

Shoshone Museum Reader

Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.

shoshonemuseum.org

Fall 2024



JAN TARBLE (1929-2024)

by Brian Brown

The Shoshone Museum and the larger Amargosa region lost a friend and a champion in late May with the passing of Jan Tarble. Quietly and behind the scenes, Jan was one of the consistent supporters who kept our little museum going. She was one of the founding board members and helped the museum acquire non-profit status--a critical step in securing our longevity.

Along with Susan Sorrells and me, Jan was there when we flung open the doors on opening day, not knowing if a museum in Shoshone could survive or not. We had each brought our own collection of historical items and documents and laid them out in a simple fashion; after all, none of us really knew how to set up or operate a museum. Jan showed up with a magnum of good champagne and hors d'oeuvres, greeted everyone who came in, and turned the day into a memorable event.

That was a time when the mining industry was in full flight, schools and local businesses were struggling, and there was real doubt about whether our little communities would continue to exist. The museum was one of our early efforts to give the public a reason to come and visit, and hopefully spend a few dollars. It was a first step along the path to where we are today--viable small towns based on sustainable tourism highlighting our history and natural resources.

Jan's father was one of four men who founded and developed the Snap-on tool company, and her family acquired significant wealth. She never flaunted this, and anyone who knew her probably saw her in a pair of overalls and a bucket hat, driving her venerable 1977 Jeep Wagoneer. Ultimately, Jan and her mother each made significant gifts of stock that continues to serve as an economic backstop in lean times for the museum.

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Shoshone Museum Association

P.O. Box 38

Shoshone, CA 92384

NEW SIGNS FOR OLD ROCKS



Darrel Cowan, PhD, vice president of the museum association, recently donated new signs for the "Walk Through Time" outdoor exhibit illustrating the local geology. The previous wooden signs were almost 15 years old and were definitely showing their age! The new signs are made of a more durable material. Professor Cowan is an emeritus professor of geology at the University of Washington in Seattle. His award-winning research has centered on the earthquake fault systems of the western United States, especially those in the Death Valley area.

OUR NEW ASSOCIATE HAS DEEP LOCAL ROOTS

Jared Grijalva is the newest member of our museum team and brings new meaning to "local roots." He is the 6th generation of the founding Fairbanks family to reside in Shoshone, and he also attended the local Death Valley Academy. In addition to his work at the museum, he is an accomplished artist and has taken on the responsibility of monitoring and feeding the tortoise colony behind the motel. Thank you for joining our team!



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

JAN TARBLE - continued from page 1)



FRESH LOOK FOR CENTURY OLD BUILDING

With a fresh coat of paint, nighttime illumination, and a refurbished canopy, the century-old museum building has taken on a new life! This transformation took place under the careful guidance of Robert Haines and included reinforcement of the foundation and rodent proofing. The canopy was added during the 1930s to this building that had previously served as a Union Hall in Greenwater and as a store in the town of Zabriskie. In Shoshone it served as an eclectic rock shop and store before becoming home to the Shoshone Museum.

A WARM WELCOME TO DEPUTY OLIVER MORA

Deputy Oliver Mora is no stranger to our area, as he comes to us from Pahrump, NV! He spent his teenage years in the Riverside, CA, area, where, as a victim of bullying, he decided he wanted to pursue a career that would allow him to help others who were being victimized. He enrolled in the Law Enforcement Police Explorer Program, which launched him on his career path. He has been situated in Las Vegas and Pahrump for the past 8 years, where he has worked as a patrol officer and a school resource specialist as well as with military veterans. He also spent a year as a police officer at the Nevada Test Site (Nevada National Security Site). We are delighted to have you join deputies Ryan Reuther and Tim Plunkett in keeping our wide-open spaces secure and safe. We are truly blessed to have three wonderful deputies!



Jan had a curiosity and love for birds, and in the early 1970s, before there was any real interest, she began quietly keeping records of the birds that occurred and migrated through the Amargosa region. In later years she shared these records with federal and state agencies and others, helping to establish baseline data about the occurrence here of endangered species, migration patterns and timing, nesting areas, and other important facts. This information is now being used to make decisions about protecting some of these sensitive species.

Jan kept a small travel trailer at China Ranch as her base of operation out here, commuting from her home in Beverly Hills. She often stayed for a week or more to accomplish her bird work and putter around her trailer, doing her own repairs. On the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Snap-on, the company had presented her father with a gold-plated set of the original Snap-on tool kit and wrenches he had sold out of the trunk of his car in Detroit in the 1920s while starting the company. I once went to talk to Jan when she was under the hood of her old jeep. To my horror, I saw that she was using these one-of-a-kind gold-plated wrenches to change a radiator hose! I protested, and her response was: "Well hell, it's a wrench, that's what it's for. Besides, it's a Snap-on, it can take it." I quickly went and got her some normal wrenches to finish the job, and, after a bit of grumbling, she put the commemorative kit away.

Jan was also supportive of the local school system and our attempts to give the kids growing up out here a chance to see the larger world. She funded a scholarship to send a Death Valley High School student to Swarthmore College, an exclusive liberal arts school in Pennsylvania. She sent another to a summer art camp in Illinois, allowing him to pursue interests that simply were not available here. She and her mother each sponsored a kilometer of the Olympic torch run to the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. We parlayed that into a fundraiser to buy uniforms for one of the last football teams of the mighty DVHS Scorpions. Two local boys ultimately each carried the Olympic flame for a kilometer and got to keep their torches. Two years ago I saw one of those runners, now in his 50s, and he still has his torch!

Life infrequently gives us a chance to make a real difference, and when it does, we are often too busy to realize it. Jan saw such an opportunity out here, and she took it. In doing so, she helped save a community. She helped found this museum. She changed young peoples' lives. She made a difference.

Echoes from the Archives

by Susan Sorrells



Over this last year, the Shoshone Museum has undergone major improvements. At the beginning of the year, a storage unit was moved behind the museum to store specimens that had been accessioned into the museum collection. The unit was then provided with electricity for climate control and lighting. Soon after the storage unit was in place, construction began on the museum's front canopy. The old one was completely torn down and then rebuilt to replicate the original canopy that was constructed when the building became a service station in the 1930s. In addition, new interpretive signs for the "Walk Through Time," an exhibit of rocks from different geological periods, were donated by Darrel Cowan, a geology professor from the University of Washington. The trail and its new signs acquaint visitors with the world-class geology that is found in the Amargosa and Death Valley regions.

These improvements also continue into the operation of the museum. Toni Kizzia and Eliza Woodall, two very creative and proactive employees, have launched a website for the museum and soon will begin sending out e-blasts as well as an electronic newsletter. The Shoshone Museum Reader is very popular with our supporters and will continue to be distributed quarterly. The column that highlights the history of the area, written by Judy Palmer and edited by Linda Greene Smith, is especially popular. It is fastidiously researched, and, because many researchers have requested more information on these articles, Judy has agreed to work with the museum staff to make detailed references on specific subjects readily available. Having two forms of communication with our members, an electronic and a traditional one, will offer the best of both worlds. The electronic form will provide instant communication, while the traditional one will continue to provide the popular articles our members look forward to receiving.

The museum was incorporated in 1989, thirty-five years ago, and it is rewarding to see it expand and improve and move closer toward realizing its primary mission--to serve as a center for the interpretation of resources within the Amargosa and Death Valley regions.

JOHN W. VAN GILDER (1850 - 1932)

A beloved figure around Shoshone in the 1920s, John was known for both his kindness and his eccentricities. He is one of 58 individuals whose final resting place is in the Shoshone Cemetery. Starting in his early 20s, he was a career telegrapher and station agent, working in that capacity for 50 years.

He was born in Ohio in 1850, the second oldest son of a family of 5 children. His father, Isaac, was a farmer in Ohio, and his mother, Anna Hanna, was born in Illinois, also into a farming family. In 1874 he married Isadora Stuart (1850-1918) in Illinois. They had two sons and a daughter. Hal Dolan (1875-1969) became a lawyer and lived in Denver, CO, while Dell Williamson (1878-1943) served as a private in the Spanish-American War and later became a physician serving in Europe during World War II. Their daughter, Isadora (1882-1933), was a teacher in Denver, CO. Married to John Surlett, she died from complications of childbirth. John Van Gilder divorced his wife after she deserted him in 1914. She died in Denver in 1918.

Van Gilder worked for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway in Arizona, Missouri, Iowa, and Colorado. By 1912 he was stationed in Ludlow, CA, working for the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad. He moved to Beatty, NV, and finally to Shoshone in the 1920s.

In those days before telephones became a household item, the telegrapher was often called upon to summon the doctor or sheriff from Death Valley Junction. John was said to have been a very pleasant fellow, remembered as being playful and good-natured. He was very community-minded and well thought of by the people of Shoshone. After his death in 1933, his successor, Deke Lowe, recalled that Van Gilder was caught up in a soap-buying scam and accumulated large quantities of the product, which he was always trying to give away to unwary individuals!

More stories about the lives of people buried in the Shoshone Cemetery can be found in the book [Desert Voices](#), available in the museum bookstore.



Upcoming Events

- Nov 17 *Geologist Marli Miller author of Death Valley Rocks
Shoshone Museum, 2:00 pm
- Nov 30 *Chris Clarke author of 90 Miles From Needles
Shoshone Museum, 1:00 pm
- Dec 14 *Matthew Leivas, Senior Chief of the Chemehuevi Tribe
Shoshone Museum, 2:00 pm
- Fall-Jan Art as Spiritual Practice, gallery open 11am-3pm, Wed-Mon
Live music on stage Fri and Sat evenings, sunset - 10 pm
weather permitting, Tecopa Hot Springs Resort
- Ongoing** 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.dvnha.org/programs-events/road-scholar>
Ash Meadows Natl Wildlife Refuge events information
<adrienne_mcgill@fws.gov>
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 Association Membership Form

(Annual Dues)

Individual	\$25	Name: _____
Family	\$35	Mailing address: _____
Business	\$50	_____
Nonprofit	\$35	_____
Mtn Lion	\$100	Email: _____
Mammoth	\$500	Donation: \$ _____
Senior	\$15	Amount enclosed: \$ _____
Student	\$15	New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/>

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



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