

Article about Dr. Marion Shinn

“I was a curious little boy in a rough & tumble neighborhood and books were who I was.” Reading has been his joy in eight decades as community leader. RENCI’s founding father Dr. Marion L. Shinn turns 100 March 11th. At age 13, he and his brother left family farm experiences miles west of Whitebird. Treks to Lewiston where they were to study at Lewiston High and Lewiston State Normal School were “all day, seven flat tire” adventures.

Those books led Shinn on journeys not to be shadowed by his own. State champion debater in 1938, he landed in a one-room cold school house in Dixie, Idaho, before World War II and his service as a radar specialist on a US submarine in the Pacific. He captured that portion of his life in his first book: *Pacific Patrol*. Later he and his wife photographed jaunts to more than 70 countries, including many that were part of his naval days.



Shortly after returning to Idaho, Dr. Shinn secured a position teaching Chemistry and supervising vocational education at Lewiston High until he was tapped to begin a vocational school at LCSC by Governor Samuelson. He founded the Vo-Tech School and orchestrated the building of its first two vocational buildings with a faculty of 60 full-time, 200 part-time, and additional support staff. Shinn also became the first recipient of vocational education doctorate from the University of Idaho. He, himself taught evening and weekend classes for vocational certification in many areas including electrician preparation.

His forty years as an educator were augmented by two decades as a summer park ranger and interpreter at Glacier National Park. While at home in Lewiston, Marion belonged to dozens of clubs, most notably being a 68-yr-member of Kiwanis. He made over 500 presentations and speeches, many while serving as a city councilman for 9 years with two years as Mayor of Lewiston. Shinn wrote his second book: *Eye Witness to History*. Marion was appointed to task forces and commissions by five Idaho governors.

Service has been his mantra, receiving the National Service Award from AARP in 1973. At home he was helping seniors do their taxes, building a pergola and a wildlife shelter. He started early with his buddies placing street signs in the Lewiston Orchards later incorporated into Lewiston. The signs still stand as a reminder of those early expenditures of energy.

He was, not only the founder of vocational education in Lewiston but also, a charter member of the Clearwater Economic Development Association, the LCSC Alumni Association, and the Retired Educators of North Central Idaho. He served as the Chairman of the Library Board of Trustees and Board Member/officer of the Nez Perce County Historical Society. He was a 2008 recipient of the Idaho State Esto Perpetua Award for his work on Nez Perce County history, authorship of two books, editing the Historical Society *Golden Times Journal* and for his extensive philanthropy.

Shinn and his wife Lorena established The Shinn Family Alumni Association Scholarship and the LHS Vocational Scholarship. He established an endowment for the Historical Society and this past year contributed \$150,000 to the Schweitzer Career & Technical Education Center at LCSC. Shinn and his wife have been recognized philanthropists for the Library Foundation and the new Library building. He has actively supported the LC Valley Kiwanis scholarship and the RENCI scholarship of an education student at LCSC. Dr. Shinn recently purchased the property where the replica of the First Idaho Territorial Capitol (office for, and mostly likely, a residence for Governor Wallace appointed by Abraham Lincoln).

COVID and a stroke put Dr. Shinn on the sidelines for a very short time, but he looks forward to leaving the rocking chair, a rejuvenated man, to resume his active life as a community and educational advocate. He often says he believes in education from the “cradle to the grave.” Marion has more years to continue his journeys from that cradle at the bottom of the Whitebird.



Dennis W. Ohrman, Ph.D.

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