



## News

### Calendar

#### Northern Nevada Schedule

**DEC. 2, 2007** - Field Trip to Court of Antiquity near Painted Rock. To make reservations call Carleen at 787-8779. Tour is limited to 15 people.

**DEC. 8, 2007** - North Christmas Party at the home of Mary Anne Convis, 2185 Court Side Circle, Carson City. Time: 1 to 4:00 p.m. Coffee and dessert served. Santas from around the world will be displayed. Children are welcomed. Please RSVP by Dec. 7th to Mary Anne at 775-888-9867.

**JAN. 14, 2007** - North Steering Committee meeting. Place and time TBA.

**FEB. 16, 2007** - Nevada State Library and Archives, 11 to 1 p.m. Join fellow members and their guests for an entertaining and informative lecture on the History of Brothel Prostitution in Nevada. Our guest lecturer will be Guy Rocha, State Archivist. Lunch will be served. Cost for lunch and lecture will be \$15.00. For reservations, please call Carleen Ernest at 787-8779. Deadline for reservations is February 14, 2008.

**MARCH 7 & 8, 2007** - NWHP State Convention in Carson City. See accompanying article.

**APRIL 24-27, 2007** - Stanchion dedication at the Women's Military Memorial in Washington, D.C. See article in this issue for details.

#### Southern Nevada Schedule

**DEC. 1, 2007** - Holiday Tea at the home of Joan Le Mere, 4755 S. Pearl, Las Vegas. Time: 2 to 4:00 p.m. The tea is free with membership, but call Mary Gafford for reservations.

**MAR. 1, 2008** - Celebrating the Life of Helen J. Stewart. Presenter: Helen Mortenson, President, Archco-Nevada Society. Place: Marie Callender's, 4800 S. Eastern, Las Vegas. Time: 11 to 12 noon Social Hour; 12:00 Luncheon; 1:00 p.m. Program. Call Mary Gafford for reservations at 702-648-9415. Cost: \$18.00.

**MAY 5, 2008** - The Contributions of Asian America Women in Nevada. Dr. Sue Fawn Chung, UNLV. Marie Callender's 4800 S. Eastern. 11 to 12: Social Hour. 12: Luncheon. 1:00: Program. 2:00: Installation of Officers. Call Mary Gafford for reservations, 648-9415. Cost \$18.

### State Committee President's Message

The State Executive Committee met on September 15 in Reno at the home of Kay Sanders. Official members Su Kim Chung, Betty Miller and Linda Miller were in attendance for the South, joining North members Holly Van Valkenburgh, Patti Bernard, Carleen Ernest, Carrie Porter, Lisa-Marie Lightfoot, Kay, and me.

There were several visitors also at the meeting. Kinsey Brown, a student at Wooster High in Reno was introduced to us by Lisa-Marie, and will be a liaison between her school and the History Project. Grace Davis, Chair of the Education, Outreach and Review (EOR, or "Eeyore") committee gave us a report about their workings, and Rose Stuart reported the progress on the Stanchion Dedication to be held this coming spring in Washington, DC, at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial.

There is more information about the dedication in this newsletter, but it is interesting to note that the WMSAM had never been approached about a dedication program for one of the State Flag stanchion plaques, so we are setting a precedent. Be sure to take this opportunity to be a part of women's history!

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### 2008 NWHP Conference Plans

Mark your calendars! Coming next March 7-8, 2008 is the Nevada Women's History Project Conference. In honor of Woman's History Month, the theme is "On the Move, Women in Transportation."

The conference will launch on Friday, March 7th with a reception from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Nevada State Train Museum in Carson City. The guest speaker is Susan Martinovich, Director, Nevada Department of Transportation. Entertainment, refreshments, beer and wine will be served.

The conference will continue on Saturday, March 8, 2008 at the Nevada State Library and Archives with registration and a continental breakfast at 8:00 am with presenters starting at 9:00 a.m. and continuing until 5:00 p.m. Presenters' highlights include women school bus drivers, the first woman to obtain a Nevada drivers license and many more. There will be nine presenters and quest tables for organizations and book sellers in the foyer.

Additionally, a special dinner event will be held at the Silver Oaks Golf Course from 7-9:00 p.m. with entertainment, an "Evening with Jeannette Rankin."

**Costs: \$60.00 Conference fees.**

Conference fees includes Friday's reception at the train museum and lunch by Molly's Catering on Saturday.

**Optional \$40.00 Saturday night dinner.**

Conference attendees may bring guests to the dinner.

Walking distance Carson City hotel accommodations will be available upon request. Host accommodations are available from NWHP members.



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## State Committee President's Message

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It is not too early to start thinking about March 2008. There are several items to be considered, most of which have separate articles in these pages with more information. First, the next State Conference will be held in Carson City. The theme is "Women in Transportation" and it promises to be lots of fun—and educational, too, of course! New members of the Roll of Honor will be inducted at the conference, so please note the form included in this issue and get your nominations in before the deadline. Remember that the nominees need not be members of NWHP, but need only to meet the criteria, which is very specific.

Also, the next meeting of the State Executive Committee will be held in conjunction with the conference. New officers of the committee will be elected then, so nomination committees are busy now. Regional nominating committees will also be recruiting soon, as both regions change officers this year. In order to remain a viable and contributing organization we must have willing and able leaders. So when a member of the nominating committee calls you, please be receptive! If you are a new member you might consider taking a somewhat "introductory" position—maybe a second or third vice-president, or corresponding secretary, or even volunteer to chair a committee. If you are unsure about the duties of any of the positions, check with the newly revised Guidelines. Each of the current officers has a copy, and there are also copies at the office in Reno.

I hope to see all of you at the conference in March!

*Cherry Jones, State Committee President*

## State Membership Report

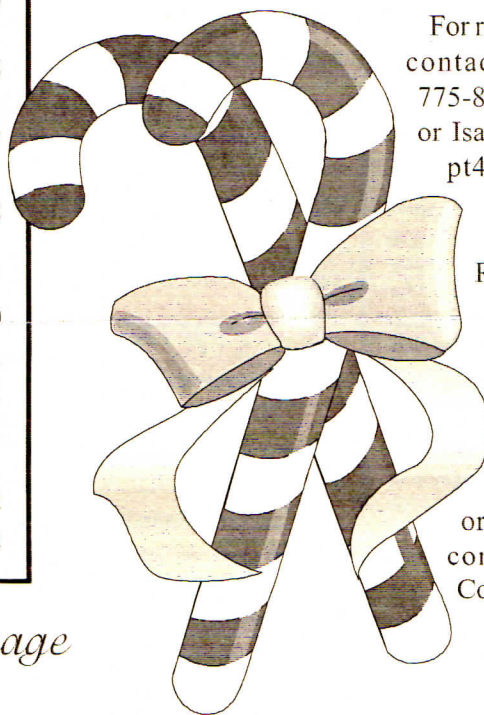
Membership renewals for 2008 are due January 1st and delinquent January 31st. Renewals are being accepted any time now. Make your check out to Nevada Women's History Project and fill out the membership application on the back of this newsletter. Be sure to let us know your current e-mail address if you have one.

Now is the time to invite your friends to be a part of this group. Give someone a membership application and invite them to our meetings.

*Betty Miller, Membership Chair*

## 2008 NWHP Conference Plans

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For reservations or more information, contact Lisa-Marie Lightfoot at 775-849-2050, [lightfeet@charter.net](mailto:lightfeet@charter.net) or Isabel Espinosa at 775-883-9035, [pt4andi@aol.com](mailto:pt4andi@aol.com) or send your checks to: NWHP 770 Smithridge Drive, Suite 300, Reno, NV 89502-0708.

We are still looking for interesting presenters, organizations to have tables and other conference support. If you have an idea about a historic woman in transportation or if you'd like to help, please contact Lisa-Marie Lightfoot. Come join the fun!

*Lisa-Marie Lightfoot*



## *Stanchion Dedication Plans Announced*

Ladies, now is the time to get ready for a trip to the Women's Military Memorial in Washington, D.C. for our stanchion dedication!

The trip is planned for April 24 - 27, 2008.

We will be staying at the Crystal City Marriott's (the same hotel we stayed at for Sarah's dedication). Room cost is \$149.00 per person, double occupancy. Reservations can be made by calling Marriott's reservation number, 1-800-228-9290. Tell them you are with The Travel Center group to get our quoted rate. Reservations need to be made no later than 15 March 2008. We must have 16 reservations confirmed for the weekend.

The cost of the lunch, etc, at the Memorial, will be announced later.

If you need help with plane reservations, feel free to call Donna at The Travel Center 323-0110. If you have any questions, call me at 853-1626. Looking forward to seeing you there.

*Rose Stuart*

## *In Memoriam*

### *Marjorie "Lee" Mortensen ~ 1934 - 2007*

Nevada lost one of its unsung heroes in the writing of Nevada women's histories on September 25, 2007. A native Nevadan, Lee was among the first group of Nevadans inducted into the NWHP Roll of Honor in 1997.

With a degree in Library Science from the University of Denver, Lee was the first full-time librarian to work at the Nevada Historical Society, serving from 1973 until her retirement in 2000.

Her work was always behind the scenes. She relentlessly traced down obscure facts and was delighted to share the wealth of information stored in her head with researchers and writers. It would be difficult to find anyone working in Nevada women's history who has not relied on Lee's help.

For thirty years, she was a partner in the Great Basin Press which published books on Nevada history and literature. Her dedication to helping historians has made it possible for us to have more accurate and complete information on the history of Nevada's women.

*Carrie Townley Porter*

## *Grimes Point Tour – October 7, 2008*



Dr. Angus Quinlan explaining a petroglyph to NWHP members.

A group of 13 strong from Reno and Carson joined Dr. Angus Quinlan and his assistant, Anne. They were Carleen Ernest, Claudia Small, Lanette Bowen, Cherry and Fred Jones, Isabel Espinosa, Norm Howard, Donna Clontz, Judy Frederick, Anne Vohl, Kathy Noneman, Holly Valkenburgh, and Kathy Drake.

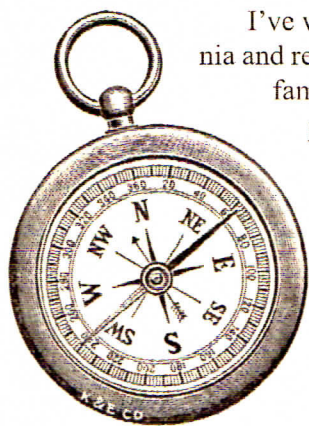
Dr. Angus Quinlan, holds a PhD in archaeology of religion from the University of Southampton, England and is currently deputy director of the Nevada Rock Art Foundation, where he supervises the archaeological documentation of rock art sites in Nevada. After a brief lunch, Dr. Quinlan gave us a tour and lecture at the petroglyph site at Grimes Point a few miles out of Fallon. As much as 10,000 years ago Grimes Point was part of Lake Lahontan where Native Americans set up camp. The original meaning of the many engravings and carvings on stone isn't currently understood. It is speculated that, to the hunter-gathers who made them, they served as maps, hunting magic, symbols of cultural identity or sources of spiritual insight. Great weather for this outing!

A December 2nd tour is scheduled to the Court of Antiquity near Painted Rock. To make reservations call Carleen at 787-8779 to reserve your space. This is limited to 15 people.

*Carleen Ernest*



## News From the North



I've watched the fires in Southern California and realized how important it is to have our family history preserved and to have duplicate copies. Our knowledge of those women who came before us has been a source of inspiration for all of us. Our stories can be that same inspiration for our daughters and granddaughters. You can begin today to write your story.

I'm thrilled with the planning of the conference to be held the second weekend in March. The list of presenters is outstanding. Mark that date on your calendar. March 7th will be an evening reception at the Railroad Museum and the conference the next day with a dinner in the evening.

Our program committee has done a wonderful job planning our programs for the year. The visit to the Paiute Museum at Pyramid Lake was standing room only. The Rock Art Tour had to change plans when they found a locked gate at the first site.

We are working now on our book signings. We are fortunate to have so many published authors as members.

*Mary Anne Convis, Northern Region Chair*

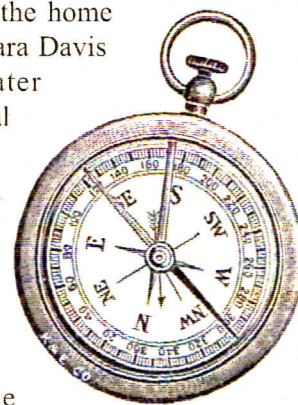


*Season's Greetings*

## News From the South

The Executive Board met at the home of Corresponding Secretary Barbara Davis on August 25. Barbara was later attacked by her cat and bitten several times. She was hospitalized twice and is recuperating.

Southern executive board members President Linda Miller, Treasurer Su Kim Chung and 2nd Vice President Betty Miller traveled to Reno for the State Board Meeting on September 15 at the home of Kay Sanders. Linda also introduced the idea of having a Teacher of the Year award. This motion was passed by the state committee. Linda stayed over



and attended events at Pyramid Lake. This was a showing of the film "Sarah Winnemucca: In Her Footsteps". She met Winnemucca family members. She discussed the possibility of creating a curriculum to accompany the movie. This was met with enthusiasm by the family.



Linda Miller, NWHP South President, Hannah Low, Jodi Tyson, and Destiny Carroll.

The first general meeting of the year was held September 22 at Marie Callender's, 4800 Eastern Avenue. The topic was "Stand Up and Be Counted: Focus on Young Suffragists". The guest speakers were Jodi Tyson from the League of Women Voters, her daughter Hannah Low and her friend Destiny Carroll. It was Hannah who started the idea of having a holiday for women's suffrage. She enlisted the help of her friend Destiny and they approached Rep. Shelley Berkley with signatures on a petition. Shelley later introduced legislation that has passed the House of Representatives and the Senate. The girls talked about their travels to Washington, D. C. They also are involved in a play called the "Long Road to Victory" about the history of women's suffrage in the United States. The Education Fund of the Las Vegas League of Women Voters will be accepting donations to help support the outreach for this play. Donations can be made to LVLWV Ed Fund and mailed to PO Box 371332 Las Vegas, Nevada 89137. Please indicate that your donation should be credited to the NWSD (Nevada Women's Suffrage Day) Project.

The girls were presented with copies of Skirts that Swept the Desert Floor. Linda coordinated the nomination of the girls

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for the Valley Forge Freedom Foundation Award. Rep. Berkley wrote the letter of nomination. The girls won and took top honors in the category. They will receive the George Washington Honor Medal and \$100 savings bonds.

Joan Dimmitt, historian, is collecting materials for the scrapbook. You can contact her at lvjoand@aol.com.

The next executive board meeting is November 3 at the home of Betty Miller.

A holiday tea will be held at the home of Joan Le Mere on December 1. The address is 4755 S. Pearl Las Vegas.

*Dr. Linda Karen Miller, NWHP Southern Region  
President*

## *In Memoriam Dixie Westergard 1935 – 2007*

Long-time NWHP member Dixie Westergard passed away on September 21st after a brief illness. She was a gifted author, writing about historical Nevada figures, Lake Tahoe, and the Washo people, including Dat-so-lah-lee the famed basketmaker. Always the teacher, Dixie geared many of her writings to appeal to children. She volunteered for years in the local schools in addition to working as a substitute teacher at Carson Middle School. A meticulous researcher, Dixie contributed to the bank of knowledge about Nevada and its exceptional women and the role they played in the history of our state. She was a presenter at NWHP State Conferences in 1997 and 2001 and received the Roll of Honor award in 2003.

Dixie was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother. She leaves the world a better place because of her nurturing ways. She is survived by her husband Roland Westergard, three daughters, one son, twelve grandchildren, one great-grandchild, as well as her mother Thelma Sturges, a sister, brother, and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins. Dixie graduated from Pershing County High School and the University of Nevada, Reno, and was a member of Delta Delta Delta sorority at UNR.

*Kay Sanders*



## *Writers Wanted*

If any NWHP member is interested in writing a short biography for the March Women's History Month newspaper articles, please contact me. I have the guidelines for the *Nevada Appeal* articles. The subject must be no longer living. Depending on the newspaper for which it is intended, the length could vary. A picture of the person is always appreciated.

The *Nevada Appeal* has agreed to run the series again. If any NWHP member can contact her local newspaper and arrange this, it would be wonderful. Perhaps if not an article every day - once a week? It could be a fantastic statewide adventure.

*Holly Van Valkenburgh*

## *September 22, 2007 Meeting Report*

President Dr. Linda Miller opened the meeting at noon. The inspirational thought was offered by Mary Gafford which focused on youth, the theme of the program. Doris Drummond led the flag salute. The following guests were introduced: Kathleen Dickinson, Margaret Ashworth, Jodi Tyson, Hannah Low and Destiny Carroll.

After the luncheon, Dr. Miller gave introductory remarks about the speakers. Hannah Low and Destiny Carroll are young girls who have been instrumental in the movement to have a day honoring suffragists. Jodi Tyson, Hannah's mother, coordinated the discussion as the girls discussed their efforts in encouraging Representative Shelley Berkley to sponsor legislation to support the holiday. After the discussion, the girls were each presented with a copy of "Skirts that Swept the Desert Floor".

The next meeting will be the holiday tea at the home of Joan Le Mere. The meeting was concluded at 1:30 p.m.

*Linda Miller*

## *North Christmas Party - December 9th - 1 to 4 p.m.*

Come see my Santas from all over the world. Our Christmas celebration will be on Sunday, December 9th, from 1 to 4:00 p.m., at my house in Carson City, 2185 Court Side Circle. Coffee and dessert will be served. Please feel free to bring children and grandchildren or friend's children. RSVP to Mary Anne Convis by Friday, December 7th, 775-888-9867.



## *Kaleidoscope of Early Cultures in Nevada*

The two day conference at the Springs Preserve and Lost City sponsored by the Nevada Council for History Education was a resounding success. This was the third annual conference for the organization. Forty-five people attended the conference coordinated by Dr. Linda Miller, President of the Nevada Women's History Project Southern Region, and state coordinator for the Nevada Council for History Education. Nevada Women's History Project participants included Joan Le Mere, a charter member of the Nevada Council for History Education and Mary Gafford. The participants were to act like archeologists and record their findings throughout the conference. The first event was an activity on the art of book binding by Jennifer Jacobi, of the Springs Preserve. Marcel Parent took them on an archeological trek through the property. During lunch Zach Zaragosa from Senator Reid's office relayed the Senator's concern for history education. Keynote speakers included historian and author Joy Hakim who wrote the History of US and the Story of Science. Artist and author Roy Purcell relayed his adventures in writing and painting. Howard Goldbaum had participants don 3-d glasses so that they could look at the One On-Line Encyclopedia. Everyone received two books from Joy, sponsored by Smithsonian and Oxford books, and a workbook and a book from Roy sponsored by Stephens Press.

On the second day the participants traveled by bus to the Lost City in Overton. Eva Jensen, archeologist, discussed the history of the site and then took them on a tour of the grounds. Jeff Hinton, a Clark County teacher gave a lecture on Environmentalism. Dr. Linda Miller conducted a workshop on primary sources which included documents about the excavation of the site. The event was co-sponsored by grants from the Nevada Humanities, the Clark County Education Association and ABC-CLIO. Several publishers provided door prizes. NWHP member, Gene Segerblom, also donated her late husband's Valley of Fire prints.

*Linda Miller*



## *Nevada Day Book Signing and Viewing of the Nevada State Constitution*

In honor of Nevada's birthday, the Nevada Women's History Project and the Nevada State Library and Archives got together and offered a book signing and sales event on Saturday, October 27, from noon until 3:00 p.m.

As part of the celebration, the Nevada State Constitution was on display at the Joseph J. Anderson Gallery at the Library and Archives building. Nevada's Constitution has been in force for 143 years and was received in Washington D.C. on October 28, 1864, and President Lincoln declared Nevada a state on October 31, 1864. Facsimile copies of the 1864 Constitution were sold.

More than one dozen NWHP authors were available to autograph their books. A few of our authors had prior commitments or health issues, but their books were available for sale.

We sold 118 items for a total of \$1,761.30. After all expenses, the NWHP cleared \$287.67 for the Jean Ford Research Center.

Books by Dixie Westergard, who just recently passed away were sold. She was a long-time member of our organization and a distinguished member of our Roll of Honor. Her family donated all the proceeds from her books to our organization.

Sarah Winnemucca posters, signed by Benjamin Victor, the artist who sculpted the statues which are in Statuary Hall in the Capitol in Washington D.C. and the Nevada State Capitol in Carson City, were for sale.

Works from film maker, Gwendolyn Clancy were sold. She documented the steps taken as the statue of Sarah Winnemucca traveled to the nation's capitol in Washington, D.C. as well other DVDs.

The event will be followed by a similar one to be held at Austin's Restaurant, 7671 S. Virginia St., Reno, NV on November 3, 2007.

*Isabel Espinoza, Chairperson*





## NEVADA WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT NOMINATION FOR ROLL OF HONOR

The Nevada Women's History Project Roll of Honor honors individuals and organizations who have "made a difference" in the gathering and dissemination of Nevada women's history...who have shown commitment and creativity that resulted in tangible contributions of published works, video collections, accessible research data and special services.

The recipients may be deceased or living. A panel of judges is comprised of individuals in the history, library, archives and other professional fields who are familiar with the roles played by individuals or organizations who have played a part in Nevada women's history. This panel makes the decision of which nominated individuals and organizations will be inducted into the Nevada Women's History Project based on information given in this form and, in some cases, interviews with the nominees. Permission of the nominee must be given before consideration, either in writing, via telephone, mail or e-mail.

The recipients of the Roll of Honor are traditionally inducted into the Roll of Honor at conferences held by the Nevada Women's History Project.

To submit a nomination, please fill out the remainder of this form and mail it to the Nevada Women's History Office at the below address. Deadline for nominations for the Roll of Honor is January 15, 2008. Nominations must be received at the Nevada Women's History office or postmarked by that date.

### SUBMITTED BY:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_  
(If an organization, Name of individual to contact \_\_\_\_\_)

### NOMINEE:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**NOMINEE'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS WHICH MEET THE REQUIREMENTS AS SPECIFIED IN THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THIS FORM:** (Attach additional pages if needed, resumes or other information which may be helpful to the judges.)







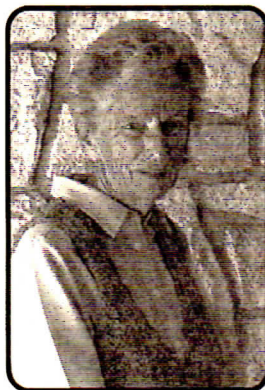
## Recent Accomplishments by the Oral History Committee



Leona Hicks



Francis Hooper



Pat Tripple

The NWHP Oral History Committee has been busy these past months video taping the oral histories of Native American women Leona Hicks and Francis Hooper of Fallon and our own NWHP member Pat Tripple.

Leona, a Shoshone, was born and raised in Stillwater which is a part of the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Indian Reservation. She currently lives on the ranch that she and her late husband Fred started and which she and her children continue to run. Leona has been active in Paiute-Shoshone leadership and has held numerous positions within that community. She and Fred were instrumental in founding the Nevada Indian Rodeo Association and she has been active in the Fallon 4-H organization. Leona spoke about the changes she has seen come to the tribal community within her lifetime, the role of women within tribal leadership, and the difficulty and importance of retaining traditions.

Frances Hooper is of Paiute parentage and is a member of the Paiute-Shoshone Indian Tribe. She was born in Tonopah, but as a young child Frances moved to the Stillwater Marsh area where her mother had been raised. She and her younger brother later moved to the Fallon Indian Colony to live with her foster parents. Frances' early education was in the Fallon schools but she left there to attend the Stewart Indian School in Carson City where she graduated from high school.

Frances has led an interesting life as the wife of her minister husband. They have lived in various states where their four children were born. She and Ernest are now semi-retired and reside on the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Indian Reservation. As a part of her oral history Frances did a presentation on Native American foods, crafts and traditions which was fascinating. We are very fortunate to have that presentation on a separate video tape.

Patti Bernard, Joanne Peden and Carrie Porter met with both of these ladies during a series of visits to Fallon in August and September.

The oral history of NWHP member Pat Tripple was also finished in October. Pat was born and raised in Seattle, Washington, where she received her B.S. at the University of Washington. She left teaching there to obtain her M.A. and Ed.D. at Columbia University. Pat recounted her many and varied experiences before and after coming to the University of Nevada in 1955 as an Assistant Professor of Home Economics. She rose to the rank of Dean of the University of Nevada's School of Home Economics and retired with the title of Professor Emeritus after she was elected to the 1995-1996 Session of the Nevada State Legislature. As Washoe County Assemblywoman from District No. 32, she served on the Assembly Education, Government, and Transportation Committees.

Committee members Patti Bernard, Grace Davis and Joanne Peden spent three highly interesting sessions video taping Pat's oral history.

*Patti Bernard*



Book Sale in progress



# *Featured Historic Nevada Woman:*

## *Jean Sybil McElrath*

**Born:** June 8, 1917

**Died:** October 7, 1967

**Race/nationality/ethnic background:** Caucasian (Swedish, Irish, Scottish and English)

**Primary city and county of residence and work:** Wells (Elko Co.)

**Major fields of work:** author, poet, columnist, feature writer, historian and journalist

**Other role identities:** civic leader, library supporter

### **Biography:**

Jean Sybil McElrath was born June 8, 1917 in the mining camp of Chloride, Arizona to Mabell Paddock McElrath and Fenton Morrill McElrath. The family settled in the small town of Wells, Nevada in 1924, where Jean lived in the same house until her death on October 7, 1967. She had two sisters, Anita Cory and Marjorie Klein, and one brother, Thomas W. McElrath. Her father died in an accident in 1936, which left her mother to raise the four children alone. She graduated from Wells High School as valedictorian of her class.

At the age of sixteen she developed progressive rheumatoid arthritis. In spite of the best treatments available to her, by 1938 she was unable to walk and shortly became bedfast. Except for treatments sought in Idaho and surgery in Kansas City, Missouri she seldom left the house for the remainder of her life. She was hospitalized from time to time. Her mother and older sister Anita took the greatest responsibility for her round-the-clock care, but many friends and the rest of the family helped in other ways.

By 1950 she had lost her sight and by 1958 she had become so paralyzed and weak that she began using an electric typewriter which she nicknamed "Simon Legree." She taught herself Braille and members of her family made Braille caps for her typewriter keys. She had a special typewriter table made which fit over her bed so she could type while lying down. Beside her was her telephone, her main contact with the outside world. She also had a radio within reach. Eventually she had tape recorders to document the enormous amount of resource material she collected for her writing.

Her mother and sister, Anita, helped organize, proofread and type up the items she sent in for publication. She received Talking Books from the Library of Congress and enjoyed listening to them. Friends and family often read books to her. She would often record brief reviews and critiques of the books in her private journals. There at her hospital bed in her room she set up a "newsroom" where she received news items and information of all kinds and sent it out by phone to the appropriate newspaper, if it were a news flash, or typed it up for publication in a feature article, book, poem or story. She often "scooped" other reporters because of the loyalty of her sources

of information. She usually knew of news before it broke, but she was very careful to always verify her stories. Sometimes Anita would transport Jean in a station wagon to the scene of the story on a gurney nicknamed "The Zephyr."

She was loved and admired by the residents of her town and the surrounding ranches and mines for her great writing talent and the courage and graciousness with which she faced a life of pain and disability. She received a constant stream of visitors who came to bring notes, stories, news items or to just discuss the enormous range of things that interested her. She had an unwavering admiration for and an understanding of all her fellow Nevadans, but most of all of the people of Wells, which became highly publicized through her writings. Many people from other towns and cities also came to

know her and communicated with her by phone, letters, tapes and personal visits. She recognized the sound of their voices or their steps when they entered her room.

In January, 1966 she wrote in a letter, "As for the word 'handicap,' it seems to me that to the person concerned, a handicap is pretty much a matter of attitude. It depends, too, I'd say, on what you are trying to do. Nearly everyone is handicapped in some way. Hardly anyone is handicapped in every way. Personality handicaps can be much greater than physical ones. They're more difficult to recognize and acknowledge. And, while it doesn't pay to spend time brooding over a handicap, one does have to face the thing, acknowledge it, before one can try besting it. 'Let's say, too, that whatever way one finds around a handicap, would give one a feeling of accomplishment and usefulness. 'Boondoggling' will not do. It is an insult to adult self-respect."

Her memory was remarkable, as was her gift for writing. She especially enjoyed the stories of "old timers" which she collected and retold with humor and compassion. Her readers, unless they knew her personally, did not realize that she was blind and an invalid, because her writing style was so visually descriptive and humorous. She painted vivid pictures of the beauty of Nevada, brought to one's senses the smells of flowers, rain on the desert sage, the majesty of distant mountains and the magic worlds of children at play.

She never lost her thirst for knowledge. After high school she took correspondence courses in journalism and free lance writing. She had tutoring in Latin and Spanish. Until she lost her sight she read omnivorously. She especially enjoyed classical music, which brought her a lot of comfort. The thing that brought her the most unhappiness was that she had to depend on others so much when she wanted to be independent and free. She had dark moments of self doubt, but those were never communicated to the world outside her family or private journals.



*continued on page 9*



Famous people such as Joel McCrea, the movie star who had a ranch in Ruby Valley, became her friends. She received recognition from Governor Grant Sawyer. Robert Laxalt, author, professor, and Director of the University of Nevada Press, was one of her mentors and was instrumental in getting *Aged in Sage* published. In the foreword, he wrote, "In this book, author Jean McElrath has done a remarkable thing. Not only has she breathed life into fine old stories that would otherwise have been left to die, but she has done so with a true storyteller's gift of narrative, with kindness, and a deep understanding of the people she writes about."

She received many awards but the highlight was when she was named Distinguished Nevadan in 1965. She was transported to the University of Nevada, Reno, where she accepted the award in person from her gurney. She was then forty-eight years old, had been unable to walk for twenty-seven years, and blind for fifteen years. At that time she received a congratulatory telegram eight feet, three and one half inches long with signatures from her friends. Her modesty and humor are illustrated by her comment that this had a good human interest story in it, but she didn't feel comfortable writing about it.

She received the National Certificate of Award for the State of Nevada from the United States Commission for the Celebration of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of George Washington, 1932; 1954 Winner - American Association of University Women, Nevada State Division, Pioneer Nevada Woman Essay Contest; Distinguished Nevadan award, 1965; Most Valuable Correspondent from the Salt Lake Tribune, 1954-1961; Certificate of Merit from the Nevada Press Association, 1966; Rose Award from Nevada Future Homemakers of America, 1967.

She was president of the Girl Scout Association (1946-56) and was an Associate Intermediate Troop Leader for three years. She belonged to the Nevada State Historical Society; Nevada Federation of the Blind; League of Women Voters; The Westerners (Los Angeles Corral) and the National League of American Pen Women.

Her honorary memberships included the Nevada Peace Officer's Association, Nevada Cowboy Association, Wells Business and Professional Women's Club, Elko Soroptomists, Northeastern Elko Historical Society, Wells Chamber of Commerce, Parent Teachers Association, Wells Chapter of the Future Farmers of America, and the Elko County Cow Belles.

In September, 1967 she told the editor of the Nevada State Journal that he should get someone else to do her job. When he refused to accept her resignation she wrote that she would try to continue, but signed the note "Square Wheels." Soon she was sent to the hospital in Elko, Nevada where she slipped into a coma, and as the editor of the Nevada State Journal wrote on Oct. 7, 1967, "Saturday morning death claimed Jean McElrath, newspaper reporter, author and, indeed, Distinguished Nevadan."

There were many eulogies and testimonials to her. At a testimonial dinner in Wells on October 26, 1967, the Chamber of Commerce presented a check for \$500.00 to the Wells city librarian as a memorial to Jean in the hopes that a book could be compiled from her writings in "Tumbleweeds." This was indeed accomplished through the efforts of her family and friends, who edited and published the book in 1971.

*(Biographical sketch by Esther Early)*

#### **Published works:**

- *Aged in Sage*, University of Nevada Press, 1964.
- *Tumbleweeds. Wells Progress*, 1971.
- McElrath, Jean. "Elko County History." *Nevada the Silver State* Vol. I, Western States Historical Publishers, 1970.
- Compilation of selected columns. University of Nevada Press, 1971.
- She is probably most famous for the weekly column "Tumbleweeds" which appeared in the *Wells Progress* from 1940-1967, and from which the book by that name was later compiled. These were vignettes of life in Wells and surrounding areas as reported by the people, and philosophical comments made by herself and others. It was the longest running column in Nevada at that time.
- She wrote feature articles for various newspapers and magazines, and a column for *Folks*, a booklet published monthly for newspaper correspondents, under the pen name "Cathy Crabb." She published a "Hunting Edition" for the *Wells Progress* for nine years and wrote a series on western rodeos and other material for the Cattle Association. Her free lance writings appeared in *Desert Magazine*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Nevada Highways*, *Grit*, *Nevada Peace Officers*, *Wall Street Journal*, *American Magazine*, *American Family*, *Better Farming*, *Western Livestock Journal*, *Las Vegas Sun*, and *Quote*. Her articles were often accompanied by pictures taken by her sister Anita, an accomplished photographer. She also wrote articles under the pseudonym, "Sayge Hehn."

#### **Sources of Information:**

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4. Howard, Ruth. "A Christmas Inspiration." *Nevada Business Woman*. Dec., 1965.
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8. Stewart, Patricia. "Postscripts." *Nevada State Journal*. Oct. 10, 1967.
9. "Last Rites Held in Elko Tuesday for Jean McElrath." *Wells Progress*. Oct. 13, 1967.
10. "Sad News for Folks." *Folks*. Washington Newspaper Publishers Association, Inc. November, 1967.
11. "Wells BPW Publishes Jean McElrath Book." *Wells Progress*. April 3, 1970.
13. McElrath, Jean. Personal Diaries and Journals, 1935-1967.



# Screening of "In the Footsteps of Sarah Winnemucca" Highlight of the NWHP Tour Held on September 16th



Sherry Ely Mendes and Dorothy Ely sharing their experiences as Winnemucca family members.

It was a sell-out at the Paiute Cultural Center and Museum at Pyramid Lake when 72 members and guests enjoyed the day touring the Center and learning about Sarah Winnemucca, her people, and the history of the area. After participants looked through the displays in the Museum, Ben Aleck, tribal member and Museum co-manager, talked about the history of the Paiute people whose residence in the area dates back at least 9,000 years. The Northern Paiutes first encountered white men in 1844 when John C. Fremont and fellow explorers passed through the territory on their way



Documentary Filmmaker Gwen Clancy talks about Sarah's life.

to California. The native peoples had to change their lifestyle in one generation as whites flooded into the area and attempted to remove the indigenous population. Sarah Winnemucca was caught in this historic conflict and dedicated her life to helping her people retain some of their land and try to adapt to the white man's ways.

Next, Paiute language expert and story-teller Ralph Burns talked about the successful effort to retain knowledge of the language and teach it to young students. Now teaching of the Paiute language, which has been translated into a written system, is wide-spread and credit is given at the University of Nevada, Reno for such study. According to their beliefs, language belongs to everyone. The concept of private property is not part of their culture.

Following lunch, the showing of the beautifully done documentary, "In the Footsteps of Sarah Winnemucca", was held.



Marilyn Melton and Doug Smith enjoying the day at the Paiute Cultural Center and Museum.

Film director, Gwen Clancy, was the master of ceremonies. She introduced her partner in producing the film, author and Nevada historian Sally Zanjani who, together with Gwen, traveled around Nevada to places that figured prominently in Sarah's life. The film included interviews with Winnemucca family members Dorothy Ely, Sherry Ely Mendes, Paiute tribal member Ralph Burns, State Archivist Guy Rocha, and others.

Questions were taken from the audience following the showing. Karen Benna, project chair for the event, presented a check from the Nevada Women's History Project for \$200 to Ben Aleck to help with Museum expenses.

Winnemucca family member Dorothy Ely spoke about her feelings regarding the history of the tribe and Sarah. She "would have liked to have known her." Referring to the 2005 dedication of Sarah's statue in Statuary Hall, Washington, D.C., she remarked, "I felt she

was there." Dorothy also expressed her disappointment that Indian history was not taught in the schools. Her daughter, Sherry Ely Mendes, expressed her gratitude to the Nevada Women's History Project, Gwen Clancy, and the Nevada Women's Fund for the recognition given to Sarah. Acknowledging that not all native people liked Sarah, she remarked that old hurts carry from generation to generation. She said, "I am glad that her history is being brought forward. It is all a part of Nevada history. It was a very difficult time."

Sally Zanjani, who wrote the definitive biography of Sarah Winnemucca, said that even though Sarah mastered English and the white man's ways, she always remained a Paiute and felt that Paiute ways were better than white ways. She wanted Paiutes to gain some skills to survive. Sarah's book, *Life Among the Piutes*, did much to explain the culture and traditions of her people. Her grandfather Chief Truckee was her role model.



Diane Monfalcone, Margaret Richardson, Sally Zanjani, and Marilyn Dousharm pose in front of the Western Shoshone basketwork exhibit.

*Kay Sanders, Newsletter Editor*



## Congratulations to:

- Hannah Low and Destiny Carroll for being chosen to receive the George Washington Honor Medal in this year's Freedoms Foundation National Awards Program in Las Vegas. They pushed to have a resolution passed in the House of Representatives honoring suffragists and supporting the creation of a holiday for this purpose. This has been accomplished twice. The girls are students at Glen Taylor Elementary School in Henderson. At the NWHP State Conference in 2006 in Las Vegas they received Trailblazer Awards.
- Member Jan Cleere's newly released book, *Amazing Girls of Arizona: True Stories of young Pioneers*, is now available for purchase at all local bookstores, Amazon.com, BN.com, and GlobePequot.com. Among her many other publications is *More Than Petticoats: Remarkable Nevada Women*. Autographed copies are available at [www.JanCleere.com](http://www.JanCleere.com).



PLEASE INFORM THE STATE MEMBERSHIP CHAIR AND YOUR REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP CHAIR OF ANY CHANGES IN YOUR ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, AND/OR E-MAIL ADDRESS. BETTY MILLER'S ADDRESS IS: 2633 LEGEND DR., LAS VEGAS, NV 89134-8810. IN THE NORTH PLEASE ALSO NOTIFY GRACE DAVIS AT: NWHP, 770 SMITHRIDGE DR., SUITE 300, RENO, NV 89502.

Articles for the February 2008 newsletter are due to Newsletter Editor, Kay Sanders, no later than January 25, 2008. E-mail her at [ksanders@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:ksanders@unr.nevada.edu).

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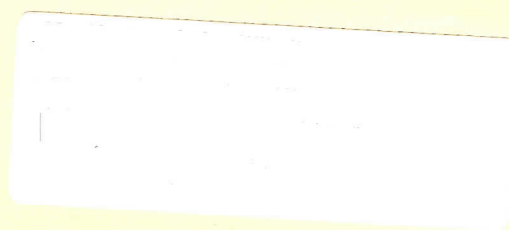
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### *New & Rejoined Members*

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Mimi Case-Liebhold  
Chuck Convis  
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Priscilla Maloney  
Carley McConnell  
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