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Spotlight
On
Instructors

Jim Lawson

Jim’s Life’s Adventures in Continuing Education

I was extremely fortunate to be reared on a subsistence farm in east Rockingham. That meant we produced all our food (all the rage today). We cooked on a wood stove, which meant keeping a full woodshed. Days started about 4:30 a.m. to get all the chores completed and milk delivered before catching the school bus. We provided our own creative entertainment, which focused on front porch music and storytelling. This early life style created the work ethic and parameters that has guided my career and life to this day.

My brother and I earned scholarships that started us on the path to higher education and rewarding careers. I had the privilege of being part of a statistical study of poverty in Appalachia for the Kennedy Administration while attending Virginia Tech. After graduating, I accepted a position as statistician for USDA. My assignments led to three state field offices before transferring to Washington, D.C. I continued my education throughout my career, completing graduate courses in the three resident states and D.C area. I taught statistics at Tennessee State University as part of my office assignment.

In addition to specializing in agricultural census and commodity estimates, my career included being part of many research projects: some of which were crop forecasting models, working with the aerospace remote sensing (AgRISTARS) program managed by USDA in cooperation with NOAA and NASA using satellite data for domestic and global commodity information, and numerous other survey sampling research projects. I enjoyed writing in-house manuals on “Train the Trainer.” This resulted in completing graduate courses in the subject area. Along the way, one of my positions included serving as Deputy State Statistician for Virginia.

After a 30 plus year career as a statistician for USDA, I returned to my beloved valley and home farm. Then, back to work for the Rockingham County Agricultural Land Use Office. I completed the Virginia Master Naturalist Training program after my second retirement. Lately, I have devoted time to teaching mountain heritage classes for JMU LLI (partnering with Sandy Conrad) and Shenandoah National Park (SNP) history for the Road Scholar program at Big Meadows and giving talks for local clubs and civic groups. I also volunteer for special projects for SNP and the Virginia Master Naturalist program.

My hobbies include researching local and SNP history, writing, hiking, wildflowers and lately, genealogy. Hiking is combined with researching abandoned home, church, and school sites, and cemeteries in SNP. It also includes taking lots of pictures! The SNP research can be attributed to my mother and grandparents being part of the 500 families evicted from the Blue Ridge to make way for SNP.

My most rewarding life adventures besides rearing three sons, included being a Boy Scout leader, Little League baseball coach and umpire, and currently being part of the wonderful LLI family. LLI has provided a great opportunity for continuing education in a relaxed atmosphere and offers an interesting diversity of subjects. LLI provides the atmosphere for meeting likeminded folks interested in gaining new skills and knowledge, and developing long time friendships.

Aso, I am proud of the large flock of sheep and the purebred livestock I was able to accumulate during my school years. Now, have I told you how I got into the sheep business? Truly one of life’s adventures.

Written by Jim Lawson
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY
Lifelong Learning Institute

Preview of Fall 2016 Courses and Events
August 10th, 2016 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
at JMU’s Festival Conference and Student Center

*Free!   *No Registration Required   *Drawing for Free LLI Classes

Have you ever been interested in learning about Mediterranean cooking, dancing, watercolors or how the weather works? These and many other courses are taught by experts at JMU’s Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI). In addition, you can take part in regional, national, and international trips! We also host Brown Bag Learning Lunches that are free to the public and are a chance to learn about a variety of different subjects with your peers.

If you consider yourself curious, and enthusiastic about learning please join us for our Fall Preview of Events on August 10th

Phone: 540-568-2923 www.jmu.edu/lli
127 W. Bruce Street, Harrisonburg VA 22807
LLI Celebrates “20 Years and Still Learning”

Over 100 dined at the JMU Festival Center for LLI’s 20th anniversary celebration on June 1, where the theme was “20 Years and Still Learning.” Popular LLI instructor Adair McConnell provided music for our social hour.

LLI founder Dr. Cecil Bradfield (1939-2015) was memorialized by Emeritus Professor Ann Myers, his colleague in JMU’s Department of Social Work. Ann, who served as LLI’s administrative liaison during most of our formative years, described Dr. Bradfield as “energetic, purposeful, passionate, caring and involved with the community. Cecil loved to plant seeds and watch them grow to reality.” Aided by a grant from JMU’s CISAT, his nationwide research of nearly 200 institutions of learning for retirees, with identification of best practices, culminated in the launch of LLI with four courses in Fall 1996. With about 530 current members, the institute expects to offer 25 courses this Fall, Ann noted.

Outgoing advisory board president Linda Bradley reported 1,336 registrations for LLI’s Spring’s courses and trips. Board president Archie Turner and other officers for 2016-17, were elected by unanimous vote.

Harrisonburg City Council member Kai Degner introduced keynote speaker Richard W. Lindsay. The renowned aging and care giving expert founded the Richmond-based Lindsay Institute for Innovations in Caregiving (recently renamed for him). In “Celebrating 50 Years with 50+ Fabulous Older People,” a 2015 publication marking the 50th anniversary of the Older Americans Act by commemorating one older person from each state, Dr. Lindsay was named its “fabulous” Virginian.

Addressing changes in lifespan, demographics and health issues, Dr. Lindsay cited “obesity, inactivity and smoking” as the top causes of death in the U.S. He cited societal needs including affordable housing, poverty alleviation and cross-cultural understanding, while offering the following suggestions for everyone: Forget such myths as “Old equals sick,” or “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” “Don’t let your brain rust.” Remember, “Exercise slows aging in the brain. Get active, but only with something you like to do.”

He showed slides of elderly mountain climbers, astronauts, entrepreneurs, motorcyclists, and recent record-setting pole vaulter Don Pellmann, aged 100. Programs such as LLI, Dr. Lindsay added, help make our later years “a sunrise, not a sunset.” Chris Edwards
Anniversary Dinner Photos
The title Nate Miller gave his course this Spring was “You Can Eat That? Forage for Edible and Medicinal Wild Plants from the Backyard to Backwoods.” A small, intrepid band of learners trekked through four local parks, plus the Edible Landscaping nursery in Afton, Va., learning about nearly countless local flora and what we might seek (or must avoid) in putting it to tangible use. Nate -- a landscaper and professor of horticulture at Blue Ridge Community College – has led several similar LLI investigations of both flora and fauna over the last two years. This Fall he’ll conduct tours of local farms in a course entitled “Agritouring: Finding the Sources of Our Food.”

Photos from the Spring’s venture are as follows:

1. Virginia bluebells in the JMU Arboretum. Blossoms make a salad garnish.
2. The ripe, yellow mayapple fruit is edible, but leaves and green fruit are poison.
3. At Edible Landscaping: prickly pear cactus pads can be stir-fried; the fruits can make jams and jellies.
4. Ramps (the wide-leaved onion-family members, shown at JMU) are fervently loved by many, notwithstanding their effect on breath aroma.

Chris Edwards
An “Ed-Venture” Explores Historic Treasures

A morning’s “Ed-Venture” in March provided an opportunity to view (and even touch, with white gloves provided) Bridgewater College’s 15th Century Illuminated Venice Bible and other historic treasures not usually accessible to the public.

The Venice Bible, of 1482-1483, was among the world’s first books printed with moveable type. BC Special Collections Librarian Stephanie Gardner showed us the Biblical text appearing at the center of each page, surrounded by commentary, plus an illuminated page from the prologue and a rubricated page (i.e., decorated in red). That volume, and the collection’s 1611 Geneva Bible, were among the more than 5,000 items donated to BC by Reuel B. Pritchett -- a Tennessee farmer, Brethren minister and alumnus of Daleville College (an early school affiliated with Bridgewater).

Historic items examined that morning in BC’s Alexander Mack Memorial Library also included a travel bag belonging to the late Brethren Elder John Kline, of Rockingham County (1797-1864), a dress worn by Aundria Newton Wilson in BC’s May Court of 1939, and quilts, regional sheet music and illustrations of early local homes. The morning concluded with a tour of the college’s library.

Chris Edwards
LLI Trip to Harpers Ferry, spring 2016

Standing on Bolivar’s Heights in West Virginia, we could see where two powerful rivers, the Shenandoah and the Potomac, carved a gap through the Blue Ridge Mountains. A park service guide met our LLI tour group here and pointed out the high bluffs which tower over both rivers, and the low spit of land between them. From here we could see Maryland, and Virginia. On that small spit of land, squeezed between the rivers and the bluffs, sits Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

It is a town with spectacular scenery and many stories. It is now part of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Our guide pointed out the landmarks from the heights and then led us to a line of cannon with their barrels pointed at the town. Those cannons would spell the end of Harpers Ferry during the Civil War.

Our tour bus wound its way down the bluff, along the remains of the Old Shenandoah Canal where the gundelows from Port Republic brought produce from the Valley. We could also see ruins of factories that once surrounded the town. From the shuttle bus stop, our guide walked us along the gentle rapids of the Shenandoah River, pointing out the stone foundations of buildings and industry that once stood here. We could imagine the clanging of the machines and the thick choking smoke when Harpers Ferry was once a thriving industrial port.

The Potomac River was a major barrier for settlers wishing to move into the Shenandoah Valley from Pennsylvania. This area was included in Lord Fairfax's 5.2 million acre holdings.

Robert Harper, received a patent for 125 acres and established his ferry in 1747. Thus Harper's Ferry became a starting point for settlers moving to the Shenandoah Valley. In 1763, the Virginia Assembly established the town of “Shenandoah Falls at Mr. Harper’s Ferry,” later shortened to Harper’s Ferry. George Washington was also a visitor here. At first, as a surveyor for Lord Fairfax, he purchased land. He saw then, the potential of the rivers as transportation to the west, and as power for industry. Washington oversaw the construction of canals as part of the Patowmack Company’s attempt to make the rivers navigable. Later, Washington recommended Harpers Ferry as the location for a federal armory and arsenal. This began the industrialization of Harpers Ferry.

Next our guide pointed out a board on a building reaching over 40 feet high, marking how high some of the disastrous floods had reached, as they swept through the town, year after year. We stopped at Arsenal Square, now empty, it once held the large and small arsenals. Next on the tour was “John Brown’s Fort”, the old firehouse where John Brown, his three men, with nine hostages were besieged by Robert E. Lee and the U.S. Army. As we crowded into the interior, we wondered how such a small space could have had such an impact on history. Standing at “The Point,” we viewed the confluence of the two rivers. The Shenandoah crashed into the Potomac with a swirl of foam, and then its current turned and swept on, becoming part of the Potomac.

Nearby, the Appalachian Trail crossed the Potomac on a footbridge beside a railroad trestle. Hikers could stand in the center of the bridge and watch the clash of currents as they swirled around old bridge abutments, that had been long ago destroyed by floods.

From the bridge, the trail climbed through the town, up a set of old stone steps, that were slippery and bowed from thousands of feet. The steps passed Robert Harper’s house, the oldest building in Harpers Ferry, then Saint Peter’s Catholic Church, whose spire rises above the town. The trail passes “Jefferson Rock”, where Thomas Jefferson once enjoyed the spectacular view and said, “the passage of the Patowmac through the Blue Ridge is perhaps one of the most stupendous scenes in Nature....this scene is worth a trip across the Atlantic.”

The complete story of Harpers Ferry can’t be told in this space nor it scenery adequately described. The ghosts of its past, haunts today’s visitors. If you missed the LLI tour, Harpers Ferry is a place you need to visit for yourself.

Written by Linda Dinsmore
United Way Day of Caring
LLI Volunteers

Gardening Group at Our Community Place
Left to right:
Philip and Christina Updike,
Deane Geier, Mother and Daughter Team Patty and Katherine Dove and Barbara McKee

Gus Bus Team

Sue O’Byrne, Bev Moore and Debra Douglas

The afternoon Gus Bus Team members (not pictured) were Kathleen Sullivan, Kathy Picerno, Donna Werstler and Anne Nielson.
The LIFE program connects JMU’s international students with individuals and families in the local community to facilitate friendship and cultural understanding. Hunter Swanson, the Assistant Director of International Student and Scholar Services is extending an invitation to LLI members to become a part of this program. Two of our members have taken advantage of this opportunity - you can read their story below, in the “Real Experiences from Friendship Families: [http://www.jmu.edu/news/2015/06/22-life-program.shtml](http://www.jmu.edu/news/2015/06/22-life-program.shtml)

Over 80% of JMU’s 550+ international students who responded to a survey expressed interest in joining a community friendship exchange program in order to learn about American culture, to feel more welcome in the local community, and to practice their conversational English skills.

- There are two options for participation to meet your preferences for time commitment and how you will meet international students. The length of time for commitments are 3 months, 8 months, or a full year. Please use the following link to learn about the length of time for a commitment: [www.jmu.edu/international/isss/students/get-involved/life/index.shtml](http://www.jmu.edu/international/isss/students/get-involved/life/index.shtml)

For more information, please contact Hunter Swanson, Assistant Director, International Student and Scholar Services at swansohr@jmu.edu or 540-568-2923