

Shoshone Museum Reader

Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.

Winter 2021



A TRIBUTE TO ETHEL ROOK MESSER 1940-2020

Death of Ethel Rook Messer

We lost a treasured member of the Shoshone Museum this summer. Ethel Rook Messer lived all her life in Shoshone and will be remembered as an important and loved member of our community.

Ethel was born in Barstow, CA, to Stella and Carl Rook and had two older brothers--Carl, Jr; and James. When her mother was pregnant with James, Carl, Jr, developed a fever and she took him to Barstow to see a doctor. On the return trip, she went into labor, and James was delivered in the Cronese Valley at the home of her parents by an elderly woman who lived nearby. Consequently, when Stella was near term with Ethel, Carl, Sr, would take her to Barstow every time she had a twinge until they finally decided to just stay there until the baby was born!

Her older brothers had nicknames--"Tuffy" and "Ruffy"--and the plan had been to give Ethel the name "Fluffy." She did have cute, fluffy, curly hair, but very early on she developed a unique ability--she could hammer nails without hitting her fingers. So, she was called "Bangey" well into her high school years. Later her brothers would organize activities and assign her various roles. They would often construct wagon roads down a hillside, and her job was to test out the new course. Usually this would result in several upsets of Ethel and the wagon before the route was perfected. She attended both grade school and high school in Shoshone. She did spend one semester of 10th grade in Los

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Shoshone Museum Association

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Shoshone Museum Elects Jim Gilliam New President

At the July meeting, long-time board member Jim Gilliam was unanimously elected the new president. Jim has always been an ardent supporter of the museum. In 2006 he gave a very interesting talk about Panamint Shoshone gift basketry and shared his collection at the Old West Days History Talks.

Jim is the great-grandson of "Dad" Fairbanks and lived in Shoshone until his family moved to Barstow when he was in first grade. He studied architecture at the University of Southern California and worked for Lockheed Aircraft and San Bernardino County Public Works before joining HMC Architects and eventually becoming their president. The firm specializes in health care, educational, and civic architecture.

In his youth, Jim was an avid soccer player, rock climber, and Corvette racing car driver. Since his retirement, he has been concentrating on drawing and painting. His work was recently displayed in the Tecopa Basin Art Gallery. He has also donated prints of his work for sale in the Shoshone Museum gift shop. He and his wife, Beth, also enjoy their two daughters and six grandchildren (two of whom attend Shoshone High School).

Jim loves history and is looking forward to guiding the museum in its mission to preserve and share our rich local history.



Jim Gilliam, new president of the Shoshone Museum Association

MUSEUM HOURS

Open daily from 9 am to 3 pm

The mission of the Shoshone Museum Association is to tell the unique story of the Amargosa region and to preserve its cultural and natural history

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Angeles while her mother helped care for her own aging parents. Ethel was very unhappy at that school and felt the education she received in Shoshone was far superior.

Ethel's brother Carl remembers a story from their childhood in Shoshone. Ethel was seven or eight years old when Herman Jones died and they inherited his old pickup truck. The truck malfunctioned if driven too fast. At that age, Ethel had already taught herself to drive, so her brothers hid the keys. Carl happened to come home early from school one day and caught her and a bunch of her friends racing the truck around on the hills. Investigation showed that she had hot-wired the ignition! She was a clever little rascal!

Ethel loved horses, and, when one of her horses got sick, she asked a local rancher to take a look at it. Determining that it required a course of an injectable medication, the rancher offered to send one of his workers to administer it. This turned out to be Luvon Messer, a shy, handsome young fellow from Clovis, CA. All the girls were enamored of him, but he wasn't interested in any of them, until he met Ethel. A friend asked Ethel how she had been successful in gaining his attention, and she replied that it was because she had a sick horse. Her friend subsequently asked around trying to find another sick horse! Luvon and Ethel married in 1958--the first couple to be married in the new Faith Community Church in Tecopa.

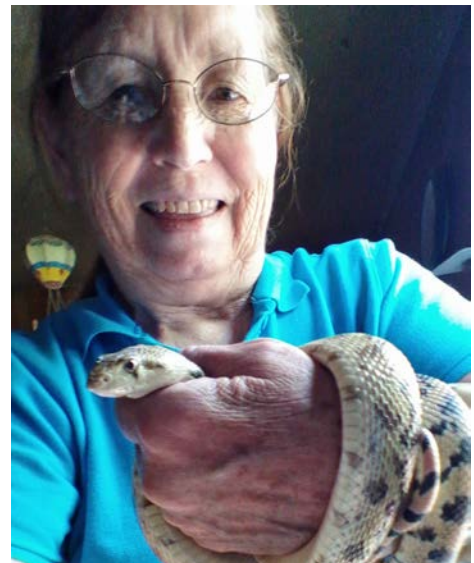
Ethel and Luvon moved to Chicago Valley where they owned 160 acres of land. Here they ran cattle and raised six boys. Luvon delivered two of the children at their home. On one occasion, during a very hot summer, the family went up to Whitney Portal to escape the heat and await the arrival of their third child. When Ethel went into labor they started for the hospital, but the baby arrived before they got there. Luvon paused long enough to ascertain that

the baby was breathing, and then continued on. The other two little boys in the car were dumfounded as to where this third child had come from!

Luvon worked for the Inyo County Road Department with his father-in-law, Carl Rook, as a heavy equipment operator. Later Ethel, Luvon, and Carl owned and operated Rook & Messer Excavating and did road building, mining, and site preparation. One of the mines they operated was the Markley Talc Mine, high in the Ibex Hills overlooking the Tecopa basin.

Although busy raising six active boys, Ethel also held many positions outside the home. She was one of the organizers of the annual Amargosa Days celebration in Shoshone, was president of the PTA and taught at the Shoshone High School, and organized the annual Shoshone Art Show as a benefit for the school. She was an accomplished artist and painted the original flowers on the Flower Building in Shoshone. She always had her camera with her wherever she went, and her photographs were published in several local papers. Later she worked at the Shoshone General Store, and, most recently, managed the finances for the Shoshone Museum.

New benches have been placed in front of the museum in her memory (thank you Toni Kizzia) so that we can all remember her many acts of kindness and her exuberant spirit!



A true child of the desert, nothing fazed Ethel!

Echoes from the Archives

By Susan Sorrells



Two thousand twenty has been a roller coaster ride for the Shoshone-Tecopa area and for our museum. In late March, when businesses and cultural organizations such as museums and libraries were closed by a California State order, our board and staff were concerned about our future, because the gift shop generates a significant percentage of our income. As a result, we sent out an appeal, spearheaded by staff member Toni Kizzia, and we were heartened by the overwhelming response from our members and friends, who donated more than \$12,000. This generosity encouraged us to plan for the coming year. But shortly thereafter we lost two of our most valued leaders who have guided the development of the museum over many years--Ethel Messer and Bob Reynolds. The loss of Ethel has been especially difficult because she has been the manager and guiding hand for the museum for several years. Whatever needed to be done, whatever question needed to be answered, Ethel was always available with unlimited patience and wisdom. In order to move forward, the staff has met at least once a week as volunteers to keep up the momentum and to keep our spirits high. One of the biggest strengths of the museum is its exemplary staff, composed of Mary Burke King, our curator for more than 10 years; John Muccio, our bookkeeper; Carla Perkins, who keeps the gift shop attractive, inviting, and well stocked with appealing gifts; and Toni Kizzia, who interfaces with guests and members and plans our special events such as Speakers Night. They all warmly welcome visitors and answer their many questions about our fascinating area. In addition we are very lucky that Jim Gilliam, who grew up in Shoshone and continued on to have a successful architectural career in Southern California, has agreed to be our president. He has joined us several times on our workdays and has great ideas for this coming year. Although the museum reopened on October 1, 2020, and we were heartened by our many enthusiastic visitors through October and November, we again faced a difficult challenge the first week of December when Governor Newsome ordered another closure as a result of the skyrocketing cases of COVID-19 in the state. Fortunately the staff, again with Toni Kizzia taking the lead, had launched a raffle several months earlier for a stunningly beautiful handmade quilt donated by Marlys Skarry. The winning ticket was drawn a week after the museum closed; the winner was thrilled, and the museum was able to add another substantial contribution to its survival fund! It continues to be a difficult time for the Shoshone-Tecopa community. Although there are divergent thoughts about the challenges presented by the pandemic and the ways to meet them, the community as a whole has demonstrated concern, and members have assisted each other as we work our way through these hardships.

Robert (Bob) E. Reynolds 1943-2020



Catherine Badgley, University of

Bob Reynolds in front of the Peach Springs Tuff in the Cady Mountains

Death of Bob Reynolds

Bob was an enthusiastic long-time supporter of the Shoshone Museum. He was born in Pasadena, CA, and became interested in fossils in elementary school. He won the Science Fair grand prize while attending Pasadena High School. At Pasadena Community College he received the Superior Achievement Award in Geology and the Edwin V. Van Amridge Memorial Scholarship. He graduated from the University of California, Riverside, with a degree in geology. In 1966 he worked briefly as a field geologist for a mining company. He was appointed Earth Science Curator by the San Bernardino County Museum in 1967. After his retirement, he continued to be involved in protection of the desert and worked for several consulting organizations that assessed construction sites before commercial development.

Bob was a prolific author and a popular teacher and lecturer. He made many important scientific discoveries. In 2011 a mineral discovered in the Blue Bell Mine near Baker, CA, and at the Red Lead Mine in Tasmania, Australia, was named Reynoldsite in his honor [Pb_{1.97}Mn_{2.01}O₅(Cr_{1.01}O₄)].

He was one of the organizers of the annual Desert Studies Symposium held at the California State College's Zzyzx campus south of Baker and gave many presentations, led field trips, and edited the proceedings. In 2019 the Robert E. Reynolds Desert Symposium Student Research Award was established in his honor.

Bob's boundless enthusiasm, infectious good nature, and geological knowledge led many of us to a deeper understanding and love of the desert.

Shoshone Museum Association Membership Form

(Annual Dues)

Individual	\$25	Name: _____
Family	\$35	Mailing address: _____
Business	\$50	_____
Nonprofit	\$35	_____
Mtn Lion	\$100	Email: _____
Mammoth	\$500	Phone: ____ (____) _____
Senior/	\$15	Donation: \$ _____
Student	\$15	Amount enclosed: \$ _____

New Renewal

Make checks payable to Shoshone Museum Association
Mail to: P.O. Box 38, Shoshone, CA 92384 or
pay by phone using VISA or Master Card 760 852 4524

Upcoming Events

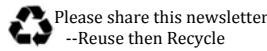
- TBA * Pine Needle Basket Making, class by Sue Palmer at Shoshone Museum (outdoors, Spring 2021)
- TBA * Oil Painting, class by Judy Dillman at Shoshone Museum (outdoors, Spring 2021)

Ongoing Tecopa Basin Art Gallery at Tecopa Hot Springs Resort exhibit by appointment (760) 852-4420

- Cosmic Community by Lara Murray
- Fire Pit Pottery by Vicki Rega
- Works by Donna Yarrell (coming soon!)

Death Valley Natl Park events: <www.nps.gov/deva>
 Get Outdoors Nevada volunteer opportunities <www.getoutdoorsnevada.org>
 Road Scholar Program, Death Valley Natl Park <www.dvnpa.org/programs-events/road-scholar>
 Ash Meadows Natl Wildlife Refuge events information <<https://www.facebook.com/pg/AshMeadowsNWR/events/>>
 Tecopa Hot Springs Campground (music, hikes, and more) <<http://www.tecopahotspringscampground.com/>>

Please contact the Shoshone Museum for more information
 shoshonemuseum@gmail.com 760 852-4524
 (* Shoshone Museum events)



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Shoshone Museum has received \$294.57 as of November 2020

The Shoshone Museum Association
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