

# Amazing Aging!

**For Seniors and Those Who Love Them**

**A free publication of the Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.  
Advocacy, Action and Answers on Aging for Shawnee, Jefferson and Douglas Counties**

**WINTER 2025**



## **Our Mission**

Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc. advocates on aging issues, builds community partnerships and implements programs within Shawnee, Jefferson, and Douglas counties to help seniors live independent and dignified lives.

- Is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization
- Is funded by tax-deductible contributions, federal funds, under state general funds and funds through local governments
- Does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, or disability



**Clenece Hills, KLWN Radio host and producer of *Timeline*.  
To be a successful talk show interviewer, you must talk,  
listen and pay attention so you react appropriately.  
Please see story which begins on page 3.**

# A Message from Susan Harris, JAAA Executive Director

Welcome to 2025! It always amazes me how fast each year seems to fly by.

The Medicare Open Enrollment season has ended, and the 2024 annual open enrollment period was another success. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the volunteers, staff at Jayhawk, and our community partners who worked tirelessly to help the Medicare beneficiaries in the communities we serve. During the 2024 Medicare Enrollment season over 1,500 beneficiaries were provided counseling on their Medicare Part D drug plans, Medicare Advantage Plans as well as other issues regarding Medicare cov-

erage. That is a lot of people to help during a short 8-week time frame! However, this barely scratches the surface in relation to the number of Medicare Beneficiaries in our service area, and we could use your help!



**Susan Harris**

We are seeking volunteers for the SHICK (Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas) program.

The work of a trained SHICK Medicare Counselor is not limited to the October 15 through December 7 open enrollment time period. Approximately 10,000 individuals become Medicare eligible nationally every day. A large part of the SHICK counselors' work is done helping to counsel these indi-

viduals that are new to Medicare to help them understand the health benefits offered and provide information that will assist individuals with making informed choices about their Medicare and other health insurance coverage needs. Jayhawk relies on volunteers to help provide this extremely beneficial service. We often receive feedback from those we have helped stating that there would be no way that they could understand the choices they are faced with making without having talked with one of our counselors. "I would have been lost without your help," is often what we hear. Please consider becoming a SHICK Counselor. We can't do it without volunteers.

Jayhawk will begin the planning and allocation processes for Older American's Act services that will be funded during Fiscal Year 2026 beginning in September of 2025. This is a

process that includes reviewing the needs of the communities we serve and making decisions regarding services that will be funded through the Older American's Act. Our allocations committee meets for three days in the spring of each year reviewing proposals, looking at current services provided, and determining where the dollars Jayhawk receives under Older American's Act will best meet the needs of the communities we serve. This is not a simple task as Jayhawk recognizes that there are far more needs than funding allows.

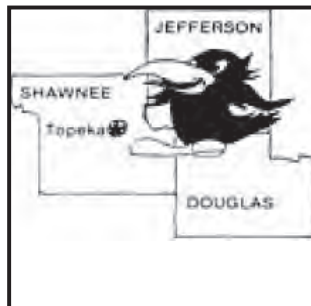
*Happy Valentine's Day!*

- Amazing Aging is a publication of Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
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You are encouraged to write us at:

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Marsha Henry Goff, editor



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*Amazing Aging* strives to provide readers with the information they need to live independent and productive lives. We also seek to feature stories of seniors who are active as workers, volunteers or engaged in hobbies. If you know a senior you would like to see featured in a future issue, please contact editor Marsha Henry Goff at [mhgink@netscape.net](mailto:mhgink@netscape.net) or write to her in care of JAAA, 2910 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, KS 66611.



# Clenece Hills: *Timeline* Host and Producer who is still ‘learning on the job’

By Marsha Henry Goff  
The majority of photos are  
courtesy of Anne Woods

Clenece Hills is like the Energizer Bunny. She keeps going and going and going with seemingly boundless energy. While she spent decades teaching students in Lawrence junior high schools, her volunteer work was often a second full-time job. She always considered her volunteer work a job and spent as much time and effort on those unpaid duties as she did the paid work for which she was educated and trained.

She documented both paid and volunteer jobs — from age 14 to the present day — in a charming memoir titled *Saturday's Child: 75 Years of Learning on the Job*. At age 86, she is still working. On Monday morn-

ings for the past 12 years she has hosted and produced *Timeline* on KLWN Radio, the same radio station where she was employed at age 19 while she attended the University of Kansas.

In addition to writing copy, recording spots, answering the phone and on rare occasions doing the news, another of her responsibilities during her early tenure at the young radio station several miles outside the Lawrence city limits was to help with the daily log, at the end of which were these instructions: “Turn off the lights. Take out the trash. Feed the cows.”

The last chore was necessary because Arden Booth, KLWN’s owner, kept cattle on the acreage behind the station. There are no cows now on the acreage where the station once stood because

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Although her radio audience cannot see her, Clenece always begins her *Timeline* program with a big smile.



After three weeks of a whirlwind courtship, Jim Hills asked Clenece to marry him. It was a good match as this photo taken on their 50th Anniversary attests.



Clenece interviews Larry McElwain about his new book titled *A Life Lived Amongst Lives Lost*.



# Clenece Hills

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that location is the busy Highway 59 intersection at 31st and Iowa Streets. Gone also is the tall broadcasting tower that was next to the station. KLWN is currently located on Highway 40 (6th Street) and its broadcasting tower is west of the city many miles from the present office.

When Clenece was 18, her beloved 50-year-old father died suddenly from a heart attack, leaving her mother with Clenece in college and three sons Todd, 13, Bruce, 9, and Bryson, 2. The entire family was in shock and moved from Great Bend to Walton where her maternal grandparents lived. Clenece thought she should find a school more local so she could live at home and help her mother but her mother insisted she return to K-State for her sophomore year. "Clenece," her mother said, "something has to be the same. We need to believe that something is the same. And you are going back to college, back to K-State."

So she did, but she had aspirations to become an actress and her father had offered her a deal when she graduated from high school. He said if she would go to college for two years, he would then give her money for two more years of college and if she decided to use that money to go to New York and pursue her dream, he would support her. It stunned her when her mother told her that deal was off. The family had moved to Lawrence and Clenece was informed by her mother that she was expected to finish col-

lege at KU and be able to earn a living when she graduated.

She was a dutiful daughter and did exactly that, earning a degree in education. Her first teaching jobs were on the East Coast — one in a school that was reminiscent of the tough school in *Blackboard Jungle* — where she not only survived but thrived as a teacher. During her 50-year career as a teacher, she taught English, Drama and Reading, directed plays, worked with students on yearbooks and school newspapers. In short, she loved to teach and interact with students.

Clenece was back in Lawrence in the summer of 1962 when the course of her life was changed forever. Her mother introduced her to Jim Hills, a handsome young Air Force veteran with black hair and lake blue eyes who had just received his education degree from KU. Within three weeks he asked her to marry him and she said yes.

Jim had a contract to teach junior high English in Arkansas City and, because she wanted to be nearer to him, she found a job teaching in Parsons, a hundred miles away. They married on Christmas Day, 1962, and she found a job teaching in Arkansas City. In addition to the newlyweds' love of teaching, they both wanted children.

Before their marriage, Jim had asked her if she found she couldn't have children, would she be willing to adopt. She answered in the affirmative and asked him the same to which he replied, "Children are very important to me. I want to have a family. I want to have a stable home." The couple had three children, Shane and Anne, only

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Clenece emcees the Veteran's Day parade on a very cold day.



Clenece accepts award for Distinguished Former Staff Member at Billy Mills Middle School (previously known as South Junior High).



# Clenece Hills

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a year apart, followed a few years later by Eve.

During the ensuing years, both taught and *were* taught, Jim getting master's and doctorate degrees and Clenece a master's degree. When Jim changed jobs — among other positions, he was principal at Valley Falls High school and Director of Education at Kansas State Penitentiary — Clenece followed along often teaching correspondence courses which she could do remotely.

But she loved teaching in a classroom and when Shane and Anne were very young and the family lived in Topeka, she found a part-time job as a teacher. Her mother, who was a stay-at-home mother until her youngest son was in junior high, was appalled that Clenece would leave her children with a baby-sitter and said. "When your little boy is in reform school, and your little girl is walking the streets, don't say I didn't tell you to stay at home with your children." Clenece cried herself to school on the bus every day for six months.

For two years, Clenece and Jim were houseparents for Trinity Foster Home, supervising seven boys who had varying degrees of physical, emotional and behavioral conditions. Because the entire family moved into the home, the Hills children were consulted. Though still young, they agreed to the idea and became willing helpers.

After that, Jim Hills became the superintendent of the Andrew Drumm Institute in Independence, Missouri, where

Clenece served as Activities Director while teaching at William Chrisman High School, and once again, the family played its helpful role during Jim's four-year tenure there. Drumm Institute was established with the laudable goal of giving "good, intelligent boys who were unlucky in life" an education and setting them on a path for success.

In 1980, Clenece produced *The Wizard of Oz* at Drumm with Anne as Dorothy and all the boys at Drumm in the play. Many people from the community were in the audience.

The Hills family then returned to Lawrence and Jim finished his career as a professor at Haskell Indian Nations University while Clenece taught at South Junior High.

Although Clenece is recognized in Lawrence as a teacher, she was surprised 20 years after she had retired from teaching to be honored by Billy Mills Middle School (previously known as South Junior High when she taught there) as a Distinguished Former Staff Member. But she is much more than a retired teacher.

Her tireless work as a volunteer in the community has earned her much recognition and many well-deserved awards. She is especially proud of a beautiful Phoenix Award she was given by the Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission in recognition of her work as an arts volunteer.

She served from 1973-1976 as chairperson of the Douglas County Bicentennial Commission celebrating our country's 200th birthday. In 1984-85, she was the coordinator of the Haskell Centennial Year. But

## Saturday's Child



**75 Years of Learning on the Job**  
by Clenece Louise Roberts Hills

The picture on this book is Clenece Hillis as a 7-year-old. Her son Shane Hills writes: "Funny – I just realized that even at that age she looks like she's posing for an author's photo."

perhaps her biggest effort so far was her position as president of the Lawrence Sesquicentennial Commission from 2000 to 2005.

When the Corps of Engineers gave the City of Lawrence 97 acres of land overlooking Clinton Lake to the west and the entire Wakarusa Valley to

the east, the commission voted to develop it as Sesquicentennial Point, the name suggested by Clenece. There are 151 steps (representing the 150 years — plus one — that Lawrence had existed since its founding).

Money was raised by selling the steps representing years and

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# Clenece Hills

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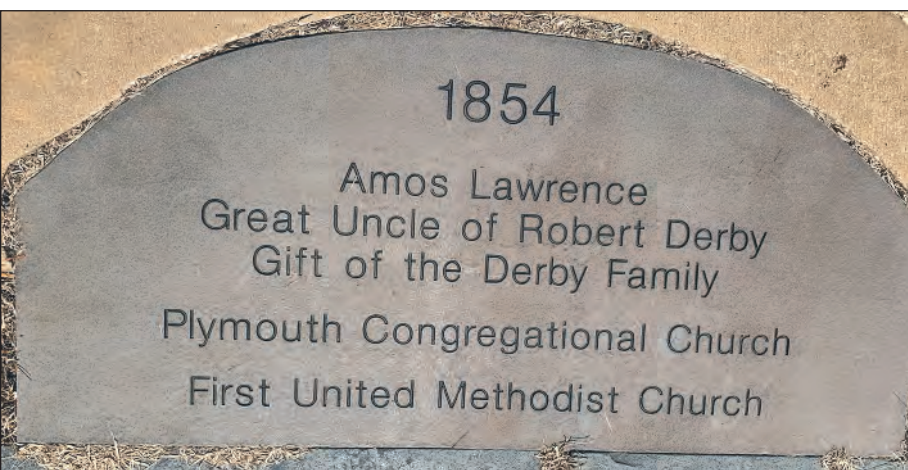
each year could have more than one step. The cost for buying and having a step engraved is the amount of the year. The first step at the top, dated 1854, cost the sponsors \$1,854 and honors Amos Lawrence for whom the city was named. About one-third of the steps are sold and memorialize individuals as well as institutions.

The commission's plans orig-

inally included building a grass amphitheater for concerts and other events. Clenece believes that will not occur until the city brings power and water to the hill so restrooms can be built. In 2004, Sesquicentennial Point was dedicated and a vault was buried containing items that will not be seen again until the vault is opened in 2054 on the city's 200th birthday. In 2007, Clenece, representing the Sesquicentennial Commission, formally turned Sesquicentennial Point over to the City of Lawrence.



Clenece and Jim sit at the end of the "Walk through Time" steps at Sesquicentennial Point.



The first step at the top of the Point is the year the City of Lawrence was founded and named after Amos Lawrence.

Clenece and Jim, along with their family, have done much to make the world a better place. Sadly, on May 25, 2023, Jim died. He and Clenece had celebrated 60 years of marriage. But she continues her work at KLWN on *Timeline*, writes poetry and is always, *always* learning. Perhaps her life thus far is best summed up by her daughter Anne Woods who writes:

"I am constantly amazed at my mother's curiosity and love

of life. I know no other person who has her level of energy and enthusiasm when it comes to building relationships and community. At home, she and my father created an environment that valued education, respect for rights and responsibilities, and most of all, love of family. My brother, Shane, and sister, Eve, and I have tried very hard to carry those values to our own families."



This stone and plaque mark the spot where the memory vault is buried and will be opened in 2054 on the City of Lawrence's 200th birthday. Coincidentally, it was donated by Warren-McElwain, the company owned by Larry McElwain who was being interviewed by Clenece in a previous picture.



Sesquicentennial Point also boasts an Off-leash Dog Park to the east of the Point.





Clenece loves this beautiful award. As the beautiful Phoenix Awards were presented to the five honorees, she hoped she would get this one ... and she did!



Clenece poses with the coveted Phoenix Award given by the Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission for her work as an arts volunteer.



On behalf of the Sesquicentennial Commission, Clenece presents the Point to the City in 2007.



This plaque honoring Clenece is permanently placed on the walls of Billy Mills Middle School.



# Caregiver Support

## Alzheimer's resources

By Michele Dillon

JAAA ADRC Supervisor

This article is mainly all about resources to help you on your journey. It offers tips and tricks that may save you a few minutes or prevent an argument. There are a lot of books out there but who has the time? I will mention a few that are good reads and reference books that will help you immensely in the long run.

### Books

*Contented dementia* – Discusses verbal and nonverbal communication skills to reduce your loved one's agitation and behaviors.

*36-hour day* – Tips and techniques for all levels of dementia. Published like an encyclopedia so you can easily reference just the section you need at the time

*Creating Moments of Joy* – A great inspirational guide on how to create moments of joy with your loved one. Those living with the disease are living moment to moment and this easy to read guide gives examples on how to make those moments joyful.

*The Dementia Caregivers survival guide* – another reference type guide. Provides tips on handling difficult behaviors.

*My Two Elaines* – an emotional journey, written by the former governor of Wisconsin, on the changes Alzheimer's makes in a person and his

emotional journey. It is a good source of support.

*Learning to speak Alzheimer's – like contented dementia.* This offers tips on non-verbal and verbal communication strategies.

### Movies

*Still, Alice* – a wonderful film about the journey of one woman going through it. You can see things from their perspective. This also comes in book form.

*My Mom and The Girl* is a short film based on filmmaker, Susie Singer Carter's journey caregiving for her mother, Norma, who lived with Alzheimer's for 16 years.

*Alive Inside* – The miracle of music and its power to breakthrough to find your loved one inside the shell.

*The Notebook* – ranked one of the best films about Alzheimer's

*I'm Still Me* – Glenn Campbell story

There are others. Just Google Alzheimer's movies and there are about 15 of them.

### Dressing and Bathing assistance

Dressing aides like long handled shoehorns, no lace shoes, button shirts and elastic pants make dressing easier and help them be independent longer. Try to avoid over the head options. Velcro is your friend.

Lay out outfits and limit choices. Remove most clothes from closet and drawers to pre-

vent rummaging and packing. Difficulty with changing clothes or they put on the same outfit the next day. Try buying two of the same outfits and put one on the wash.

Add labels to drawers and closets.

Make sure room is warm enough

**Mealtime** – colorful and pretty clothing protectors can assist with keeping clothes clean. Wear one yourself so they feel it is more natural.

Use colorful plates to help with sight. Mashed potatoes on a white plate can cause some difficulty. If utensils are becoming hard to use, try switching to finger food to help maintain independence. Use non-skid plates and cups with lids.

If taking to a restaurant let server know that your loved one has memory issues and try to limit choice to two of your loved ones favorite. Example, "Mom, would you like the pasta or the fish?"

**Bathing** – Prepare shower ahead of time and make bathroom warm and steamy, using words like spa and relaxing.

Place towels around personal areas to respect dignity and keep other areas covered while assisting with one area at a time.

I highly encourage you to use Trualta website and look up Teepa Snow or careblazers on YouTube. They have wonderful helpful videos.

Limit shower times. Sponge baths can work just as well. Walmart and Amazon have lots of items like dry shampoo and bath clothes to help you.

If your loved one still enjoys socialization, take to barber or hairdresser for some pampering.

Get help

It's ok to take care of yourself and get help as needed. You can be a better caregiver if you take time to rest and reenergize. Using In-home help, even for just a couple of hours a day, can be so beneficial. We offer some short-term grant assistance with this. Call me to assist with a plan of care to optimize financial needs. Long term care policies can offer in home assistance and our grants can help with the elimination period costs. We also offer a two day a week 4-hour respite program. You can drop off your loved one for some fun and socialization while you get some respite. Several friends that have attended have had a smoother transition into memory care due to the increased socialization. We offer lunch and activities. This is a volunteer based non-medical option. If you need medical options, there are several. Give me a call and we can discuss the best one for your needs.

**Discussed division of assets** – Information taken from KC Elder Law pdf on The-Consumers-Guide-To-Medicaid-Planning-and-Division-of-Assets.

One primary benefit of Medicaid is that, unlike Medicare (which only pays for rehabilitation in a skilled nursing facility), the Medicaid program will pay for long term care in a nursing home once you've qualified. Medicare does not pay for treatment for all diseases or conditions. For example, a long term stay in a nursing home may be caused by Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease, and even though the patient receives medical care, the treatment will not be paid for by Medicare.

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# Alzheimer's

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These stays are called custodial nursing stays. Medicare does not pay for custodial nursing home stays. In that instance, you'll either pay privately (i.e. use long term care insurance or your own funds), or you'll have to qualify for Medicaid. There is exempt (i.e. house and car) and non-exempt assets (i.e. savings, checking, Ira's and life insurance)

Division of Assets applies to couples. The intent of the law was to change the eligibility requirements for Medicaid where one spouse needs nursing home care while the other spouse remains in the community, i.e., at home. The law, in effect, recognizes that it makes little sense to impoverish both spouses when only one needs to qualify for Medicaid assistance for nursing home care. As a result of this recognition, division of assets was born. Basically, in a division of assets, the couple gathers all their countable assets together in a review. Exempt assets, discussed above, are not counted. The countable assets are then divided in two, with the at-home or "community spouse" allowed to keep one half of all countable assets up to a maximum of approximately \$120,900. The other half of the countable assets must be "spent down" until less than \$2,000 remains. The amount of the countable assets which the at-home spouse gets to keep is called the Community Spouse Resource Allowance (CSRA). Each state also establishes a monthly income floor

for the at-home spouse. This is called the Minimum Monthly Maintenance Needs Allowance. This permits the community spouse to keep a minimum monthly income ranging from about \$2,030 to \$3,023. If the community spouse does not have at least \$2,030 in gross income, then he or she is allowed to take the income of the nursing home spouse in an amount large enough to reach the Minimum Monthly Maintenance Needs Allowance (i.e., up to at least \$2,030). The nursing home spouse's remaining income goes to the nursing home. This avoids the necessity (hopefully) for the at-home spouse to dip into savings each month, which would result in gradual impoverishment.

## Websites to add to your favorites bar.

- Dementia map
- Alzheimer's Association
- Caregivers.com
- AARP caregiving
- Caregiver Action Network
- National Alliance for caregiving
- Trualta

## Podcasts

- Love conquers Alz
- AlzAuthors: Untangling Alzheimer's & Dementia
- The Forgetting: Inside the Mind of Alzheimer's
- Alzheimer's speaks

While this is not an exhaustive list it is my hope that they can help you on your marathon journey. I also encourage you to find a support group to connect with others on the journey. Call me for an individual consultation.

- Michele Dillon Caregiver support specialist, Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, 785-235-1367.

# Larry McElwain: Living his best life and writing a book to prove it!



Larry McElwain holds his recently published book titled *A Life Lived Amongst Lives Lost*.

## By Marsha Henry Goff

Few young boys aspire to be funeral directors, but Larry McElwain is one who did. He never deviated from that aspiration and had a 45-year career at Warren-McElwain Mortuary in Lawrence. His caring personality and calm demeanor suited him perfectly to deal with those who had sustained great loss.

Larry has written a book — *A Life Lived Amongst Lives Lost* — which was recently published. If you think that such a book would be sad or grim or even dull, think again. His stories range from scientific — search-

ing for methane in the attempt to locate a murder victim — to, believe it or not, humorous. He has encountered and helped people in all stages of grief.

He has stood on the brink of death himself when he suffered a heart attack while walking to a KU basketball game. Now recovered, he is forever grateful to the paramedic who saved his life and to the surgeon who performed his heart bypass surgery.

His book is also a model for budding entrepreneurs in any business. Larry McElwain has indeed been living his best life while deeply caring for lives lost.

Please visit us online at  
[www.jhawkaaa.org](http://www.jhawkaaa.org).



# Carol Guy: Keeper of Lawrence history and sharing it on Facebook

By Marsha Henry Goff

From the time she was very young, Carol Guy remembers pedaling her tricycle around her West Lawrence neighborhood, passing grand Victorian houses and wondering about their history. She played in nearby Clinton Park and recalls the “spooky” tunnel that ran under Highway 40 (6th Street) which allowed students to reach Pinckney School safely.

She noticed and wondered about beautiful buildings like the Carnegie Library and features like the bandstand in Central Park that she and her younger brother passed as they walked downtown or to the swimming pool. One favorite childhood memory was when her sister took her to the Jayhawk Theater where they sat in the balcony and watched *White Christmas*.

She kept her questing mind when her father, who managed a Sinclair gas station in North Lawrence, moved his family to East Lawrence where he fulfilled his lifelong dream of building and owning his own garage—Les Proctor, Auto Mechanic—on East 9th Street. The new neighborhood offered new structures and businesses to wonder about.

These childhood memories became very important when she discovered computers and web-searching as a way to answer the questions she had been storing up for a lifetime. When she noticed discrepancies in local history accounts, she worked hard to determine which was the accurate histori-

cal portrayal. She drove around town and took photos of old buildings and places that she remembered and wanted to learn more about, once even parking under the Union Pacific underpass on North 2nd Street and jumping out to snap a photo of the brass plaque which showed it was constructed in 1936.

Carol says she greatly regrets the loss of several older gentlemen who had lived through a lot of Lawrence history and posted their memories on Facebook. Their remembrances are safely stored on her computer. Over the years, she has accumulated a great many documents and photos saved in folders on her computer which she uses to post history on Facebook and to answer the many questions she receives from people who have learned to rely on her information.

“Many have asked me for information having to do with Lawrence or a person from Lawrence and I love going on a search to see what I can find for them. Sometimes I spend too much time at my search projects but I love doing it,” Carol says.

What she appreciates most about her nostalgic postings is that they often trigger the memories of people who read them. “Then they comment with their own story or information.” However, she notes that if someone posts something regarded as inaccurate, others will quickly reply to correct an address or a date. She admits to making an occasional mistake herself. “When I do find that I have made an error after I have posted a story, I do my best to



Carol Guy with her late father Les Proctor

edit and correct asap.”

History in general—and Lawrence history in particular—is important to Carol.

Preserving history is what she does. “Posting accurate infor-

mation is history, and when it gets changed or altered, then it gets lost,” she says.

She works very hard to ensure that no history is lost on Carol Guy’s watch.

Call Kevin at  
(785) 841-9417 to place  
your display ad in the  
SPRING 2025 issue of  
Amazing Aging! The  
deadline is APRIL 15.



# Have I fallen? You may be sorry you asked!

By Marsha Henry Goff

I don't know how old I was when medical personnel routinely began asking me "Have you fallen?"

That question might make sense now that I am suffering from a fractured L3 vertebra in my spine. Suffering is the right word. If you have had a fractured vertebra, you have my profound empathy. If you haven't, I hope you never do. Still, the question of me falling when recently asked by a doctor gave me pause. I answered, "Yes, but every time I have fallen it was due to activity."

I mentioned a fall I had last summer when I was cutting a semi-circle of eight-foot-tall pampas grasses by the water garden and sat on a stone bench to rest. The stone seat tilted backward and flipped me on my back wedging me between the cut grasses. Took me a while to roll onto my hands and knees so I could stand up. I was in the house before I realized if the stone seat had landed on top of me, I'd still be out there looking at the stars and fending off coyotes.

Then I recalled vacuum-

ing the living room rug about a year ago and backing into an ottoman and falling backwards over it. That was the kind of embarrassing fall where I was happy there were no witnesses. I'm pretty sure they would have laughed. I know I did.

I have wondered if I might have broken that vertebra earlier or cracked it and then broken the weakened vertebra later. Although it wasn't classified as a fall, I have had an off and on back pain since February 2022 when I drove to Topeka to interview a woman. I had just exited the turnpike and was sitting at a red light at Topeka Boulevard with my foot jammed on the brake when BAM! I was propelled through two lanes of the boulevard. I crossed the other two lanes when safe and parked by the side of the road to wait for the driver who had rear-ended my car.

She sat through several light changes then drove over and parked behind me. Her car was badly damaged leaving a lot of debris at the site of the collision. My Ford Edge didn't look so bad although it was later totaled due to the frame being damaged beyond repair. She said she was

sorry and I was worried when I noticed two children in carseats and asked if they were OK. She said they were fine but added "I ruined my coffee!" She was a nice young woman who told the police officer and me that she was parked behind me and when the turn arrow turned green, she started forward and I didn't (we were in the straight-through lane). Neither of us believed her due to the force of the collision. I was later checked out at the hospital where they did a CT scan of my head and cervical spine and diagnosed me with a minor whiplash. I wonder what they might have found if they had looked at my entire spine.

But back to falls: I had two others about ten or more years ago. I was standing on my Wii platform performing yoga. That was when I learned I don't have sufficient balance to hold a tree pose. Don't know what that is? Well, you stand on one leg, putting the foot of your other leg on the knee of your standing leg and stretch your arms over your head. I may have held it seven seconds before I fell backwards off the platform into a small table and an antique floor lamp.

My husband Ray, who was reading in a nearby chair, picked me off the floor, righted the table and the lamp. Then he stepped on the platform, performed a perfect tree pose and held it for a good three minutes to show me how it was done.

The only other fall I remember as an adult was when our grandson was staying with us while attending KU. One evening, I collected his laundry out of his downstairs bedroom and started up the stairs with the laundry basket when I noticed I left the light on in his bedroom. Thinking I was on the first stair, I reached backward with my right foot into empty air and let out a loud scream as I realized I was on the fourth or fifth stair. I crashed back first into the hard tile floor while my head hit the door to our backyard. Overhead, I could hear Ray's boots running through all the upstairs rooms as he shouted, "Where are you? Where are you?" Just his luck to marry a klutz.

I have decided that the next time a nurse or doctor asks me if I have fallen, I will answer with a question of my own: "How much time have you got?"

## Falls are especially dangerous for seniors. How to prevent them and minimize damage.

Anyone can fall but seniors may more easily break bones. Some of the ways to prevent falls are obvious: eliminate loose throw rugs, watch out for anything that you might trip over like electrical cords, use the railing when on stairs, stay off ladders and don't wear shoes with slick soles. One of the most important ways you can prevent falls is to improve your balance by strengthening your core muscles. But there are times, despite precautions, that you may fall. In those cases, it can be life-saving to have a device that detects falls and calls for help even if you are not conscious. One man who lived alone had a stroke and couldn't move. He lay on the floor for 16 hours before he was found by someone checking on him. Sadly, he did not survive because it was too late to give him the "clot-buster" shot that may have prevented the severe damage he sustained. JAAA can answer your questions about cost of these devices which may vary with income.





## **Volunteers Wanted (and greatly appreciated)**

Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas

*Would you like to learn new skills while helping others?*

**SHICK has many volunteer opportunities**

Medicare Part C/D Counselor, Comprehensive Medicare Counselor, Call Center Operator,  
Education and Outreach Volunteer, Office Assistant

**We provide you with training, support and satisfaction**

If you have the ability to work with others, a caring, confident attitude, the ability to understand health care information and options, a willingness to stay up-to-date with changing regulations, familiarity with computers and the Internet, good communication skills and time to commit to multiple ongoing projects, please contact:

Susan Harris, JAAA Executive Director, at 785-235-1367 or [sharris@jhawkaaa.org](mailto:sharris@jhawkaaa.org).

