

Shoshone Museum Reader

Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.

Spring, 2008

Shoshone Museum
Association
P.O. Box 38
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FEATURED LOCAL AUTHOR

*Lauren
Wright*

by Judy Palmer



Lauren Wright and Bennie Troxel are well-known figures around Shoshone. World-renowned scientists and educators, they have spent 56 years studying and documenting the geology of Death Valley and the Amargosa region. They have published scores of papers in the scientific press about their work. Fortunately for us, they have also published many books and articles for the general public about the "world class" geology of our area. For books available through the Shoshone Museum, see page 2. This article spotlights Lauren Wright; Bennie Troxel will be featured in a future issue.

Originally from Los Angeles, Lauren Wright spent summers with his family at Lookout Mountain near Denver where he was fascinated by the structure of the flatirons in the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. He nurtured this childhood interest in rocks by studying geology at the University of Southern California in 1936.

At the beginning of the war, the need for strategic materials brought him to Death Valley in search of talc. During the war, he served in the Army Air Force as a group instructor in cold weather survival techniques. The fact that he had never been to the Arctic didn't seem to matter! After the war, he worked for the California Division of Mines (1947-1960) while completing work for his doctoral thesis on the talc deposits of Death Valley at California Institute of Technology.

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Sharon Schafer Donates Art to the Shoshone Museum Wildlife Display

On March 15th, Sharon Schafer gave another extraordinary presentation to a packed house at the Shoshone Museum. Schafer is an exceptional photographer, painter and naturalist. This presentation was called "Art in Nature: Images from the Wildlands of Southern Nevada", the result of in depth visual studies of the plants and animals of seven different locations within 70 miles of Boulder City where Schafer resides. Images for each area began with photographs, continued with detailed sketches, and culminated in a stunning large painting. The full collection has also been on exhibit in Las Vegas for several months.



Schafer stated that the project grew out of her abiding love for desert life forms and landscapes, and her desire "to never hear the words desert and wasteland mentioned in the same sentence again."

Over \$80 was raised for the Shoshone Museum Assn. in donations by attendees, and Sharon Schafer has also offered to donate images to greatly enhance our new improved Natural History exhibits. The Museum will also be offering Schafer's work for sale, as well as a DVD of the presentation when available.

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In 1950, he was placed in charge of the Los Angeles office. -- Later that year Bennie Troxel, a recent UCLA graduate, was to join the staff there also. Lauren and Bennie were able to work closely with another famous Death Valley geologist, Levi Noble, mapping the Death Valley region. Lauren joined the faculty at Pennsylvania State University in 1961 as Head of the Department of Geology and Geophysics.

It was here also that Lauren met his future wife, Myrtle Davies, the administrative assistant of the Dean of the college. Part of the agreement with Penn State was that he was to spend part of each academic year in Death Valley. Soon Myrtle and their son Tony learned to share his love of the area. This arrangement allowed him to continue his work with Bennie Troxel mapping important features of the area, and also provided an opportunity for Lauren to supervise graduate student research into the geologic evolution of Death Valley.

Lauren has always been an active member of the community in Shoshone. He has served on the board of the Shoshone Museum for many years and was a founding member of the newly formed Amargosa Conservancy. His work has brought international attention to the geology of our region and led to the establishment of the Shoshone Education and Research Center (SHEAR) in town where geologists and students from around the world come to study.

You can order books (and companion poster) by Dr. Loren Wright directly from the Shoshone Museum by sending a check to PO Box 38, Shoshone CA 92384, or by calling (760) 852 4524 with your credit card information.

Improvements for Museum Exhibits

We have been making small but needed changes to our Natural History room in recent months, to improve the Shoshone Museum experience for our visitors and members. Many thanks go to John Muccio of Pastels Bistro and Meg Viereck, who moved large floor cases still filled with mineral specimens! Other volunteers who are helping immensely with Nature and Native American exhibit consolidation and upgrades are Mary King, Amy Noel and Judy Palmer.

Thanks to the donation of a large locking wall display cabinet by the Tecopa Post Office, we will soon have important additions to our Native American section, featuring the history of Paiute and Shoshone people who have made this area their home for thousands of years. We will also be developing Children's Exhibits in the Fall.

Loren Wright's Books *available at the Shoshone Museum*

"The Geology of Death Valley National Park", by Dr. Loren Wright and Marli Miller, including Land Forms, Crustal Extension, Geologic History and Road Guides. \$25.95 plus postage. Copyright 2004, 2nd edition. A must for field trips and those who want to get the most out of their Death Valley visit, through the full-color photographs and geologic map by Marli Miller, and detailed descriptions of amazing geology. New to this edition: six different road guides for touring Death Valley with detailed geology highlighted.

COMPANION POSTER: "The Geologic Evolution of Death Valley", by Marli Miller. \$8.25 plus postage.

"Guidebook: Death Valley Region, California and Nevada", includes multiple articles by Loren Wright, Bennie Troxel and others. \$12.00 plus postage.

"Fifty Years of Death Valley Research: A Volume in Honor of Loren Wright and Bennie Troxel", Special Issue of Earth-Science Reviews, March 2005. \$3.95 plus postage.

PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

The fall issue of your newsletter will feature an article about the history of the Flower Building in Shoshone. In addition to the article, we are planning to develop a scrapbook of photographs and stories about the Flower Building and other historic buildings in Shoshone.

If you have photos or stories to contribute, please send them to the museum at PO Box 38, Shoshone CA 92384. We would really appreciate it!



Echoes from the Archives

—Susan Sorrells, Board President

As I crested the summit of the pass between Chicago Valley and Shoshone a few days ago, I saw an unusual sight. As I glanced at the Amargosa basin and the village of Shoshone, I noticed something different in the breathtaking view I often enjoy on my journey home. Just down the road, at the famous road cut that displays 25 different geological events, there were many vans and a large gathering of people. As I drove closer, I noticed about 40 students sitting in chairs arranged like an indoor classroom at a university. The professor was standing in front of the students with a flip chart, waving his arms, oblivious to the cars whizzing by. Several cars passing by had stopped to find out what was going on, so I too parked my car on the shoulder of the road and joined the group. I soon discovered that Santa Barbara City College was having its annual field trip to the Amargosa basin, and this year the professors had decided to take full advantage of the “outdoor classroom”.

Santa Barbara City College is just one of many learning institutions that consistently visit Death Valley and the Amargosa to study the “world class geology” made famous by Dr Wright and Bennie Troxel. The Shoshone Education and Research Center (SHEAR) is often the field base for many of these groups, and almost every season there are between thirty to fifty university groups and researchers who enjoy the center. It is a non-profit corporation run by a board of directors; donations toward its up keep and development are tax deductible. It is housed in the historic mining quarters built by Southern California Minerals and later occupied by Pfizer. The building housing the Death Valley Health Center also was once part of the complex. Although the facilities are rustic, they are heaven compared to camping in a sand storm or trying to stay warm during the long cold winter nights. The facility can sleep 26 students and has a group kitchen, living room and bathroom, replete with hot water for showers. One of my most enjoyable evenings in the desert was spent at the SHEAR center around a dinner of pasta, French bread, wine and fascinating company and conversation.

From its inception, the geologists and researchers who direct and stay at the SHEAR center have been invaluable partners with the Shoshone Museum. Both Bennie Troxel and Lauren Wright have been on our board of directors for many years and have helped us build exhibits that interpret the geology of the region, such as the Walk Through Time created by Bennie Troxel. These professors and students also have given intriguing and well attended presentations about the area such as a PowerPoint presented by Dr Lauren Wright and Dr Marli Miller, titled “Death Valley’s Dynamic Landscape”. We are truly lucky to have the SHEAR center as a partner, as we work toward our mission of interpreting and preserving the wonders of the Amargosa region.

More New Exhibits at the Museum Prohibition in the Desert

The history of Shoshone, a small desert town on the edge of Death Valley, is filled with colorful events and characters. A new exhibit, “Prohibition in the Desert”, will highlight another exciting era. The exhibit will be centered around the recently recovered suitcase of Jack Madison, Shoshone's most famous bootlegger. We are grateful for the support and encouragement of Jack's family – his niece, Dr. Rachel Jenkins and her daughter, Judy Jenkins. Their generous contributions and donation of the suitcase have made this exhibit possible. We welcome other stories, photographs and artifacts that would help to tell the story of that time.



George Ross accepts a donation from Judy Jenkins.

HEADSTONE FOR "WHITEY BILL" WALTER CHARLES MCGARN

Visitors to the Shoshone Cemetery will notice a new headstone on an old grave. Long time Shoshone resident, "Whitey Bill" was laid to rest over 50 years ago. The following year, his wife Marie was buried by his side. Although a small marker indicated her grave, his remained unmarked.

"Whitey Bill" was a WWI veteran and was eligible for a government marker. After almost 3 years of navigating bureaucratic red tape, his headstone finally arrived in Shoshone this spring and was installed in March by George Ross and Judy Palmer. A formal dedication ceremony is planned for the fall during Old West Days. Stories and photographs of Marie, "Whitey Bill" or others buried in the cemetery are welcomed and may be left in the museum.

OLD WEST DAYS 2008 will be celebrated in Shoshone CA from October 31-November 2nd.

SMA Membership Form

Membership Dues

Individual	\$ 15
Family	\$ 25
Joint/AC	\$ 40
Business/ Nonprofit	\$ 50
Mammoth	\$ 500
Donation:	\$ _____

Make checks payable to:
Shoshone Museum Association.
Mail to:
P.O. Box 38
Shoshone, CA 92384
OR
Pay by phone using your Visa or Master Card!
(760) 852-4524

Name: _____
 Email for events: _____
 Mailing Address: _____

 Returning Member: ___ New Member: ___

Thanks to Our Wonderful Membership!

Many thanks to all of you who joined or renewed your membership to the Shoshone Museum Association since our February newsletter. We really appreciate your continued support.

Members get a 10% Store Discount-Don't forget to mention your membership in the Gift Shop, and save 10%.

NEW! You can get a joint membership with the Shoshone Museum and the Amargosa Conservancy for a \$10 discount of \$40.

SHOSHONE MUSEUM NEEDS & WISH LIST

Perhaps you have a few things that are taking up space in the garage that just might help us out. The Shoshone Museum is currently seeking:

- A good working floor vacuum cleaner or shop vac
- A hand-held vacuum for cleaning exhibits
- Boards 1 foot wide and 8 feet long for additional library shelving
- 1 x 2 inch trim, also 8 feet long & large L brackets
- Durable area rugs for office & stockroom
- Foam core and archival glue for exhibits
- Pendeflex hanging file folders or magazine cases

The Shoshone Museum Association

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Don't forget to mark your calendars for Old West Days
October 31st-
November 2nd 2008!

