



# The Shoshone Museum Reader

Spring 2009

Shoshone Museum  
Association  
P.O. Box 38  
Shoshone, CA 92384  
(760) 852-4524  
Editor: Jennifer O. Viereck



Featured Local Author:  
**BENNIE TROXEL**

By Judy Palmer

*This is the last article in our series spot lighting local authors. Previous articles have featured Robin Flinchum, Marta Becket, George Ross, and Lauren Wright. Future articles will explore the various historic buildings in our community, in a Series called "If These Walls Could Talk..."*

A part time Shoshone resident, Bennie Troxel has been studying the geology of the Death Valley area since 1952. Born in Osawatomie, Kansas, Bennie moved to California in 1939 where he worked at Douglas Aircraft, and then Northrop Aircraft.

During World War II he served in the US Army Air Corps in India and China. After the war, he entered Compton Junior College (Compton, CA) and then UCLA to complete his college education. Required to take a science course, he enrolled in a geology

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## What's New at the Shoshone Museum:

**SHARON K. SCHAFER**  
NATURAL HISTORY EXHIBIT

Please Celebrate With Us  
Special Reception Saturday  
February 21 at 3:00 p.m.

3:30: Sharon K. Schafer's multi-media program "The Wildlands of Southern Nevada"

This month, we will complete our greatly enhanced Natural History exhibit in the Mammoth Wing, comprised of images, drawings and teaching text donated by widely acclaimed artist and naturalist Sharon K. Schafer. Images of living wildlife in their natural habitat have been selected to compliment artifacts already on display, such as the Desert Tortoise, Dahl Sheep, Cougar and many more.

Posters featuring Sharon's photographs of golden eagles, cougars and petroglyphs are also available in the Museum Book Shop for only \$12, as well as DVD copies of her multimedia presentation, the "Wildlands of Southern Nevada", for \$20.

Please join us Saturday, February 21st, to meet Sharon yourself. Sharon's artwork will be on sale at the reception to benefit the Shoshone Museum.

## GEOLOGY TEACHING TOUR WITH DR. LAUREN WRIGHT

*A 3 day special event  
to honor noted geologist and  
former SMA Board President  
John Cooper*

**Friday, April 17th, 7:00 p.m.:**  
"Photographic Journey of Amargosa  
and Death Valley Geology", with Dr.  
Lauren Wright and Marli Miller at  
the Shoshone Museum.

**Saturday, April 18th: Day 1-** "The Oldest  
Rocks in the Death Valley Region", in  
the vicinity of the War Eagle Mine at  
the southern end of the Noah Range.

**Sunday, April 19th: Day 2-** "Tertiary and  
Quaternary Features" including Te-  
copa Lake beds and ash hills, the Black  
Mountains and Greenwater Range.

The tour is limited to 25 people, so please  
reserve your place soon by calling the  
Museum at 760-852-4524. Requested do-  
nation is \$100 for both days. We will  
meet at the Shoshone Museum at 9:00  
a.m. each day. Bring water, lunch and  
prepare to car pool.

**Hold That Date!**  
SPECIAL RECEPTION  
FOR  
LIFETIME SHOSHONE  
MUSEUM MEMBERS

At the Crowbar Café Patio  
Saturday, April 18th following  
the Geology Tour.

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class. He was immediately hooked, and made geology his life-long pursuit.

After completing his Master's degree in 1952, Bennie went to work with Lauren Wright at the California Division of Mines in Los Angeles on several projects documenting mineral commodities in the desert regions. At Lauren's suggestion, Bennie began making a geologic map in 1953 of the southern Death Valley area. Soon they were working with another well-known Death Valley geologist, Levi Noble. One of the many advantages of this partnership was exploring remote canyons in Levi's walnut-paneled 4-door Jaguar!

With Levi Noble, Bennie and Lauren began mapping various areas in the Funeral range. Bennie recalls staying at the Shoshone Inn, where they would write up the results of their studies. Work would come to a sudden halt at 10 pm each night, when the town's generator was shut off! Prominent geologists would visit Levi to review the results of their work—Lauren and Bennie were often put in charge of guiding the group. As a result, there was growing interest in the geology of Death Valley. Soon Bennie began attracting students from the University of California at Davis and started teaching classes there and at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. Bennie's wife, Betty, son Wyatt, and daughter, Mona, commonly spent time with him in Shoshone.

Bennie is a much sought after speaker and trip leader in Shoshone. One of his most popular excursions is to the road-cut on highway 178, located 3.7 miles east of Shoshone. After the highway was rerouted over the Resting Spring Pass, A fascinating slice of geologic history was exposed to view. According to Bennie, 24 separate geologic events are revealed here. A pamphlet describing the geology of the road-cut is available at the Shoshone Museum.

In the scientific community, Bennie is known for his keen observational skills, his ability to merge observations with theory, and his eagerness to mentor students of all ages. Around Shoshone, he is also known for his cheerful smile and his willingness to help anyone in need.

Of their many accomplishments, Lauren Wright said, "We did things together that neither of us could have done alone." Together, Lauren and Bennie have co-authored (along with many others) more than 100 articles on Death Valley geology.

**SHOSHONE MUSEUM HOURS:**  
Open 10am-4pm every day

## Echoes from the Archives



Spring in the Amargosa region promises to bring many exciting events to the Shoshone Museum. One of these will be the grand opening of our Natural History exhibit in the Mammoth Wing of the museum. The Amargosa river basin is renowned for its endemic plants and animals found nowhere else on our planet, such as the Amargosa vole, the Ash Meadows gumpant and, of course, the famous pupfish.

These special plants and animals are fascinating to study, and we are so fortunate that Sharon Schafer, a talented naturalist and artist, has offered to bring the flora and fauna found in our area to life with her inspiring and intriguing photographs and paintings. Those of you who have noticed the Amargosa Conservancy's eye-catching logo, a breathtaking rendition of the palisades in the Amargosa Canyon, are aware of Sharon's art. During the time that the Amargosa Conservancy was becoming known as an advocate for the protection of the beauty of the Amargosa, Sharon donated this logo as her contribution to our effort.

It is not surprising that Sharon has become such a good friend of the Amargosa Conservancy and the Shoshone Museum Association, because our mission and hers is very similar: protecting, interpreting and stewarding the many treasures found in the Mojave Desert. In her statement as an artist she writes, "I am in love with the Mojave Desert. Austere, enchanting, secretive... the Mojave is a land of mysteries; a keeper of secrets, a land of great contradictions and contrasts... a land of much beauty and little rain."

She continues, "It is my hope that, by looking at these images, the viewer will come away changed - no longer seeing the desert as a wasteland, but as a miracle of life's inventiveness and tenacity against great odds... and to recognize that the Mojave is a wondrous place deserving of our care."

Sharon has translated these goals into many important interpretive projects that she has worked on with the Audubon Society, Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park and Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association as partners. We are indeed fortunate to also have Sharon as a friend and a partner. Please join us for the Reception!

—Susan Sorrells, Board President

### OTHER AREA EVENTS:

**February 7, 2-5:00 pm: Reception for "The Vortex Is Our Muse",** group show at the Tecopa Basin Artists Group Gallery at the historic Tecopa Hot Springs Resort.

**February 14: Titus Canyon Drive -** Join historian Ken Lengner. High clearance vehicle - \$100 per vehicle, benefits Death Valley Natural History Association. Call 760-786-2146 ext. 10 to make reservations.

**February 21: Saratoga Springs & Talc Mines Tour.** Meet at the Amargosa Conservancy office at 8:00 am. \$30-50 suggested donation. Call 760-852-4339 for reservations.

**March 7, 2-5:00 pm: Reception for "Death Valley and Beyond",** show of photographic works by Laurie Naiman, at the Tecopa Basin Artists Group Gallery at the historic Tecopa Hot Springs Resort.

**March 14-15: Death Valley Chamber Art Show in Furnace Creek.** 10-5 on Saturday, 10-3 on Sunday. Call Phyllis Nefsky at Xanterra, 769-876-3353 for additional info.

**March 15: "Death Valley on the Silver Screen".** Annual Death Valley Chamber Brunch at the Furnace Creek Inn. Featured Presenter is Chris Langley, Inyo Co. Film Commissioner. Tickets \$35 each. Call the Museum to reserve yours.

**February 21: Amargosa River Tour.** Meet at the Amargosa Conservancy office at 8:00 am. \$30-50 suggested donation. Call 760-852-4339 for reservations.

## SMA Membership Form

### Membership Dues

Individual	\$ 15
Family	\$ 25
Business/	
Nonprofit	\$ 50
Cougar	\$ 100
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: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail for events: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Returning Member: \_\_\_ New Member: \_\_\_

### Notes To Our Museum Members

Old West Days this year was a wonderful event, and we were happy to see so many of you attending. Many thanks to all of you who renewed your membership to the Shoshone Museum Association since then. We would especially like to warmly welcome all our new members. Joint memberships are still offered by the Shoshone Museum Association and the Amargosa Conservancy, a significant discount to individual memberships with both nonprofit organizations. Please inquire by calling 760-852-4524 or email [shoshonemus@veawb.coop](mailto:shoshonemus@veawb.coop).

PLEASE: We really want to encourage everyone who shops at an Albertson's store to go to their Community Partners website [www.albertsonscp.com](http://www.albertsonscp.com), and re-link their Preferred Savings Card to the Shoshone Museum. Our number is **49001010978**. It is quick and easy, and sends up to a 4% donation our way every time you shop. Please encourage friends and family to sign up as well. It really helps us! For help, call them at 877-932-7948.



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