

*Foreword:*

*The Academy of Senior Professionals at Eckerd College (ASPEC) is one of hundreds of Lifelong Learning Institutes in the country. Most of these LLIs are affiliated with Colleges and Universities, and for the most part they are valuable, worthwhile, and successful. The common goal of these organizations – Lifelong Learning – is shared by all. But, as might be expected, approaches differ.*

*The approach used by ASPEC is significantly different, and it is this difference that we examined in a day-long conference this past March 17. ASPEC is now 25 years old, and counts more than 300 members. The organization works with the college, with its members, and with the community. Active participation is high. But we must look ahead; how should this approach be modified in the future to satisfy the thousands of potential new members who will soon be appearing?*

*The following report describes, in summary, the discussions that took place.*

## **Lifelong Learning and Sharing: The ASPEC Approach**

**A Conference Celebrating 25 years**

**March 17, 2007**

### **Two Essential Questions**

*ASPEC is a community of experienced learners with a history, a purpose, and a promise. For 25 years we have contributed learning and sharing through content, process, and organization. How do we do it?*

*During the next decade, lifelong learning institutions in general and ASPEC in particular will face societal changes that will impact not only their structures and memberships, but also their very existence. What will the future hold?*

## **Topics for This Conference**

### **Welcome and Conference Goals**

Jim Frasier, Director, Continuing Education, Eckerd College

### **What has ASPEC done? And how? What is the ASPEC approach?**

Bob Stoffels (leader) with Len Block, Ray Spigarelli, Bob Siver, Bill Dorney

**Over 25 years, what have we learned about content, process and organization?**  
Stan Chesnut (leader) with Bill Stickley, Dorothy Kalapaca, Linda Reimer, Eleanor Wolf

**The New Landscape for Lifelong Learning**  
David Houle, President, David Houle & Associates, strategic planning and consulting

**The Next 10 Years: A Teleconference Program**

Mike Beilis (leader)

- **“The Next 10 Years”** Lawrence K. Grossman, former president of NBC News
- **“Older Americans and the Digital Revolution”** Everette E. Dennis, PhD, former senior vice president of the Gannett and Freedom Forum foundations, author of 38 books.
- **“Successful Aging, The Big Picture – What is going on?”** Ernest Mahaffey, ASPEC member and a member of the American Society on Aging, Generations United, and the International Consortium of Intergenerational Programmes.

**What impact will societal changes have on lifelong learning and continuing education?**

Jim Frasier (leader) with Jerry Meketon, Ara Rogers, Cheryl Gold

**What impact will societal changes have on ASPEC – the possible, the probable and the likely?**

Joe Cortese (leader) with Len Block, Dick Hallin, Stan Chesnut, Ernest Mahaffey

**The Program Begins**

**Welcome: Bob Stoffels** (Co-Chairperson of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee of ASPEC)

Bob Stoffels welcomed the attending participants and guests. He introduced the Academy of Senior Professionals at Eckerd College (ASPEC) as the hosting organization, an organization that might be called a “Lifelong Learning” group. But “we are different,” he stated. This conference will explore *How?* and *Why?* We will look back at the past 25 years and look forward to the next 25. We will ask:

- Where have we been?
- How did we get there?
- Who are we now? and
- Where are we going?

**Welcome and Conference Goals: Jim Frasier** (Director Continuing Education Eckerd College)

Jim Frasier acknowledged the goals of the conference as recognizing the base upon which ASPEC has been built and exploring how it can continue to serve the membership, the college, and the community. He mentioned the approaching retirement age of the Boomer generation. He then pointed out the effects that a growing 60+ population will have upon the nation and particularly upon the

communities chosen for residence by retired and semi-retired people. Research has shown that Tampa Bay is the # 1 relocation destination for Boomers. That finding means there will be more people and more prospective ASPEC members coming to our area.

Jim Frasier reminded us that the Boomers are a somewhat different group from the currently retired population. They are more self-directed, more physically active, and more likely to continue working in a variety of jobs after their “official” (or first) retirement. Their coming will generate some new requests upon ASPEC. “Think positively!” said Jim. This is an opportunity to enrich our programs and expand our horizons. ASPEC members should ask: “How can we better serve more people?”

## **What has ASPEC done? And how? The ASPEC Approach: Bob Stoffels, Leader, and a Panel of ASPEC Members**

Bob Stoffels used the metaphor of a four-legged stool to describe the foundations of ASPEC.

- **The College:** the faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to participate in ASPEC activities and ASPEC members participate in both academic and extra-curricular college activities.
- **Ourselves:** membership in ASPEC gives purpose, focus, and potential growth to participants. There are 46 on-going interest groups in the arts, sciences, and physical and recreational activities.
- **The Community:** Over 100 ASPEC members are working actively in community activities outside the ASPEC programs. These include medical clinics, child care, mentally handicapped art projects, legal aid, community theatre, work with the homeless, art and history museums, and many other projects. ASPEC also sponsors Forums on a variety of issues and topics. These are open to the public.
- **The Purely Social Gathering:** ASPEC members participate in many “good-times” activities that promote cohesiveness and a sense of extended family. These include a weekly “happy hour” cocktail party and a monthly “evening out” dinner at a variety of area restaurants. ASPEC also has a “caring committee” which lends a hand whenever needed.

### **The Panel Members**

#### **Ray Spigarelli: An ASPEC Profile**

ASPEC has 207 Members and 126 Associate Members. They range in age from 53 to 100 years. Their education covers the spectrum from self-made entrepreneurs to PhDs, LLDs, MDs, and a lot of people in between. Most live in the Tampa Bay area at least part of the year but we have members from California, Illinois, New York, and even Europe. The Membership initiation fee is \$1,500, which can be paid over a four year period. The quarterly dues for

members range from approximately \$300 for a regular member to \$95 for a single associate. Other payment programs for seasonal and introductory memberships are available.

ASPEC is governed by a 12 member Senate elected by the Membership. The Senate Members in turn choose the officers each year from among the Senators: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. ASPEC has a \$205,000 yearly operating budget and over \$240,000 in ASPEC restricted funds and endowments.

**Bill Dorney: ASPEC and the College – A Resource for Students**

Bill Dorney is the ASPEC representative to the Student Liaison Committee. He stressed the importance of meaningful interaction between ASPEC and the students, faculty, and administration. He discussed some of the ways that ASPEC is a resource for the students:

- Joint programs, Center for the Applied Liberal Arts (CALA). The Autumn Term Picnic – this is an opportunity for new students to meet ASPEC members and discover Lewis House.
- Airport pick-up for international students and others.
- Twice a year *Been there! Done that!* This is a get-together that allows ASPEC members to share their professional experiences and insights with students aspiring to the same profession.
- ASPEC representatives work as consultants with ECOS (Eckerd College Organization of Students) the self-government of the student body.
- ASPEC dinners – one or two dinners per month are given for different student organizations.
- Resume revision services and mock interviews in preparation for employment or advanced degree interviews.

**Len Block: ASPEC and the College – Participation in the Classroom**

Len Block, along with Naomi Block and Bob Shepherd, is a coach for the Eckerd College Ethics Bowl Team. He stressed the importance and rewards of being involved in the academic programs at Eckerd College.

- The Ethics Bowl – 5 students are coached for competition.
- Discussant Colleagues – ASPEC members are encouraged to participate in two required courses: Western Heritage – Global Context, and Quest for Meaning, required in the senior year.
- Auditing – ASPEC members are allowed to audit courses, with permission of the faculty member instructor.
- Specialists – ASPEC members can act as tutors or advisors in their professional specialties.

At this point, **Bill Dorney** made comments that ASPEC is 100% free of College interference as far as academic freedom is concerned. He pointed out that ASPEC exists solely at the goodwill of the College. Members are considered as “Faculty & Staff”. This designation is part of Eckerd’s commitment to lifelong learning.

**Ray Spigarelli: Ourselves – the ASPEC Interest Groups**

Ray Spigarelli pointed out that all of the ASPEC interest groups have grown out of the interest and desire of the membership. Nothing is imposed from the college or the director; there is no “You should...” or “You shouldn’t...” Any member who wishes to pursue a particular interest with a group of members can submit a proposal to the **Programs Committee**. The ensuing Interest Groups are quite different from the given-number-of-sessions programs that are offered at most conventional Lifelong Learning Institutes. Once established, the Interest Groups are on-going, one topic leads to another, etc. Some groups such as the Music Interest Group, the History Group, and the Philosophy Group have been continuous since the earliest days of ASPEC. Interest Groups are disbanded when interest fails or by common agreement of the members.

**Bob Stoffels: Ourselves – The ASPEC Interest Groups**

Bob Stoffels mentioned that interest groups tend to fall into one of six categories:  
**Skills:**Digital Photography, Computers, Writers’ Workshop, Origami, Studio Art  
**Discussion:** Sometimes Science, Current Events, Women Speak, Investments  
**Knowledge:** Science & Society, Philosophy, History, Music, World Classics  
**Languages & Cultures:** Spanish, French, German, Italian  
**Physical Activities:** Tai Chi, Applied Technology, Biking, Bird Watching  
**Fun & Social Activities:** Laughing Matters, Locus Focus, Social Hour

Some Interest Groups survive for long terms (years) and some quietly pass away – members vote with their feet! Those groups that attract participants keep going. All groups are peer led; there are no outside, paid leaders.

At this point **Susana Bouquet-Chester** commented that we should not forget the humanitarian work done by many members within the ASPEC community and outside in the Tampa Bay community. Some members work even beyond that in the national or world community. **Bob Stoffels** responded, “Yes, we are a family.” **Roz Kent** added that we should not forget the ASPEC sponsored Forums that are open to the public. **Ann Rascoe** spoke up for ASPEC support for Fine Art, pointing out the year-round exhibits at Lewis House and our support for Art Students at Eckerd College. **Ernie Mahaffey** mentioned the mentor work that many ASPEC members do.

**Bob Siver: ASPEC and the Community**

Bob Siver discussed the fact that many activities at ASPEC focus outwards. He pointed out work with the University of South Florida and with Temple Beth El and St Petersburg municipal activities. He reminded us that qualification for membership in ASPEC is dependent not only upon one's personal integrity and achievement but also upon one's contribution to the community at large. Many members have worked for groups such as *Habitat for Humanity*, for service groups such as Elks, Girl or Boy Scouts, or 4-H, for Speakers' Bureaus, or for local church and community groups.

**Ray Spigarelli: The Social Side of ASPEC**

"Social hours are the glue that binds our membership into an extended family." These activities provide us with the opportunity to meet new members and to get together with members we might not see in the Interest Groups that we attend. In addition to the weekly social hour, there are the monthly "Nights Out", the picnics, the holiday parties (4<sup>th</sup> of July, Halloween, Valentine's Day), musical afternoons, art receptions, dramatic presentations, and an occasional gala.

**Bob Stoffels** concluded the session with a summation. He said that membership in ASPEC is selective. ASPEC does indeed evaluate its prospective members against written qualification guidelines. But it's important to remember that the prospective member also selects ASPEC. Because there is so much interaction in the small group that is the Membership, there must be a kind of mutual admiration among individuals. ASPEC really does have a sense of extended family. The magic is not fully understood, but it is ongoing. Each individual finds his own overview of ASPEC: the over-all concept and his or her individual place in that concept and the community.

**What have we learned over the years about content, process, and organization? Stan Chesnut, Leader**

**The Panel: ASPEC Members Dorothy Kalapaca, Linda Reimer, Bill Stickley, Eleanor Wolf**

**Regarding Interest Group Content:** Bill Stickley and Dorothy Kalapaca discussed the history, focus, challenges, changes, and applications of several different interest groups including Computers, Digital Photography, Religions and Faiths, Science and Society, Health Interest, Books & Ideas, and Travel Sharing.

**Regarding Discussion Groups:** Linda Reimer talked about Discussing Differences On Line, an ASPEC chat site that most LLIs do not have. Ernie Mahaffey added that this kind of discussion group allows out-of-towners to keep in direct touch with other ASPEC members. Linda went on to discuss the evolution of Current Events into Foreign Affairs Study Circle; the ties of *Sometimes* Science, *Sometimes Not* to the *NY Times* Science section; and

WomenSpeak, which began as an affinity group in 1999. Eleanor Wolf defined *affinity group* as a gathering that just springs up without the approval of the Program Committee. Affinity group meetings are generally not listed in the ASPEC Weekly Newsletter. Some affinity groups, however, become Interest Groups, which was the case with WomenSpeak. The assimilation of affinity groups such as WomenSpeak and Bridge is another example of the diversity of ASPEC interest groups.

Leo Nussbaum, the Director of ASPEC from 1983 to 1987, spoke about the meaning of *diversity* to a lifelong learning group and specifically to ASPEC. He said, “Diversity means diversity in all aspects of life and living, including politics, religion, and ethics. ASPEC proves that a variety of views from every dimension can live together.”

**Regarding Social and Fun Groups:** Eleanor Wolf spoke about the Interest Groups, affinity groups, and events that make us laugh, and sing, and dress up, and scheme, and pretend, and, of course, eat! Among those mentioned were Happy Hour, Evenings Out, the annual Gala, holiday celebrations, ASPEC Singers, Food & Wine, Bridge, “International Financial Exchange” (poker), Readers’ Theatre, Foreign Film Study Group, Saturday Matinees, Laughing Matters, and Magic 101.

The panel pointed out that prominent among the lessons we have learned is the **mobility** of the human psyche. It is quite possible for a person to come from one profession and then move the focus of his or her interest into another or others. Scientists can become historians, musicians, artists, writers, or even literary critics; artists can become computer experts; business executives can gracefully execute the movements of Tai Chi. It is not necessary to have professional qualifications to lead an ASPEC interest group.

The **attraction** of the unique magic that ASPEC offers is another lesson learned. People from the faculty and the student body have been drawn to participation in ASPEC interest groups. There has been a large increase in the number of these participants during the past 5 years. Many visitors have also come to Lewis House from the Tampa Bay community and as guests of ASPEC members.

## **The New Landscape for Lifelong Learning: David Houle, Speaker**

David Houle, president of David Houle & Associates, a consulting firm, has had a long-standing interest in Adult Education through his association with the work of his father, Cyril O. Houle, one of America’s most respected leaders in the field.

David began with a quotation from his father: “In the future, the central concept of education is going to be lifelong learning.” He discussed the current time as “The Shift Age” (a time when change is constant). He pointed out that *time* and

*distance* are no longer meaningful impediments to communication. (A person can call China in the same amount of time that it takes to call Sarasota.)

David quickly looked back over the changes that took place in the ability to communicate during the history of man. There were few changes until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then the great acceleration took place between 1985 and 2005. Today contact between individuals can be virtually instant. What are the results of this instant communication?

- Communication and its outcomes continue to move ever faster.
- We communicate within ever-bigger networks.
- The individual has a greater power to choose.
- West and East have met and continue to meet in globalization.

David summed up by discussing the fundamental forces of The Shift Age.

1. There is a flow to global. There are no more gatekeepers in economics, politics, and cultures. Regionalization is breaking down.
2. There is a flow to the individual. We no longer look to our leaders to keep us informed. We feel less need to join organizations.
3. There is accelerated connectedness. Through virtual reality we can be witness to world and local events, Hurricane Katrina for example.
4. Dis-intermediation. The function of the “middleman” is ending. Consider, for example, the changes that are occurring in dealing in stocks, travel, real estate, mortgage financing, and purchasing.
5. There is greater power to the people. It is easier to make choices and to make your choices immediately known.
6. The Shift Age is the beginning of the end of long-rang planning. Because of the rapidly changing world, outlooks must be focused on short-term decisions.

At this point, Carolyn Janik made the comment that while the Shift Age is making communication easier and faster, it is also isolating people more. The communication takes place over distance and the “being there” is a virtual reality but not real. People still need to get together to share good feelings and stressful times. “I believe it is human nature to laugh together.”

### **The Next 10 Years: Lawrence K. Grossman, Speaker by Teleconference**

From 1948 to 1988, Lawrence Grossman was the president of NBC News. He has also held management positions at NBC, CBS, and Look Magazine. He has contributed many articles on media and politics to newspapers, magazines, and journals. *Speaking from Westport, Connecticut.*

Lawrence Grossman began by identifying lifelong learning as the necessary centerpiece of education. He suggested that monies on the national level be gathered into a trust fund to facilitate implementation of the concept.

He spoke extensively about the new learning by virtual experience. New programs can allow an individual to participate in an archeological dig or to watch the body's immune system fight against infection. Virtual education is being used to train professionals against potential disasters: for example, firefighters are being taught to deal with top story fires in high-rise buildings. Students are already taking courses at every level on line.

### **Older Americans and the Digital Revolution: Everette E. Dennis, PhD, Speaker by Teleconference**

Everette Dennis was senior vice-president of the Gannett and Freedom Forum Foundations. He is a Professor at Fordham University's Graduate School of Business and the author of 38 books. *Speaking from New York City*

Dr. Dennis pointed out the split that the digital revolution has caused in our society. If you are over 13 years old today, you are a *Digital Immigrant*. If you are under 13, you are a *Digital Native*. The immigrant must learn the language by study, the native learns it because it is there.

He discussed the differences in sources of information. Younger Americans get little or no news or information from traditional communication sources: newspapers, television, radio. Their world is more mobile, hand-held, instantaneous. People ages 12 to 24 watch much less television than older Americans. Instead they want total control of whatever they attend to. They want to download and save whatever interests them. They want to choose whatever it is they want at any given moment. For them, even email is a thing of the past, too slow and too cumbersome.

Americans over age 55:

- Use the internet less than the general population
- Still read newspapers and magazines
- Use more email for family communication
- Use the internet most for medical information
- Get both news and entertainment on television

### **Healthy Aging, The Big Picture – What Is Going On? Ernest Mahaffey, Speaker**

Ernie Mahaffey is a long-time member of ASPEC. H is a member of the American Society on Aging, Generations United, and the International Consortium of Intergenerational Programmes. *Speaking in person*

Ernie is a member of the Boomer Generation. He said “We are an edgy generation, accustomed to having our own way.” And he asked what the Boomers’ legacy will be. He cited the need for:

- Brain health – the need to think and stretch mentally
- Civic engagement – the need to work in the community for the greater good
- Learning with a purpose – the need to work toward a goal and to contribute
- Generativity – the need to teach the younger generation beyond family and familiar. This foster growth through interaction and change; compare to Stagnation when everything stays the same.

Ernie asked the questions “What is the new ASPEC to be? He posed the idea that the answer could be gleaned from an analysis of the Purpose Prize winners’ lifestyles. Their common assets are:

- Passion: they care about something intensely
- Energy, tenacity, courage: they go forward and stay with it
- Mobilization of assets: they find new ways to solve new problems
- Readiness to learn: they are open to new ideas and new approaches
- Learning with a purpose: they work to achieve goals.

Each of Civic Ventures’ initial Purpose Prize winners did something relating to life style. Most of the winners did things after retirement that made a significant contribution to our society. Often the achievement has been in a field unrelated to their training and former experience.

“Hard stuff (work) changes your brain. Demanding projects stretch your brain. Healthy aging is work! The joy of work is accomplishment.”

## **What impact will societal changes have on lifelong learning and continuing education? Jim Frasier, Discussion Leader**

### **The Panel:**

- **Dr. Jerry Meketon, USF Executive Director – Academy for Lifelong Learning, USF Sarasota**
- **Dr. Ara Rogers, Director of Lifelong Learning USF, Tampa**
- **Cheryl Gold, Director of Elderhostel Programs, Eckerd College**

**Jerry Meketon** said the 21<sup>st</sup> century is going to demand that we be open to new ideas. It is also going to demand that we foster a new respect for on another. He asked, “What would happen if you tripled the membership at ASPEC?” Would there be time for meditation? A place to be quiet? Would there be members still looking for meaning in life and would ASPEC be able to support their quest?

**Cheryl Gold** cautioned everyone to remember that Boomers may be a generation but they are individuals. No one or two things are right for every person. There is no “one size fits all.” BUT, we need to get together. The #1 reason that people go

to Elderhostel is for social interaction. There is a need not only for lifelong learning but also for groups and gathering places.

**Ara Rogers** spoke about the cyclical pattern of American history. “We are shaped by history at the same time that we are shaping history.” Social moments (wars, the Great Depression) change external structures of society. What follows is a spiritual awakening. The Boomer awakening occurred between 1968 to 1980. Inner values and structures were being challenged. Boomers may well be challenged again in elderhood by events that will force change and re-thinking.

**Jim Frasier** pointed out that there are many different ways to learn but all of them already exist at ASPEC: discussion, lecture, visual, hands on, meditation and solitary search. The older brain uses both hemispheres and with stimulation assimilates information from many perspectives. His suggestions for ASPEC in the coming decade include:

- More electronic outreach
- Membership on a more flexible basis
- More available hours
- Larger scope and different formats

At this point Ernie Mahaffey noted that unlike many LLIs, ASPEC is a 12 month program. There is no semester division.

Bill Dorney then asked the Panel “What are your top three programs? Are they changing?”

- Cheryl Gold replied that the top three programs at Eckerd are the American Foreign Service, The Criminal Justice System, and St Augustine, Florida, a history program that is ½ outdoors and ½ in the classroom. She said Elderhostel is seeing a demand for more physically challenging programs, not so sedentary. Students are more interactive.
- Jerry Meketon replied that at USF in Sarasota their most popular programs are lectures. These programs require no preparation and are essentially passive. Number one is the architecture of Sarasota with commentary by the architects who designed the buildings.
- Ara Rogers said that it is not activity or passive learning that determines popularity in Tampa, but rather the force of the personality of the instructors. The most popular program is Geopolitics Today: Between Iraq and a Hard Place. It is taught by a retired Brigadier General and a retired member of the American Civil Liberties Union. Elderhostelers get caught up in the spark of the discussion.

## **What impact will societal changes have on ASPEC – the possible, the probable, and the likely? Joe Cortese Discussion Leader and a Panel of ASPEC Members: Len Block, Dick Hallin, Stan Chesnut, and Ernie Mahaffey**

**Joe Cortese** began by stating that the potential membership pool of 65+ year olds will almost double between 2000 and 2020. There is a possibility that the choice of ASPEC candidates from this growing pool can become even more discriminating.

What should ASPEC look for in a candidate:

- One who remains active and involved
- One who wishes to accomplish things and continue to live a meaningful life
- One who has a desire for continued community activity after his or her disconnect from a job and the demands of raising and educating a family
- One who wishes to grow intellectually and spiritually
- One who is anxious to explore new fields.

Joe thought that ASPEC's multi-dimensional environment will be very attractive to the Boomer generation. Among the plus points are:

- the peer led groups and the opportunity to lead or start an interest group;
- the opportunity for inter-generational activities with the college;
- the ASPEC sense of community;
- the opportunity for social interaction with peers
- and fun!

At this point, Ernie Mahaffey added that the use of technology is one of ASPEC's strong points. He cited the ASPEC Interest Group *Discussing Differences on Line* saying that it allowed him to interact with members despite his permanent residence in Illinois. He said that such groups can open ASPEC to the world.

**Dick Hallin** spoke next saying that during this conference, the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, have been referred to as the Age of Anxiety. For those in their retirement years, an institution like ASPEC might well be an example of the best way to cope with such an Era. An institution that enables us to continue to grow and learn as individuals while giving and sharing with larger and diverse communities might be right on target.

By all accounts, the number of age 65+ folks in the Tampa Bay area/Florida/the world will be increasing dramatically in the next decades. The potential applicant pool for ASPEC will grow. At the same time, it seems to be generally accepted that ASPEC (given space and programmatic considerations) cannot grow much beyond its current membership numbers. This scenario is typically a Godsend for a Dean of Admissions type person because it allows you to be increasingly selective as you choose your class/membership.

The interesting question for ASPEC is this: What would we do if we had 5-10 applications for every vacant spot in the Academy? Upon what bases would we make our selections? The Academy is its membership, and we now have an opportunity to carefully define who we are and craft what we want to be.

Given our links to Eckerd College, it would seem logical that one important ingredient of our membership search would be to find those committed to intergenerational learning and contact. We might want to invite more professionals who bring experience and expertise related to some of Eckerd College's largest majors (marine science/environmental students/international relations/etc.). Similarly, our links to the College might encourage us to recruit more aggressively among the recently retired Eckerd alumni and parents of Eckerd students and alumni (all part of the boomer generation). We might also decide to increase the diversity of the Academy in terms of gender, national origin, ethnic and racial mix, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation.

With all of the new technologies, we could certainly find ways to "recruit the world" and keep folks linked to our efforts throughout the year (including the summer).

**Len Block** cautioned about generalizations. He said that neither Boomers nor ASPEC members are a monolithic group. "We're not all the same. We come to Lewis House and we find a common ground to celebrate together. What is the purpose of learning? We search to discover the sheer joy of life."

Len went on to talk about the trauma of retirement. There is a sudden void where once the day was filled. The new retiree says, "Now what do I do with my life?" One of the purposes of ASPEC is to help others make the transition of retirement. There is engagement to help fill the huge amount of time available. And there is friendship.

**Stan Chesnut** asked what changes are coming? What societal factors will *force* ASPEC to change? We must test our values in three categories:

- physical
- intellectual
- spiritual.

**Ernie Mahaffey** brought technology into focus again. "I can feel that I belong because technology allows me to stay connected. We know that whatever technology we use, enhances ASPEC's community and fellowship. Also, we need to extend ourselves outside this building." He said ASPEC could use technology to dig down and go deeper in our connection with others. Boomers simply *expect* a familiarity with technology. Their attitude is: *Change now!*

**Jim Frasier** talked of the brain's ability to adapt and to learn how to deal with challenges. The brain needs exercise just like our muscles. We need to move program times to accommodate Boomers who are still working.

**Joe Cortese** said that if we have more candidates, we have to give them more options to choose from. ASPEC needs to satisfy new prospects with the kinds of things they want. We need more physical activities, more models for learning. When you shift out of the job scene you look out on a brave new world. The separation between career identity and retirement leaves a large void. The question is how to integrate into the new life.

**Len Block** said that when he completed his career as a dentist he needed to fill the time that was once occupied with working. He tried his hand at pottery. ("I was a terrible potter, but I kept trying.") And then he discovered a love of literature and the desire to share it by forming the interest group World Classics. He said that ASPEC needs to encourage active learning. We must search for new ways to use skills and share talents. We need to GIVE.

**Ernie Mahaffey** said that many married couples who will be coming to ASPEC will have had equally demanding professional careers. They will want challenges to share together and others to explore separately. Providing those opportunities is ASPEC's challenge. Mahaffey added that many of the services and facilities provided by Eckerd College – he mentioned the ready availability of a computer lab, email addresses, list services, websites, bulletin boards, and Lewis House itself – go a long way in serving these needs.

**Stan Chesnut** added that it is essential to remember that ASPEC members learn from each other.

**Jim Frasier** turned again to the future of ASPEC. He said that populations come and go and people cycle through but generally ASPEC will need to provide:

- more physical activities such as Tai Chi
- opportunities for learning in different formats
- more travel
- more community based activities.

**Stan Chesnut** asked "If ASPEC grows to maximum capacity, what else can we do?"

At this point, **Bob Stoffels** suggested that perhaps ASPEC should not grow beyond a certain size. "We hope to be a 'family.' A member should know most of the other members personally."

**Mike Beilis and President/Director Jane McBride brought the conference to a close with an invitation to all participants to share in refreshments together.**

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