

Serving the greater New River Valley, Virginia

April 21 Chapter Meeting

Redistricting in the Old Dominion

Former Virginia Delegates Jim Shuler and David Nutter will discuss redistricting: why it is important and the current status in Virginia.

State legislatures and the US House of Representatives elect members based on districts. The composition and configuration of districts affects outcomes of elections. Every ten years, following the national census, states may redraw their districts. In Virginia, the state legislature has primary responsibility for creating a redistricting plan. The party in power in the legislature redraws districts to give competitive advantage to delegates from its party. This practice, known as gerrymandering, creates districts in which there is little competition. This situation has been defined as legislators choosing their voters rather than as voters choosing their delegates. Gerrymandering is almost as old as our country, but technology gives the practice new power today.

Nutter and Shuler will give us the latest information on redistricting in Virginia, and suggest what is likely to happen following the census in 2020. They will also suggest ways we can help bring about needed changes to help Virginia restore competitive elections.



Jim Shuler



Dave Nutter

President's Message

April

*April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.*

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 1922 (Italics added)

So, here is another month that evokes not only strong feelings, but in Eliot's opening line one of the most concise, yet also ambiguous statements in modern poetry. Much is written, I've recently discovered, about this particular work of Eliot's, and rightly so given its apparent status as one of the most influential works of poetry in the modern era. Finished in late 1921, published in 1922, dedicated to Ezra Pound for his extensive editing, and coming on the heels of the "great war," Eliot is credited with producing a work that is radically experimental in style, difficult to understand for a variety of reasons, but powerfully expressive of his observation of a contemporary society in need of renewal but in Eliot's mind absent the needed cultural tools.

Admittedly, I stumbled upon *The Waste Land* while playing with some ideas about springtime, and April in
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Upcoming Programs and Events

April 30–May 1: Driver Safety Course, Community Center (p. 5)

May 18: Reception sponsored by Lifelong Learning Institute (p. 4)

May 19 program: AARP benefits, presented by Brian Jacks (Virginia state office of AARP)

June 16: Chapter picnic and white elephant sale

September 8: Living Well@50+ conference

Please bring a food donation (a can or box of non-perishable food) to AARP chapter meetings. We will distribute it to the food banks in Blacksburg and Christiansburg.



Blacksburg Chapter #2613
Chapter meetings are the third Tuesday of each month at the Blacksburg Community Center, Patrick Henry Drive at 11:30 a.m. There are no meetings in July or August. Board meetings are the first Tuesday of each month at the Blacksburg Community Center at 10:00 a.m.

Program plus: Lifelong Learning Institute

Board member Jerry Niles will give us a mini program about the September Conference on Living Well@50 Plus and the Lifelong Learning Institute now being organized.

President's Message (continued)

particular. For an informed review, there appear to be no shortages of critics who will entertain you with deep analysis.

But I do want to get back to Eliot's compelling first line—*April is the cruelest month*. Statements like this are compelling because they are absolutely concise, and thus easy to remember. So much for April. Yet, there is ambiguity here—another reason why the statement draws attention. On the surface at least April has a great many qualities that we would never associate with cruelty, and that ambiguity needs to be dealt with. We need an explanation.

So I've been using this exact statement for quite some time, and not in any way attributed to T. S. Eliot. My thinking has to do with birds, and cattle, and other critters we may know and love. At my home we take care of our songbirds during the winter, going through copious amounts of bird food sourced in very large bags from our local Tractor Supply store. We feed the squirrels too, especially when the black walnut supply seems a little thin.

Now here comes April, signaling for the most part that winter is gone, and nature is back at work producing all the natural beauty we love, and supposedly food, right? But here's the rub: there is no real food, at least yet. Even the lush young grass that looks so inviting for cattle is absent any real nutrition at this point and, overloaded with moisture, could be unhealthy in some cases. So April can be deceptive, and in that sense it may be cruel. Bottom line—don't put away those bird feeders just yet.

In the past, some of my colleagues and I would sometimes use an even more concise version of Eliot's first line in *The Waste Land*. *Spring sucks!* That's what we used to say. And that comes even as spring

was perhaps the most beloved season for many of us. The reason was in the juxtaposition of a beautiful season with so much promise, and the fact that for us professors the spring season tended to bring all the work of the year to a head (i.e., reports, papers and grading, conferences, and a host of other deadlines). Of course we quickly recovered, usually in May, but only to repeat the same "misery" the next spring. Did I mention tax season on top of all this?

On a more serious note, T. S. Eliot's poem also brings to a level of analysis the notions of recovery and resurrection. Easter, after all, usually occurs in April as it does this year. With recovery and renewal comes hope and optimism, but not so easily when promises are unfulfilled, when the new life that emerges seems only temporal, or when the optimism of early spring is juxtaposed with painful memory. In Eliot's time, as reviewers will state, the angst suggested in the early lines was with a barren post war social landscape that made a retreat to the forgetfulness of winter seem desirable.

Large-scale trouble seems to find the month of April with some regularity (see the box for an impressive list just since the Civil War's beginning on April 12, 1861). The start of April this year will see the continuation of recovery operations in the French Alps, and a world seemingly on edge for a variety of reasons. But if April seems unusually associated with trouble and hardship, might the timing just be randomness at play? What would the author of *The Waste Land* say if he were writing today?

April does then seem to produce a confused picture. Is it the worst month ever, or among the best?

Whatever the view, the good news is that renewal does occur with some regularity, we as people are stubbornly resilient, and hope is still in style.

Speaking of hope, my garden that remained frozen most of the winter is now turned over, birds are scour-

April at its worst

Civil War Begins, April 12, 1861
Lincoln shot, April 14, 1865
Hitler born, April 20, 1889
San Francisco earthquake, April 18, 1906
Titanic sinks, April 15, 1912
Failed Bay of Pigs invasion, April 20, 1961
Martin Luther King assassinated, April 4, 1968
Chernobyl, April 26, 1986
Bosnian war begins, April 4, 1992
Waco, Texas, April 19, 1995
Oklahoma City Bombing, April 19, 1995
Columbine, April 20, 1999
Virginia Tech shooting, April 16, 2007
BP oil spill, April 20, 2010

April at its best



Public Libraries: Notes and Opportunities

Blacksburg Library

Showcase of Local Art; Pottery Demo April 30

The Blacksburg Library is delighted to showcase local art. Various local artists currently have their works on display throughout the month of April. Stop in to see the hanging art by International Award Winning Watercolor Artist and Professor, Master Z. L. Feng, and his Radford University Drawing and Watercolor Graduate Students. Chris Lively, a nationally known ceramic artist, has his ceramics on display and will be demonstrating a wheel-throwing pottery program on **Thursday, April 30 at 6:00 p.m.** at the Blacksburg Library in the community room. Satisfy your creative interests by viewing the artwork on display and watching the process of wheel-throwing techniques in person!

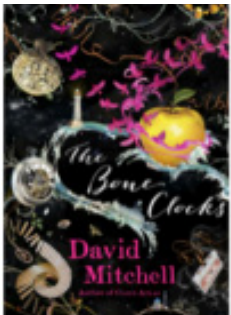
Spring Readings, Sunday, April 26

Help support the literary arts in the New River Valley! Bring friends and family to the Valley Voices Spring Reading at the Blacksburg Library on **Sunday, April 26 at 3:00 p.m.** Winners of the Spring Valley Voices Writing Celebration will perform featured readings of poetry, fiction and non-fiction. Light refreshments will be served.

Book Groups, Discussions, April 27, May 18

This month we'll discuss *The Bone Clocks: a novel* by David Mitchell on **Monday, April 27 at 11:00 a.m.** This title is available in print, on CD, MP3, and electronically as an ebook. If you're interested in participating in any of the MFRL adult book clubs, please just drop in! No commitment is necessary.

All the Light We Cannot See, a novel written by Anthony Doerr, will be the book of discussion for the Talking About Books book group at the Blacksburg Library on **Monday, May**



**18 at
11:00
a.m.**

If you're interested in participating in any of the MFRL adult book clubs, please just drop in! No commitment is necessary.

For a full listing of book groups, including branch schedules, titles and meeting dates, please visit our website at www.mfml.org/book-clubs.php.

Christiansburg Library

Popular Music Programs, June 12, October 24

Christiansburg Library has provided a unique venue for popular music programs since summer 2013 when No Strings Attached performed on the library lawn. Indoor and outdoor performances since then have included Irish tunes performed by Mist on the Mountain; bluegrass favorites by County Connection; roots rock by the The Floorboards; classical guitar selections by Sparky Weintraut; and, most recently, Paul Little and Pete Hastings performing a mix of Gershwin, Hank Williams, Louis Armstrong and Paul's own compositions. Events in the months ahead include Wound Tight scheduled for 7:00 p.m., Friday, June 12, and, on Saturday, October 24, the big band sounds of The Old Pros, with dancing and mocktails. All musical programs are free, made possible by the Friends of the Library.

Books by and about Harper Lee

A wonderful 2014 memoir about Harper Lee, *The Mockingbird Next Door* by Marja Mills, was the April selection of the Evening Book Group. Mills' book has received additional interest due to the upcoming, somewhat controversial, publication of Harper Lee's novel *Go Set a Watchman*.

Discussion of Factory Man, May 6

Beth Macy's book *Factory Man* will be discussed at the library's Talking About Books meeting on Wednesday, May 6 at 11:00 a.m.

Retirement-Related Titles

New retirement-related titles of interest include

Get What's Yours: the Secrets to Maxing Out Your Social Security, by Laurence J. Kotlikoff
Refire! Don't Retire: Make the Rest of Your Life the Best of Your Life, by Kenneth H. Blanchard
What to Do to Retire Successfully: Navigating Psychological, Financial and Lifestyle Hurdles, by Martin B. Goldstein.

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President's Message (continued)

ing it for worms and grubs, and unlike Eliot I'm not looking for the comfort of a forgetful snow. I'm happy to be reunited with my trusty '57 Massey Ferguson, and ready to deposit the seeds ordered in February. My unexpected detour into *The Waste Land* presented (as Eliot reviewers point out) a stark contrast with the sunnier disposition toward April expressed in the early lines of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. I think I choose to side more with Chaucer, but perhaps now in a more realistic frame of mind.

Terry Wildman



Terry Wildman preparing his garden

Buy Experiences, Not Things

According to an article in the October 2014 issue of *The Atlantic*, experiences, such as trips, concerts, and movies, bring people more happiness than do possessions. But why? Here are some research results:

- Experiential purchases are associated with identity, connection, and social behavior. Material things become obsolete or deteriorate. The fleetingness of experiences endears us to them; our memories and stories of them get sweet with time. People don't like hearing stories of our possessions, but they like to hear about experiences.
- Our anticipation and memories of experiences keep our minds from wandering to dark places.
- Waiting for a purchase elicits more impatience than anticipation; waiting for an experience elicits excitement.
- People are less likely to measure the value of their experiences by comparing them to those of others.
- Even a bad experience becomes a good story.

For more explanation, see the article at www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/10/buy-experiences/381132/

Libraries (continued)

Audio Books, eBooks, Video, and More...

Give your eyes a rest by listening to audio books or reading large print books! All branches of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library (MFRL) carry a good variety of both audio books (books recorded on CD and MP3 formats) as well as books in big font. Patrons can download eBooks and AudioBooks through OverDrive and One-Click digital; eBooks through 3M Cloud Library and Freanding; movies, music, TV shows, and audiobooks through Hoopla; and digital magazines through Zinio.

Check our website, www.mfml.org for more information. And contact the library for our Book-a-Librarian service if you need assistance using your device.

The information on libraries was contributed by

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Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library www.mfml.org

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The Lifelong Learning Institute
at Virginia Tech invites you to

AN AFTERNOON RECEPTION

with P. Buckley Moss

May 18, 2015 3:30 pm

The Inn at Virginia Tech

The LLI at VT is an emerging, member-driven, volunteer organization that will sponsor a program of courses, lectures, and events drawing on local, academic, and community resources to provide educational opportunities and intellectual enrichment for active adults in the New River Valley.

After an address from P. Buckley Moss, more information about the LLI at VT and a sneak preview of the Fall 2015 LLI at VT program will be presented.

Information about registration will be posted on the AARP website.

Chapter News and Activities

AARP Blacksburg 2015 Budget

Income

Interest	2
Silent Auction	450
Membership	1,875
50-50 Raffle	125
Health Fair (from savings)	3,300
Holiday Luncheon	1,500
TOTAL	7,252

Expenses

Admin Costs	
Miscellaneous•	100
PO Box Rental	65
VA Corp. Comm.	25
Liability Insurance	112
Website	120
Gifts and Donations	
Charity	3,300
Newsletter	
Bulk Mail Permit	220
Postage	400
Printing	1,050
Program Costs	
Award Plaques	60
Social Events	
Holiday Luncheon	1,500
Hospitality	100
AARP Tax-Aide Program	100
Travel	100
TOTAL	7,252

•Expenses incurred by officers and chairs representing the chapter; small gifts for speakers (applebutter); caring cards

Legislative Report *by Val Coluni and Alison Galway*

AARP Legislative Objectives: Governor McAuliffe has signed major AARP Legislative Objectives for 2015: The **Care Act** (patient protections) and **Work and Save** (a study group to determine how best to help individuals who do not have a pension). These are major achievements for our citizens.

Ethics Reform: The governor did not sign the Ethics Reforms bill because he believes it was not effective enough to motivate appropriate behaviors. He requests the General Assembly to resubmit the legislation with appropriate changes.

Redistricting: The governor did not sign any bills (six submitted to him) because he considers them to be unconstitutional. AARP strongly supported the bill to create an independent redistricting commission, which would have started the process for an amendment to the Virginia Constitution to establish nonpartisan redistricting.

The Assembly will reconvene April 15 to consider the governor's actions and determine if they should revise bills or override his decisions.

Atlantic Coast Pipeline: The governor supports an appropriately located pipeline to attract investments in the state and create jobs in companies that would now feel that Virginia is an attractive place to set up operations. Some proposed pipelines would pass through private property in Montgomery and Giles counties.

Senior citizen scams: Scams continue to be a major problem, especially during the holidays. The "grandparent scam" is a call from a presumed relative claiming an emergency and asking for money. A toll-free federal hotline is now available for reporting scams and getting help: **1-855-303-9470**.

AARP-Sponsored Driver Safety Course

AARP members have a great opportunity to participate in this two-day course on April 30 and May 1, 2015, right here in Blacksburg, at the Community Center on Patrick Henry Drive. The class schedule is 1-5 pm each day. The course fee is \$12 for AARP members, \$14 for non-members, payable the first day of the course.

Completion of the course is good for discounts at participating auto insurance companies, plus there is a lot to learn about safe driving these days.

Call Cecil McBride, the course instructor, to register. He can be reached at 540-552-4396.

Chapter Officers 2015

President • Terry Wildman, wiley@vt.edu

Vice President • Don Creamer, dgc2@vt.edu

Secretary • Sally Anna Stapleton, sanna418@gmail.com

Treasurer • Pat Ballard, pballard@vt.edu

Board of Directors

2015—Don Creamer, Terry Wildman, Nola Elliott

2016—Tom Alston, Tina King, Sally Anna Stapleton

2017—Pat Hyer, Jerry Niles, Shirley Peterson

Contribute to Senior Chronicles!

Terry Wildman has written one. Don Creamer has written one. Ben Crawford and Jim Wightman have just posted theirs. Several other members are at work. Join them in contributing a "Senior Chronicle"—your reflection on a life experience or your story about how you are living well at 50+. Find out what you learn about yourself by writing. If you are not yet ready to write, get to know fellow members by reading their chronicles at <http://blacksburgaarp.org/>. When you are ready to post, submit your entry to Don Creamer: dgc2@vt.edu.

Visit Your AARP Chapter Website at www.blacksburgaarp.org



Blacksburg Chapter #2613
Terry Wildman, President
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 **Member Application for 2015**

Name: _____

Spouse/Partner: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Today's Date: _____

Annual (Calendar Year) Dues: **\$15.00** (includes spouse)

New Renewal 90+ years old (free)

*Please make your check payable to "Blacksburg AARP Chapter #2613"
and mail check and this form to:*

Tom Alston - P.O. Box 10082 • Blacksburg, VA 24062