



## Association of Hutchins Alumni (AHA) Fall 2009

### Memorial Service for Warren Olson



The Hutchins School owes a great deal to the inspired vision of our founder, Warren Olson, who passed away on September 7, 2009. We will mourn his loss at the same time that we are grateful to him for laying the foundation for such a successful and enduring institution. Please join us to honor his memory on Sunday, Dec. 13, 1:00 – 4:00, in the Sonoma State Commons.

### Greetings from the Hutchins Alumni Coordinator:

Debora Hammond

Having agreed to serve as the official alumni coordinator, I hosted a discussion -- during the open space session at our recent 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration -- on ways to nurture on-going connections with our alumni. The conversation generated a number of fruitful suggestions, which we will be implementing over the coming year.

First and foremost, we all agreed that a newsletter would be a great way to let alumni know what's going on in Hutchins and on the SSU campus in general, including any upcoming events that might be of interest. Currently, I am aiming to send out a newsletter each semester, and I welcome your input. Some ideas were to include updates on Hutchins faculty and curriculum, as well as links to relevant articles and other resources (such as a list of recommended readings, for example).

Second, everyone expressed a desire for a dedicated on-line discussion forum, which dovetails with our current efforts to update the alumni webpage. The link to discussion groups on the current site is to CafeSSU, which is no longer being supported by SSU. I have explored a number of options and, at the recommendation of our IT staff, have set up a Google Group for the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies. I will be sending out an invitation to join shortly. Once you respond to that invitation, you will receive a confirmation e-mail, which requires a second response, and then you will be an official member, able to post comments and upload files.

In addition, groups have also been set up on Facebook (search groups for Hutchins School of Liberal Studies) and MySpace (<http://groups.myspace.com/hutchinsalum>). The alumni discussion group on the main SSU alumni page is still being developed and faculty do not currently have access to this forum. Google groups offer the advantage of limiting access to members' profiles to other members of that group, unlike Facebook and MySpace. However, several pictures from the anniversary

celebration have been posted on the Facebook site. It is the Hutchins way to offer multiple ways of thinking, seeing, and doing, so there you are. I hope these resources will prove to be useful to you.

Several attendees asked for copies of Tony's and Les's addresses, which are now posted on the Hutchins alumni site, and they will be uploaded to the Google Group site as well.

Other suggestions included occasional Saturday seminars, which might be proposed and hosted by students, alumni, or faculty; and invitations to alumni to come and speak to current students and possibly to serve as mentors in various capacities. I'm sure there are many more ideas out there; please feel free to contact me at [hammond@sonoma.edu](mailto:hammond@sonoma.edu).

## Notes from the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration:

Francisco Vazquez

Approximately seventy people, many of whom had not seen each other for a long time, got together to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies on October 16-18. The event was kicked off with a social gathering on Friday night at the Double Tree Hotel. Saturday was the big day and it started with seminars on *Food, Education for Social Change, Humor: What Makes Us Laugh*, and a *LifeCore Workshop*.

The seminars were followed by lunch in Commons Hall and, under the capable MC skills of Hutchins Director Eric McGuckin, the program started with a warm welcoming from SSU President Ruben Armijañana and also SSU Alumni President Cynthia H. Stringer. In his keynote speech professor Anthony Mountain paid homage to the late Hutchins founder Warren Olson and spoke eloquently about the connection between a Hutchins pedagogy that emphasizes critical judgment and the health of a democracy, noting that, "It seems to me not just realistic but crucial that we pay attention to our thinking if we wish to preserve our democracy."



In the Open Technology discussion that followed, participants proposed and enthusiastically engaged in a number of topics such as *Arts and Social Justice, Retirement/Life Change, Acceptance vs. Forgiveness, What is "Wilderness"?, Does Art Matter, Grades in the Lower Division?, Finding Time for Community, and Nurturing Ongoing Connections*. (Notes from these discussions will be available on our web site)

The afternoon reception started with brief presentations on the various programs of the Hutchins School, including the *Hutchins Institute for Public Policy Studies and Community Action, The Dialogue Center, and Project Censored*. It soon turned into a lively celebration with alumna Brenda Zander's showing of photographs covering four decades, and participants taking individual journeys down memory lane.

The festivities continued in the evening with dinner at the Double Tree Hotel. The dinner guests were honored with the presence of Warren Olson's wife Maurine Olson, and a moving letter from his son Berthold Olson, Buddhist Monk at Shasta Abbey, read by professor Francisco H. Vázquez, in which he wrote, "Every student, staff member and teacher who has and is giving their life energy to this school adds their YES to my dad's vision, furthering and deepening it."



Those in attendance were then regaled with professor Les Adler's speech "The Heart of the Matter," a poetic image of the journey initiated by Olson's vision, similar, Adler observed, to the 40 years of wandering in search of the promised land by the Children of Israel. After a vivid description of the growing pains of this institution, and of the many characters in this saga, he concludes by noting, "So, perhaps we haven't changed the world yet in our 40 year journey, but all of us have certainly been changed for the better by it."

All in all, Warren must be proud that his child had a wonderful 40<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### Thanks:

**To Eric McGuckin for (almost) six years of loyal service as Director of the Hutchins School and for his excellent job of hosting our anniversary Celebration;**



**to Brenda Zander, Francisco Vazquez, Dacia Sandoval, Sue Foley, and Eric Carlson for planning and coordinating the event;**

**and to you, our alumni, for making Hutchins into such an amazing place.**

**Note: Thanks to Brenda Zander, many more pictures are available on the Facebook site.**

