problems or questions about your union status or related matters can be addressed to him: [joel.rosenthal@stonybrook.edu](mailto:joel.rosenthal@stonybrook.edu).

Visit our website: To visit our website, go to the University website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/emeritus/index.html>. It always contains the latest emeritus news (click on "Next Meeting"), a list of members' email addresses, a list of officers, newsletter archives and many other useful links.

