Larry Abramson lived for a long time in the area of Washington, DC known as Chevy Chase. He liked it because it was a “real” neighborhood: a tightknit community, a place where people knew and looked out for each other. He was in DC because he worked as a reporter and writer for National Public Radio. Larry was at NPR for twenty-nine years. That sort of longevity with one news organization is atypical for journalists.

Larry knows the customary pattern in journalism because he is a veteran reporter, but also because his wife, Anita Huslin, has a more typical resume with experiences at a varied set of news outlets. For a while, she was a TV news anchor for station WMAQ in Chicago (an NBC affiliate), then she moved to CBS radio (she preferred radio journalism to TV), the NY Times, the Associated Press and the Washington Post. She and Larry met in Washington and they both loved living in Chevy Chase.

But they left DC when Larry became Dean of the UM J-School in 2014. It was not immediately obvious to them whether they would feel truly at home in Missoula, but they chose the Upper Rattlesnake. In our interview, Larry was quick to point out that they have grown to love the Rattlesnake because, different as it is from Chevy Chase, it too is a “real” neighborhood. There they found a network of friends and a great view of Montana terrain from their deck.

Now that Larry is retired from the J-school he keeps busy in lots of ways. Teaching for MOLLI is one, but he can also be found at Snowbowl as part of their volunteer ski patrol. Anita, who is about to make a guest appearance in Larry’s MOLLI class on the portrayal of journalists in film, works from home now for a company that taps into her journalistic skills to do “deep dive” research into aspects of business that are mostly of a proprietary sort.

During our conversation, we could not avoid touching upon the pandemic and coping. Like many, Larry and Anita found some great TV series to counter the tedium of isolation, including “The Queen’s Gambit.” As natural game players, their newest focus is – unsurprisingly - chess. Crosswords are also an ongoing love (an addiction I share). Putting that in perspective, Anita suggested that doing the puzzle (from The NY Times or The Missoulian) snuggled up with Larry on these cold evenings is the sort of joy that “our children may never know.” That took me back a bit. I hadn’t thought about the future of that lovely entertainment. Are we in the over-50 group “the last generation” to venerate great crossword puzzles, like those that come late in the week at The NY Times?

You have to take Anita’s concern seriously: she and Larry have a long dedication to “making things out of words,” stories that help us understand what’s going on. Can we be optimistic? How about next time you do a puzzle (if that is your thing) leave it partly undone and challenge someone you know under 30 to finish it?
MOLLI was founded in 2006 by a small startup grant from the Osher Foundation. As a result of MOLLI's rapid growth and success, the Osher Foundation provided MOLLI with a $1 million endowment in 2009 and an additional $950,000 endowment in 2014. These endowments are invested by the University of Montana Foundation, and MOLLI uses the annual interest from the endowments to help cover operating expenses.

MOLLI has developed a strong base of support, with annual membership typically in excess of 1400 individuals. In recent months, MOLLI experienced a small decrease in participants due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, membership remains strong, with participants joining us from across the state of Montana, surrounding states, and Canada.

As set forth in the article about Kathy Bartlett, MOLLI Council Chair, an organization of MOLLI’s size and reach requires strong and capable leadership. In addition to a dedicated and experienced staff, the Chair depends heavily on her fellow Council members and MOLLI committee members, and especially on MOLLI membership as a whole.

MOLLI is self-funded and operates with an annual budget of approximately $390,000. A portion of its financial obligations is met by the interest generated by the two endowments mentioned above.

Another portion of its budget is met by class fees and membership fees. However, these sources of income do not cover all of MOLLI’s expenses. As a result, MOLLI asks its membership to make charitable contributions - either by becoming a Booster, remembering friends and relatives In Memorial, or making a donation at our Cookie Table fundraisers.

COOKIES! A refrain not heard in the halls of the Todd Building this past year due to COVID-19. Thanks to a partnership with Great Harvest Bread Company, during the pandemic MOLLI is conducting its traditional Cookie Fundraisers on line. And our membership has continued to be extremely generous. To date, donations in the current fiscal year are in excess of $26,000. This is extremely helpful, because our expenses have increased this year, due primarily to additional staff and work hours required to deliver remote courses and special events.

The Osher Foundation monitors the financial health of its OLLI’s through an annual report. The Foundation is especially interested in the fundraising activities each OLLI undertakes to become and remain financially secure. So THANK YOU to all who contribute to MOLLI above and beyond the membership and class fees. Your donations allow us to continue such an amazing program and keep us in good standing with the Osher Foundation.
MOLLi
“Short Read-Poem”
A Good Days Work
By Sharon Lamar

I learned to drive a tractor before I learned to ride a bicycle
The combine left stray ears scattered across the cornfield
Frugal farmers wasted nothing: *Fodder to fatten the hogs*
Dad boosted me onto the metal seat of the muddy Ford tractor
My first lesson in steering: *Just follow the stubs of the corn stalks*
Advice about stopping: *Stand with all your might on the clutch*
Dad shifted into low gear and slowly let up on the clutch
The tractor rolled across the field at a snail’s pace: *I’m driving!*
The men deftly tossed the ears into the rearward wagon
The hired hand peered upward: *Looks like rain’s a-comin’*
When the tractor outpaced the men, Dad yelled: *Whoa!*
That was my cue to stand on the clutch with all my weight
In the waning hours of daylight, we traversed across the field
One mile per hour: *A good days work for a five-year-old farm gal.*

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Presidential Lecture Series
Conversation on Race and Racism
Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum
Wednesday, March 3, 12:00 - 1:15 pm

Moderated by Blackfeet Community College president Dr. Karla Bird

The community is invited to join Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum for a President’s Lecture Series conversation on race, class, gender, and their intersections. Dr. Tatum, president emerita of Spelman College, is a clinical psychologist widely known for her expertise on race relations and as a thought leader in higher education. She is the author of several books, including the best-selling modern classic “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” and Other Conversations About Race (now in a 2017 20th anniversary edition), and “Can We Talk About Race?” and Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation (2007). Dr. Tatum is a sought-after speaker on the topics of racial identity development, race and education, and strategies for creating inclusive educational environments for learners of all ages.

Please RSVP to join this event.

MOLLI members, do you have a short writing or poem you would like included in MOLLinSights? Send it to: molli@umontana.edu
"Ladies do not put their lipstick on at the table!" Mrs. Mann told her daughter, Kathy. Just one of many pearls of wisdom she shared with Kathy. Perhaps that was why Kathy Bartlett dedicated a room in the UM Phyllis J. Washington College of Education (PJWCoE) building to her parents, Mae and Ted Mann, lifelong teachers and learners. Or maybe it’s the red cowboy boots Mrs. Mann allowed her only daughter to wear.

Yes, Kathy, born in Thermopolis, Wyoming, did wear red cowboy boots in her early years. Not as a fashion statement but to avoid rattlesnakes and cacti on the prairies outside Thermopolis and Chester, Montana. She was familiar with being the “new kid in school.” She attended four elementary schools, two junior highs and two high schools, moving where her father’s civil engineering projects took the family. Kathy attended college here at UM and graduated in 1969 with a degree in elementary education. Her days in Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority further molded her into the “lady” her mother began.

Kathy married in college. After graduation she and her husband moved to Rhode Island, Virginia, and then returned to the west to live in Billings, Denver and then Butte. As Kathy’s daughters grew, she was involved in numerous children’s activities, Junior League, and PEO. She taught students with disabilities in Butte and served as the District Special Olympics coach. After her divorce, Kathy earned a Master’s Degree in Technology. Kathy spent her summers riding her motorcycle and fly fishing the Big Hole River. She explored paleontology sites as she lived in a teepee at Egg Mountain near Choteau, Montana, and in yurts across the Gobi Desert in Mongolia. By now, her mother was resigned to Kathy’s own independent view of her lady-like life.

In 1997, after Kathy’s mother/friend/mentor passed away and her two daughters were out in the world, she moved to Olympia, Washington, to be near her father. Kathy treasured the moments with her father as she worked full-time as Special Education Co-Director for the Washington State Education Department and earned her doctorate from the University of Washington in 2006. Her goal was to earn that degree by age 60 and she finished it exactly a year early.

Kathy’s father passed in 2006 at age 98 so she sold her home on Puget Sound’s Budd Bay and returned home to Montana to live near her daughters and their families. She came full circle back to UM when she taught education students as an adjunct professor at PJWCoE. She became even more involved with UM when she was elected to the Alumni Association Board of Directors and invited to join the PJWCoE Dean’s Advisory Council.

Kathy enjoys cultural and sporting events at UM (once a Griz always a Griz) and in the community, along with skiing, a hiking group and book club. She is a devoted fan of the Missoula music scene from classical to jazz and bluegrass. Kathy’s most precious moments have been with her daughters, sons-in-law, two rescue granddogs, and interacting with three grandchildren who are now teenagers.

Kathy’s initial involvement in MOLLI began in 2008 through the MOLLI Grandparents Camp when she would visit from Washington. After she moved to Missoula, she served on the Membership and Marketing Committee, as Chair of the Member Engagement Committee, became MOLLI Council Vice Chair, and is now the current MOLLI Council Chair. Kathy stressed that she can only function as Chair with the help of capable MOLLI Council members and an exemplary staff. When asked whether she dreaded 2020 in her first year as Council Chair due to all the COVID accommodations she indicated she was excited about the new possibilities. The organization of MOLLI committees has changed this last year to reflect a growing and evolving entity, so Kathy not only assumed the Chair in a pandemic but also as a leader of an organization somewhat redesigned to meet the changing needs of its members and the times. By all reports this “lady” is doing an amazing job.

Kathy Bartlett
Our MOLLI Council Chair

50+
by Myra Shults