



LegalWriting  
institute

# LWI LIVES

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*LWI Lives* is a regular electronic publication of the “Faces of LWI” Committee, which explores and communicates the emerging identity of LWI and its members. We have in common the commitment to being the best legal writing professors that we can be. But we are multidimensional people with different strengths, interests, curiosities, and gifts. By profiling individuals in our community, we hope to expand and develop our understanding of who we are and what we aspire to be.



## Luellen Curry: The Legacy of a Legend

By Abigail Perdue

For the vast majority of my time at Wake Forest, I had the great pleasure of sitting next door to the most compassionate and caring colleague imaginable—Associate Professor Luellen Curry. Although Luellen retired from teaching in the summer of 2021 after an impressive career that spanned decades, she left an indelible impact on me and every other member of the Wake Law community, especially her students. I often wondered, “How did she become such an amazing teacher and mentor?” This is that story . . .

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## Lisa A. Goodman: Living the Dream

By Wayne Schiess



Lisa A. Goodman had wanted to be a lawyer ever since fifth grade, when she saw a documentary about Thurgood Marshall. But all she knew about being a lawyer was what she saw on TV. Today she has realized her fifth-grade dream, but along the way there have been stops and starts and a few sharp turns that showed her that lawyers do lots of different things—including working in libraries.

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### A note from the Co-Chairs:

In this Issue, we wanted to honor Black History Month by featuring legal writing professors of color. While we always strive to select diverse professors for our editions, for this February release, we felt it was especially important to focus on professors of color exclusively. We hope you enjoy learning more about Luellen and Lisa—two women who undoubtedly contribute to the making of Black History.

## Luellen Curry

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Raised in the small Southern town of Lexington, North Carolina, Luellen learned at a young age that if you can be anything, be kind. Her beloved mother, Virginia Curry, was the kind of person who would seek out anyone who was alone on a holiday and either invite them into her home or bring them a delicious meal to enjoy. Self-sacrificing and resilient, Virginia had been forced to quit school to care for her siblings after her mother took ill. A talented and self-taught baker and cook, love was the secret ingredient in everything she made. She was an extraordinary woman who went above and beyond to make everyone around her feel loved and cared for, even when money was tight and times were hard.

Her only daughter was no exception. Virginia used her meager earnings as a housekeeper to ensure that Luellen never wanted for anything, all while instilling in her a spirit of gratitude and humility. “She always taught me that I wasn’t any better than anyone else,” Luellen shares. “She kept me grounded and considerate of other people.”

Luellen’s father was, in some ways, a stark contrast to his wife, at least on the outside. A retired member of the Capitol Police in Washington, D.C., who was significantly older than his wife, Benjamin Curry was a man of few words who had a “gruff” and stoic exterior, except around “Peaches” –the pet name he gave to his cherished little girl.



Luellen with her Family

With two loving parents who made her the center of their world, Luellen enjoyed a happy and relatively “uneventful” childhood. But while things were peaceful inside her home, racial conflict was intensifying outside. It was the sixties—the height of the Civil Rights Movement—and the Currys were living in a predominantly white Southern town. “Growing up in the 60s really left its mark on me in terms of social issues and caring about other people and having a sense of the need to do something to change the things that were wrong in the world,” she explains. She remembers her name appearing in the local newspaper when she and a few other neighborhood kids became the first students to desegregate a formerly all-white elementary school. Although the racial conflict “wasn’t nearly as bad as in other places,” it was still “eventful in small ways” and often left her feeling “in between.” She also experienced overt racism firsthand when a bus driver refused to let her board a bus to an afterschool YMCA Program. Those experiences still shape “how she thinks about racial issues” and make her more “attuned” to racial bias.

For the most part, however, Luellen had a “good” experience in school. She learned how to feel “comfortable” around “people who are not like her,” which was an “asset.” She also thrived in the classroom, excelling in her advanced placement courses and even being selected to attend the prestigious Governor’s School of North Carolina, a program reserved exclusively for “gifted” high school students. She absolutely “loved” this “rich [and] wonderful experience.” It was there, while attending weekly orchestral concerts and dance performances, that her passion for the arts intensified. She immersed herself in a community of intellectually curious young people, forging several lifelong friendships and discovering new things about herself and the world.

## Luellen Curry

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That invigorating experience fueled Luellen’s desire to pursue a career in law. She didn’t know any attorneys personally; indeed, her exposure to the law came primarily from watching TV, especially re-runs of Perry Mason. But she “remember[s] sitting in her room and thinking about all the things that were wrong in the world and wondering what [she] could do to help.” She decided that being a lawyer would allow her to “make a difference.”

Around the same time, Luellen learned from her history textbook that Oberlin College had been the first U.S. college to admit African American students on an equal basis with white students and women on an equal basis with men. As a result, she decided to apply. For a small-town girl from conservative North Carolina, Oberlin was a different world. Although the college “viewed” itself as being more “progressive and inclusive” than it actually was, Luellen’s classes were stimulating, and there was always some kind of march, movement, or protest happening on campus. In many ways, Oberlin was a “practicum on organizing” that would inform the racial justice advocacy she later pursued. And while her official major was

Government, she got an unofficial degree in grass roots activism, which taught her that “thoughtful organizing can have a positive effect.” She and her classmates also worked toward the creation of a Black Studies Department and became heavily involved in the Afrikan Heritage House. She also met the dynamic man, Carlton Eversley, whom she would eventually marry.

When Carlton later attended seminary in Chicago, Luellen attended law school at Northwestern. She “disliked” law school because of the excessive workload and the frustrating “sage on the stage” teaching style that some of her professors utilized. But “everything was interesting,” and she especially loved working in Northwestern’s legal clinic.



After law school, Carlton and Luellen settled in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where Luellen worked as an attorney for Legal Aid and served on the Winston-Salem Human Rights Commission with Wake Law Professor David Logan. After she and Carlton had a son and adopted a daughter, Luellen decided to take a step back from the chaotic hours of full-time law practice to pursue something less stressful but equally meaningful. Around the same time, Logan encouraged Luellen to apply for an adjunct position teaching Torts at Wake Forest. She enjoyed teaching, so she eventually applied for and obtained a tenure-track position. In 1996, she began teaching legal writing full time and remained in that role for over two decades, teaching everything from Appellate Advocacy to Race and the Law.

Luellen feels strongly that racial justice should be “carefully” and “thoughtfully” addressed in “big and small ways” across the curriculum from using racially inclusive settings and characters in first-year legal writing problems to offering specialized upper-level courses and clinics that take a deeper dive into racial issues.



## Luellen Curry

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But she acknowledges that it's "hard to do" and admits that professors are "rightfully worried" because they "don't want to mess up or offend anybody or make anyone feel uncomfortable." To ensure that students don't feel "disconnected," she encourages professors to "educate themselves so they can . . . establish a comfort level and make class a safe space."



Despite her dedication to teaching, Luellen still made time to pursue interests outside the classroom. Specifically, her lifelong passion for the arts and written word converged when she began volunteering for the biennial National Black Theatre Festival at its onset in 1989. The six-day Festival is an "amazing experience" that showcases the "rich and worthwhile contributions" of Black Theatre. It was the brainchild of the late Larry Leon Hamlin, Founder and former Artistic Director of the North Carolina Black Repertory Company. It includes everything from one-person plays, large-scale musicals, and an awards ceremony to workshops, a youth talent show, and a poetry

jam. Through the years, Luellen has performed various roles from contract review to editing playbills. She currently works as Publications Manager and Co-Volunteer Coordinator, which has given her the unique opportunity to see hundreds of productions as well as to mix and mingle with celebrities, actors, musicians, and playwrights, including Maya Angelou, Denzel Washington, Ruby Dee, Oprah Winfrey, and even the oh-"so charming" Sidney Poitier. (When he kissed her hand, Luellen briefly considered "never washing [it] again."). Working on the Festival makes her feel a "part of something that's so big and so great and so wonderful," she says. "I'm grateful every day to be a part of this . . . amazing thing . . . it's what a person with a vision can do, and [Hamlin] let us all be a part of it."

Science fiction is another lifelong passion. On a lazy Saturday, you might find Luellen binge-watching episodes of her two favorite TV series, Farscape and Babylon 5. In fact, she became so "immersed" in Farscape that she joined online groups where dedicated Farscape fans exchanged and commented on each other's fan fiction. "That's where I felt like I found my people," she observes. Eventually, she and her online friends began meeting up at Farscape conventions and still today, they annually connect in idyllic locales like Mammoth Cave and Yosemite.

Luellen also enjoys reading, gardening, and spending time in nature. She "couldn't live without trees," so she and her husband bought a home surrounded by woods. "I love birds and bird-song," she says, smiling. "I'm delighted by birds." Her appreciation likely began as a child when a parakeet was her very first pet. Birdwatching also reminds her of her childhood when her father placed a birdhouse on the pine tree just outside her bedroom window so she could watch and listen to the birds.

Luellen's unwavering and lifelong faith in Jesus Christ is another formative aspect of who she is. For thirty-five years, her husband pastored a "small" and "inclusive" Presbyterian church in Winston-Salem. But Luellen was "never a typical pastor's wife because Carlton was not a typical pastor." While she did attend church every Sunday, participate in a women's group, and serve as a deacon and worship leader, Carlton supported her efforts to be her own person and have her own identity. "I wouldn't want to live without faith," she shares. "Faith is everything to me. . . . I strive . . . to live according to my faith, and that informs . . . who I am. . . . And I try. . . to reflect God's love to others . . . [because] that's what we're called to do . . . to care for people, no matter what."

## Lisa A. Goodman

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Lisa was born and raised in Michigan, where her parents, both from Shreveport, Louisiana, relocated. Her father was a Vietnam-era veteran and 30-year employee at General Motors. Her mother earned a degree in accounting from Grambling State University and worked as an accountant in both Louisiana and Michigan.

While Lisa was in high school, an English teacher watered the seed the Thurgood Marshall documentary had planted. This English teacher, knowing that Lisa aspired to the legal profession, helped Lisa choose her college major by offering this advice: “English is a good program of study for a future lawyer because lawyers write a lot.” How wise. Lisa’s high school career also included being president of the National Honor Society, entering speech and oratory competitions, competing in quiz bowl, and studying French for four years.

Lisa attended college at the University of Michigan, where she majored in English literature. She found college to be intense, and she decided to take some time off before going to law school. During this break, she learned that Eastern Michigan University offered a bachelor’s degree in paralegal studies, and she thought that might be a good path to becoming a lawyer, so she enrolled.

With law school still waiting in the distance, Lisa took her paralegal degree to Ford Motor Company. Around the same time she began working there, Ford brought all litigation discovery in-house, and Lisa spent a year responding to interrogatories and requests for production of documents all day. This environment created a lot of pressure and caused her to ask herself, seriously, whether she really did want to be a lawyer.

But she didn’t give up on her dream. Instead, she left Ford and spent a year as a paralegal in a personal injury law firm. She liked working in the small five-person office (as opposed to a large paralegal “bullpen” at Ford) and having the opportunity to see the nuts and bolts of the litigation from beginning to end. She conducted client-intake interviews, drafted motions and briefs, answered phones, and filed documents in court. She got to see a little bit of everything while working closely with a supervising attorney. For Lisa, this was very different from seeing only the discovery slice of the pie at Ford while working on an approximately 30-day time clock with each set of discovery requests.

Now it was time for law school. She attended Wayne State University Law School and loved the academic side of studying law. She was noticing, though, that she didn’t enjoy the practical side quite as much. Still, upon graduation, she went to work in the labor and employment department of a law firm in Michigan and, as a young associate, spent a good amount of time in the library. Compared to the adversarial nature of law practice and the necessity of billing time at a law firm, working in the law library was ... fun! Besides, one of the happiest people she met while working at the law firm was the law firm librarian.



## Lisa A. Goodman

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So Lisa decided that she needed to explore that path. She wanted to learn more about being a librarian and attended a library studies information program, ultimately deciding to leave the law firm and to attend Wayne State to pursue a Master's in Library and Information Science. She recalls that although the first research paper she was required to write was challenging, because it was a more academic pursuit, she loved it.

Upon graduation, and holding both a J.D. and a M.L.I.S., her first job was as a reference librarian at Texas Wesleyan University School of Law in Fort Worth, Texas. Although she had never lived outside Michigan, she found that she loved the Dallas-Fort Worth area (what locals call the “Metroplex”). After six years working as a librarian there, she left and went to the law library at Louisiana State University and worked there for four years, rising to the position of Associate Director and serving one year as interim director. She had found the path to being a lawyer that suited her well.

Now came a big change for Lisa: she left LSU and became a librarian at Yale Law School—one of 40 members of the law library staff. Lisa rose to the level of Assistant Law Librarian for Administration (a/k/a Associate Director). At that time, her supervisor, the director of the law library, was embarking upon a plan to groom associate directors at Yale to become directors at other law school libraries around the nation. The plan worked. After three years, Lisa left Yale in 2019 to become the director of the law library at Texas Wesleyan, which by this time had become Texas A&M University School of Law.

Lisa was enthusiastic and excited about the opportunity to return to a familiar law school in a beloved place—she was ready to hit the ground running. But we all know what happened next: Covid-19.

The pandemic has loomed over two of her two-and-a-half years at Texas A&M. “Covid dampens everything,” she said. Nevertheless, Lisa continues moving forward: she teaches two advanced legal research courses to upper division students, one during spring semesters, and the other during an intensive one-week winter-session as well as during the summer term. In addition, she supervises six library faculty members and four support staff members, and she oversees the law library’s budget. She loves engaging in the varied responsibilities of administering a law library.



## Lisa A. Goodman

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That's Lisa's legal world. In her personal life, she loves travel—a high school trip to France having inspired her. She is a member of three groups that travel together. The groups she travels with cater to African-American women interested in international travel and have great names: Travel Divas (her favorite and the one she most often travels with), Pumps and Passports, and Ladies & Luggage. She picks destinations and trips she's interested in and goes.

She took a wonderful trip to Dubai in the holiday season of 2018. She loved the food, the sites, and the fireworks on New Year's Eve. In particular, she had dinner in a sky-high elevated platform where a five-course meal was served, after which she and her friends watched fireworks. She and her travel-group friends have also visited Aruba and Jamaica (several times).

Her 2020 trips to Alaska, Singapore, and Malaysia were canceled due to Covid and rescheduled for 2021 and then cancelled again! She's hoping to make it to Greece in 2022.

Lisa also loves live music, particularly rhythm and blues, and has made multiple trips to Las Vegas to see certain musical performers, with Usher, Bruno Mars, and Maxwell being her favorites.

As with many in the legal research and writing field, one of the most enjoyable experiences for Lisa is mentoring younger law librarians. In fact, she participates in the formal mentoring program of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL). She also serves as a mentor for AALL's Leadership Academy fellows. Her goal is to help these young librarians follow a path to becoming successful law librarians, especially those interested in becoming law library directors—as she was.



Lisa Dining in the Sky



Lisa in Dubai





### LWI Lives Selection Process

The LWI Lives Committee is organized into three teams, and each team is responsible for selecting, proposing, and writing the three profiles in each issue. To ensure a diverse newsletter, teams propose individual names to the Co-Chairs, and the Co-Chairs review the suggestions to ensure a wide range of coverage over time.

If you have someone in mind who we should put on the list for a future newsletter, please feel free to email any of the committee members listed below. If you could include a note explaining why you think the individual's profile would be particularly interesting, it will help us in developing priorities.

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