

HISTORY OF LAMP: INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

By Betty and John Wood

(Written in 2002)

LAMP entered the 21st Century stronger and larger than ever and offered more activities to members. Lectures have continued with the same high quality.

In 1999, LAMP increased in membership to 500. Most people live in the immediate Austin area, but several drive from Wimberley, Luling, San Marcos, Marble Falls, Bastrop, Georgetown, Lakeway, and other surrounding communities. With the increased number of people living longer and desiring to expand their knowledge of the world and to keep informed of current events, the Continuing Education Department at the University of Texas under the guidance of the Dean, Dr. Tom Hatfield, began to expand in the area of Third Age Education.

LAMP assisted through advice and counsel in the organization of SAGE in 1996 and QUEST in the spring of 2001. Each of these groups drew from the LAMP wait list to make contacts for membership. The three organizations together have a membership of 1,000 people with a long wait list for all three groups. Dr. Hatfield established a third-age council to coordinate activities and communication among the three groups. One of the first joint projects was "An Evening with Shakespeare."

In the fall of 1999, LAMP and its members were involved in facilitating an extremely successful national third-age conference. Many LAMP members attended the conference where ideas were exchanged for the formation of new groups throughout the country and improvement of existing ones. As third-age educational groups have grown, LAMP has served as a model for many of these groups.

By 2000 the Executive Committee, which is the governing board of LAMP, increased its membership to fourteen; included are past chair, chair, chair-elect, secretary, treasurer, registrar, curriculum chair, curriculum chair-elect, and six members at-large on rotating, three-year terms.

The by-laws written in 1989 are still in effect in the year 2000 and had needed only three minor revisions during the intervening years. In 2001 the board found it necessary to have written policy statements to insure continuity and effectiveness of programs.

In 1996 LAMP initiated a scholarship program in the name of Margie Hale, one of the founders, to assist qualified U.T. students aspiring to be educators. The recipients of scholarships must be in their junior or senior years and committed to becoming teachers. By 1999 the scholarship became endowed at \$25,000, and in 2001, it became a presidential endowed scholarship when it reached \$50,000. The Margie Hale U.T. LAMP Scholarship Fund continues to grow and will forever be enjoyed by young teachers. (Note: By May 2006, the Fund was valued at over \$126,000; 17 scholarships have been awarded to that date. The [History of the LAMP Scholarship Program](#) includes the names of the scholarship recipients.

In the spring of 2000 LAMP presented its first award in recognition of outstanding contributions to LAMP to Marlin Bownds. A committee was appointed to continue this tradition when a member's contributions warrant this recognition.

The new millennium brought the electronic era to LAMP. In the 2000-2001 year, the minutes and the agendas for board meetings were sent via e-mail for the first time. LAMP created its first website using a borrowed private site donated by a generous LAMP member. By 2002 LAMP established its own independent, interactive website at U.T.

Computers were added to the office to enable computer training for members who need some assistance using the website. In addition, these computers are used for administration of LAMP business requirements.

Cyberlamp, an unofficial communications site, was established to provide announcements about LAMP and its members, summaries of lectures, and facilitate the communication of members' views on various subjects.

In 2001 we purchased a higher performing multi-media projector to take advantage of the fact that U.T. professors at U.T. and other professionals often use Powerpoint presentations for their lectures. Also, the Executive Committee voted to purchase a state-of-the-art sound system.

The purchase of a piano in 1999 has enhanced the overall program. The piano is used not only for programs with musical presentations, but several members contribute their time to provide music in the mornings before the lectures.

By 2002, the basic curriculum lectures consisted of six major areas (two each morning on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday): Science & Technology, Lifestyles, Business, History, Creative World and Public Affairs. On one afternoon LAMP members speak in a session called Et Cetera. A series of seminar lectures are held on another afternoon each week.

Many members answered a survey identifying veterans, most of whom served during World War II, the Korean, or the Viet Nam Wars. Each year persons from this group present memorable programs of oral history from those experiences.

The social aspect of LAMP has continually increased. Social interaction was evident as much of necessity for mature people as the educational opportunities provided. This social interaction was enhanced by in-town and out-of-town tours, small monthly dinners at the U.T. Faculty Club (now renamed Campus Club), and by three elaborate and entertaining end-of-term dinners. Other small group activities have included a book study group, a Monday morning discussion group, a bridge group when LAMP is not in session, and a weekly supper together at a local cafeteria. A book and magazine lending and exchange library was begun. Some off-shoots of LAMP which are unofficial include a poker group, a "42"(domino) group, and an annual New Year's Eve dinner and dance.

LAMP continues to enjoy and appreciate its connection to The University of Texas not only through the Division of Continuing Education but through various research projects in the

Department of Gerontology. Because of its relationship to the University, LAMP receives special invitations to various performances and activities at the University such as band concerts, museum exhibits, and lectures.

LAMP continues to be led by volunteers even though the group has more than doubled in size since the beginning. The members take pride in running the organization and keeping its administration in-house along with many other all-volunteer functions. By 2002, more than 225 members participate in running this organization effectively.

Even with the coming of the electronic age, the use of standardized forms, the increase in written policies, and the enlarged membership, LAMP has retained the essence that was established by the charter members by valuing talent and encouraging personal interaction among the members.

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Note: The 1992 article by Dr. Louis DeMoll, “**U.T. LAMP: AN EDUCATIONAL ADVENTURE**” describes the philosophy and the founding of UT LAMP.