I sat down recently and talked with Hal Stearns — scheduled for Two MOLLI offerings this Fall (a course, History Tales along Montana Trails, starting Wed Sept. 29, and a Special Member Event, a Virtual Pep Rally, on Nov. 17 just ahead of the 120th annual “Brawl of the Wild”).

Hal can say a lot in a short period of time and so I quickly learned that he is an historian, teacher, raconteur, veteran, and sports fan not to mention his identity as husband, father, and grandfather — he is first and foremost a family guy. He has taught extensively at the secondary level here in Missoula, but also at the two main public universities, UM and MSU. He can spin out a considerable amount of information about the sports history of both campuses, but let there be no doubt … Hal's loyalties are all squarely with the Griz family.

He grew up in Harlowton, MT, graduating with a class of 32. Despite the fact that both of his parents attended UM, he chose Notre Dame for his undergraduate experience. He then found his way back to the Treasure State to teach high school and work on a Master's degree in history at UM with K. Ross Toole as his advisor.

While teaching high school in Missoula he met a woman I suspect many of you know — Sheila MacDonald, an accomplished scholar and academic leader at several institutions including UM. Hal and Sheila became engaged on the same day she was crowned as Homecoming queen at UM! After Sheila graduated, they took off for Europe. During their time there, they both taught and they managed to visit what Hal reckons to be 40 countries.

Because Hal is a skilled storyteller, I could not resist asking him what he thinks are the ingredients for a great story. First, he said, it’s important to know that storytelling is really about “his-story” and “her-story.” Women’s experiences have not been told as often as they need to be. Almost equally important is to recognize that we each have a story or — more likely — stories. And what might these be? Hal believes they are the things that have changed your life — we all have some of those — and he categorizes these as essentially “magical” things.

Hal provided a compelling example from his own life. When he was in grammar school, his younger brother Bill (William DeSmet Stearns) died at a tragically young age in a bicycle accident. On the way home from the funeral, he mentioned to his dad that he did not intend to go to school that afternoon, where he had some duties to take care of as class president. His dad quickly and strongly advised him not to skip. To be resilient and ‘hang in there’ is a Stearns family value. Hal knows that he learned something that day and that such resilience helped him at numerous points later in life.

One last thing he relayed to me that I really enjoyed: is that his given name is Harold Joseph Stearns. You might think his middle name is pretty common. However, his dad “snuck” Joseph in there to honor Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce, whom his dad greatly admired. You will love hearing Hal’s stories in his MOLLI offerings. He is a true son of Montana in the broadest sense and a hell of a good storyteller!
**Book Recommendations**

When interviewing MOLLI members and faculty, we often ask about recent books or films they have enjoyed and would recommend. We will include these suggestions from time to time and if they seem popular, we will open channels for members at large to submit recommendations. Here are some from folks interviewed last year.

**American Dirt**
Jeanine Cummins - 2019. A bookstore owner becomes the target of a drug lord. She saves her 8-year-old son from the bloody execution of her family and becomes a migrant, joining countless people trying to reach el norte. Everyone is running from something.

- Recommended by: Gladys Considine

**Deacon King Kong**
James McBride - Recommended by: Kathy Bartlett

**The Emerald Mile**
Kevin Fedarko – True story of Colorado River dudes who run the river at its highest flow in decades in a wooden dry. History about the Grand Canyon Dating back to Cortez and a fascinating description of the evolution of rafting the Colorado. – Recommended by: Anita Byrne

**Film Recommendations**

**Hot Peppers**
(dir. Les Blank) - this up-close look at Zydeco bandleader Clifton Chenier may or may not be Blank's best, but I think it's my favorite; all of the late directors loving portraits of American eccentrics and lonesome geniuses at the margins of the mainstream are worth watching.

- Recommended by: Robert Greene

Books are transport machines to new worlds. Words activate the reader's imagination and senses, creating a virtual reality that takes the reader out of familiar, day-to-day experience into places and times never before known. A reader can join Huck Finn on a raft going down the Mississippi, travel into the Backbone of the World with Fools Crow, or journey to new planets with Ursula K. Le Guin. In this way books expand a human being's universe, encouraging empathy, providing new knowledge, and offering solace in times of pain.

Books' magic was never more apparent than during the coronavirus pandemic. Quarantined and isolated, readers turned to fiction and nonfiction to learn about how prior generations coped with a truly viral event. Suddenly old favorites such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Love in the Time of Cholera took on new meaning, new resonance. Montana author David Quammen's Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic looked not just prescient but necessary. New books contributed to empathy and understanding as well. The recently published Hamlet takes us inside the life of the Shakespeare family after their son dies from the plague, revealing the trauma of loss and the wonder of literature's power to release pain through catharsis (the play Hamlet was inspired in part by the playwright's grief).

“Adventures in World Traveling through Books” will be a column by Ken Egan, appearing occasionally in future MOLLI Newsletters. The Column will introduce MOLLI members to readings that transport the audience to diverse worlds, with a focus on texts that do not typically appear on the New York Times bestseller lists. These are often highly original books that emerge from a writer’s personal obsessions or life-long apprenticeship. We live at a moment when highly creative individuals occupying unfamiliar niches possess the talent and publishing opportunities to share their precise knowledge and urgent voices.

Ken Egan is a proud graduate of the University of Montana who has taught courses on American, British, and world literatures at six colleges and universities in the United States and abroad during a thirty-year career. There is nothing more revealing about our culture than discussing a Poe short story or a Toni Morrison novel with students from Slovakia and Greece. After entering post-professional life (aka retirement), Ken is pursuing a range of writing projects. He is currently working on his Irish-American great grandfather's immigrant story, Henry David Thoreau's efforts as a public humanist, and the Montana Rocky Mountain Front's complex history. Many of the reading recommendations offered in his columns will emerge from these research efforts. His published books include Hope and Dread in Montana Literature and Montana 1864: Indians, Emigrants, and Gold in the Territorial Year. To catch up with Ken's new writing, stay tuned (simply by opening future MOLLI Newsletters)!

**Volunteer for MOLLI or other UM Departments by Clicking here**
Where Do Discussion Groups Fit Into The MOLLI Program

MOLLI classes are set up in various formats: walking and learning, limited class size, medium and large lecture classes. The amount of interaction between students and the instructor usually depends on the size of class. In some classes you are expected to participate i.e. Memory Writing or chorus. “Outdoor Classrooms” allow for interactions while walking or stopping at a particular example. Instructors in Zoom have chat boxes and in large lecture classes many professors welcome questions or observations during class.

During the COVID Times many of the classes built in an additional Discussion Group to give more of the feeling of interaction and to allow for those before and after class conversations that take place during normal times. Some were led by the instructor and some were led by a student. But these additional discussion groups didn’t really catch on—perhaps because some instructors organized formal in-class discussions and others may give you an email address for communication. Due to continuing COVID protocols there will be additional time needed between classes to clean and keep class groups apart. Students will be asked to no longer linger in the classrooms and hallways. Sign-ins may be required so that any outbreak may be contact traced.

Now with the return to more in-class sessions (this fall there will be 4 Zoom only classes, 4 In-Person classes and the remainder will be a hybrid). The Member Engagement Committee has recommended that we disband these additional discussion groups based on the experience of offering them the last two terms. I am a member of this Committee and experienced a discussion group this spring, but in a class of over 75 only 5-6 students participated and the last 4 sessions we had a wonderful tutorial for 2 from our Professor. This method of interaction created a lot of work for the tech team, asked more of the professor, and in the end did not seem to produce the interactive results envisioned.

So, our discussions will be held in class, on the “chat” function, and most of our presenters welcome your questions and comments during class. Some may organize formal in-class discussions and others may give you an email address for communication. Due to continuing COVID protocols there will be additional time needed between classes to clean and keep class groups apart. Students will be asked to no longer linger in the classrooms and hallways. Sign-ins may be required so that any outbreak may be contact traced.

We encourage you to keep talking and asking questions but be mindful of the environment and Remember: SAFETY FIRST.

MOLLI Cookie Fundraiser

MOLLI’s Cookie Fundraiser is critical to the ongoing success of our program. The Osher Foundation, our benefactor, insists that the number of members participating in the fundraising is as important as the amount raised. Please pitch in and make this fundraiser a success.
**Important Dates**

**Thursday, September 9**  
Special Member Event - Reflections on an Anti-racist Spirituality for Today

**Tuesday, September 21**  
Special Member Event - Following in the Path of the Girls Who Stepped out of Line

**Wednesday, October 6**  
Special Member Event - Wrongful Convictions

**Thursday, October 21**  
Special Member Event - Tips and Tricks to Tell if an Image Is Legit

**Wednesday, November 3**  
Special Member Event - Set in Stone: Painted and Carved Images of Montana's First People

**Wednesday November 10**  
Special Member Event - A Life & an Organization Dedicated to Owl Research

**Wednesday, November 17**  
Special Member Event - Thomas Savage and Montana Literature

**Allocation on September 7**

**September 25 Fall Classes Begin**

**Winter Proposal Deadlines:**  
Previous Instructors - September 12  
New Instructors - October 31  
Previous Instructors - November 12

**Spring/Summer Proposal Deadlines:**  
Previous Instructors - September 12  
Winter Proposal Deadlines:  
Previous Instructors - September 12

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**MOLLI Short Story**

**LADIEEEEEES!**  
By Libby Langston

“LADIEEEEEES, Blah, Blah, Blah!”, bellowed the man from way across the marsh. Being the only other humans for miles around, Cindy and I took notice. I yelled back at the top of my lungs, “What did you say?” “BEAR!” “What kind of bear?!” I screamed back. Did it really matter what kind I later asked myself. “GRIZZLY!” “Oh crap!”

Starlatt, Cindy and I scanned the open forest all around us. “What should we do? Beeline it to the water and start swimming?” “What about our cell phones?” “Let’s just leave them on the ground and pick them up later.” “Swim or go back the way we came along the river?” Within seconds and not knowing exactly where the grizzly was lurking, we headed back along the same trail we had just strolled.

As we briskly walked away with an appearance of calm, we were terrified and trying not to run while constantly looking over our shoulders. “Let’s go straight up the hill and into the open meadow so we can see further. At least then we’ll know if the bear is heading towards us!” With our bear sprays out of their holsters and in our hands ready to spray in self defense, we hiked across the seemingly endless meadow this blazing hot July afternoon and worked our way directly to the highway. We didn’t feel safe until we reached the edge of the two-lane road with occasional passing cars. Our heart beats slowed as we marched the three miles back to my car that was parked by itself along the river.

This day started out as a relaxed outing that we had enjoyed the evening before when we drove my car a few miles downstream, parked and hiked upstream along this same gently-flowing river back to my cabin. We had hopped in the double-inflatable kayak and paddled down the river like we have done dozens of times. That warm and people-less evening offered a peaceful float with an eagle flying overhead, ducks splashing away and one deer bedding down in the brush along the water. After such a pleasur-able experience, we hoped to repeat it the next day. Why wouldn’t we experience the serenity of the evening before, we thought.

I had forgotten the lessons I’ve learned living in Montana and basing my adventures on nature. No outing ever repeats itself.

Once we arrived back at my car this nerve-wracking hot afternoon, we knew we had to track down the man who saved us from the grizzly bear. We drove back towards the area from where he yelled and luckily found the 70-year-old man still sitting there by his camper with his binoculars. We pulled up, got out and thanked him. “Hi, I’m Libby and this is Cindy. Thank you for saving our lives!” As I said that out loud, I was struck by how trite I sounded. “Can you tell us what happened?” “WELL, he was the biggest grizzly bear I’ve ever seen in my life! I was sitting here watching him through my binoculars. Then you two ladies suddenly appeared in my view.” As we walked away with an appearance of calm, I was struck by how trite I sounded. “You mean we were that close to him?!” “YES, he was just ahead of you on the trail about ten yards away, heading your way.” “You mean thirty feet in front of us?!” “YES, you had a small hill between you.” “Wow- we were scared, but we didn’t know to be THAT scared.”

I still imagine the scene of a man in a camp chair watching a grizzly bear through his binoculars across a marsh and seeing two women walk into his zoomed-in view. We were those two people. How many times has this sort of potential encounter happened in our lives and we had no idea what we missed? This time, we know.

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In Memory of Robert Greene

The History Department will host an in-person memorial to honor Professor Greene at 4pm on Thursday, September 30th in the Dell Brown Room on the first floor of Turner Hall. All are welcome. Please contact Professor Kyle G. Volk if you have any questions.

MOLLI members, do you have a short writing or poem you would like included in MOLLI Sights? Send it to: moll@umontana.edu

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Copyright for this work belongs to MOLLI Member, Libby Langston
Yesterday, I sat across the “Kitchen Table” for a conversation with Brian and Kathy Derry. Well, actually, we talked over our coffee at a small table in an outdoor café.

Brian said, “Each of our volunteer service activities has been very important to us.” One volunteer activity is training older people to hold family Kitchen Table Conversations regarding end of life issues. After their class, my husband and I had a much needed discussion with our own family. This dynamic duo offers the program in cooperation with Missoula Aging Services. Kathy comes to this task with a background in clinical psychology and mediation. Brian just likes to see things organized and working: operations and leadership.

From his beginnings in Washington, DC and Maryland, Brian has been immersed in getting things done. In the Navy as an officer overseeing repairs for the Atlantic Nuclear-powered Surface vessels, through manufacturing management positions with several different companies, Brian was motivated by a desire to be closely involved with people in accomplishing a shared task and mission. He appreciates and respects the value of his subordinates and their skill in “getting it done.” Now, getting it done includes long-distance care giving for Steve, his invalid brother in Houston.

Kathy came from that famous Oshkosh, B'gosh, Wisconsin where she grew up tolerating the guidance of two older sisters and passing that on to her younger brother. Kathy's story: "I had gone to DC to work for the summer where I lived with an aunt and uncle. Brian had just graduated from Kenyon College. We met playing volleyball at a church youth group. I had just arrived from Wisconsin, but my clothes had not. I met Brian wearing my 56 year old aunt's dress! It had to be love."

She jokes about following Brian around with his work-related job changes. But wherever they moved, Kathy made a place for herself; teaching music, serving on school boards, volunteering for a CASA--Court Appointed Special Advocate—program to help troubled kids, giving piano lessons, singing in the Oberlin choir, and raising their two sons. A natural helper, with her love of music, Kathy offers ease to others through the wonders of music therapy and clinical therapy. Using her know-how and Brian’s “getting it done”, they hold a zoom singing session every week with Brian's older sister in Maryland for Steve and his care providers.

Brian retired in 2002 and they moved to Bayfield, Colorado, an intentionally created co-housing community. Their house was constructed of straw bales with an invitational front porch open to the common path that meandered through the community. There was ample opportunity for volunteer leadership in the community management where decisions were made by consensus and volunteers prepared common meals twice a week. In 2006, to share in the lives of their grandchildren, they moved to Missoula and brought their experience and skills to enhance our more traditional community of Missoula.

Retirement has provided opportunities to travel far and wide. They have traveled to China, Maine, Australia, New Zealand, and train travel across Canada with Road Scholars. Their two Garrison Keillor Prairie Home Companion cruises were not at all like the west coast and Panama Canal “cruises” Brian did in the Navy. In addition, Brian and Kathy gifted each grandchild a national park adventure of the child’s choosing for their twelfth birthday. Recently they are doing more local two-night stays which have included Fort Benton with a ride on the ferry across the Missouri river, Quinn's Hot Springs for the Baroque Festival, the Homestake Pass Resort with a side trip to the famous Ringing Rocks.

Since moving to Missoula, Kathy helps with Aging Mastery classes, Kitchen Table Conversations, and other Missoula Aging Services programs. She has been a Friendly Visitor for MAS clients and recently became a Hospice volunteer. She offers moral support, networking advice, conversation, and friendship to young women at Mountain Home. And she delights in her regular Cello lessons, playing what she wants, when she wants.

Soon after coming to Missoula, Brian heard friends at church and a book group talking about MOLLI classes. In his first class, he asked so many questions, the teacher took him aside and recruited him right then to become a volunteer for MOLLI. Helping to “get it done,” he started out working on the Finance Committee and became chair of the committee. He served on the MOLLI Council as vice-chair and chair and is now a member of the Program Committee.
Brian said, “Early on, I discovered that MOLLI participants may hold vastly different opinions but have respect for others and are willing to listen to new perspectives.” Brian would like to see even more intergenerational interchanges with the students in the Davidson Honors College, in addition to the Griz Read. Brian took any class led by Robert Greene and deeply feels his loss. Among many other classes he likes Harry Fritz and Tobin Shearer. He especially likes the expansion of special member events and special interest groups.

They love MOLLI and shout out accolades for the way the staff have accomplished the changes necessary due to the “COVID thing.” The technical aspects of changing to Zoom classes, teaching the instructors how to operate, keeping as close as possible to MOLLI traditions, finding a new university home when SELL was disbanded—all took a lot of intense work, expertise, and skill. Managing all these changes may appear smooth and polished—all in the work-load of a very small staff.

Adam Collins’ Cello classes and the poetry classes are Kathy’s favorites, as well as the recent Native American Issues Today class led by Joanne Ducharme.

The MOLLI Choral Group where they both participate is now on hold, and they couldn’t perform their last expected concert. When infection dangers are minimized, they will sing again. And we will be glad to listen.