**An Artist and a Scientist**

*Two OLLI instructors from different disciplines - Cash Baxter, an artist and Larry Fox, an economist - discover they have much in common.*

**A POLAND:** Today two OLLI instructors talk shop and gear in for a boring academic course. Well think again.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

**A POLAND:** Welcome to *In Conversation: The Voices of OLLI*. OLLI, O-L-L-I is an acronym for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute located at the Palm Desert Campus of California State University San Bernardino.

**A POLAND:** Meet two of our outstanding instructors, two beloved personalities. Cash Baxter is an instructor of fine arts at OLLI. A fine painter in his own right and a multi-talented Broadway luminaire. Larry Fox is an esteem economist, founder of the private equity group and a retired professor of finance at the Northwestern University. An artist and a scientist are about to discover that they have so much in common. Let’s listen in on their conversation.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC FADES)

**C BAXTER:** Hello, my name is Cash Baxter. I have been a part of the OLLI team since January of 2004. The first class I taught and because I am also a painter, and it was a course in painting the impressionist way. I am really proud to be a part of Osher.

**L FOX:** I am Larry Fox. I teach courses that are some combination of economics and policy. I was trained as an economist but unfortunately, I’ve forgotten most of that. All of my courses set around the issue of the inequality of opportunity. The unfair inequality of opportunity because I am talking about inequality based on race, gender, national origin, wealth of the family, or the appearance of people or stuff like that. When you break that down and try to deal with just inequality you kind of don’t get anywhere. All you can do is redistribute income. If you think about things like health care, education, immigration, and tax policy and you think of it as an integrated way, all of a sudden solution instead of being dissatisfying and limited become very rich and pretty clear and I love doing it. I have been doing it now for 11 years and 27 courses. It is just the greatest program on Earth.

**C BAXTER:** I can tell you this, I have never been to one of your classes and that is something I intend to do. Yet my wife she has been to I think many of your classes. We know each other in the hallway, and you have come to my classes, and always have stayed and greeted me afterwards, and complimented me on what I was doing. So, stand by kiddo because I will do the same with you.

**L FOX:** I would look forward to that. Actually, Cash’s classes are great. I go into classes on art, dance, in the films, tap, and they have been fabulous. Minor fact that he has put there a feeling based. There are people who feel what do you need to go to college for when you got a telephone that has all the facts on Earth, but facts are not a way of thinking. They are kind what you think about when you are not thinking about your feelings. You know I teach politics. If you try to establish policy without considering how people feel. For example, one of the really bad things that has been happening in the last thirty years at an increasing rate is a complete disrespect of work and workers unless they’re doing work that requires a college education. This is just the dumbest thing in the world and it makes it harder for people to go to work rather than easier. Why would you work at a minimum wage and a tough job if you aren’t going to get any respect out of it at all. It’s not just that, I-I love art. I love art of all kinds. I think a well-rounded person is hard to describe in two words. Well rounded people had got not corners but rounded parts.

**C BAXTER:** I can do it in one word. Overweight. (LAUGHS)

**L FOX:** Oh no. That’s not what you mean.

(LAUGHTER)

**C BAXTER:** No, no. No, I am not. You know what, I think that one of the reasons why I have not come to your classes even though I have heard glowing reports from so many sides. I think I am a little frightened of it. I think it is because it is an area that I am not comfortable and instead of being willing to go out there and learn, I have been a little shy more than a little and intimidated and that is going to change.

**L FOX:** So many people take classes on a basis of the subject matter. Gee I am interested in whatever it is and of course it is much smarter to pick the courses based on the instructor because a good instructor will make any class good and a bad instructor can’t make a boring subject interesting.

**C BAXTER:** I think that one of the things that is attracting people and a lot of it has to do with how well the title of the class is written and prepared for the catalogue because you can say I will teach the first film *The Airforce*. They trained me to be a film decorator and director. I decorated a few films too and my first film was a hard sell. It was called *Entitled:* *Oxygen, Nitrogen, Dissolution, Quality Controlled*.

**L FOX:** Oh boy.

**C BAXTER:** What the heck does that mean?

**L FOX:** (LAUGHS)

**C Baxter:** I don’t know yet what that means but it was during the testing of the mercury missile and the Atlas as the delivery system. Some of the most exciting work in my film was when the Atlas blew up. We ended up blowing up Atlases all over the place. I think that if I could say Osher presents Atlases blowing up, I probably can sell it out because people would know I am crazy anyway. They would come and think it is about musical comedy, wouldn’t they?

**L FOX:** I think it is like a Nascar race, you don’t go to see the cars running around and round, you go to see them going off the track.

(LAUGHTER)

**C BAXTER:** And you’re right.

**L FOX:** No doubt about it. No doubt about it. How many films have you directed before you did the Beethoven film that we saw a few months ago.

**C BAXTER:** I can’t imagine how many films I have done because I did documentaries which was primarily the reason I was trained or how I was trained to do.

**L FOX:** When you were twenty-two would you say that you were self-confident or were you self-questioning.

**C BAXTER:** Oh, I had what is called the second lieutenant syndrome and that is there is nothing I couldn’t do or I didn’t know better. Someone said to me that during the course of my air force career “I’m sorry lieutenant” he was a captain and he said, “I’m sorry lieutenant, I know you are down here with your crew in Puerto Rico but I don’t have an airplane to fly you over to get the drop site that you need for the parachute. I don’t have an airplane.” I was like, “Really?” I said, “Have you seen my orders?” and he said “Yes.” The attitude was very real and I said, “Could I borrow your phone sir?” and he said “Sure.” He kind of shoved it my way and remained at his desk. I picked up the phone and I dialed the code, it went *blrlrlrlrlrl blrlrlrlrlrl* watching it switch. There was this lady’s voices on the phone, I said “I need to talk to General Amay. Here is my code.,” *click, click, click* and by golly. “Lieutenant, this is General Amay, what’s the problem?” and I said, “Well, the Captain has no airplane.” And he said “Um, he does have an airplane. I will get him one. Put him on the phone.” The color of this man changed.

**L FOX:** The tone of this man changed (LAUGHS)…. Completely.

**C BAXTER:** He was absolutely pale.

**L FOX:** Well if my reputation was at bay with a guy who worked with people very well, I would forget about not doing well with people and living in Italy. Cash, I had entirely the opposite experience. I was talking about it in class the other day. When I was an undergraduate I went on an athletic scholarship and I got injured. I was in a lesser sport you lose the scholarship if you’re in a lesser sport. So, I go to the head department to thank him for being so nice to me and tell him that I was going to leave school and he said “No, no… we will work something out.” And he did. I went to go work for the department and I ended up in a huge study of the effective government retraining in the poverty pockets in the United States. I started off as a grunt, of course. I could’ve had a lower job if I was watching whales from the bottom of the Marianna trench. It was something but I worked my way up and had some pretty good position with this study. In the study from the point of view from everybody turned out to be a horror show. The government had done very good job of structuring ths retraining program, very good job recruiting people, and having excellent instructors for a whole variety of people. The retraining was just not worth the tax payer’s money. We had to write this report saying the retraining is just not worth the tax payer’s money. Which was the right conclusions but intensely painful to us. Now comes the better part of the story. So, my mentor at the University of Wisconsin where I was an undergraduate said, “you know your parents live near the University of Chicago and you told me you went to a debate with Milton Friedman the other day. You should go down to see Friedman and talk about graduate school. And I was just exactly the opposite of you. I did not have the second lieutenant’s problem.

(FAINT LAUGH)

**L FOX:** I said “sure, I am going to go down and see the most famous economist in the world, right now and he is going to see me.” “No, yes he will, he will. I will write to him and he well be happy to see you.” So, I went down there and this is a little opposite. I did not have a Curtis Labada call and this is part of the quadrangles at the University of Chicago. Each side is this immense building. I walked around the building twice with my heart rate getting faster and faster (LAUGHS)

**REVISE L FOX:** And my breath getting shorter and shorter “I got to do this.” So, I went up there and I knocked on the door, he came and threw open the door of his office. The opposite experience of Kurt Labay or your fellow of the Beethoven film. He is about five feet and one inch tall and dome headed.

(LAUGHTER)

**L FOX:** Like he wouldn’t be. He could have possibly been nicer and put my life in an altogether different path but I was so scared. I didn’t have any saliva in my mouth.

(LAUGHTER)

**L FOX:** I mean I was just… I was petrified.

**C BAXTER:**  What a story. Wow

(LAUGHTER)

**L FOX:** Yeah. Well he was… his wife was director, who also deserved a Nobel prize and told me she had kept count and I had spent 200 nights on his, on Milton Friedman’s couch because your computer stuff, used to come out in the middle of the night. So, I had to be on campus in the middle of the night to go pick it up and look at it and try to get another turn before morning because I usually screwed it up. So, I slept on his couch. I was at the university in grad school for five years, so there was a lot of nights I spent on his couch. He couldn’t have been nicer and he was only intimidating if you were debating because he was just the smartest man on Earth. He was, he was sweet. Rest in peace.

**C BAXTER:** I can’t imagine what that feeling is to meet someone who is a genuine celebrity and not in show business but a real celebrity.

**L FOX:** Yeah.

**C BAXTER:**  I know that when I was introduced to a person that you probably heard of named Judy Garland.

(SLIGHT LAUGH)

**L FOX:** Saw the movie anyhow.

**C BAXTER:** Sawthemovie**.** I haven’t seen the movie yet. I heard it is quite wonderful. I am anxious to see it. Liza Minnelli was starring in her first Broadway show, it was called, *Flora, The Red Menace*. It was written by the same men that wrote *Cabaret*, Kander and Ebb. Liza knew that I was there, I had met her but I didn’t know her well but knew I was there. So, I went backstage after the show as she had asked and my wife doesn’t like that part of show business. She is not comfortable with show people. They can be strange. They are strange, weird, and wonderful. I was one myself. In any case, I go and knocked on her door and there was this crowd of people in a little circle and I can see through. As I looked into the circle, the person looked out, just by circumstance, and it was Liza Minnelli. She waved to me to come on in. So, I reluctantly went to join this little circle and she said, “Oh everybody, this is my very good friend Cash Baxter. He is a director and he is here to see me tonight and, how was I?” and I said, “You were terrific.” And she said, “Thank you. Oh, I know my mother would love to hear that. This is my mother, Judy Garland.” And I said “Aha. Oh. I, freesia?” I couldn’t speak. This was an embarrassing moment and no general Amay and no airplane. No air force film footage to cover it. But I can imagine meeting somebody in a world stage.

**L FOX:** When I went to Chicago… We’re both conscious that we are doing something for a reason

(INAUDIBLE)

**L FOX:** and it is not just for personal thought, we are both leaving a record.

**C BAXTER:** And when the show closes the actor is always convinced, I will never work again. One of our classes closes, there is a void there because that class meant something special for those six weeks or so or for however many weeks the class was. It meant something special that only we could generate.

**L FOX:** Yes.

**C BAXTER:** It’s a responsibility and I love the responsibility. That is why it is so important what this program does. The OLLI Program, the Lifelong Learning Institute to me is as valuable as it is to the students.

**L FOX:** You know when my late wife died, there were three things that kept me going really. My kids, the hiking clubs in which I was involved, and the OLLI program. And they were all of tremendous importance and I will be forever grateful. Just this last week I commented in class, as people came in to the room… I got there early because I had to set up, I was just grinning like the Cheshire cat because of the people that walked in, I probably know eighty of them and I have probably eaten with sixty of them. You know, and they are friends.

(LAUGHTER)

**C BAXTER:** You get that many invitations to go out, do you?

(LAUGHTER)

**L FOX:** If you were married to my wife you were very busy socially. There is no doubt about it. I think you were of the same experience.

**C BAXTER:** ButI understand your point. Those are not your students but they become friends.

**L FOX:** Yeah, yeah.

**C BAXTER:** You depend on them as they depend on you.

**L FOX:** Everyone of them has a—whatever their educational background. They all have a life history. They are there because they want to be there. They have not paid much to be there. How do I say this without being unkind to undergraduates?

(LAUGHTER)

**L FOX**: it is totally different that teaching undergraduates. An experience that I have had but enjoyed.

**C BAXTER**: It is true and very challenging.My people like yours I’m sure, will challenge you if they don’t understand or if they think you are wrong or mistaken. Of course, that is what it is suppose to be about, some give and take. If I make some dumb statement, I better be able to prove it. There was an incident of when I was talking about Bob Fosse one time. I ran into him one time and asked him, “Hi, Bobby, how are you? What are you doing here in California?” he said, “I’m looking for the urinal” and he walked right on. That meant something to me because we would be in rehearsal together, in the same building and we had too few toilets for both men and women. Our stage managers would time it so we can take alternate breaks to use the urinal. Bob Fosse never acknowledged that he knew me except for that. I told his story and someone in my audience said, “And how do we know if he really said that?”

(LAUGHTER)

**C BAXTER:** This was an arbitrary guy from Brooklyn and I was so shocked and said “Because he said it to me!”

(FAINT LAUGHTER)

**C BAXTER:** And everyone applauded.

**L FOX:** I am about to make podcast history. We were at the theater last week and at the break the line in the men’s room was longer that the line at the women’s room.

(LAUGHTER)

**C BAXTER:** It doesn’t say much for the architect.

**L FOX:** No, it doesn’t say much. Plumbing being what it is, it doesn’t say much for the architect.

**C BAXTER:** Boy, we’re having too much fun. I wonder can we get drinks in here.

(LAUGHTER)

**C BAXTER:** You know what we have?

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

**C BAXTER:** We have tremendous respect for each other.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

**L FOX:** I do for you, for sure.

**C BAXTER:** And I do for you, for sure.

**L FOX:** Thank you.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC FADES)

**A POLAND:** Cash Baxter and Larry Fox. Two vibrant voices of OLLI. And here are others.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

**OLLI MEMBER 1:** Our OLLI, our Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, we offer a wide variety of courses, and member events, and educational travel for people fifty and over who just love to learn.

**OLLI MEMBER 2:** From economics to environmental issues, to art, film making.

**OLLI MEMBER 3:** There are no tests, no homework, there’s no books.

**OLLI MEMBER 4:** No grades. You can just enjoy learning for the love of it.

**OLLI MEMBER 5:** There is a passion of learning it as I am about teaching.

**OLLI MEMBER 6:** The interaction of the people that you meet is incredible.

**OLLI MEMBER 7:** A whole other level of socialization. It is not just an overt topic over wine or a cup of coffee. It is about an idea, subject, a thought.

**OLLI MEMBER 8:** I just love going to school.

**OLLI MEMBER 9:** My head is still in the game and I want it to be.

**OLLI MEMBER 10:** We got an incredibly fascinating educated and accomplished student body

**OLLI MEMBER 11:** There is not a student here that doesn’t have a post education in life.

(STATIC NOISE)

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

**A POLAND:** This has been *In Conversation: The Voices of OLLI*. Our thanks to Cal State San Bernardino in Palm Desert. Along with the communications study professor, Lacey Kendall and all her media students. This podcast is produced for OLLI by Lou Gorfain and I am Dr. Arlette.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC ENDS)