

REJOICE: LEARNING NEVER STOPS

By William Nicoson

Learning is part of living. Whether we set out to learn or just let it happen, it happens. A kid learns at an early age not to touch a hot pot. A school kid learns because that's what school is about. Those of us full of years have the leisure to savor learning and the power to decide what kind of learning offers the richest pleasure.

You guessed it: the Learning in Retirement Spring Catalog is out, and the buffet of courses has never been more appetizing. LRI is an arm of George Mason University and sponsors three terms of courses annually at Lake Anne in Reston and its GMU headquarters in Fairfax City. The annual enrollment fee is \$260. Where else at that price can you feast for a year on your favorite brain-food?

You're not retired? Neither am I. It's just a matter of blocking out time in your daylight schedule for the joys of exercising the mind.

If history is your thing, you're in luck. Sit at the feet of Carlyn Elder, named teacher of the year by the National Capitol Historical Society, to study "Turning Points in American History." One of LRI's most spellbinding instructors, Glenn R. Markus, will examine the nature and evolution of history, including the influences on history of modern physics (such as relativity and quantum mechanics): a history of history itself. Another of LRI's most popular instructors, Bruce Boston, will teach "The History of Ancient Israel."

Courses dealing with the culture of other nations are always popular at LRI. This spring, courses on China, Germany, Ireland and Cuba will draw internationalists. Also scheduled is "An Inside Look at Foreign Affairs" offering a different specialist (frequently of ambassadorial rank) at each session focusing on one of the hot spots around the world.

If you're into hands-on workshops in the arts, the spring semester offers sketching, painting, drawing, dancing, poetizing and autobiographical writing. Courses also abound in artistic observation, listening and discussion. Hemingway turns you on? Sign up for "Hemingway: The Man, The Myth, The Writings."

As usual I've signed up for Gloria Sussman's "The Ongoing Pleasures of Music." "Pleasure" is too tame a word for the diverse treasure-trove she shares with her faithful listeners. I'll also head every Thursday morning to Lake Anne's Used Bookstore for Jan Dewire's "Literary Roundtable," featuring this semester "Great Modern European Short Stories" about which I know next to nothing.

"Issues in Bioethics" should be a battlefield of contested opinions on matters from cloning to assisted suicide. Catherine Wetherby offers her fascinating course : "Bequeathing Your Personal

Values Through an 'Ethical Will'." Courses in religion this semester focus on fundamental texts: "A Sample of New Testament Apocrypha" and "Pirket-Avoth (The Teachings of Our Fathers)" from the Talmud.

An array of seven experts, including planner Patrick Kane, Delegate Vincent Callahan, Jr. and Fairfax City Mayor John Mason, will lead sessions on "Transportation Policy Issues." Another array of experts on global warming, nanotechnology, unmanned aircraft, gene therapy and food safety will teach "Science and Technology Today."

My favorite subject, newspapers, will be the focus of two courses, "All the News That's Fit to Print," moderated by LRI's president, Ed Mentz, and "Be a Monday Morning Editor," moderated by former *Washington Post* editor, Bob Webb. Note that they call themselves "moderators" rather than "instructors." That's undoubtedly because they anticipate animated, even raucous, discussion which, defying instruction, must somehow be moderated.

This is just a sampling of LRI's goodies listed in its Spring Catalog. For your own free copy, call 703-503-2832 or burn off an email to lri@gmu.edu.

Despite appearances, William Nicoson is not a publicist for LRI.