THE FILE

INSPIRING OLDER WOMEN

By
Jo Sadalla and Stephanie Waxman

FROM STEF

Jo and I were raised by vibrant, creative women, each with a strong sense of independence. Jo's mother, Jacobina Caro, was a dancer, choreographer and theater director whose life was derailed by the Hollywood blacklist of the 1950's. Thereafter, she taught acting and body movement. She was still teaching at age 90, a few months before she died. My mother, Rena Waxman, was an actress who carved out a career performing one-women shows. When the same Hollywood blacklist destroyed my father's career as a film actor, she brought him into her act (which was not vulnerable to the blacklist) and together they wrote and performed plays in and around Los Angeles for over 30 years.

Given this history, it is no surprise that Jo and I were primed for the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970's. Having traveled in the same circles as "children of the blacklist," we were then friends in college (Berkeley 1962), New York (1967) and Los Angeles (1969). It was there that we attended our first CR (Consciousness Raising) group. Each week we gathered in someone's living room with 10-12 other women (not "girls"!) to share our experiences as second-class citizens. We shared laughter and tears and in the process found camaraderie, comfort and hope. We emerged proud to call ourselves feminists: women determined to live up to our own potential.

By this time we had each fallen in love. When Jo and Ed were married by a Santa Monica judge, Dennis and I were their only witnesses. The four of us logged many hours together hiking, camping, learning Tai Chi Chuan and Kung Fu. With each new activity, Jo and I gave each other confidence to try new things. When our husbands took up rock climbing, so did we. Finding ourselves dangling hundreds of feet above ground at the end of a rope, we shouted "On belay!" with energetic determination to conquer our fears. Being women — and mothers (Jo's son Jed was born when my daughter Jessica was one) — would not stop us from daring ourselves! Furthermore, we competed with each other: when one of us pushed a limit, it was a challenge to the other.

Then Ed was offered a job in Phoenix and he and Jo and my godson Jed moved to Arizona. It was hard to explain to 3-year-old Jessica and 2-year-old Jed why they couldn't play together. It was hard for Jo and me too.

But we kept connected through letters (before the days of email) and over the subsequent 40 years developed a rich correspondence to keep us current in those long stretches between visits and family camping trips. As we approached middle age, we had ongoing conversations about aging. We wondered how or if we could continue being active and creative. In one of her letters, Jo enclosed a newspaper clipping about an older woman in her 60's who had just taken up tap dancing. That clipping was the first in our file of what became a theme of our friendship: vibrant older women.

Now we ourselves are in our 70's. On occasion, we still send each other newspaper articles about women. We've amassed these clippings in the hopes that they will be as meaningful to others as they've been to us!

Stephanie Waxman
Venice, CA
2016

FROM JO

This project is the culmination of a 35-year letter/article exchange. It has its genesis in an exhilarating, adventurous, boundary pushing aspect of my long and close friendship with Stef. We became friends during college at UC Berkeley, although I had been acquainted with her growing up in LA where our parents were part of a community of actors, writers and directors. Fortunately, after graduating we lived in New York and Los Angeles around the same time. We have lived through life's important stages together —self discovery, relationships with men, marriage, children, careers, aging parents, children leaving home, being grandparents…However, there was a unique aspect to our relationship. We shared the discovery and exploration of ourselves as strong physical women who loved nature and became adventurous in it.

Both of us had the good fortune to marry exciting men who, among many other things, were physical, adventurous, loved nature and enjoyed challenges. Through our relationships with them, a whole new aspect of our lives was discovered. Camping, hiking and backpacking in the Sierras became our passion. The guys got into technical rock climbing. We tried it, faced our fears and embraced it. We pursued martial arts, studying Tai Chi with James Wing Woo, a Chinese master (Stef and the guys also doing Kung Fu).

It was a huge life shift for me. I grew up in an artistic, theatre family. Ballet and modern dance constituted my physical, creative outlet. Now, I was in my body in a new and challenging way. Pushing myself through physical discomfort and fear led to a feeling of openness, expansion and competence. It gave me an entirely different view of who I was and what I could do.

In the early years, our guys were clearly the leaders, teacher, protectors and "experts." It was expected that they would do the "hard stuff" — build fires, set up the tent, operate the stove and drive the van through precarious conditions. Then, at some point, Stef and I decided to try our outdoor skills on our own. It was an exhilarating,

giddy and scary moment, but we wanted to do it and believed we could. So we did, and we could, to our great delight. There were so many ways in which Stef and I helped each other grow and expand. We saw the competence, adventurousness, the bravery and potential in each other. We have encouraged, challenged, supported and celebrated each other others' progress and efforts. Together (and with other women friends or our children) we have camped, backpacked, rock climbed and hiked. With our families and friends we've explored yoga, dancing, kayaking, skiing, sailing, volleyball, paddle tennis, bicycling and horseback riding. We deeply appreciated and delighted in the opportunity to do it all.

We were in our early 40s when Stef and I began to wonder how aging would affect our ability to continue all of the activities that had become so vital to our lives. It was sad and scary to imagine this part of our lives coming to an end. Not being able to easily move, hike or explore was sobering. We found ourselves drawn to magazine and newspaper stories about older women who were still active and leading adventurous, creative and physical lives. They inspired us and provided a new way to see the upcoming chapters in our lives.

Stef and I developed what we came to call "The File." We have sent each other articles through the years and saved them all. Of late we have talked about what to do with this treasure trove. Sharing it with others, particularly women, seems like a wonderful thing to do. Enjoy and be inspired!

Jo Sadalla

Phoenix, AZ

2016

AUTHORS' NOTE

We hope that the women in these pages will inspire you as they inspired us. This compilation does not need to be read all at once or read in sequence. Pick it up from time to time when you need an image or the words of an older vibrant woman.

We gratefully acknowledge the photographers, journalists and publishers who found these women's stories compelling and chose to share them with us.

SECTION I

HEROINES OF MIXED AGES

"Marilyn Leibovitz," by Annie Leibovitz

Jo - Knew you'd love her! Stef

Los Angeles Times Sun., May 28, 1978 —Part VIII 3

ALL FOR THE LOVE OF PACKING—Mildred Smith, 75, a resident of the Methodist Home for the Aged in Chelsea, Mich., changed her main exercise two years ago from pushing shopping carts to bowling, swimming, tennis and workouts at a gym—all so that she can stay in shape for her real love, which is backpacking.
AP Wirephoto

RV women delighted to go it alone

By Kristin Bender
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

DANVILLE, Calif. — When Anne Hutchison sets out in her recreational vehicle for three years of solo travel, she won't take a boyfriend or husband along, but she will pack a well-worn pair of men's size-14 shoes.

"I put them out on the porch of the motor home. It's a form of protection," Hutchison said. "That way nobody bothers me."

Hutchison, 66, is among a growing number of women who store their worldly possessions, rent or sell their homes and hit the road alone in their RVs.

Bob Pepping/Contra Costa Times

The retired, divorced mother of two grown daughters doesn't have a clear traveling plan, but knows she wants to see the country's national parks — all 300 of them.

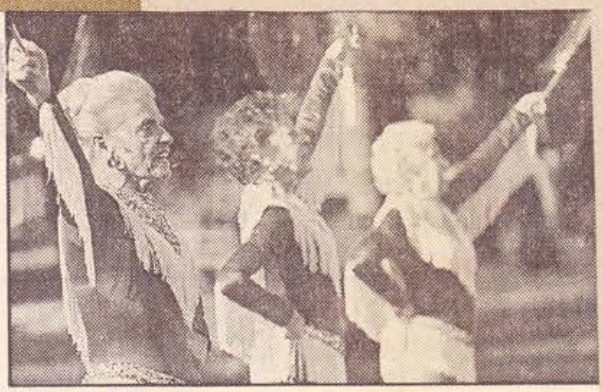
"I don't know where I am going or when I am coming back, and that's why I don't have the tenseness in my face anymore."

257-8426

Maya Plisetskaya, 62, dances her signature piece, Fokine's "Dying Swan."

Bess James, 74, above, runs in full marathons.

Heading up the line of fl wavers – departure for the Sun City Poms — is Evie Hartman, 72. The Poms have been featured in newspapers and magazines as well as on television.



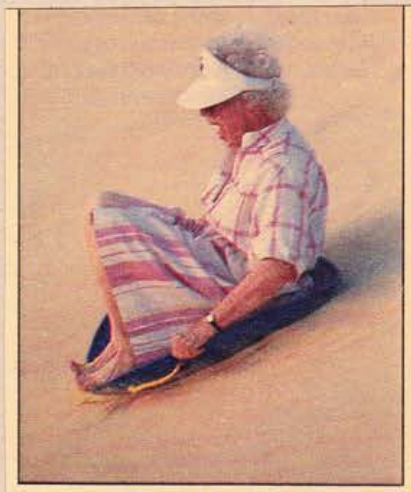
Seventy-six-year-old Dottie Peabody (left) starts a series of the high kicks that keep the Sun City Poms in practice — and in shape. At top, 74-year-old Terry Jones makes a few last-minute adjustments to her glittering costume before the start of a Poms performance in Phoenix.

Photos by Tammy Vrettos/The Arizona Republic

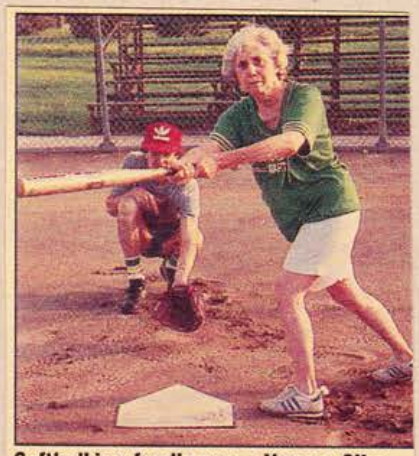
Foofie Harlan, 77, gave up her motorcycle to join the Poms. She's noted for handstands and flips.

Pat Vick, 63, is considered one of the babies of the Poms troupe.

Senior women discover good health, great fun in the chorus line



Inclined to have fun: Roberta Bain, 73, zips down the sand hills of Monahans State Park in Texas. Photo by her son, William R. Bain of Falls Church, Va.



Softball is a family game: Yvonne Cline, 67, takes her cuts while her son Warren, 39, waits in case she misses. Jeanie Cline, Warren's wife, took the photo in Lincoln, Neb.

APPRECIATION

A Fabulous Fighter

Growing up with 12 older and much taller brothers, **Mary Lillian Ellison** wasn't considered the strong one. All that changed nearly 60 years ago, when she took her first step into the ring. At the time, women had a minimal presence in wrestling, but Ellison's signature flying drop-kicks and hair-pulling body slams quickly earned her a loyal fan base. Shortly after she started wrestling, a promoter nicknamed Ellison the "Fabulous Moolah" for her stated ambition in life: money. In 1956, she won the World Women's Championship. Twenty-eight years later she was defeated, but she regained the throne—in her 70s. "I love old people, and I love babies," said Moolah, who was the first woman inducted into the World Wrestling Entertainment Hall of Fame. "If anybody else steps in my way, I'll just kick [their butt]." She was 84.

And the winner is: Samia Doro, 69, crosses the finish line of the 400-meter dash at the Albuquerque Senior Olympics in New Mexico. Photo by her son, David H. Doro of Clearfield, Utah.

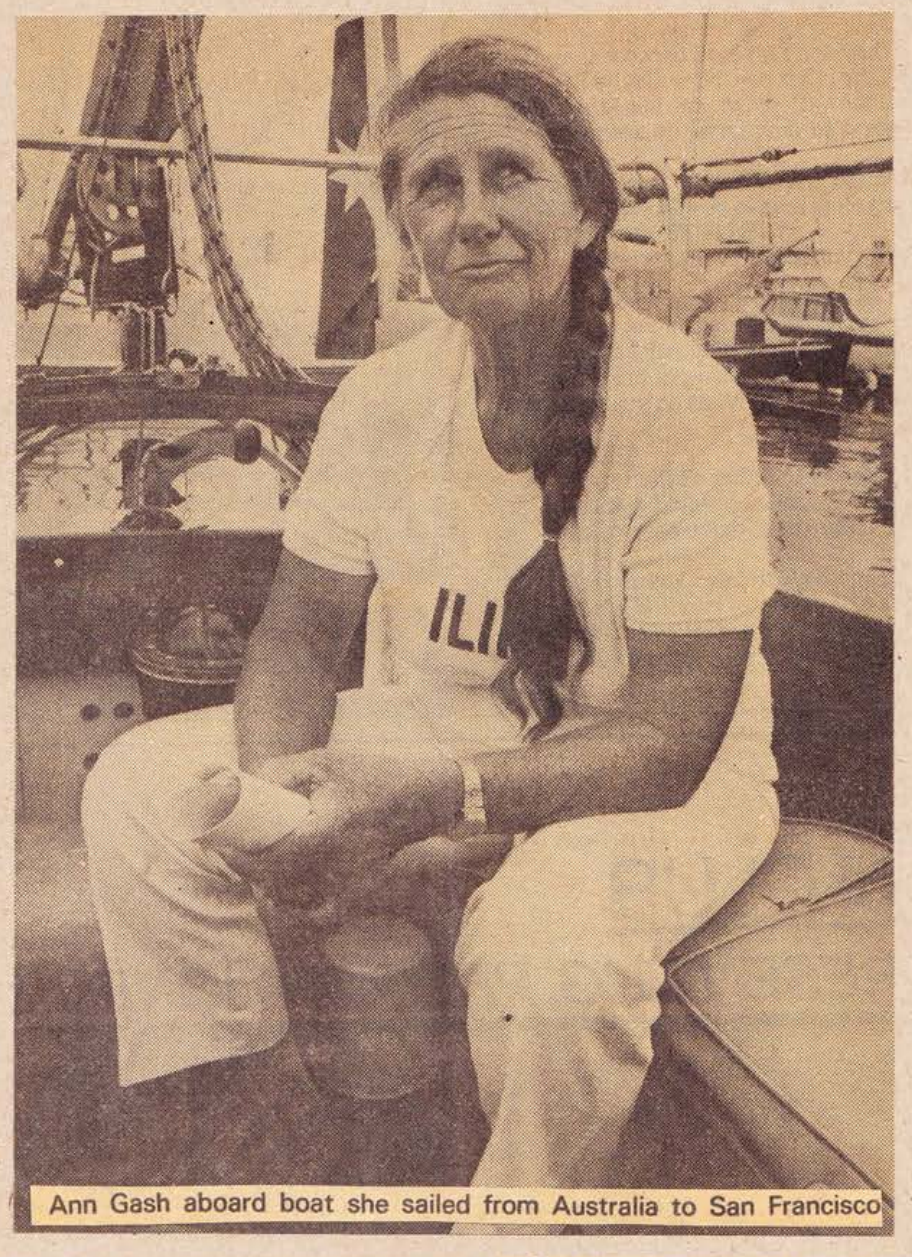
Emma Beardain, 94, says she likes to travel. Here, she does so on a golf cart in Memphis, Tenn. Photo is by Joseph L. Tyler Jr. of Memphis.

Fred Felleman

Hazel Wolf of Seattle, Wash., —still active outdoors and the editor of *Outdoors West* magazine —celebrated her 101st birthday last March. During the '90s, the number of centenarians in the U.S. grew to more than 70,000.

SECTION II

DOERS IN THEIR 50'S AND 60'S



Ann Gash aboard boat she sailed from Australia to San Francisco

Ann Gash, 58, arrived in Los Angeles a month ago in her wooden-hulled craft, the Stella Ilimo, after crossing the Pacific from Australia by way of Tahiti, Hawaii and San Francisco.

The 5-foot, 5-inch, tanned Australian grandmother expects to arrive in Honolulu in three to five weeks, stop at several Pacific islands and reach Sydney sometime in October or November.

Gash believes she has spent more time sailing the oceans of the world alone than any other woman. She spent 2½ years sailing around the world alone (except for a stretch from Ghana to England) from June, 1975, to December, 1977.

She is the mother of six grown children and has seven grandchildren and had never been in a sailboat until she was 45.

Her boat is well stocked for the long voyage with a three-month's food supply, 35 gallons of water, a flute, 50 books and six bottles of rum.

"I have a tot of rum with lemon and honey at the end of each day as the sun sets and I'm cooking my dinner," she said.

"I'm never lonely," Gash said. "I'm in tune with everything—the compass course, the wear and tear on the boat.

"I read an average of a book a day. I love to navigate. Every day I write letters and spend time playing my flute.

"Worry? I don't know the meaning of the word."

The sailing granny said being a single-handed sailor (one who sails alone) is her way of staying young.

"I don't want to grow old," she said the day before departure as she smeared vaseline on five dozen eggs to keep them from spoiling. She swears it works.

She credits a broken back for her interest in sailing.

"I worked hard all my life. I was a goat breeder for 15 years. Then I smashed my car and broke my back and had to give up the goats. And I took up boats."

Soon she was spending all her free time sailing and reading everything she could get her hands on about sailing.

She bought the 26-foot boat in February 1974, and set out alone on an around-the-world voyage in June, 1975.

"I love the sea. Love it out there alone. No telephone ringing. No one knocking at my door. The challenge. The adventure.

"I worked all my life. My husband and I are divorced. My children are all grown up and on their own.

"God knows what I'll do next," Gash said.

She sailed from Australia to the United States this time "mainly to sail under the Golden Gate. I wanted that so much. It was fantastic . . . ."

Gash is a folk hero to single-handed sailors the world over. While in Los Angeles, she spoke to a meeting of the Pacific Singlehanded Sailing Assn.

"She's an inspiration to all of us, a most courageous, unassuming person, who singlehandedly has conquered the ocean," said Dan Byrne, president of the association.

Have Experience and Wisdom, Will Travel

We've found a way to see the world, meet new friends and make our golden years meaningful

BY JOAN LOWELL

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT portrayals of aging adults. There are the sad, incompetent, forgetful elderly who must be protected from thieves and swindlers. Then there are those featured in advertisements, their white or blond hair beautifully coiffed, playing golf or tennis outdoors, or dining grandly in their gated retirement home. I would like to suggest another option for those of us in retirement: we can share life-learned skills with people in other countries who have never seen a retirement community.

When my husband and I became Peace Corps trainees in Kazakhstan in 1994, he was 65 and I was 59. Even so, we weren't the oldest in our group of 53 trainees. Marge was a 69-year-old retired economics professor, and Marianne, 71, was a retired schoolteacher. All of us—the seniors and the twenty- and thirty-something volunteers—made a two-year commitment to live in a country we knew little about, in small apartments, often without heat or hot water (when there was water), and to learn Kazakh and Russian. Every one of us had something to contribute. My husband and I used our experience—mine as a former administrator of a large hospice and his as a former distributor of laundry and dry-cleaning equipment—to help entrepreneurs draw up business plans and get financial backing.

It was a funny, emotional and educational time. We laughed when, during the mandatory health training, my husband won the contest for the best technique for putting a condom on a cucumber, and fellow trainees dubbed him "the condom king." I cried when the shoe repairman didn't understand what I thought was my perfect Russian. And I learned how to make borscht and *plov* and pick the stones out of the beans before soaking them.

We came to appreciate this new country, as well as the one we had left behind. We realized how little we needed to be happy and that age is irrelevant when a group shares a goal. We found out that our families understood why we went, and our grandchildren didn't forget us.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JON GIPE FOR NEWSWEEK

SENIOR CITIZENS OF THE WORLD: In Thailand we rode an elephant and took a boat ride down the Mekong River

Our friend Marianne died a year after we returned from Kazakhstan, but she left behind a library that she had developed with teachers in a school in Semey. When word of her death reached her friends there, the teachers wrote to us and said, "Marianne will never be forgotten." I believe that.

I also believe that those of us in the business-development program made a lasting impact. We helped people of all ages start up businesses in a country that, under communism, had considered such activity a crime. We saw the light in their eyes when they realized they could shape their own futures.

Since our return in 1996, we have spent weeks and months in other countries as volunteers with various aid groups. In Kazakhstan we often heard older people express concern that their government was taking away their financial safety net, but five years later, when we were in Ukraine, we heard an elderly woman say, "I wish communism had ended when I was younger." She had used her new freedom to develop a business that made small loans to young businesswomen using pensioners' retirement funds as capital.

Last year I spent my 68th birthday in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where I was helping a nonprofit organization that educated people in rural areas about AIDS prevention. I sat on the floor, surrounded by 10 employees, beautiful and energetic young men and women who sang "Happy Birthday" to me in heavily accented English. They taught me to say "Mai pet" when ordering food so the spice wouldn't burn my palate, and how to ride on the back of a motorcycle.

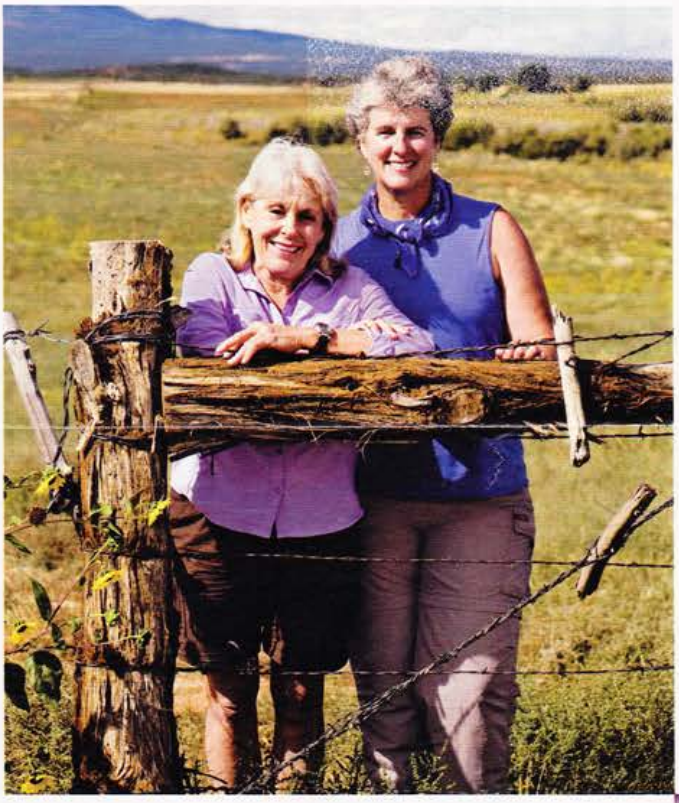
No matter where we have lived, we have been feted by new friends who put on their very best clothes and served us their tastiest food. On the outskirts of Almaty, in Kazakhstan, we had picnics in the mountains, attended parties where we danced until dawn, bathed in *banyas* fired up in our honor and traveled by train across the steppes. In Thailand we walked on beautiful beaches. Most recently we rode an elephant in the jungle and took a boat ride on the Mekong River.

We continue to receive e-mail from the friends we've made. They tell us that they are following the plans we developed together. They send pictures of their children and reports of their successes as well as their disappointments. We share the disappointments.

Of course, we are very happy that we have our health and the ability to travel. I'm grateful that I have an employer who lets me leave my part-time job now and then, and colleagues who encourage me. This beats any other form of retirement I've seen. As Ken Dychtwald, noted gerontologist and author, wrote, "Old simply isn't what it used to be."

LOWELL lives in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Stef:
I guess I'm still in the habit of finding things for the file. Liked these "Great old Broads" xoxo



Tattle Trails

A group of hikers with cameras finds a way to keep vehicles from ruining the West's wildest lands

AS LIGHTNING STREAKED the canyon and rain drummed on the red-rock walls of Recapture Wash, Ronni Egan and Rose Chilcoat took shelter under a ledge, delighting in the meteorological drama before them. "Does anyone not feel alive?" shouted Chilcoat after a deafening clap of thunder.

Egan, 63, and Chilcoat, 50, lead Great Old Broads for Wilderness: 3,600 women (and a few hundred men) who put hiking boots to the ground and take a stand for Mother Nature by monitoring abuses of public lands. Recapture Wash in southeastern Utah is one area they watch. There, using Global Positioning System devices and digital cameras, the group has been documenting damage to vegetation and streambeds by all-terrain vehicles. The pictures have paid off: the Bureau of Land Management closed a trail that ATV enthusiasts had dynamited out of rock perilously close to 800-year-old cliff dwellings.

To contact Great Old Broads call 970-385-9577 or go to greatold broads.org.

"We're not against off-road vehicles—or grazing cattle or oil derricks," says Egan, the group's executive director. "There's enough room for everybody. But some of these things are just so destructive, they shouldn't be allowed in certain environments." The Broads have worked to limit snowmobiling in Yellowstone National Park and to establish Wild Sky Wilderness in Washington State.

On this visit to the wash, Egan and Chilcoat were pleased to see the canyon recovering. The air was pungent with juniper and sage. A wren's song cascaded in the breeze, and the cliff face bloomed with sunflowers, blue asters, and scarlet gilia. Says Egan of the landscape: "It's my shrink, my church, my meditation. When I'm out here, everything else goes away."

Egan had never led anything but horseback trips from her family's dude ranch in New Mexico before taking the reins of the Broads in 2002. The group, based in Durango, Colorado, got its start in 1989 after some older hikers took exception to a remark by Utah senator Orrin Hatch. He opined that the United States shouldn't designate more land as wilderness, because the elderly wouldn't have access. Now the Broads have 22 chapters—called Broadbands—in nine states.

> You do what you can, and you're glad to know there are still wild places."
> —Rose Chilcoat

NATURE AND COMPANY
Egan, *top left,* and Chilcoat; pottery shards found in Recapture Wash.

"We're not enforcers," says Egan. "We're the evidence-gathering arm of the environmental movement." And though staunch advocates for wild places, they seek common ground rather than confrontation. When Egan and Chilcoat, a former U.S. park ranger and the group's second in command, invited a New Mexico state legislator and rancher to sit down and talk, "he said, 'I don't get why you're inviting the enemy to dinner,'" Egan recalls. Yet they found that despite differences over desert grazing, they shared concerns about contaminated water from oil and gas exploration.

Egan spends at least one week each month outdoors, on monitoring trips or camping. By the end of their recent foray, Egan and Chilcoat had jostled for hours over winding roads and waded calf-deep through a muddy flash flood. Word of a mountain lion in the vicinity only added to the excitement. "Icing on the cake," says Egan.

"Backs fail, knees fail, the body might not do anymore what it did," Chilcoat notes, "but you do what you can, and you're glad to know there are still wild places." —*Beth Baker*

SECTION III

SEEKERS IN THEIR 70'S

Each partially disabled by strokes in 1982, Ruth Brewer Eisenberg now plays the right hand parts — the melodies — and Margaret Patrick plays the left hand bass parts when they perform together at the piano.

Last month, Ebony and Ivory performed at the United Methodist Church in Waldwick near here, drawing waves of applause. This week marks their first international booking, a rehabilitation center in Montreal.

In real life, Ebony is 74-year-old Margaret Patrick. Ruth Brewer Eisenberg, 85, is Ivory.

Ebony and Ivory, both partly paralyzed by strokes in 1982, have two good hands between them. Side by side at the piano they complement each other like the black and white keys. Patrick's left hand plays the bass, Eisenberg's right hand the treble.

Patrick is slender and stately, with large expressive eyes. She performs in softly tailored suits of subtle colors and prefers not to speak in public. Her natural shyness has been deepened, she said, by speech difficulties since the stroke.

Eisenberg, plumpish with fluffy white hair, leans on a walker and travels to recitals in a wheelchair. She wears riotous colors, and commands the microphone.

"Beethoven went deaf, Bach went blind," she reminds audiences, exhorting them to "reach for higher horizons and tap inner potentials."

Daredevil celebrated 78 with a leap from a plane

By Janie Magruder
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Joyce Ramsey and instructor Dean Giannantonio head for terra firma over Eloy in 2000 to celebrate Ramsey's 78th birthday.

In her 50s and 60s, Joyce Ramsey parasailed off Mazatlan, soared over Lake Pleasant in a glider, drifted over the desert north of Phoenix in a hot-air balloon and rafted down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon.

For her 78th birthday, Ramsey pulled out the stops: She jumped from an airplane 13,000 feet above the scrub and cropland southeast of the Valley.

"I kept putting it off and putting it off, and thought I'd better do it before I got much older," recalls the Phoenix native, now 84.

Ramsey, buoyed by her family, including her husband, Earl (who's now deceased), their two children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren (there are six now), received a 30-minute briefing from her Skydive Arizona instructor/diving partner, Dean Giannantonio.

"I guess I was a little nervous, yet I wanted to do it so badly and kept telling myself it was going to be OK, and it was," she says.

They practiced jumping from a mock plane on the ground at the Eloy Municipal Airport, she watched a safety video, and Giannantonio, whom Ramsey's friends call "the hunk," gave her some

See **PLUNGE** Page E2

PLUNGE

Continued from E1

pointers. There's one thing he didn't mention: Keep your mouth shut during freefall.

"Out into the wild blue yonder my instructor and I leaped, me with a victorious thumbs up, a great, big toothy grin, and my chewing gum flying from my mouth," Ramsey says.

The best part was after Giannantonio pulled the rip-cord, releasing the "peaceful, quiet descent after flogging around at 100 miles per hour in the freefall. He wanted to know if I wanted to do some flips and turns, but I could do without that."

They made an easy, feet-first landing to the cheers of her family.

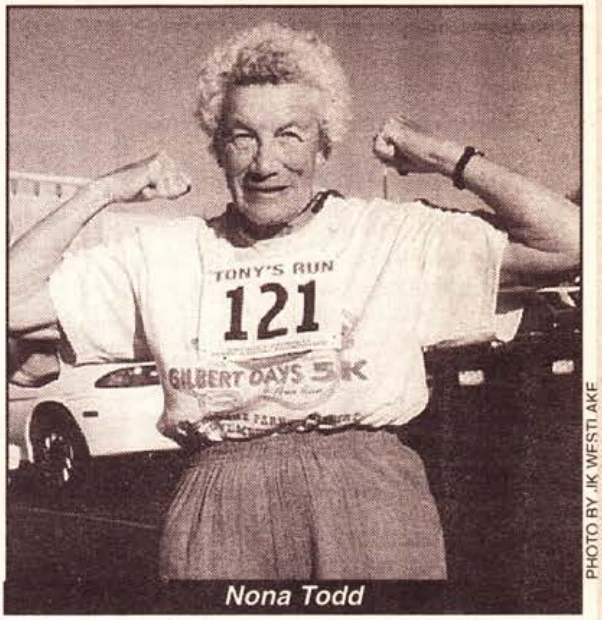
"I could hardly stop laughing from exhilaration, relief and the realization that I'd really done it," Ramsey says.

This self-proclaimed "sky-diving granny" said the daredevil is out of her system now, and she's content to garden, do church work and play penny-nickel-sometimes-dime poker every other week with four other widow friends.

" 'All the queens' is one of our favorites," Ramsey says.

AZ Republic 9/8/06

Nona Todd, 76, Phoenix and formerly Bismark, N.D., could be the poster babe for the Arthritis Foundation, except no one would believe the vibrant, athletic woman suffers from the painful affliction. Particularly if you watched her, her niece and running partner Ella Vaughn, Phoenix, 67, come laughing across the finish line on Nov. 25 at Tony's Run, an annual Scottsdale Saguaro High School 5k.



Nona Todd

PHOTO BY JK WESTLAKE

Both Vaughn and Todd took top honors in their age divisions, but Todd said they were moving slowly because it was their third race in three days starting with a the Gilbert Days 5k on Friday, the Love Run 10k on Saturday and Tony's Run on Sunday. The pair race every weekend and racewalk/run about six miles everyday. Plus, Todd bowls, shoots pool, pitches horse shoes, lift weights and does water aerobics.

She said, "Back in 1988, when I started racewalking, I had arthritis so badly that I couldn't walk across the room. So, I started walking one mile at a time. I won a ribbon at my first race, it was the Senior Olympics, and I thought hey, this is great."

She said she was active in sports as a child but tending bar and raising seven children in North Dakota curtailed her athletic endeavors. When she jumped into competition at the age of 64, she gave it her usual all. Todd has competed in three Senior Olympics: North Dakota, South Dakota and Arizona. She won 27 medals in three days at the South Dakota Senior Olympics. Her main events are track and field and horseshoes. She'll be at the Senior Olympics national finals in Tucson in May.

"I like the Senior Olympics because I'm competing against people my own age," Todd said. "Some of these races put me in the 60 years and older and it's kind of hard to beat the younger ones [she said pointing to her niece]."

Her exercise strategy seems to be keeping a step ahead of the arthritis but she admitted, "After a race, sometimes I'll get pretty stiff and think, I won't do this again. But, a Jacuzzi is really good and soothing and we'll be back running the next day."

—by Joan Westlake

FEBRUARY 1997

Jeanne Calment, the oldest woman on record, may be a case in point. The 4-foot-11 Frenchwoman died in 1997 at the age of 122. She was known for eating 2 pounds of chocolate a week and didn't quit smoking until she was 117.

JEAN PIERRE FIZET *Sygma/Corbis*

HAPPY 117TH: *Jeanne Calment on her birthday in 1992. She lived to be 122.*

Eudora Welty: A Life of Stories

78-Year-Old Novelist Finds Strength and Continuity in the Written Word

"I don't make them up," she said of the characters who have inhabited her fiction these last 50 or so years. "I don't have to."

Beauticians, bartenders, piano players and people with purple hats, Welty's people come from afternoons spent visiting with old friends, from walks through the streets of her native Jackson, Miss., from snippets of conversations overheard on a bus. It grates Welty that, at 78, her left ear has now given out. Sometimes, sitting on a bus or a train, she hears only a fragment of a particularly juicy sounding tale.

'I Miss the Payoff'

"I miss the payoff," Welty grumbled. "It makes me mad. I want to say: 'Would you repeat that?' "

Such is the plight of the habitual observer. Though "I never was any good until after I got out of college" (first at Mississippi State Women's College; later, the University of Wisconsin), and though she never took a single writing class, Welty knew as a child that she wanted to write. She loved words, loved the way they rolled together and spun off her pen.

"I love using the language," Welty said during a visit here to meet with her publisher and to preside at the Whiting Foundation's writing awards ceremony. "That's really the reason I still write."

"I got millions of rejection slips," she said. "What would be so good was if someone would write something on the bottom, like 'try us again.' That would send your Adrenalin flowing, almost as good as an acceptance."

Writing at home in Mississippi, in the comfortable, two-story house her father built in 1925, even the rejection slips became vital forms of contact with a distant outside world.

"To me it was a way to find out how you were doing," Welty said. "I never would have shown what I was writing to anyone at home. They would have said: 'Oh, dear, that's so good.' "

"We, readers and writers, compose an ongoing search party," she told the crowd gathered for the Whiting Awards ceremony here. "Tireless, our lives long, open to hope and astonishment, we keep at it. . . .

"Reading, we pursue discovery of human life through the word. Writing, we search out the word by way of life."

Friday, November 13, 1987 / Part V

Free-spirited poet never feared 'new'

Photos courtesy of Jacqueline Williams

Dubbed the "Dazzling Dancing Damsel of the Desert," donnafred took up belly dancing in her 70s.

Donnafred was a free spirit.

The unconventional poet, painter and sometime belly dancer was considered something of a black sheep by her straitlaced family. She didn't care, though. She was too busy having fun.

Donnafred was a prolific writer with a contagious zest for life. She had an inquisitive enthusiasm for the world around her and expressed that enthusiasm in hundreds of poems and paintings.

She was handy with tools, too, and built a nature trail around her home. Sometimes, if things didn't go just right, she'd "get mad in the face," as her family used to say. But she'd get the job done.

Donnafred's sly, insightful poems won her many awards. Some poems display an ironic wit; others are poignant and deeply moving.

Donnafred and Wilbur moved to Globe in 1963 and bought the highest lot available on Skyline Drive. Wilbur died two years later.

Donnafred was never afraid to try anything new. In her 60s, she hiked across the Grand Canyon by herself. She always had a thing for mountains and reveled in her patio views of the clouds and sunsets over the Pinals.

Over the years, she published nine volumes of her verse and was awarded an honorary lifetime membership in the Arizona State Poetry Society.

Donnafred was an exuberant dancer who took belly-dancing lessons in her 70s. She was dubbed the "Dazzling Dancing Damsel of the Desert" by Bill Leverton, longtime host of the *On the Arizona Road* segment on KTSP-TV. He had gone to Globe to report on the Happy Hayseed Band, but was captivated by the spontaneous, free-form dancing of donnafred and featured her several times on his show.

Throughout most of the 1980s, donnafred marched in Globe's annual Copper Dust Stampede parade, usually as the only representative of the senior center — no one else could walk the mile-long parade route.

Donnafred had tremendous faith in the human spirit. For a time she was a humanist counselor and performed two marriages in Arizona.

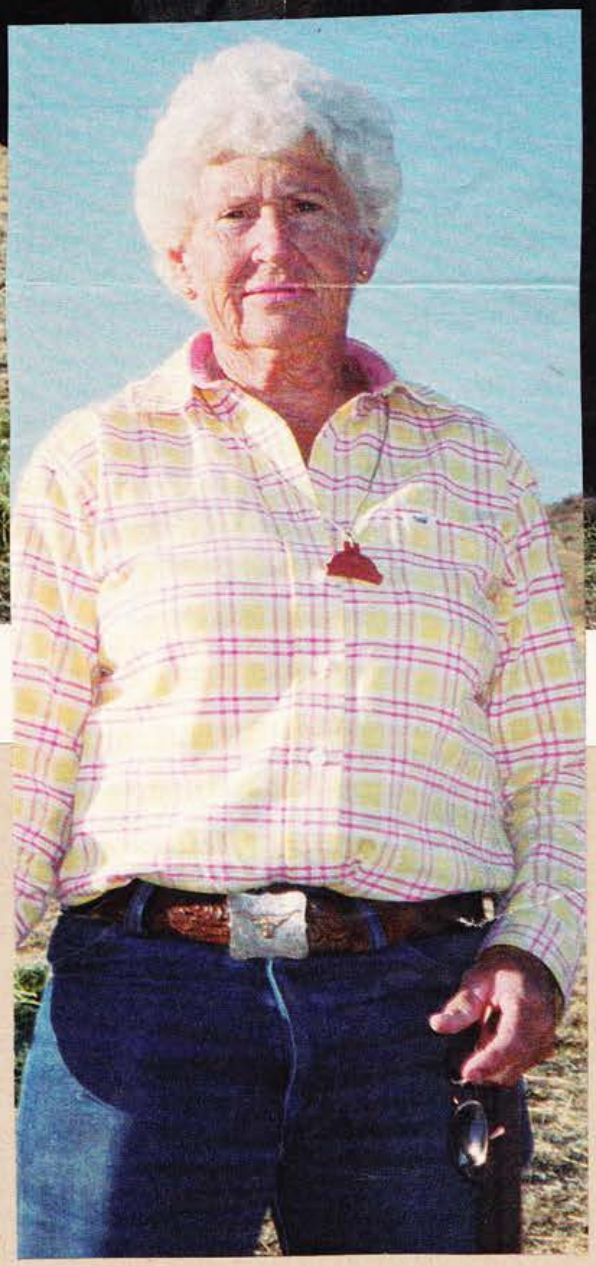
She loved to dress up in colorful outfits that were always perfectly coordinated. And she'd never dream of leaving house without earrings, claiming she felt undressed without them.

AZ Republic 4/00

Of Land and Legacy

Eleanor Truocchio is a fourth-generation Central Coast rancher. Unfortunately, the fifth generation may collide head-on with skyrocketing land values and the vagaries of U.S. tax law. By Matthew Heller

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARRY LETTERS



OFF IN THE DISTANCE, ON A BARE, STRAW-COLORED HILLSIDE FRINGED WITH coastal oak, Eleanor Truocchio spots a dark speck. It's at least half a mile away; to the untrained eye it looks like nothing more spectacular than a rock. But Truocchio stops the pickup she has been driving around her family's 4,100-acre cattle ranch north of San Luis Obispo and grabs her binoculars.

"There's a cow by herself," she announces. "There's something wrong with her, or she has a calf." She pans away from the cow until she focuses on a brownish form almost camouflaged by the grass—the cow's newborn calf, probably less than a day old.

How could she even suspect there might be a cow there?

"Oh," she replies with a shrug, "you get to know these things better than the back of your hand."

In her hawk-eyed stewardship of the ranch she calls Lone Valley, Truocchio is maintaining a family tradition that goes back four generations. At 70, she is a bronzed, sinewy dynamo—branding cattle, rounding up strays, fixing fences, heaving hay, still getting satisfaction from all the tough, physical things a rancher needs to do. "When an animal is in the corral, I've won," says the former San Luis Obispo County Cattlewoman of the Year, wearing jeans and a checkered shirt with a Cowgirl Co. logo. "I can come home and say, 'There's a lot of people who couldn't do that.' "

Truocchio eventually would like to pass along her domain of rolling chaparral hills, cottonwood copses and 250 head of cattle to her daughter, Pat Abel, and thus avoid having it developed into 10-acre ranchettes or sold to a corporate ranching enterprise. That's how the American dream is supposed to work, isn't it? The beloved land stays in the family, and the child profits from the parents' labor? The family ranch, that symbol of the pioneer spirit in the West, would live on.

If only it were that simple.

The dilemma reflects conflicting priorities. If agricultural land is valuable, then surely society as a whole should see some benefit from that, even if it comes from a "death tax." But at the same time, we don't want that symbolic family ranch to disappear from the landscape.

Truocchio says she is "more optimistic than quite a few" of her colleagues that family ranching will survive. Maybe it's the pioneer spirit talking. That, after all, is what makes her such a vigilant and skilled steward of her land, and what makes her see the issue not in terms of dollars, but something perhaps more valuable. "I think this place is beautiful," she says as she completes another inspection of her ranch, closing its main gate behind her. "Whether it makes a lot of money or makes no money, it's really beautiful."

LOS ANGELES TIMES MAGAZINE, November 14, 2004

MARK BOSTER Los Angeles Times

ACTRESS Kay D'Arcy practices tai chi outside her Hollywood apartment. As the star of Web series "Agent 88," she performs many of her own stunts.

COLUMN ONE

Unlikely action hero

After decades as a midwife and mother in Britain, Kay D'Arcy, 79, is playing an acrobatic assassin

BY DAWN C. CHMIELEWSKI

Kay D'Arcy didn't expect what Hollywood had in store for her.

At an age when others have been relegated to playing invalids and dowagers, D'Arcy will appear as Agent 88, an assassin who keeps the deadly tools of her trade tucked into her hair bun. The octogenarian avenger dispenses evildoers with acrobatic moves that would impress Jackie Chan.

In the opening episode of the Web series "Agent 88," D'Arcy demonstrates her martial arts skills in an encounter with thugs surrounding the bloodied body of their victim.

"Get lost," one villain tells her, and knocks her to the ground.

"I really wish you hadn't done that," she says, and springs into action.

With lethal efficiency, she neutralizes them all — delivering roundhouse kicks that send one crashing to the ground, pulling daggers from her bun and hurling them at another assailant, and twirling Kali fighting sticks to batter two others.

"Kay couldn't think of harming a fly. She's never thought, in her whole life, about hitting someone with the intent of hurting them," said Digger T. Mesch, the creator of the series. "Somehow ... she got on that set and she looked like a killer."

"Agent 88" is one of thousands of

[See D'Arcy, A20]

The role gives D'Arcy, a retired nurse and midwife, the big break she has been working toward since leaving England for Los Angeles in 2002 — at the age of 69, and over the objections of her family.

D'Arcy, now 79, said she was intrigued by the strength and humanity of the character.

"She's this dippy, absent-minded woman who's really quite a child inside," said the actress with gray spiked hair and crystal blue eyes. "This little inoffensive woman, who's slightly lala, ends up becoming a formidable assassin."

"What impressed us is she could go from being really frail, and looking like she could break, to a totally empowered woman," Utstein-O'Neill said. "She did it right in front of us and blew us away."

To prepare for her portrayal of Agent 88, D'Arcy studied Filipino stick fighting and hand-to-hand combat with Australian martial arts expert Nino Pilla. The training, and a daily regimen of martial arts exercises, enabled her to do many of her own stunts.

D'Arcy found that the physicality was not the role's greatest challenge.

"The hardest thing was to hit," D'Arcy said. "It's quite hard if you've been schooled all your life not to."

The last of D'Arcy's five children left home in 1989, and her husband walked out shortly after. At 58, she decided, "This would be a good time to change horses."

She enrolled in a theater school in London's gritty East End and took up residence with seven other students in a dingy, rat-infested apartment, a significant step down from the big house with a garden and tennis court in rural Somerset that she left behind. D'Arcy lived frugally, "stewing up bones and scrag end," a British term for inexpensive cuts of meat, and earned extra money by working with children to act out nursery rhymes and fables.

For the next 10 years she took curtain calls in Hamburg, Germany, and Shanghai, but had to vie for choicer roles with more seasoned acting contemporaries like Judi Dench and Maggie Smith.

When the last of her 11 grandchildren reached 18 months of age and her sense of responsibility for helping to care for the little ones diminished, she left England and headed west.

"I suddenly thought, 'I'm going to make a break for it,' "

Michael Meister/Staff photographer

Norma Elizabeth Shyrock / Confined to a Mesa nursing home, the poet can move only her eyes, her mouth, and her right arm and hand. Yet she radiates energy, good cheer and a special knowledge of what it takes to rise above suffering.

Invalid poet's work honored

By Paul Brinkley-Rogers
Staff writer

Two heart attacks, a stroke and a terrible bone disease keep Norma Elizabeth Shyrock confined to a tiny room of a Mesa nursing home, but that is not the end of the story.

Three years ago, at the same time these illnesses left her paralyzed and racked with pain, this 75-year-old wife of a Kansas farmer suddenly started writing stark, irreverent verse about people in her situation.

Her poetry is so compelling that on Aug. 1, the International Society of Poets will present Shyrock with a bronze medal at a ceremony at the Capitol in Washington, D.C., at its annual meeting. President Clinton is expected to attend. Mesa's Grace United Methodist Church and Apache Junction's American Legion Post 27 helped raise funds to send Shyrock, and a nurse who will assist her, on the trip.

At the glass-fronted entrance to the Sunrise Health Care Center where Shyrock shares a room with another woman, six aged people slumped in wheelchairs watch the traffic go by outside on Broadway Road. It looks like the endgame of life. Down a corridor is the facility's celebrity.

Shyrock, propped up in a motorized wheelchair, can move only her eyes, her mouth, and her right arm and hand. She speaks in a small voice. Yet she radiates energy, good cheer and a special knowledge of what it takes to rise above suffering.

Because her world is so limited after her vigorous life out on the wide-open prairies, Shyrock has a surplus of energy and emotions.

"That's why I write," she says. "If I didn't, I would be so bored. I am so full of feelings. I am so happy to be alive."

Those parts of her body she can move are in constant motion because her brain, with its wit and powers of invention, is untouched by her affliction.

Almost nothing escapes her attention.

Her window to the center's inner courtyard attracts hummingbirds and green-throated finches that peck on the glass to signal their thirst and hunger. She can see the changing sky and seasons.

"If I could," she says, with a touch of longing, "I'd bring all the outside inside."

She uses her one good hand to print out the poem in a notebook and members of the nursing staff type it.

"Don't think that just because this is a nursing home, nothing happens," she says. "It all happens, believe me."

But again and again, her thoughts turn to people like herself, living out their last days, often forgotten, dependent on nurses and kindly aides, determined to savor every day.

Signing myself, stroke and paralyzed patient, into a
nursing home was the only solution left for me to do. Since
family didn't want me at home, just too much care to be burdened
with.
First night was a frightful experience, thanks to charge nurses'
lecture on how things were to be; regardless of needed assistance
and loss feelings of being discarded by those who claimed to love
me.
Never shall I forget the tears shed as an unwanted soul at home
and here. Other residents offered their theory on helpful hints
on surviving without love and a will to live. In time shared
on each others shoulder. Thus friends were born in our lonely
lives.

Over-50 bikers take staid stereotypes for a spin

David E. Nelson / Staff photographer

At 74, Tibby Berglund says she enjoys the breeze on her face and exhilaration when she drives her 1993 Harley-Davidson Sportster 883 Hugger. She started out with cycles with small engines.

By Susan Leonard
Staff writer

AZ Republic
3.27.96

Tibby Berglund took her first ride on the back of a Harley when she was 16.

She was hooked for life.

Now 74, Berglund still rides a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. But now she's the driver.

"There's nothing like the purr of a Harley."

Berglund, who lives in east Phoenix, said she enjoys the breeze on her face and the exhilaration when she rides.

"You feel free and like the sky is the limit," said Berglund, who works six days a week running an insurance company with her son.

Local motorcycle dealers say she is part of the growing number of people over 50 who hop on their Harley (or Honda or Yamaha) looking for fun. Along the way they defy stereotypes of the over-50 set and redefine what it means to be a biker.

Over the past several decades, Berglund has gone through many bikes. She started out with cycles with small engines, graduated to large ones, and recently scaled back to a 1993 Harley-Davidson Sportster 883 Hugger.

For Berglund, slightly over 5 feet tall, the Sportster is a better fit.

"I'm shrinking so the bike has to shrink."

Berglund usually rides with her sons or son-in-law on the weekends. Most people don't realize how old she is until she takes off her helmet. Then, they're surprised.

Berglund specializes in selling insurance to motorcycle riders and has about 3,000 clients, about half of whom are over 50. She has no plans to retire, fearful she would be "bored."

Across the Valley, Gene Grassie, 80, has found there's no reason to fear retirement, if you keep riding.

Grassie, a retired electrical plant manager and engineer, started riding a motorcycle after he retired and moved to Sun City from Chicago in 1981.

"It keeps my mind alert because you know you can get killed on this thing," he said.

Grassie bought a cycle after his grandchildren urged him to ride their mo-ped when he visited them in Ohio. He drives a 1985 Honda Elite 250.

"I only wish I could get the bigger ones," said Grassie, who is 5-foot-7 and weighs 150 pounds. "But I'm a little guy and can't handle those."

Grassie usually takes a breakfast ride, often 50 to 200 miles long, on Saturday mornings with a group from Sun City who call themselves the Flying Wheels.

Grassie is probably the oldest rider in his group but estimates there are more than 100 Sun City residents who ride motorcycles or scooters. Another group is called the Power Riders.

Although hooked on the two-wheel habit, the thought of quitting has been creeping up on him.

"Every time I realize I'm 80, I think, 'You can't keep this up — don't try and kid yourself.' "

People like Grassie serve as an inspiration to Jerry Ciptak, 53, of Chandler, who got his first motorcycle when he was 19 and has no plans to stop riding.

"I'm going to ride until I can't ride anymore," said Ciptak, who sells equipment for gas stations and auto repair shops.

Ciptak and his wife, Karin, 53, often ride their Harley with a group of 285 other Harley owners that belong to a club in Mesa. About a third are over 50.

Most wear black leather clothing, but say they are not outlaws and spend part of their time raising money for charity and delivering presents to poor children.

"A lot of people think we wear black leather because we want to look bad," he said. "We want to stay warm, and if you do take a spill on a bike, the leathers will protect you."

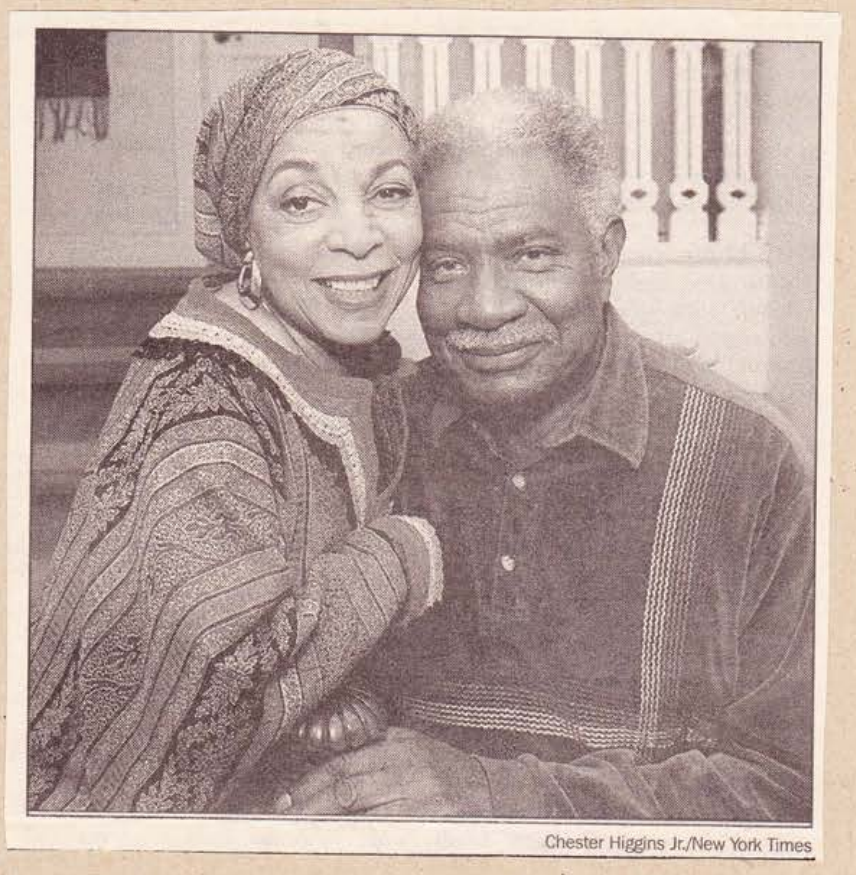
Ciptak said his wife had not ridden a motorcycle until several years ago when he brought home a new one.

"She used to grit her teeth and was very nervous," he said. "She was not sure which way to lean. Now, it's like she's sitting in a rocking chair."

Ginny Blanchard, 52, who rides a Honda motorcycle with her husband, Mickey, 52, and other couples their age, said people don't seem too surprised by their age.

Blanchard, who works as a host at the McDowell Mountain Regional Park four miles north of Fountain Hills, said they ride "for the joy of it."

"You don't miss much when you ride a motorcycle. You get to see everything and smell everything."



Chester Higgins Jr./New York Times

The Arizona Republic Sunday, May 23, 1999

Ruby Dee

Actress offers honest portrait of life in show

By Diane Haithman
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — The husband is 81; the wife is 74. Parents, and grandparents, several times over. In an era boasting a divorce rate of 50 percent, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in December. If you looked up "family values" in the dictionary, you'd expect to see their picture.

So, it is only to be expected, in separate conversations with these two model senior citizens, that talk would soon turn to sex.

Actually, nothing that comes out of the mouths of Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis, the golden-anniversary couple in question, is anything close to what you'd expect. In recent years, they have made a career of talking honestly about topics few others will.

Although she may have hidden her writer's identity until her seventh decade, Dee is outspoken on most topics — in particular, the future of young Black men and women, whom she would like to see concentrate on careers in business and technology, rather than show business or sports.

"We have to create a whole new generation of stars in the economic sphere," she says. "Singing, dancing and boxing are all great, but where are the scientists, the dentists and the computer whizzes?"

If being female, Black and over age 70 puts any limits on her own career, Dee chooses not to acknowledge it.

"I don't have time for that kind of lamentation," she asserts. "There is so much I can do in terms of improving that picture, I really don't have the time to waste. I can't deal with the fact of injustice; I really have to keep my mind on all the things that I want to do, and push injustice into the gutter someplace.

"I think you can laugh and cry at the same time, and maybe that's where I am — with the heavier emphasis on the laughing, and the trying, rather than the crying. I cannot live comparatively — I can't. It's too despairing. I've always taught my children to rejoice in others' good fortune, because, as we are each other, a lot of that fortune is also mine."

Karate 'Gave Me a Purpose in Life,' Says Mary Stermer, 75

By JOHN HURST
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The barefoot karate student in white jacket and pants stood on the polished wooden floor facing the master, a formidably built man with a black beard.

"*Ichi! Ni! San!*" shouted the master in Japanese. One, two, three.

The student responded with choppy punches, kicks and with graceful, balletic moves.

"Don't go too fast, you'll make mistakes," advised the master, who then suggested a break.

"I don't need a rest," responded the student.

"Just tell me when you're ready to go," said the master.

"I'm ready."

The student, who already holds a prestigious brown belt in karate, is on a virtual mission to earn a black belt—reserved for the elite practitioners of the martial art—and does not believe in resting very much. Never has. Not in all her 75 years.

Mary Stermer has always led an exceptionally full and busy life, but when it all fell apart from depression not long ago, karate helped her put it back together. The martial art helped her to center herself, to concentrate and give her something to look forward to.

The medical treatment that she received probably did not hurt either, but Stermer emphasizes activity rather than medicine.

At age 55, Stermer happened to be passing by a karate studio then operated by the International Karate Assn. in Alhambra. Fascinated by the fast action, she stopped to watch the lesson.

"I don't like anything that moves slow," she said. "Like bridge."

Stermer noticed that several karate students were girls.

"I said, 'Can anybody do this?' "

Five years later, Stermer—under the tutelage of karate master Tom Serrano—earned a brown belt, a step below the black belt.

But Stermer drifted away from karate. When she was 64, her husband, Donald, became ill with heart trouble. At about the same time, she was asked to take custody of three grandchildren.

In 1989, a half century after their marriage, Donald Stermer died. The children were grown. The house was big and empty. Mary Stermer fell into a deep depression. For nine months, she barely ate or left the house.

Stermer decided to stop taking medicine and return to karate so she could perform in the Ms. Senior America contest as a martial artist. She was again instructed by Serrano, this time at his studio in Pasadena.

"It gave me a purpose in life," she said. "I'm doing it for me. I never did things for me. I always did things for someone else."

Stermer receives the same type of tutoring that younger students receive, says Serrano, except that some potentially dangerous moves are avoided.

"There are certain things she can't do," he said. "I would never have her do jump kicks."

He expects her to be ready for the black belt test next year.

"When she goes out for the black, she'll have to earn it," he said. "They don't give it away."

But he expects her to succeed: "She has this attribute of being hungry."

After Stermer returned to karate, she trained hard for a year and in September entered the Ms. Senior America contest as planned. Serrano accompanied her to the event in Laguna Hills and she delighted the audience by throwing her instructor all over the stage.

She did not win the contest, but she won where it mattered to her. "I won in my heart," she said, "because I accomplished something I wanted to do. I've been fine ever since."

LA Times
2/2/95

HARRIET HUNTINGTON DOERR, '31, 1910-2002

Late to Bloom, She Stunned Them All

WHEN 70-YEAR-OLD Harriet Doerr finished reading her work before the other students in Stanford's Stegner program in creative writing, the room was silent. She assumed they all thought it was horrible. They hurried to tell her just the opposite: it was wonderful.

Doerr, an award-winning writer who discovered her talent late in life, died November 24 in her hometown of Pasadena, Calif., at 92.

She grew up in a large family that encouraged independent thought and spirited argument. Transferring to Stanford after a year at Smith College, she dropped out in 1930, after her junior year, to marry Albert Doerr, '30, whom she knew from back home. For 25 years, they lived in Pasadena, where she raised their daughter and son and volunteered in community-service projects. In the late 1950s, the couple moved to a village in the Mexican state of Aguascalientes to restore an old copper mine owned by Albert's family. They stayed until Albert died in 1972.

'SPARE, GRACEFUL': Doerr enraptured critics when she published her first novel at the age of 74.

Not long afterward, her son, Michael, '53, suggested she return to college. She accepted the challenge, finishing her BA in history in 1977—a half-century after she first enrolled at Stanford. With the encouragement of writing professors, she continued in the creative writing program, becoming a Stegner fellow in 1980. Though old enough to be a grandmother to most of the students, Doerr enjoyed getting together with them for burgers and beer. Her respect for eccentricity and independent thinking led her to prefer student life in the 1970s to her college experience in the 1920s, says her daughter, Martha Doerr Toppin, of Oakland.

After Stanford, Doerr returned to her Pasadena home. She published her first book, *Stones for Ibarra,* at age 74. The novel, based partly on her life in Mexico, won the 1984 American Book Award for First Fiction Work and was translated into 10 languages. *Consider This, Señora,* appeared a decade later; *The Tiger in the Grass,* an essay collection, came out in 1995, the same year her son died.

Critics described Doerr's writing as "spare and graceful," "lapidary" and "lovely and as pure as clear water, and as rare." Her honors included the Transatlantic Review-Henfield Foundation Award, the Harold D. Vursell Memorial Award for prose style, and finalist honors in the PEN competition for fiction.

Doerr worked tirelessly and meticulously, typically writing about one sentence per hour. "She was a perfectionist," Toppin says. "Each word was chosen carefully. Mother had to hear the word rise in her brain and flow down all the length of her arm, through her hand, through the pencil, onto the page."

Her methodical approach to writing contrasted with her liveliness and spontaneity at speaking engagements, which she loved. "Thirty seconds after beginning, she had the audience in the palm of her hand," Toppin recalls. "She enjoyed surprising them a bit, and her charm was enormous."

SECTION IV

SHAKERS AND MOVERS IN THEIR 80'S

The wisdom and triumph of growing old

The founder of the Gray Panthers writes about being eighty-six

It seems like yesterday that I could dash up and down the steps. I could twist open jars, push through heavy doors, climb into the bathtub myself and see the pictures hanging on the wall in the next room.

Today, I approach each day determined but uncertain. Will a dizzy spell catch me on the stairs? Will I be able to get into a car without breaking my back? How bad will the accumulated aches and pains be? You see, eighty-six years old is very different. Different, of course, from twenty-six and thirty-six, but also different from sixty-six and seventy-six. The losses accumulate: The bones weaken, the eyes grow dim, the ears no longer hear clearly.

"Maggie," a friend says, "you are more spirit than body." Exactly. You won't find me confined to a chair, mulling over my mortality. Day after day, I'm out the door, sometimes with the first crack of light, for meetings in New York, Massachusetts, California, Ohio—wherever I'm of use.

Of course, I'll grab hold of your arm—anybody's arm—on my way out the door. I have always been fairly small, but now I'm just eighty-five pounds. One day not long ago, I stepped out of a building at the United Nations in New York, and a gust of wind lifted me off my feet. If I hadn't been holding on to a friend's arm, I'd have been carried off down First Avenue.

I am what gerontologists call "old, old," a member of the fastest growing age group in America. Census figures show that more and more people are living to eighty and ninety in reasonably good health. For us, the independence we make a fetish of throughout life is no longer possible. We must replace it with interdependence. Very few of us can get through the day without any assistance. We may need help cutting our food, getting into bed, using the bathroom.

What *can* we do? We can think and speak. We can remember. We can give advice and make judgments. We can dial the phone, write and read. We may not be able to butter our bread, but we can still change the world.

"Must you do this?" my assistant sometimes asks, pointing to a meeting on my crowded calendar. I can hear my frail bones ask the same question. "Absolutely!" I respond, "I absolutely must." There's still this drive to get out there, to have my opinion heard. There's still so very much to get done.

Those of us who are old can also still love. Perhaps my love of my friends is *stronger* at this stage in my life. I must confront the question: How much longer do we have together? Sometimes, I even feel that familiar tug. A male friend of mine often squeezes my hand and asks, "So when are we going to have a love affair?" It's a tempting offer.

For me, this is a glorious period of life. Old age has fed my passions—my passion for the world, for people, for a better way. As my personal tale is about to end, I am more interested than ever in the larger story. I am free in a way that was not possible when I was thirty or forty.

Looking back, I think the most stressful year of my life came with my thirtieth birthday. Thirty seemed so old. And most people at thirty were married. I can see much better now how troubled I

(continued)

From No Stone Unturned: The Life and Times of Maggie Kuhn. *Copyright © 1991 by Maggie Kuhn with Christina Long and Laura Quinn. Published by Ballantine Books, Inc.*

BY MAGGIE KUHN

Growing old

(continued)

was—not because I was single, but because everyone suddenly viewed me as odd. People constantly asked: "You're not married?"

When I faced retirement, I was also apprehensive and depressed. I'd invested so much of my life in my work. Not to have a job, or structure to be a part of, was very hard for me to accept. Now, there's none of that stress and anxiety.

Old age is not a disaster. It's a triumph over disappointment, failure, loss, sickness. I know now that if something I've initiated falters and fails, it won't be the end. I'll learn from it and begin again. When I was younger, I took failure much more seriously.

As Simone de Beauvoir noted almost twenty years ago, the issues of age challenge the whole of society and put it to the test. Indeed, those of us who are old and frail remind the world of the delicate interdependence of us all. We are more human than ever before because we see so clearly how finite life is. Unfortunately, we are often deemed a separate species. If you happen to be an old person accompanied by a younger person in a restaurant and show even a hint of deafness or uncertainty in your step, the headwaiter will talk right past you: "What does she want to eat today?"

In my old age, I have discovered a miracle. When I reach out to others I receive a new kind of energy—physical, mental and spiritual—that rejuvenates and emboldens me. So many people are ashamed to ask for what they need. I have two friends who say, "Anytime you need to go anywhere, just call me." I so appreciate that. We visit with each other while we go shopping or to the doctor's. They have given me confidence about asking for help, and now I don't hesitate to flag down strangers on the street for help in getting up a curb or into a car.

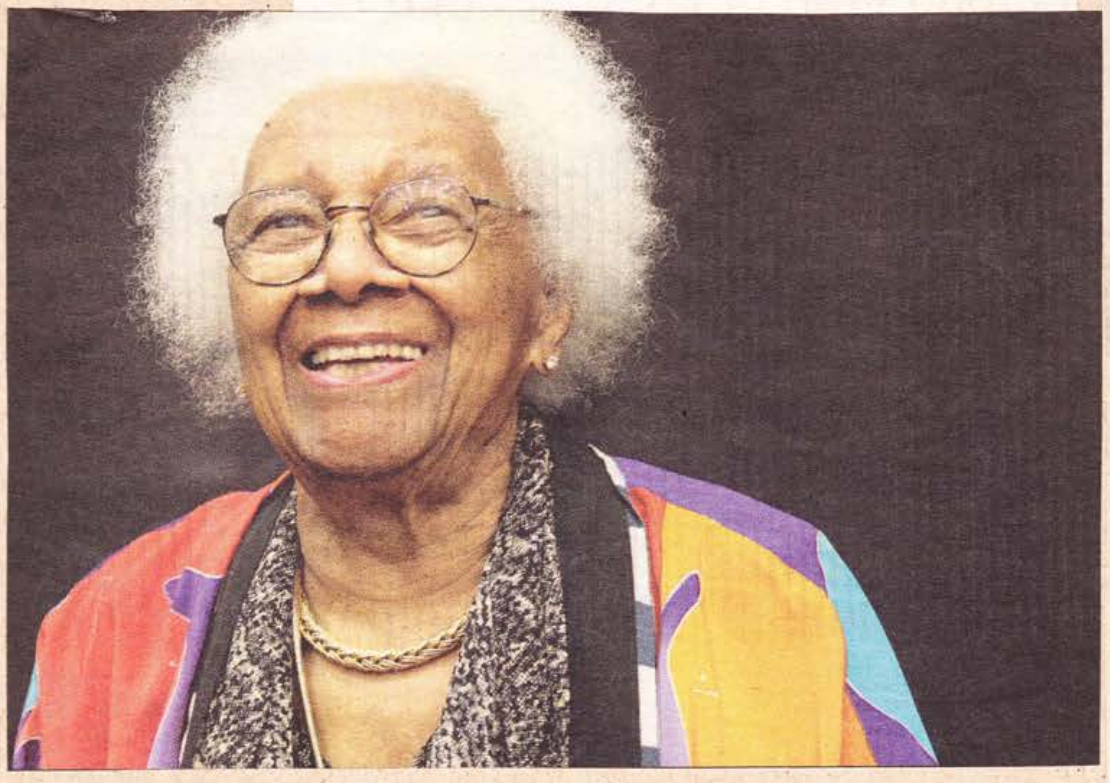
All of us are at the mercy of fate. But when the biggest transition of all—death—lies just before us, we are better at surrendering to life. It's not resignation, but acceptance. We've learned that change is a constant.

> This is a glorious period in my life. Old age has fed my passions. I am free in a way that wasn't possible when I was thirty or forty.

My gardener, Leon Majors, has deepened my appreciation of change. Over the years, he has transformed the scraggly plot of grass in the back of my house. There are azaleas in the spring, tiger lilies in the summer and chrysanthemums in the fall. Being a gardener in the heart of the city takes vision. Indeed, Mr. Majors is more than a gardener; he's a philosopher and preacher. One of his themes is the symbolism of the seed: If you look at the tiny seed, you can't see all the changes to come. "A seed possesses a mature tree in a miniature state," Mr. Majors tells me. "If the conditions are right, once the seed is planted it's just a matter of time before it unfolds itself and reveals its history."

When I look at my garden, it's not so much the individual parts I appreciate as the changing whole. And so it is with my life. I have not yet revealed all of my history. □

Sisters offer grads financial boost



Each college year rewarded with $1,000

By Betty Reid
BETTY.REID@ARIZONAREPUBLIC.COM

At the dedication of a high school in her name, Betty H. Fairfax and her sister announced plans to continue giving to students.

Fairfax, 89, who still works as a high school counselor, told the 500 freshmen in the Betty H. Fairfax High School gymnasium in Laveen that if they complete high school and go to college, she will give each of them $1,000 for each year they complete.

Earlier, in a speech at the high school dedication, Betty's sister, Jean Fairfax, said they have also asked educators at the high school to apply for a grant to develop a college preparatory program. That money could do any number of things, such as providing extra tutoring, counseling or even pay for Scholastic Assessment Tests for students who come from financially strapped families.

Fairfax High Principal Zachary Muñoz said the sisters' generosity will help the school reach its goal of moving students toward college.

Betty H. Fairfax

Title: Dean emeritus at Central High School. At 89, still works with students and parents.

Teaching history: Arrived in Arizona in 1950 to teach at Carver High School, the city's high school for African-Americans prior to school integration. She taught physical education, science and was a coach. Fairfax went to Phoenix Union High School in 1955 after Carver closed and became a counselor. She moved to Central High in 1969 and became dean of students in 1991.

Education: Bachelor's degree from Kent State University and a master's at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

Style: Fairfax is renowned for her no-nonsense, dogged approach to student success. Students come to her by appointment and if they do not show up, she calls them on the phone, finds them in the parking lot or calls their parents and goes to their house.

Noted philanthropist: She and her sister, Jean, have supported endowments totaling more than $1 million.

A poster in Fairfax's office: "Our Children, Our Life."

3 cheers for Betty and Jean Fairfax

Thank you for giving the Valley the opportunity to know the tireless, mostly anonymous work by both Betty and Jean Fairfax ("New school, same grace," Valley & State, Sept. 10).

I was fortunate enough to teach at Central High School in the '90s when Betty Fairfax was the dean. When sorely aggravated by other teachers, administrators or students, I would show up at her office and 10 minutes later left refreshed, laughing and ready for more!

She is a state as well as a national treasure, and I am honored to know her. She truly is a beacon of hope for all students, regardless of race or ethnicity.

And is she tough! Betty Fairfax demands the best from everyone and absolutely gives no quarter when it comes to excuses.

May she be blessed with good health, as there is so much more to be done and students to be helped. And can she dance!

Kinkri Devi Is Dead at 82; Fought Illegal Mining in India

By HARESH PANDYA

Kinkri Devi, an illiterate and impoverished woman who had waged a long and at least partly successful fight against illegal mining and quarrying in the mountainous northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, died last Sunday in Chandigarh, India. She was 82.

Ms. Devi was born into a poor Dalit, or untouchable, family in the village of Ghaton in 1925. Her father was a subsistence farmer. That she came from a low caste made her struggle against powerful and politically connected mining interests all the more remarkable.

With no hope of an education, she began working as a servant in early childhood and, at 14, married Shamu Ram, a bonded laborer. He died of typhoid when she was just 22, and she was forced to become a sweeper.

Over the years, she watched the world around her change for the worse. Uncontrolled quarrying despoiled the fabled hills in many parts of Himachal Pradesh, harming the water supply and destroying once-rich paddy fields. Seeing the damage in her own district, she vowed to take on the mining interests.

Backed by People's Action for People in Need, a local volunteer group, Ms. Devi filed a public interest lawsuit in the High Court of Shimla, the state capital, against 48 mine owners, accusing them of reckless limestone quarrying. The quarry owners dismissed her campaign, saying she was only trying to blackmail them.

After a long period with no response to her suit, she headed for Shimla and staged a 19-day hunger strike outside the court until it agreed to take up the issue. The strike won Ms. Devi national and international headlines. In 1987, the High Court not only ordered a stay on mining but also imposed a blanket ban on blasting in the hills.

Faced with the prospect of closing their operations, her opponents threatened to kill her, but she continued to fight. The mine owners appealed to the Supreme Court of India, which ruled against them in July 1995, adding to Ms. Devi's renown.

The same year, still working as a sweeper, she was invited to attend the International Women's Conference in Beijing because of the keen interest taken in her by Hillary Rodham Clinton, then the first lady.

Kinkri Devi in a 2005 photo.

Poverty did not stop an environmental advocate.

A private organization sponsored her trip to China, where Mrs. Clinton asked her to light the lamp at the inaugural function. She spoke to thunderous applause about how the enchanting Himalayas were being degraded by illegal limestone quarrying and how it was up to ordinary people like her to save the environment.

Despite Ms. Devi's efforts and the Supreme Court ruling, quarrying continues not only in the hills but also in the forest preserves, though with some improved regulation.

She is survived by a son and 12 grandchildren.

Ms. Devi, who could neither read nor write and learned to sign her name just a few years ago, also waged a long campaign for opening a degree-granting college in Sangrah, the village where she spent most of her life.

"It wasn't in my destiny to study," she said, "but I don't want others to suffer the way I did for want of education."

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 2008

Big U.S. olive farm started on a whim

By Kim Curtis
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PETALUMA, Calif. – Seated at a small table, listening to her grandson's high school classmates on stage, Nan Tucker McEvoy looks more like a proud matriarch than a groundbreaking agricultural entrepreneur.

But it's McEvoy's olives, not the jazz, that drew nearly 600 friends and visitors to her annual harvest party recently at McEvoy Ranch, 550 acres of rolling hills covered with rows of mint-colored olive trees.

The annual bash featuring music, wine and a sit-down dinner of organic, locally produced delicacies is McEvoy's way of showing the neighbors what's going on at the ranch.

But McEvoy's roots are far from humble. Her grandfather, Michel DeYoung, founded the *San Francisco Chronicle*. McEvoy served as chairman of the paper's board until she was ousted in 1995 over a disagreement about whether to sell the *Chronicle* to Hearst Corp.

She also was an early member of the Peace Corps, serving as special assistant to Sargent Shriver, brother-in-law of President John F. Kennedy. She married Dennis McEvoy, a senior editor at *Reader's Digest*, in 1948 and the couple had a son before divorcing.

In 1991, she bought the former cattle ranch, sight unseen, to give her three grandchildren "a place where they can run free," she explained.

The land was zoned for agricultural use, but McEvoy didn't want to farm livestock or fruit orchards.

On trips to Italy, she'd fallen in love with the olives and thought the trees were pretty.

Her son, Nion, who runs Chronicle Books, encouraged her to read *Feast of the Olive*, by Maggie Klein, which featured an Italian olive oil expert named Maurizio Castelli.

McEvoy flew to Radda, a small village in Chianti, to meet Castelli. She brought along soil samples, weather data and asked him whether she could grow olives in northern Marin County.

"I said, 'In my opinion, yes, you can plant olives,' " said Castelli.

Castelli selected the first 1,000 trees, five Tuscan varieties, and traveled to California to plant them for McEvoy.

"Mercifully, he turned out to be correct," said McEvoy, 87. "That was the beginning of it."

The 18,000 trees now growing at the ranch were propagated from those first 1,000.

McEvoy's frantoio, or olive mill, is the only one of its kind in the U.S.

Last year, 150 tons of olives were pressed, yielding 4,500 gallons of oil. In 2006, halfway through harvest, ranch officials estimated the crop at 120 tons, likely producing about 4,200 gallons of oil.

Nan McEvoy stands on a balcony outside her home at the McEvoy Ranch in Petaluma, Calif., in October. The ranch, originally meant as a fun place for her grandchildren to "run free," is now the largest private-estate bottler of olive oil in the U.S.

Steg -
With my love of olive oil, how could I not admire this gal, who at about 72 or more researched and launched this amazing adventure in ranching and producing olive oil. Definitely for "the file". Lovingly, B

88-Year-Old Dances to Her Own Beat

By ZAN DUBIN

Mildred Walter's passion is dancing. Four times a week she bends and swirls to '40s ballroom dances, stomps and kicks in folk-dance formations, and teaches tango in her living room. But she's also a gardener, a seamstress and a Spanish-language enthusiast, tending to five fig trees, creating costumes and compiling a computerized Aztec dictionary. She's also 88.

"When I was quite young, I remember reading about a French actress who had good legs at 70, but I still have good legs at 88," Walter said during a recent Monday-night tango session.

Gliding Movements

Wearing an embroidered Mexican blouse and a knee-length skirt, she became only slightly out of breath gliding through movements she had mastered some 70 years before. Practicing a back-bend with dance partner John Simons, she said, "I always say I can do it to the floor if the man can."

Perhaps it is the six to eight hours of dancing she does each week that keeps Walter in shape. (She also goes contra dancing—a rigorous form of social dance dating from colonial times—about twice a month.) Or perhaps it's her frequent visits with sons Donald, 56, and Robert, 62, her daily 20-minute walk, or her 70-year-old boyfriend ("Alan [Rader] thinks I'm swell," she said) that do it.

Weekly Tango Sessions

Whatever the reason, her frail features belie the curiosity, fortitude and stamina her life style and friends attest to. Simons, 33 years her junior, admits he has to concentrate as he dances unlike his partner, "I can't do it automatically, like Mildred does." But nothing keeps Simons from the weekly tango sessions including the fact that the couple is nearly as disparate in height as they are in age—Walter is a petite five feet, Simons is 5 foot 9.

CRAIG T. MATHEW

Mildred Walter, 88, who dances at least four times a week, practices a tango step with her partner, John Simons, 55.

Thursday, March 28, 1985
Los Angeles Times

In training for her next adventure

"If not now, when?"

Back in 1989, that became the motto of Margaret Davis and her adventurous new husband, Ed. "Heck, we had to do something to kill time," jokes the now-84-year-old, a retired schoolteacher and former City of Hope administrator from Azusa. So after 45 years of virtually no athletic activity, save chasing around four kids and nine grandkids, attending PTA meetings, trimming hedges, playing for three years on a softball team and doing the occasional Jack LaLanne TV workout, she got moving. She went skiing. She tried bungee jumping in New Zealand. And snorkeling the Great Barrier Reef. White-water rafting the Zambezi River in Africa. Travel to Israel, Denmark, Bulgaria.

To stay in shape between expeditions, Davis, at age 66, began competing in 5-kilometer walking races in Griffith Park — and winning her age group. "People made such a fuss about me — and it got me so motivated that I started running the Santa Anita 5K." She won her age group five years straight.

Even better than hearing her sons-in-law and kids endlessly brag about her running prowess was seeing how it was changing them. "The effect on everyone around me is really what kept me going, gave me an even greater purpose."

That's why Davis set her sights on a far bigger prize: the 2002 Los Angeles Marathon. "When I signed up for a marathon training class at Citrus College, I kept it a secret from the family," she says. "I didn't want anyone telling me not to do it."

When Davis won the 75-to-79 age group in 6 hours, 3 minutes, even beating the men, the cat was out of the bag. She and her youngest daughter, Colleen Heublein, now 51, began training together in earnest, starting with a climb up Mt. Whitney to celebrate Davis' 80th birthday that August.

Eight months later, after running side-by-side the whole race, Davis dropped Colleen at mile 22 and won the 80-and-older age group at the 2003 marathon in an eye-opening personal record of 5:37:15, again beating all the 75-year-olds, men and women.

Since then, Davis has run five more marathons — three L.A.s and two San Diego Rock 'n' Rolls — and 10 half-marathons. Her time of 5:42:49 in 2005 was recognized as the fastest marathon in history for any 82-year-old in the U.S. A few weeks ago, in what many are calling the hardest L.A. Marathon in history, she ran a 6:07:56, finishing two hours ahead of the runner-up in her age group.

Davis says she can't afford to slow down. "I hear rumors of a woman up north who can run a sub-five marathon — and she's 84 too. She'd clean my clock if she came down here."

She credits her fast times, lifelong health and svelte form — 10 pounds lighter than she was in her 20s — to a sensible training plan, a good diet and good genes. She keeps in shape with 5 miles of running and two days of yoga and Pilates classes per week, adding 2 miles each week after Christmas to prepare for marathon season.

Her "alternative" diet, as she calls it, includes her own granola mix, little sugar and desserts and a two-thirds reduction in her consumption of all meats from earlier years. She hasn't cut back on dairy, however, regularly having cottage cheese, butter and 2% milk.

"My real secret is cod liver oil," she says. "When I was 12, it cleared up the terrible psoriasis we'd get in the cold New Jersey winters. Ever since, I've taken a couple spoonfuls of the cherry flavor nearly every morning — and haven't had an outbreak since."

Apart from a bout of hepatitis in 1950, her only visit to a hospital came two years ago after a half-marathon, when she felt faint and was reluctantly whisked away when race aides called 911.

"I told them I was fine — it was so embarrassing," she says. "There was nothing wrong — maybe a little dehydration. But it was a good way to get $13,000 worth of tests done for $300 [the insurance deductible]."

A positive attitude may be her biggest trump card. Outliving two husbands, she surrounds herself with her "young, vibrant" family, is active socially at the Pasadena Nazarene church and is forever looking forward to new athletic achievements.

Last year, she went skydiving with her grandchildren. This year, she and her daughter plan to complete the three-race Triple Crown Half-Marathon series.

"I'm busy. I don't have time to slow down," she says "And you know what they say: The best defense is a good offense."

SPENCER WEINER *Los Angeles Times*

WINNER: *Margaret Davis, left, and her daughter Colleen Heublein, right, at the start of the 2007 L.A. Marathon. Davis finished first in her age group.*

KEN HIVELY *Los Angeles Times*

AGE AND GRACE: *Needing a walker to get around now, Scott dances with hands and arms.*

Marion Scott, 84, says only death will keep her from performing.

By Susan Josephs
Special to The Times

With her walker as dance partner, Marion Scott performs her latest choreography in her living room. Wearing a pink housedress and with her gray hair in the dancer's bun she has long favored, she takes slow, ceremonial steps toward a nearby chair. She moves from standing to sitting in deliberate stages. Once seated, she dances with her arms. When she stands again, her gaze is distant yet serene and victorious. She's looking death in the eye — but not for the first time.

As she prepares for the 10th installment of her "Spirit Dances" at Highways Performance Space, the 84-year-old choreographer concedes: "I'm going to die at some point. But other than that, I have no plans to retire. I'm giving my life meaning, and unless I have something like a heart attack, I will keep going."

Two years ago, around the time she got the walker, Scott wasn't so sure she would dance again. But if anyone knows how to stage a comeback, it's Scott. In 1968, she disbanded the Marion Scott Dance Company, which had been in existence for two decades, and she didn't perform again for 17 years. But then, after three hip-replacement surgeries and bouts of severe depression, she formed a new company that lasted three years and, more important, led to the epiphany that she was far from finished.

"We were in between rehearsals at this theater, and I walked onstage and knew I was home," she recalls. "I knew I was meant to perform, no matter what condition I was in."

As an octogenarian, the former UCLA dance professor has dislocated her knees, suffered silent strokes and been hospitalized for high blood pressure and congestive heart failure. For "Spirit Dances 8" in 2004, she performed leaning against a wall for support. Just before "Spirit Dances 9," she wound up in the hospital and had to cancel the show. Today, her dining room table features a tray neatly arrayed with 26 bottles of medication.

Yet though she's diligent about taking her pills, Scott knows what's really keeping her alive. "It's the 'Spirit Dances,' " she says. "They are healing for both the dancer and the audience."

Scott began her theme-based series in 1999, and over the years the shows have celebrated the aging process, paid tribute to dance icon Isadora Duncan, explored the effect of masks on movement and relied largely on improvised performances. In more recent years, though, Scott has worked on adding more choreographic structure to the dances, and she now collaborates with a core group of performers ranging from their mid-40s to their 80s. Company members work individually on dances and meet once a month for feedback.

"Marion has really opened people's eyes to the value of getting older," says Roberta Wolin-Manker, a choreographer and dance professor at Santa Monica College, who until this year produced the series. "She has revived careers and shown us what people can do in the later years of their lives."

Allegra Fuller-Snyder, for example, hadn't danced for years, though she "was surrounded by dance" as a professor and pioneer in dance ethnology at UCLA, when Scott asked her to participate in the series' second installment. "I thought that was absolutely ridiculous," she remembers. "But the piece was called 'The Crones,' so I thought, 'Why not?' I decided to try and realized that I could dance from the heart, that it didn't have to be about technical mastery."

Now 79, Fuller-Snyder will perform in the latest show, called "Courage Has Many Faces," despite a recent shoulder injury that limits her mobility on the left side of her body. "After all these years of not dancing, I discovered that the spirit of dance remains vital within me," she says.

For Wolin-Manker, the show's title inspired her to create a dance dedicated to her daughter-in-law, who recently died of cancer. "Marion allows each of us to have our own voice in the company," she says. "She helps people go to that place inside themselves and works with them to shape and present that essence in a cohesive way."

A mentor to many

But Wolin-Manker, who first met Scott as a graduate student at UCLA in 1983, says that while Scott influenced a number of choreographers who studied or worked with her early in their careers, "everyone is making different work, and no one looks like the other. Marion always knew how to key in to your essence and could draw out what makes you special."

"Marion saw early potential in me," says Hae Kyung Lee, now a dance professor at Cal State Los Angeles and an internationally known choreographer who studied with Scott at UCLA in the late '70s. "Years later, I approach teaching in that way, where I try and find the talent in my students and help them develop it."

Lee, who often draws upon her Korean heritage in her work, adds that all of Scott's work "has been about spirit. She has always approached dance in a spiritual way. She works from the inside out, and that's why I feel so connected to her."

'Spirit Dances 10: Courage Has Many Faces'

Where: Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica

When: 8:30 p.m. April 20 and 21, 2:30 p.m. April 22

Price: $15 and $20

Contact: (310) 315-1459 or *www.highwaysperformance.org*

Before showing her dance called "Prayer," Scott sits at her dining room table wearing a blue robe and a favorite pair of dangling amethyst earrings. When she speaks about dance, she closes her eyes. When the conversation turns to her daily life and all the doctor visits, she opens them. She says that her first visceral understanding of how "spirit moves through you" came when she was a young dancer in New York auditioning for a company run by modern-dance pioneer Helen Tamiris.

"I always had bounce but not height," she says of her jumping ability. "But at the audition, I remember feeling so buoyant, and afterward I found out I was accepted into the company."

Raised in Chicago, Scott had made a beeline for New York at age 18 and, in addition to Tamiris, studied and worked with such other pioneers as Martha Graham, José Limón and Doris Humphrey. "Of course I drew from them," she says of her mentors.

But Scott says she also learned from the years when she didn't perform and suffered from depression. "I got fat, and I was so negative," she says. "I was so depressed, I even thought about suicide, but this finally led me to dance alone in my living room. I started expressing my despair through movement."

Spirit dance, says Scott, is "expressing that which is larger than yourself. You are dancing the part of yourself that is searching for something higher — call it God, call it whatever you like."

These days, Scott expresses joy rather than despair when she dances. The depression she felt as a younger woman, she says, no longer exists. "I'm not that person," she replies when asked about a Times interview she gave in 1986 that described her as "stark, intense and self-absorbed."

"Sure, I have my bad moments," she acknowledges. "But I have a lot of happiness in my life now. I'm less afraid to die."

Last spring, Scott wound up performing the duet she had created for the canceled "Spirit Dances 9." After "being given the OK again" by her doctors, she appeared as a guest artist with fellow collaborator Craig Ng in Wolin-Manker's "Freedom Dances" at Highways. The duet was about her facing the inevitable end. Ng, an actor and dancer with a martial arts background, played the role of Death.

"I felt really nervous," he recalls. "Marion's health was getting worse and worse, and there was the possibility that she could even die during a performance, and here I am playing the part of Death. But then I thought, 'If you are a dancer who has danced all her life, then wow, what a way to go.' "

Scott and Ng performed the piece mostly without mishap. But one night, as they exited the stage, Scott stumbled and Ng struggled to support her. "In the end, we made it," he says. "And she looked at me with such joy on her face."

That might explain the calm and dignified expression in Scott's eyes when she rehearses her "Prayer" dance. "As long as I use this walker and work within my limits, I can still do my best work," she says. "I'm looking forward to 'Spirit Dances 11.' "

MOTOR RACING SHAV GLICK

Even at 84, She's Still a Pit Bull

Her picture is on the wall at the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame in Knoxville, Iowa, but with it are not the usual helmet, gloves and driving suit. **Evelyn Pratt's** legacy is a red bullhorn.

For more than 30 years, the feisty little woman from El Monte has barked orders to sprint car drivers, from Williams Grove Speedway in Pennsylvania to old Ascot Park and most tracks in between where sprint cars have run.

Pratt, 84 and that's not a misprint, will be in the infield tonight and Saturday night at Perris Auto Speedway, acting like a traffic cop to more than 60 drivers whose strong suit is sliding 750-horsepower vehicles through the corners of dirt ovals. She is pit steward for the Sprint Car Racing Assn., which sanctions the Budweiser Oval Nationals, a $100,000 event that has attracted the best drivers from all over the country.

"If I see someone out of line, I tell 'em, and if there's any backtalk, I'll fine 'em," she said defiantly. "They know I'm all business. When I say, 'Get in line,' they know they'd better get where they're supposed to be."

She was once described as being like "a lion tamer at a circus matinee." She has also worked with the U.S. Auto Club, World of Outlaws and NASCAR.

Her working day starts about 3 p.m., when she receives the list of entries.

"The first thing we do is pull the qualifying pills, sort of like they do in the lottery," she said. "That determines the order they qualify. If I see that one of them hasn't paid his entry, I tell them, 'No money, no pill.' They either hand me the money or I show them the back gate."

It can be costly. A prepaid entry fee is $75. At the track it's $250.

Tony Stewart has felt her wrath. Before he became Winston Cup champion, driving stock cars, he did something Pratt didn't like in a sprint car.

"I went right up to Tony in no uncertain terms and told him he was out of line, and I was going to fine him. I don't play any favorites. I've known his dad, **Nelson,** as a friend for many years, but that doesn't mean anything when I'm on my job.

"You know, after the race Tony came up, put his arm around me and said, 'Thanks, you taught me a lesson.' Now, every time Tony is around, he looks me up and tells me how much I meant to him.

"The truth is, I love every one of the guys. I love them like they're my boys. But I never let them forget that it's all business out on the track."

After qualifying, Pratt determines the heat lineups and announces them in a high-pitched voice that resonates throughout the infield. She doesn't use the bullhorn anymore. It became obsolete with the roving microphones, but she still keeps one in her truck, just in case.

ROBERT LACHMAN *Los Angeles Times*

CHECKING THEM OUT: *Evelyn Pratt is the pit steward for the Oval Nationals at Perris Auto Speedway this weekend. "They know I'm all business," she said.*

"It's my job to keep things moving," she said. "Once one race is going, I'm lining up the cars for the next one. I have to push, push, push to keep them in line. I don't fool around. My objective is to get the races over on time, and the boys know that if they're not up there, we're going without them."

While all the pushing is going on, she checks each driver for the proper helmet and uniform and each car for the decals it carries for sponsor money.

"I've been doing this since I went to Ascot in 1972 with my wrecker," Pratt said. "We ran a service station in Upland with a wrecker service and [husband] **Bill** had a car he raced there, so I went along with the wrecker and began moving cars around. Next thing you know, they asked me to help officiate and here I am.

"I've been around so long, I worked with a lot of these boys' daddies. I've known **J.J. Yeley** since he was a baby. He calls me 'Mom.' "

Yeley, 27, is the U.S. Auto Club sprint car and Silver Crown champion from Phoenix and is one of the favorites in the Oval Nationals.

Bill Pratt, who has had health problems since retiring in 1992, still fields the red No. 12 car in SCRA races. It is driven by **Greg Bragg** of Visalia and will be in action at Perris.

The Pratts will be doing double duty this weekend. Besides Evelyn's pit work and Bill's managing the team, they will be grand marshals of the Oval Nationals. Bill has had sprint cars longer than any current SCRA car owner, his string of consecutive years as a sprint car owner going back to the 1960s. Among his drivers have been **Rick Goudy**, **Billy Wilkerson**, **Clark Templeman**, **Max Sweeney**, **Tony Simon**, **Steve Ostling** and both of **Parnelli Jones'** racing sons, **PJ** and **Page**.

Up until 2001, on weekends when Winston Cup races were at Phoenix International Raceway, Evelyn would work as pit steward there in the daytime, then hustle to nearby Manzanita Speedway to officiate sprint car races at night.

"I didn't quit because I got tired, I quit because the new regime at NASCAR is so cheap," she said. "They wanted me to work free and they wouldn't even give me a pass for my husband.

"Then they started charging us $300 to park our motor home where I could get to it when I was working. It just wasn't a friendly atmosphere like it once was, so I quit. I miss a lot of the boys, especially **Bill Elliott**."

She even raced, about 40 years ago.

"I drove against other girls," Pratt said. "They called them 'powder puff races' but you can't say that anymore. Once, I finished third against about 10 other girls in a jalopy race at Western Avenue Speedway in Gardena."

Ask Evelyn Pratt how she keeps going at such a pace at 84 and she says, matter-of-factly, "I'm athletic. I was a rassler in high school, up in Aberdeen, Washington. I could always take care of myself. My doctor says I'm stronger today than I was 10 years ago. I'm from good German stock."

Working weekends at races is only part of her routine. Three days a week, she operates a lawn-mowing and tree-trimming business.

"I do it all myself," she said proudly when asked if she had a crew to help her. "Here, look in the back of my station wagon." It was crammed with mowers, trimmers and other tools of the gardening trade.

She was a school crossing guard for a number of years and was named "Outstanding School Guard of El Monte" one year. In her spare time, she crochets afghan robes for her racing friends.

89-year-old rebel with a cause

AGUILA — In front of her stretches a straight strip of miles and miles of U.S. 60 and not much else. Somewhere in the distance is Wickenburg. It seems a long way off when you're walking, but it's nothing, really. Not when you've got thousands of miles to go.

And Dorris Haddock does. The New Hampshire resident is walking across the country, from Pasadena, Calif., to Washington D.C., gathering petitions and drawing attention to the need for campaign-finance reform. She calculates the trip at 3,055 miles. She started after the Rose Parade on New Year's Day; walking 10 miles a day, she hopes to get to D.C. by November.

Oh, one more thing — she's 89 years old. Is she nuts?

"Some of my dear friends have said that," she said last week, laughing. "My family said that. I said, 'Look, I've got 10 great-grandchildren in this world. I want them to come into a democracy that is of the people, by the people and for the people instead of, of the corporation, by the corporation and for the corporation.'

"If one person can do that, I can."

Longtime activist

She's probably right. Whether protesting with her husband to stop nuclear testing in Alaska in the '60s — they lived, for a time, in skin-covered huts near the Bering Strait — or working to stop a major highway from going through Dublin, N.H., where she lives, Haddock has long been an activist. Not a professional one, mind you. Although she's plenty savvy about politics, she doesn't spend her time poring over *Mother Jones* magazine, looking for issues. She just waits for the right one. And then she runs — or in this case, walks — with it.

"I see something that's not right and I say, 'Can one woman do something about this? Let's try.' Sometimes, it works and sometimes, it doesn't. But I keep trying."

The walk is her biggest effort at activism. She thought the feat would draw the most attention to her cause.

Can she make it to D.C.? Even Haddock doesn't know. She began walking 10 miles a day last year to train, said Jim Haddock, her son. Told she might have to sleep outdoors, she pulled a sleeping bag into her front yard and slept there.

"She's always been a rebel," Jim said from the donated van he was driving, a sort of mobile rest stop for his mother (he'll be with her a month before returning home to New Hampshire). "She's an indomitable spirit."

Still, at times her age has shown. Haddock developed a mild case of pneumonia walking through the California desert and had to take a few days off. Her son worries about her, of course. But she doesn't.

"What does it matter to me if something happens to me on the way?" she asked. "That's all right. But if I can just nudge those senators . . . ."

Yoga at 80

When Ruth Lain first began practicing yoga, her health was a disaster. She'd had 11 operations, she housed a 50-year-old ulcer, and chronic asthma had dramatically reduced her lung capacity. She had recently retired from a 30-year job as a schoolteacher in southern Texas and, at 65, she wondered if her life was almost over.

Then she saw Lilias Folan gliding into a forward bend on her PBS morning yoga show. Mesmerized, Lain spent the next few mornings lying in bed, watching Lilias twist and stretch across her TV screen. Finally she told herself, "I should do that."

That was 15 years ago, and now Lain, who just celebrated her 80th birthday, has herself become a beacon for aching bodies. Off her medicines, free of her asthma, ulcer long gone, and weight stabilized, she is a breathing, bending, stretching example of the transformative effects of yoga. "I really impressed my doctor," Lain says. "But more than just my physical health, I am also more alive mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I feel much better today than I ever have in my entire life."

Lain doesn't just do yoga; she lives it. She runs her own studio, called the Yoga Room, out of her house in Corpus Christi and shares her practice with the 70 or so students—ranging in age from 17 to 92—who drive in from all over southern Texas to attend the 16 classes she leads every week.

Although she'd be the last to say it, her students' dedication is nothing compared to the 150 miles Lain drove to study with her first yoga teacher in San Antonio.

Ruth Lain (left) and student in yoga class.

When that teacher moved to New York, Lain resorted to watching Lilias in the morning, studying Iyengar's *Light On Yoga,* and attending workshops in Dallas or Houston whenever possible. "These were the days before instructional videos, so I decided that since I couldn't find a local yoga teacher, I had to become one," Lain recalls. "I hauled in neighbors, relatives, and anyone I thought was open enough to try. Back then, I didn't dare call it yoga. It was 'exercise.' But still people were surprised that this nice little Methodist lady was turning so strange."

Nowadays this unconventional great-grandmother teaches Iyengar yoga, which she has studied, among other places, at Rio Caliente in Mexico and at the Iyengar Institute in San Francisco. She credits its teachers like Mary Dunn, Manouso Manos, Patricia Walden, and Judith Lasater for her strong practice, but claims that Peggy Kelley, her teacher in Austin, is her "rock."

"Sometimes, I can't believe I am calling myself a yoga instructor," Lain muses. "I've practiced mainly on my own, I started teaching too soon, and I work with people who are a lot younger, stronger, more flexible than I am. You know, there aren't many 80-year-olds rushing in to take my yoga classes. But many of my teachers have assured me that I don't have to do every asana perfectly to be a good teacher. People are still asking me to teach them, so I figure I must be doing something right."

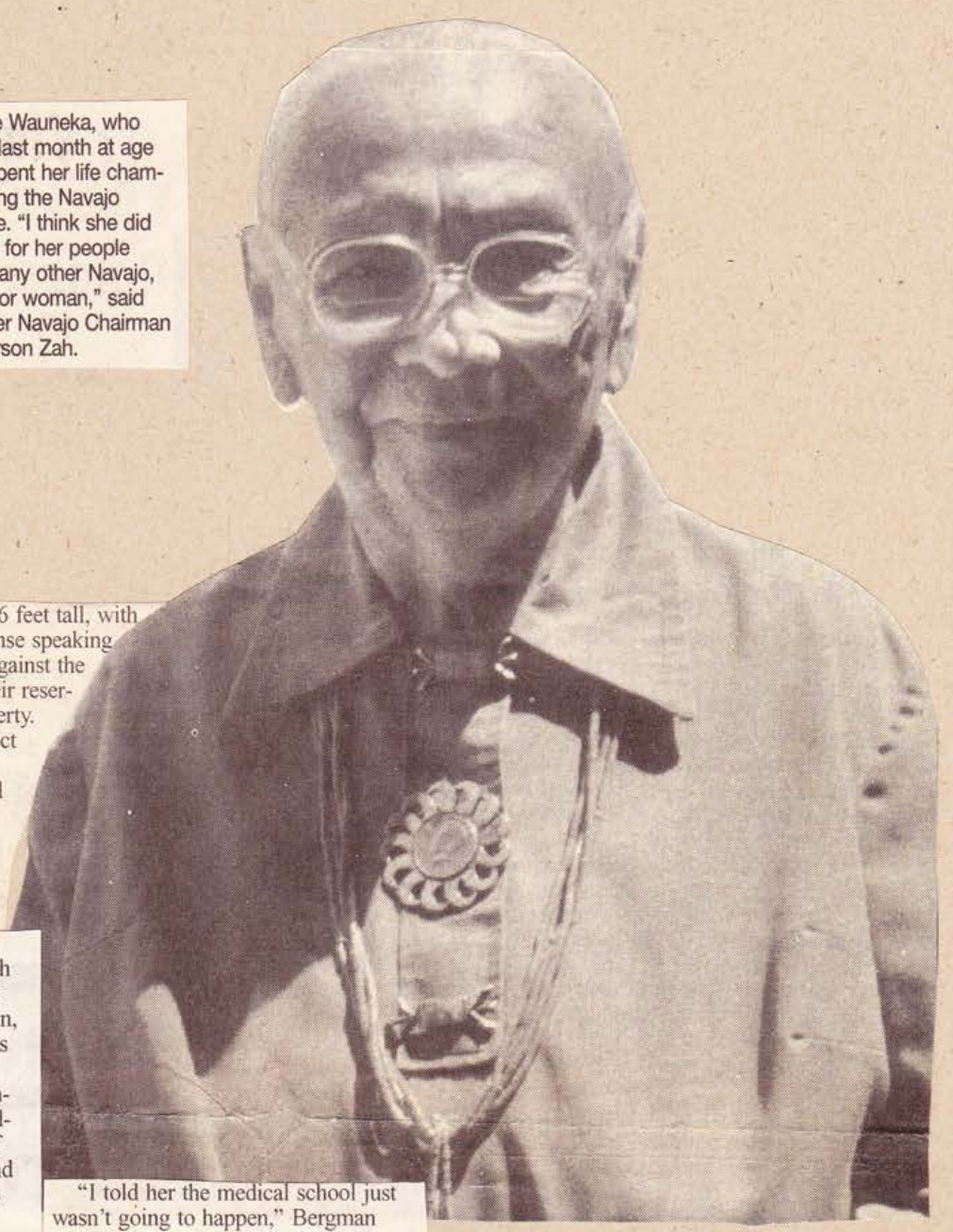
She says developing a yoga community in her home town wasn't easy. "I remember one Sunday, a year or two after I started practicing, when I saw a friend on the church steps. He said, 'Ruth, you really look good, what are you doing?' So I told him about yoga. He looked me square in the eye and asked, 'Do you eat it every day?'"

Lain's biggest challenge, she says, is living life in the present, since it's hard not to wonder what life would have been like if she'd practiced yoga in her youth. "I imagine how much better I would have been back then as a teacher, mother, wife if I had this kind of energy. Then I remember to think, 'No, look where I am now, look how good I feel right this second!' I have found something that gives me great joy, and I know I'll practice yoga till I die."

For information on classes, contact the Yoga Room, 5050 Eider, Corpus Christi, TX 78413; (512) 994–9223. ◆

—Blake More

Annie Wauneka brought modern medicine into harmony with Navajo tradition



Annie Wauneka, who died last month at age 87, spent her life championing the Navajo cause. "I think she did more for her people than any other Navajo, man or woman," said former Navajo Chairman Peterson Zah.

Nearly 6 feet tall, with a serene toughness and a no-nonsense speaking style, she led her people in battle against the dragons of sickness that stalked their reservation of vast beauty and deep poverty.

Wauneka also commanded respect in Washington, where she was a powerful lobbyist for funds to build hospitals, clinics and sanitation projects. Ron Wood, a Navajo executive in the Indian Health Service, was a witness to her Capitol Hill charisma.

"Most of us, when we went to Washington, we'd have to meet with legislative aides," Wood said. "But when Annie Wauneka came to town, senators would cancel appointments to meet with her personally."

Valley psychiatrist Dr. Carl Hammerschlag calls Wauneka "a boundary person, a bridge person, one of those rare individuals who can stand between different cultures and help them bridge their differences."

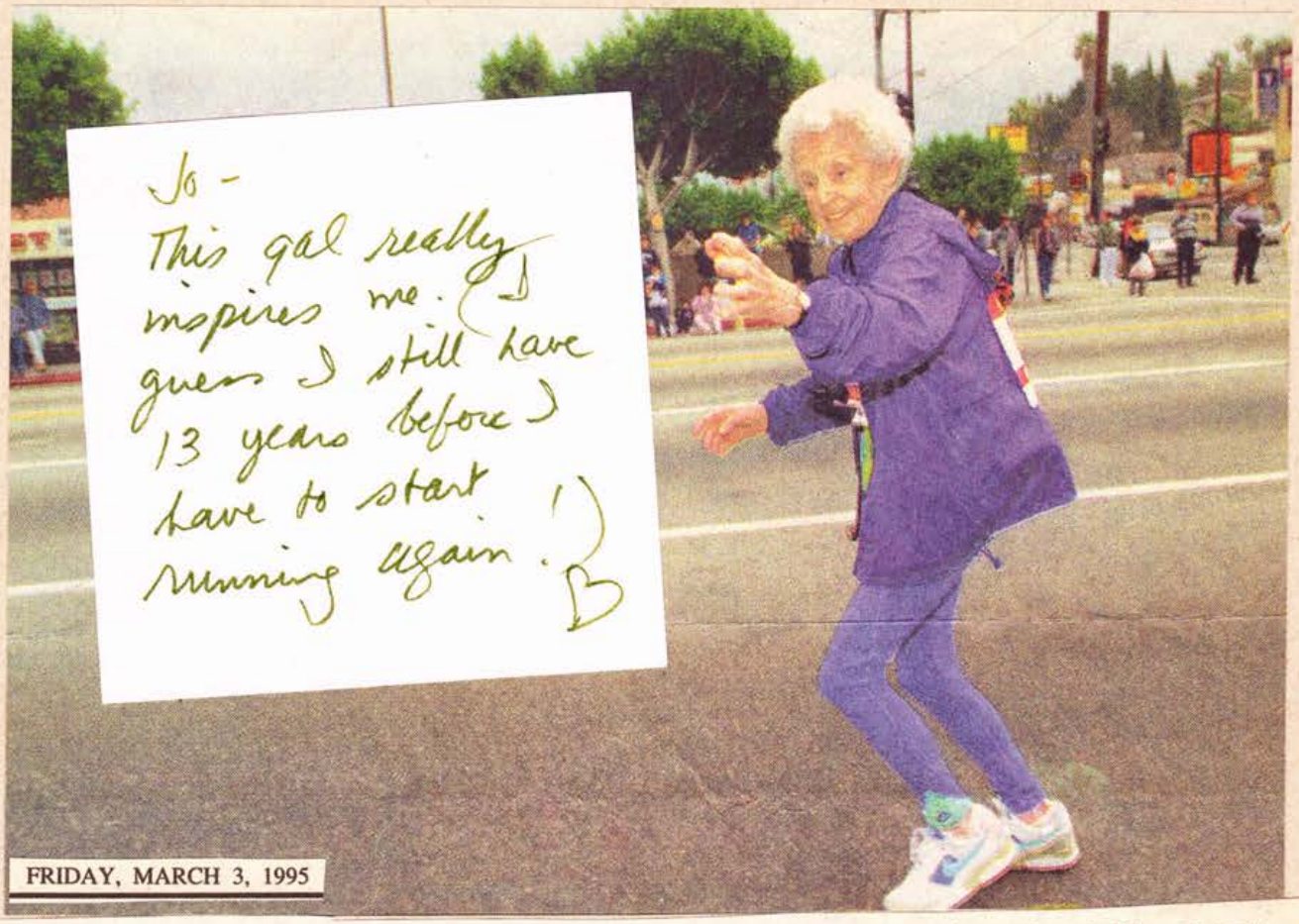
Wauneka served 27 years on the Navajo Nation Council. She received dozens of honors, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom and an honorary doctorate from the University of Arizona.

"I think she was the smartest politician I've ever known," said Robert Bergman, a former Indian Health Service physician on the reservation. Bergman recalled how Wauneka parlayed a failed 1970s bid for a federally funded medical school into money for more pragmatic programs.

"I told her the medical school just wasn't going to happen," Bergman said, citing enormous logistical problems associated with starting a medical school on the reservation.

"She told me, 'Of course I know that, but think what they'll have to give me to make me feel better about not getting it.' "

Wauneka's greatest triumph of persuasion stemmed from her ability to coax her people to accept the white man's concept of disease in their grim confrontation with tuberculosis. In the 1950s TB was striking Navajos at a rate eight times the national average.



FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 1995

At 87, Woman Will Be Running L.A. Marathon for the Ninth Time

By FREDERICK M. MUIR
TIMES STAFF WRITER

At the age of 63, when some people might consider settling into a rocker, Mavis Lingren got out of hers and began running.

That was 24 years ago, and she hasn't stopped running since.

Lingren, now 87, figures to be the oldest and one of the most experienced runners in this year's Los Angeles Marathon.

When she lines up at the starting gate Sunday morning, Lingren will be embarking on the 70th marathon of her career. And though her expected time of about seven hours will be well off her best showing of 4½ hours, Lingren says matter-of-factly, "You get slower as you get older."

Lingren didn't set out to be a star.

In fact, she didn't even set out to be a runner. But after suffering through four bouts of pneumonia in five years, Lingren said to herself, "I've got to get out and get active." She did, and she hasn't had pneumonia or any other serious ailment since.

Lingren started walking around the block in her neighborhood. "It was one mile around and so it was easy to keep tabs. I liked that."

After a while, she began adding a few steps of running. Soon she was covering the mile route in under nine minutes. Then she extended her course to five miles.

Lingren had to learn a few lessons along the way. One was on the need for staying current with sports fashion.

"I was running in a dress," she says. "My daughters saw me one day and said, 'Mom, don't do that. People will think you're running away from home.' "

They got her into a pair of slacks, and eventually into a sweat suit and shorts.

But other passers-by found it hard to believe that a woman her age was running just for the fun of it.

"People would always stop and ask if I needed a ride," Lingren recalls. As she got healthier and slimmer, people took notice. "One man stopped, leaned out his window and said, 'Lady, don't get any thinner,' " says Lingren, who weighs 100 pounds and stands 5 feet 2.

At age 70, she ran her first marathon, the Avenue of the Giants race in Northern California. Then she went to Hawaii and ran the Honolulu Marathon a year later.

With that, she was off and, well, running. She once ran five marathons in four months and went on to win and hold for eight years the world record for women 70 years and older, posting a time of 4 hours, 33 minutes and 5 seconds.

At one point, concerned family members persuaded Lingren to get a medical checkup, to make sure it was safe for her to keep such a rigorous schedule.

Although she was past 70, doctors at Loma Linda University Medical Center in Riverside concluded that she had the health profile of a woman in her 20s.

Lingren, who worked most of her life as a nurse, says she was never particularly athletic, though she adds, "I was always a fast walker. I always wanted to get things done."

Lingren and her husband, Carl, raised their family in Riverside but now split their time between a new home in Orleans, in Northern California, a winter home in Desert Hot Springs and time spent with their three children, eight grandchildren and one great-grandson.

She chalks up her longevity and health to her lifelong vegetarian diet and a "trust in God." She also recommends good shoes, plenty of rest and lots of water when training.

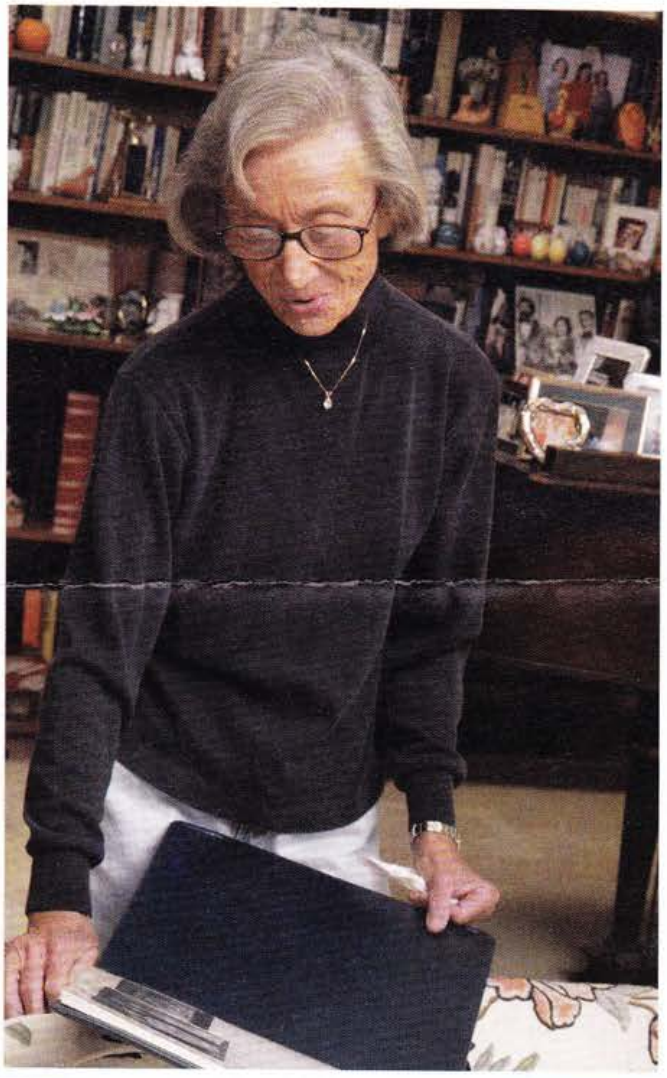
Ann Marcus

She did it her way. And at 82, she's still doing it her way.

A slightly different sort of gal for the file —

Ann always wanted it all: a career as a writer while having a sit-at-the-dinner-table-with-her-husband-and-kids lifestyle.

At 82 she's trim and chic. She's sophisticated on the outside while remaining on the inside a kid, the eternal tomboy. Her house has witnessed close calls, from her own battles with cancer to personal losses—her writer husband, Ellis Marcus, and more recently, the loss of her sister, the beautiful actress-director and legendary acting teacher Tracy Roberts (my subjectivity results from Tracy and I having shared some years of our lives together).



There have been great joys, such as the addition of six grandchildren (from daughter Ellyn and sons John and Steve). Ann Marcus also witnessed an upward career climb as a television writer, such as the premiere in 1976 for *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* [developed by Norman Lear], which she co-created with Gail Parent, Jerry Adelman, and Daniel Gregory Brown and for which she earned an Emmy. Or when she and Ellis created their own show, *L.A.T.E.R.* Or the myriad other shows from sitcoms to soaps to hour dramas and TV movies that Ann worked on as either a creator, producer, or head writer. The list is long and includes *Knots Landing, Forever Fernwood, All That Glitters, Susan Farr, M.D., Falcon Crest, Women at West Point, Days of Our Lives, General Hospital*. Many writers Ann mentored or gave their first writing assignments have passed through her house, such as Diane Frolov (*The Chris Isaak Show*), Merrill Markoe (*Late Night With David Letterman*), Bill and Jo LaMond (*Hart to Hart, Hotel*), Peggy Goldman (*Mary Hartman*), and others.

And Ann has racked up more than 40 years as a WGA member.

Yet it is interesting to note that, while many in the industry move ahead by not offending people and by never rocking the boat, Ann's passion, competitiveness, and sometimes confrontational manner when fighting for whatever she thinks is right has not interfered with a long career. But it was no smooth ride. She has stirred the pot more often than not. A pioneering creative force? Perhaps. A headache? Probably. A bore? Never.

SKY DIVING AT 89

At age 89, jumping off a plane at 12,500 feet may seem extreme to some, but to Corina Leslie it was a dream come true. Leslie, shown gliding through the Valley sky with jump instructor Bill Will, apparently broke a Guinness record as the oldest parachutist in history. Leslie and Will boarded a 12-passenger Queen Air plane, jumped out above Buckeye Municipal Airport and landed perfectly. "It was wonderful," Leslie said Monday. "I'd recommend it for everyone."

After jumping about 12,500 feet from a plane (top photo), 89-year-old Corina Leslie and Bill Will, jump instructor for the Desert Skydiving Center, make a perfect landing. Earlier Monday, with the cameras rolling, Leslie and Will were the center of attention (left) at Buckeye Municipal Airport. "I've wanted to do this for years, ever since I started watching these people jump out of planes and land exactly where they wanted to," Leslie said. The age factor for such feats, the perky Leslie said, is just a relative thing. "I'm really about 39," she said.

80-year-old captures life force in her art

By Gail Tabor
The Arizona Republic

Iza Hahlo doesn't make light of life's complications, but she does make art of them.

When an 80-year-old has endured eight operations, bouts with cancer and a massive stroke only months before that birthday, surely inactivity can be excused.

That type of lazy thinking, however, is foreign to Hahlo's nature.

"The life force is still coming out, in spite of everything," she said. "We all have a duty to make our lives as strong and as good as possible. To heck with the stroke. I came out of it, and that's what counts."

This fight for life, a battle Hahlo has been waging for several years, runs through the 50 paintings that will be in the Scottsdale artist's show April 14-29 at the Art Cellar, 7171 Main St. in Scottsdale.

"The motif starts with the beginning of life, the embryo," she said, "moving on to the family, then into the bloom and the flourishing. The enjoyment of life is going through it all. These are my emotional paintings, done when I was full of pain. Life comes out of pain."

One year ago, Hahlo exhibited a collection of pastels in Sedona titled *Life Goes On.* That was to mark her recovery from operations on her hips, legs and back. But when she was felled by the stroke in October, doctors weren't sure whether her life would go on as before.

They had not reckoned with Hahlo's strong will. Even before she left the hospital, she was sculpting with modeling clay. And every one of the paintings in the *Vital Force* show has been done since she arrived home from the hospital Dec. 29.

"I'm very stubborn," she said. "I have willpower and self-discipline. My father was very strict, and I guess I still have that in my system. When I said (I would have) 50 paintings (in the show), that was it. The show will be different. It touches human emotions, not just one theme or one technique."

"I think I was the first hippie," Hahlo said. "I ran away from home when I was 17 because I wanted to prove I could be something besides a housewife."

In Vienna, Hahlo went into stage design and traveled throughout Europe. She moved to Paris, where she painted murals on restaurant walls in exchange for meals (she became a vegetarian that way), and came to the United States in 1936. Hitler's ideas frightened her, and she figured it was best to get out of the area before things got worse. Later, after Nazis burned her father's furniture factory, she got them out of Germany, also.

In America, Hahlo discovered the stage designers' union was closed to newcomers, especially women. She took up the art of window display, then moved on to dress and hat design.

"I'm really a designer/painter," she said. "I love to design — the frames, my tables — I love form and color."

Hahlo moved to Arizona in 1972 and had her own studio gallery on Second Street in Scottsdale. She gave it up because it required working about 20 hours a day. Fourteen years ago, she bought her home, where she also has a studio. She got interested in cactuses, dug up all the grass and planted more than 300 varieties of cactus in the front and back yards.

"I love plants, I love animals, I love nature, I love everything," she said. "People always ask me why I'm so happy. It's because I've seen the other side. We appreciate the good times much more if (we) have the painful time.

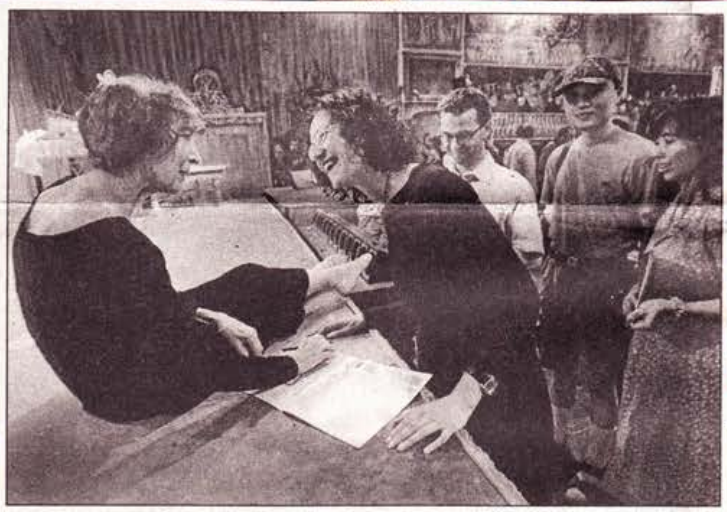
"It's the old philosophy: die to live. We have to plunge down to rise back up. We wouldn't have the strength to fight otherwise."

Hahlo knows how to fight. When she first started the paintings for this show, she could barely hold a brush. She still can't do large paintings, but vows "I'll do them again." Painting from a wheelchair isn't that easy, but she perseveres.

Turning 80 on March 26 would be considered a milestone by many people, but Hahlo pooh-poohs that idea.

"It's nothing to be 80," she said. "My father (lived until) 94, and until he was 92, he was still hammering and making bookshelves. I have more young friends than old friends. I feel like I'm on top of a mountain looking down — I have a better perspective (on life) than when I was living in the middle of it.

"I love life. Yes, the pain was there. But it's over. It's time to look ahead."



DAMON WINTER *Los Angeles Times*

INTERACTION: *After every performance, Becket returns to the stage and meets with almost every member of the audience, signing autographs and posing for pictures late into the evening.*

A Desert Flower Still Blooms on Her Stage

After the death of her longtime 'soul mate,' ballerina, 80, continues the dance.

By ASHLEY POWERS
Times Staff Writer

DEATH VALLEY JUNCTION, Calif. — Marta Becket, the ballerina, glanced toward stage left, where a red sequined dress and boa drooped from hangers. The clown who wore them was gone.

Thomas J. Willett, Becket's stage partner for two decades, died last month after suffering a stroke. The burly man with Einstein hair, who clomped on stage in an oversized tutu he called a "four-four," was 76.

Becket, a spindly woman who once pirouetted in the Radio City Music Hall corps, has decided to keep dancing. She seeks solace in her desert opera house under stage lights that beam from coffee cans.

Becket will glide through this season's last performance of "Masquerade" tonight at her Amargosa Opera House, a lonesome town center for Becket and Willett, who were the Junction's only residents. Its closest neighbors, seven miles away in Nevada, are a casino, grocery store and gas station where the pumps sometimes run dry.

Becket, 80, transformed the opera house nearly four decades ago, after a flat tire left her and her husband stranded in the tiny desert hamlet.

In the harsh noon sun, Becket became enraptured with the U-shaped white colonnade hall built for Pacific Coast Borax Co. workers in view of the Charleston Mountains. The opera house, called Corkill Hall, was the town's social center until the 1940s, when it was abandoned to dust and ghosts.

"I had found my place in the sun," Becket writes in her show program.

At first, she creaked open the doors three nights a week, and occasionally locals wandered into the one-story structure whose white paint peels like sunburned skin. Sometimes she danced only for the empty wooden benches.

The houselights went black.

Becket kicked and posed with grace, though her hands sometimes trembled. Her dark hair was pinned back, her eyes rimmed with black, her lips reddened, and when Becket stretched onto her tiptoes in point shoes, the audience gasped. She danced for an hour as a country girl, a ladies' man and Esmeralda, who warbles in a thin voice:

I fell in love at the masquerade

Elizabeth 'Bunny' Herring will celebrate her 80th birthday by revisiting her youth as a circus acrobat.

By P.J. Huffstutter
Times Staff Writer

ST. LOUIS — For many octogenarians, looking good in a stoplight-red acrobat leotard and fishnet stockings would be cause for celebration.

For Elizabeth "Bunny" Herring, that's the easy part.

Flying through the air more than 10 feet above a concrete floor while hanging onto a trapeze by the strength of a single frail ankle — now that's a bit trickier.

A former debutante whose family tree traces back to St. Louis' founding fathers, Herring shocked her parents in 1946 when she ran away from her ballet training in New York to join the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

For nearly three years, she rode horses bareback under the big top, lay still on the ground as elephants placed their feet on her face, and slipped into glitzy costumes to dance between acts as a "ballet broad."

"Even after I left in 1949 to get married and raise a family, I always missed the life," said Herring, a widow and grandmother of five. "I've always wanted to go back."

On Saturday night, Herring will get her wish.

She will celebrate her 80th birthday at the St. Louis City Museum, which houses a reproduction of a circus tent. There, above the crowd, she will climb into a lyra trapeze- a large aerial hoop — and spin and twirl through the air to Verdi's "Rigoletto."

Without a safety net.

tic/executive director. "In the ring, Bunny isn't an old woman. She's an amazing performer."

On a recent weekday, Herring walks up two flights of stairs at the City Museum, greets acrobat trainer Donald Hughes and enters the circus space.

Pink twinkle lights crisscross the ceiling, bathing the room in a soft, rosy glow. Purple curtains sparkle at one end of the performance ring, hiding buckets overflowing with juggling pins and balancing balls. Aerial bars hang at different heights.

Herring doesn't look like a thrill-seeker. Her 5-foot-4, 125-pound frame is birdlike. She is hard of hearing, so she reads lips to help fill in what her hearing aid can't catch.

She's also remarkably flexible. As Herring stands beneath the lyra, she pulls her right knee up until it touches her chest. Then she straightens her leg — stretching her toes skyward.

Warmed up and ready to fly, she gets a boost to the bar from Hughes.

Vivaldi's opera fills the room as Herring's body quickly flows from one contortion to the next. She arches backward, then hangs parallel to the floor, balancing precariously on the thin bar. She hooks her ankle into a loop of rope and leans backward.

The music soared. And for two minutes and 11 seconds, so did Herring. Each toe-point, each arch of her body, was perfect.

Herring dismounted and bowed to a small crowd. With the sound of their applause filling her ears, she walked out of the ring and flung aside the curtains with a victorious flourish.

[HigherCalling]

Healing Arts

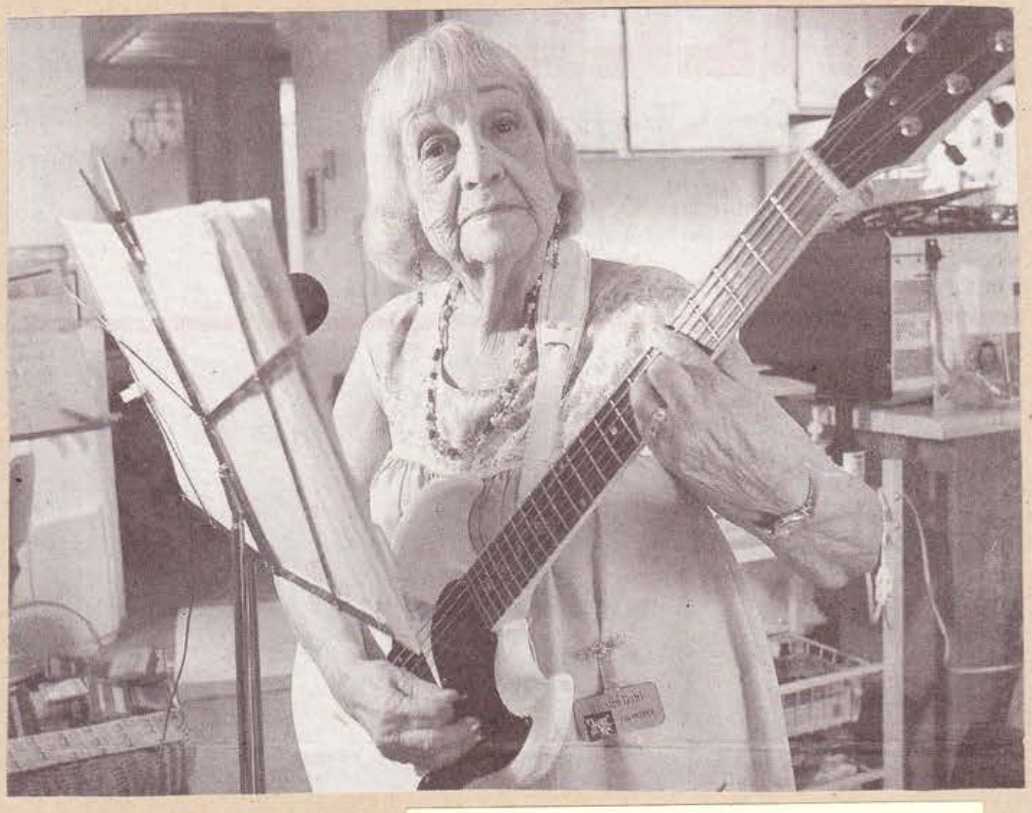
Lolo Sarnoff knows that painting can't cure people with Alzheimer's disease, but it stimulates their minds and, she says, "makes them happier." That's why, in 1988, the now-89-year-old sculptor founded Arts for the Aging, a Bethesda, Md.-based nonprofit that each month brings 85 arts workshops to 51 senior centers in and around the nation's capital. The group retains 18 artists to teach painting, drawing, sculpture, music and dance to people over age 65. The organization's annual $300,000 budget comes from grants, fundraisers and personal requests Sarnoff makes "to friends, to enemies, to anyone I can think of." And she still makes art of her own. "I always seem to find the time," she says.

—BRAD McKEE

Age doesn't slow this songwriter

Peoria resident, 86, performs, writes hundreds of songs

By Angela Cara Pancrazio
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC



It's still hot. The air-conditioning in Noralee Dahl's '76 Dodge is still out.

And she doesn't have the money to fix it.

When the hot weather lifts, she can get back to her gigs: hauling her guitars, her amplifier and microphones to play at dozens of senior centers and care homes, often entertaining people younger than she is.

It's music that keeps the 86-year-old's spirits from wilting while she waits for the cooler season.

Go to **videos.azcentral.com** to view a video of Noralee Dahl performing.

It was music that sustained her through husbands who didn't know how to be true and drank too much.

Music is Noralee Dahl's life.

Dahl, of Peoria, has written more than 300 songs. Among them, two recorded singles and two ballads titled *Beautiful Arizona* and *Phoenix*.

Please excuse her if her two-bedroom apartment isn't so tidy. She has taken over the living room with a maze of musical equipment.

It is here, surrounded by family pictures in heart-shaped frames, the American flag, notes to herself clipped by clothespins to bookshelves, that she sways and sings: "...What can match our own Painted Desert? Picasso's great works cannot touch! Beautiful *Arizohohohnah* ..."

Rather than use a capo to fudge on chords, Dahl presses her fingers into the frets, producing flawless bar chords.

To see this octogenarian, a little under 4-foot-11 inches, standing with an electric guitar slung around her shoulder, delivering licks reminiscent of Patsy Cline, may seem like an anomaly.

But she's far from that, says Kathleen Waldron, of the Arizona State University gerontology department. She says Dahl depicts what aging looks like these days.

"People cling to the ideas in their mind of the stereotypes of people in their 80s in the rocking chair," Waldron says. "She represents the future and the present."

In the 1960s she was really an anomaly, Waldron says, "when playing an electric guitar was associated with young rebellious White males." Back then, Dahl was paid to sing, and one of her songs, *You've Got the Wrong Bottle*, was recorded by another artist and pressed into a 45 by Capitol Records.

"It's about a drinkin' man," Dahl says, before singing the lyrics.

"You're such a mama's baby who just cries, when you don't get your way from telling lies."

"That's the gist of it. It was the Top 10 in Fresno, Calif. for two weeks," she says.

"It didn't make me rich. It was just something that had my name on there."

She wrote the song sitting in a coffee shop, about ready to eat lunch.

"All of a sudden this whole song wrote itself on a paper napkin."

That's how most of her songs were written.

They'd seep into her dreams or come while changing her baby's diapers, scrubbing the floor, cooking dinner and washing dishes.

The melody would always follow; even though she doesn't know one note from another, she was much like her father, who could play a song on the piano after hearing it hummed.

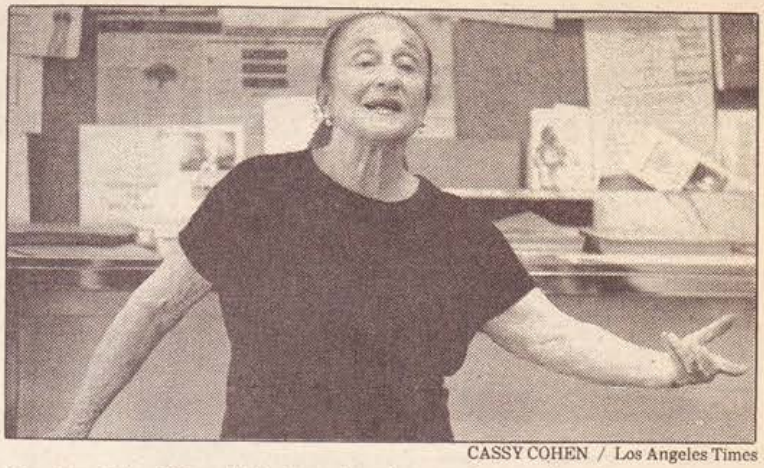
Ah, these spunky women. We can only hope....!
for the file
"with love"
See you soon. ☺
Jo

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC
9/7/06

Ballet Keeps Her On Her Toes

■ Dance instructor Iris Merrick shares a lifelong passion—for 20 cents a lesson.

By CHRISTINA V. GODBEY
TIMES STAFF WRITER



CASSY COHEN / Los Angeles Times

Iris Merrick, 82, attributes her longevity to the joy of dance.

Dance is Iris Merrick's life. What's remarkable about that is that her life is 82 years long. And Merrick has no plans to hang up her ballet slippers.

She is in her fifth year of teaching weekly dance classes at a senior center for 20 cents a lesson.

"I love teaching," she said. "I get such a kick out of it when I see someone improve."

Born to Russian immigrants, Merrick was reared in a small Wisconsin town. When she was a youngster, an aunt took her to study ballet in New York City, where she was accepted into the prestigious School of American Ballet. There, she studied with Michel Fokine, a renowned ballet master and choreographer.

Because money was short, Merrick began performing and touring professionally at the age of 16. She worked on anything in which she could dance, including musicals, theater and comedy shows on Broadway. Along the way, she learned how to select music, choreograph, direct, produce and design costumes. It was that experience, she said, that planted a seed in her mind about someday opening a ballet school.

She married and had four children, all the while continuing to dance. In 1951, she founded the Westchester Ballet Company in Tarrytown, N.Y.

"I started the ballet school so they [children] would know what it is like in the theater," she said. "I was the first in America to start a regional ballet company, in 1951." For some 30 years, she directed the classical ballet school.

She retired in 1984 and moved to Los Angeles to spend more time with her children and grandchildren. But retirement didn't last long.

"I was taking a folk-dancing class when someone asked if I wanted to teach again, and I thought, why not," she said.

Merrick began teaching weekly classes at the Felicia Mahood Senior Center and Older Adult Services and Information System five years ago. Students there learn classical dance and make new friends. Merrick has her classes listen to selections such as the "Nutcracker" and "Swan Lake" in addition to their work at the barre. She tells students that ballet is a form of exercise that develops the body to its highest potential and that anyone at any age can do it.

Merrick, who is a survivor of lung cancer, attributes her longevity to the power of positive thinking and the joy ballet has brought to her life.

"I am an optimistic person and grateful for what I have," she said. "My feeling is that if something isn't life-threatening, you are just wasting your time worrying about it."

Octogenarian a Bright Angel inspiration to fellow Grand Canyon travelers

Hiker, 89, keeps fit on trails in wilds

By Carol Sowers
Staff writer

She looks fragile, barely 5 feet tall and 97 pounds. Blond hair carefully cut and curled, a tasteful trace of eye shadow on her eyelids, stylish red-framed glasses.

But in mid-December, Garnett Beckman completed her 13th or 14th (who's counting?) round-trip, two-day hike from the South Rim of the Grand Canyon to Phantom Ranch, a settlement of rustic cabins near the Colorado River at the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

Garnett will be 90 in April.

Suzanne Starr/Staff photographer

Grand Canyon hiker Garnett Beckman, 89, says she exercises because "it is insurance for the quality of life, never mind the quantity of years."

She exercises because "it is insurance for the quality of life, never mind the quantity of years."

Garnett, with her strong, muscular legs and agile mind, clearly has refined the process of growing older.

Twenty-three years after she retired from teaching and another job as a career coordinator, Garnett's life is delightfully crowded.

Every year, she and her friends hike through Madera Canyon at the base of Mount Wrightson, near Tucson.

Her adventures have taken her far beyond Arizona. In 1990, she trekked through the Andes in Ecuador, and three years later, she rafted the white water of the Mendenhall River near Juneau, Alaska, savoring the icy splash of the rapids on her face.

Garnett's life is so busy that sometimes, she has to skip one of her thrice-weekly trips up her beloved Squaw Peak. She makes up for it by climbing up and down the 64 stairs of her condominium eight to 10 times.

She began hiking the 1.2-mile Squaw Peak trail when she was 64, long before it became a trendy site for urbanites in search of fitness. Many hikers are glad she's a regular there.

That kind of determination leaves her little time for details, such as visiting her doctor. She sends him a post card from Phantom Ranch every year, so he'll "remember who I am."

She acknowledges a little "old-fashioned rheumatism" in her back, but said she treats it herself with a half-hour of stretching each morning.

"I just don't worry about it," she said.

Garnett isn't much of a worrier about anything.

If she were, she would never have made her first trip into the Grand Canyon, when she was 75 years old.

She went alone.

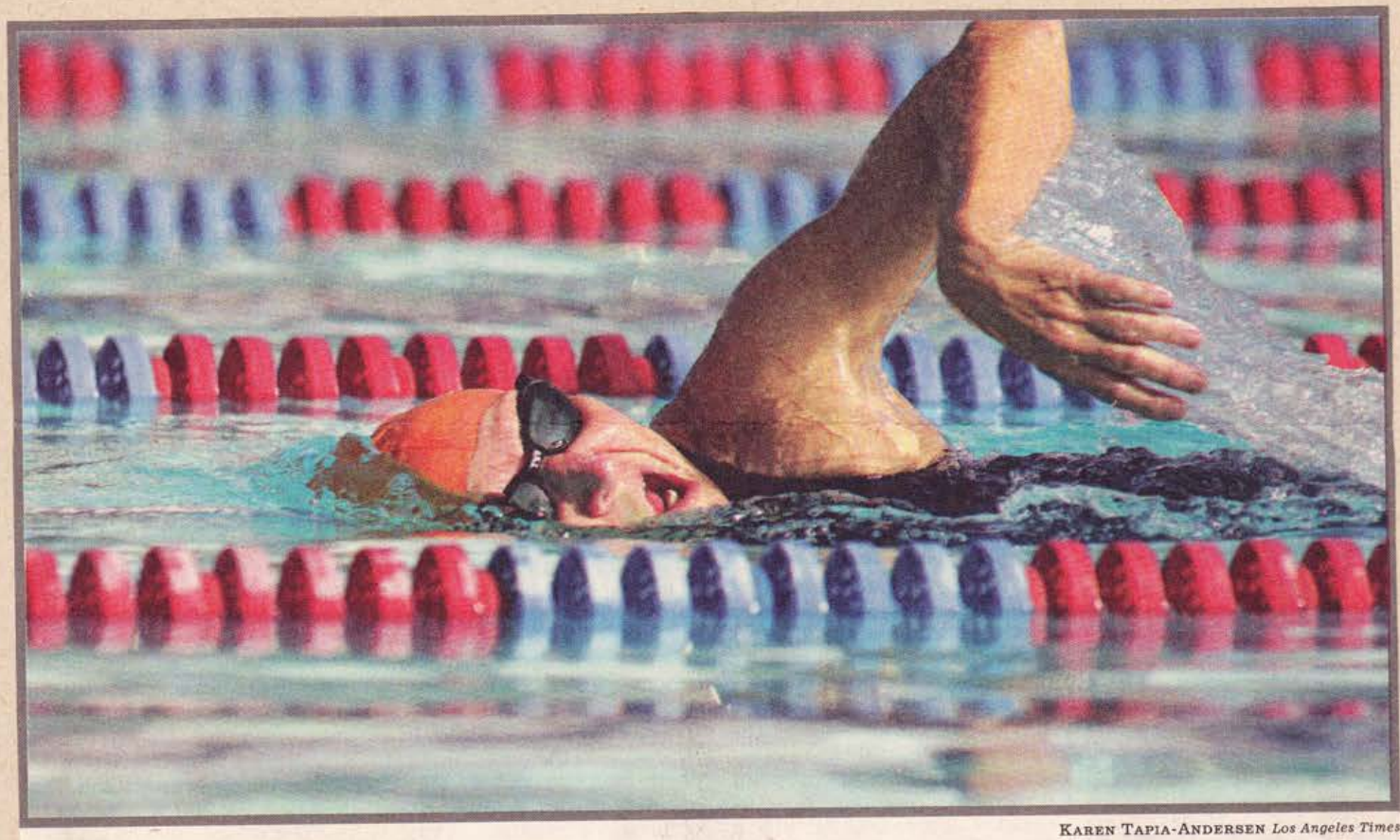
Fellow hikers on Squaw Peak were reluctant to invite the senior hiker to accompany them.

"They didn't want a little old lady with them, and I didn't blame them," she said.

So in Phoenix, Garnett boarded a Greyhound bus bound for the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. The next morning, she strapped a small pack on her back and strode down the Bright Angel Trail to Phantom Ranch. She came out the next day.

"I sang all the old songs," she recalled. "*It's a Long Way to Tipperary, She'll Be Coming Around the Mountain.*

In early October 1993, at age 86, she was working "right along with the kids" as a hostess at Grand Canyon Lodge on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Well-trained after other hikes near the North Rim, she decided to hike the 23 miles to the South Rim.



KAREN TAPIA-ANDERSEN *Los Angeles Times*

LATE BLOOMER: *Rita Simonton says she was a mediocre swimmer in high school, but she rose to be a world champion in her 80s.*

IT started in the 1920s, in a little brook under a bridge in Providence, R.I. That's where a young Rita Gadbois, with a new pair of inflatable water wings from her mother, learned how to swim, going back and forth. Her dad, a gemstone-setter, would challenge her to swim more and more laps — and then go down and beat her.

"My dad wouldn't let me beat him in Tiddlywinks," she says.

But she loved that. It helped her develop a passion for athletics and competition that led her to marriage, made her a world champion, and, if all goes as planned, could whisk her past the century mark to a record she hopes will never be broken.

Now Rita Simonton, she wouldn't have predicted any of this back in 1935, when she finished her high school swim team career with little distinction ("I wasn't any good," she says). But she impressed the local Amateur Athletic Union team enough to warrant an invitation, and proved her AAU coaches right by winning the Rhode Island state low-board diving championships.

When poverty wrecked her college plans ("no one was buying jewelry in the Depression," she says), she became a bookkeeper, filling her spare time with hikes on the Appalachian Trail, bike trips with American Youth Hostels, and nighttime swim practices.

In 1940, after a planned vacation to see the Helsinki Olympics was canceled by the Soviet Union's invasion of Finland, she switched to a four-week bike trip in Mexico. There, she met her future husband, UC Berkeley medical student Jack Simonton. They married in 1944. The rapid arrival of two children and the lack of a car shelved her athletic pursuits for nearly two decades.

Living in San Pedro in 1962, the radiologist's wife read an article in the Los Angeles Times about an upcoming Masters swim meet near the Coliseum. "I've always been competitive, and I just had to do this," she said. But several weeks of determined practice at a nearby hotel pool wasn't enough.

"I got beat," she said. "But that event rekindled my fire. I was 53. I set a goal of victory at the Senior Olympics."

That would take a while. Despite placing third in the breaststroke in a local Santa Monica meet within a year, Simonton wasn't close to national caliber. But relentless improvement and age-group attrition helped her cause. She also bought her first car, a yellow Pontiac LeMans with a black vinyl top, which allowed her to travel to meets.

"By 65 or 70, there aren't too many competitors, and I was getting, as I like to say, 'less slower.' I was ready to start winning."

And she did, taking her first national title at 65. Today, she holds the short-course (25-meter pool) freestyle world records in the 85-to-89 age group in the 100, 200, 400, 800 and 1,500 meters and the 100-meter individual medley, with more in similar long course (50-meter pool) events. All were set in 2003, when the then-84-year-old was named "Swimmer of the Year" by Swim Magazine and made the cover of Masters Swim in July 2004, as she was winning five gold medals in Italy at the 2004 World Championships.

Now a Masters Hall of Famer, Simonton combines a rigorous training schedule (swimming 1¼ miles a day four times a week with two gym sessions of Pilates and weights) with a "kinda fussy" diet — eight servings of fruit and vegetables a day, mainly bananas, blueberries, raspberries, tomatoes and spinach. She eats no white bread or fried food, only meat that's broiled. She takes 81 milligrams of aspirin a day to help prevent clogging of the arteries. "I don't get enough sleep. I'm trying to get eight hours, but I read too much," she says.

Simonton is so flexible that she can bend over and put her palms flat on the ground, and so healthy that she hasn't had a cold in three years. But life's not perfect. "I have arthritis all over — especially in hands, knees and shoulders." The arthritis has stooped her back somewhat and long ago forced her to give up running and skiing, which she'd begun at age 45 with Jack and found "exhilarating." But since her doctors tell her that a non-impact exercise like swimming may help relieve the problem, she trains harder than ever.

A widow since 1991, Simonton's mantra is "Keep busy, keep learning." She loves birdwatching — locally at the Bolsa Chica wetlands and as far afield as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in the Canadian Atlantic. She belongs to a once-a-month French club ("I'm losing my tenses") and always takes a history or literature class at Golden West College near her Huntington Harbor home. Besides keeping her mind active, that lets her use the school's pool for free.

Her advice on aging boils down to "Don't dread it, revel in it."

"Oh, I look forward to getting older — especially 100," she says. "After all, look at the times." She points to the record book, which shows that a younger woman from Santa Clara is erasing all her records in the lower age groups.

So Simonton has no choice but to keep setting new ones. She especially has her eye on the 50-meter freestyle for the 100-plus age group, set by an Australian woman with a time of 5:10.84.

"Five minutes to go one length of the pool?" Simonton says. "I could do that with one hand! But I've got to get through my 90s first."

LA Times 3-26-07

Associated Press

Maryetta Evans, 86, executed a perfect scissors split before she was helped back to her feet during a performance of the Fabulous Palm Springs Follies.

Showgirls Are Seniors In Palm Springs

Follies grosses $10 million a year

By Deborah Hastings
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PALM SPRINGS

Onstage, 86-year-old Maryetta Evans has fallen and she can't get up.

So two tuxedoed men gently lift her from a perfectly executed scissors split and deposit her in a wheelchair, from which she resumes tap-dancing.

Evans doesn't really need the chair. It's just a prop in a hilarious dance number involving walkers, canes and crutches. She did need help, though, getting off the floor.

This is the Palm Springs Follies – an aging chorus line of former showgirls and male hoofers that is part shtick, part extravaganza and part minor miracle.

It has attracted a large following. Nearly every show of its nine-month season sells out. Annual gross ticket sales top $10 million.

The dancers must be at least 50. Most of the women are in their 60s and 70s, with shapely gams, statuesque posture – and wrinkles.

They do 232 shows a year, most twice a day. Each performance is three hours, with some 20 costume changes, almost as many wigs, a dog show, a ventriloquist and guest stars including song-and-dance men Donald O'Connor and Howard Keel.

A Smashing Success

They come in buses from Arizona, San Diego and points between. They arrive in wheelchairs, pushing walkers and leaning on canes. "Sometimes it looks like the procession to Lourdes," whispered a theater employee just before the curtain rose at a recent matinee.

The audience stands during the last scene, an extravaganza that runs a patriotic gamut from "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" to "The Star-Spangled Banner." It applauds wildly for Bob Moore and His Amazing Mongrels, all saved from the pound and trained to jump through hoops and walk tightropes.

It is an audience that knows every word of "Paper Doll" and sings each one with 84-year-old Donald Mills, the sole surviving Mills brother.

At the end of every show, the cast stands in the lobby, shaking hands.

"Unbelievable! Unbelievable!" an older woman gushes to Mills. "I just want to take you home."

Later, backstage, 75-year-old Dorothy Kloss becomes serious amid the dancers' ribald laughter.

After years away from the spotlight, "we didn't feel glamorous anymore," she said.

"But I think we've all dropped 15 years just being in the Follies. All of a sudden we started going shopping and doing something with our hair."

MONDAY, JUNE 21, 1999 LA TIMES

CAROLYN COLE *Los Angeles Times*

BELLA LEWITZKY

To her dancers and supporters, Lewitzky was "an extraordinary and rare role model, a powerful woman who was every bit as strong as the men in society," said Loretta Livingston, one of the most prominent Lewitzky company members and an acclaimed director of her own locally based ensemble.

The dance company Lewitzky formed in 1966 toured to critical acclaim in 43 states and 20 countries.

She lived her life as if it were a test of her principles and, in the process, took the legacy of her mentor, innovative Los Angeles choreographer Lester tion.

Lewitzky was born Jan. 13, 1916, in Los Angeles and spent her childhood with her parents and older sister in a utopian colony in the Mojave Desert and on a ranch in San Bernardino.

She moved to Los Angeles in her early teens and studied ballet briefly.

But at age 18 she surrendered to the lure of modern dance when she enrolled in a class given by Horton at the Norma Gould Studio.

"It was wild and wonderful," she recalled decades later.

In less than three years, she became the leading dancer in the Horton Dance Group. Writing of early performances, dance historian Margaret Lloyd described her as "a small girl with heavy, dark hair and big eyes, a dancer of quality from the outset."

In 1940, local dance critic Dorathi Bock Pierre wrote that "she has it in her power to create an immortal place for herself among the great American dancers."

That year, Lewitzky married Newell Taylor Reynolds, an architect and fellow Horton dancer.

Her prowess as a teacher grew and, in 1946, she cofounded the seminal Dance Theatre (with Horton, Reynolds and William Bowne) in a reconditioned store on Melrose Avenue.

She also earned critical raves throughout this period for her strength and intensity as a dancer.

Growing artistic and personal differences caused her to leave Horton and, in 1951, found Dance Associates, a school and company that lasted until 1955, when her daughter was born.

Her new role as a mother led Lewitzky to focus on educational activities that had long interested her, including teaching residencies across the country and abroad as well as periods of employment at USC, the Idyllwild School of the Arts and the California Institute for the Arts, where she served as the first dean of dance.

She made a belated New York debut at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1971 with her Bella Lewitzky Dance Company.

Reviewing her performance in the New York Times, critic Clive Barnes called her "one of America's great modern dancers."

She retired as a performer seven years later at age 62.

As a choreographer, Lewitzky forsook the narrative and ethnic emphases of the Horton repertory for painterly movement compositions that explored the drama she found in the interaction of her dancers and in the division of the stage space.

"Even when they dabble in illusion and abstraction," her works "appeal, always vehemently and often poignantly, to the emotions," wrote Los Angeles Times critic Martin Bernheimer in 1982.

"Creative, progressive, glamorous dance doesn't always have to be imported from Brussels or Amsterdam or New York. It can flourish in our own frontyard," he wrote.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Lewitzky was in great demand as a teacher and speaker, and in the period after retiring from dancing she served on various art boards and the NEA's dance panel.

However, her uncompromising, lifelong stand on freedom of expression more than once led to conflict with the U.S. government.

In 1951, she was subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee to answer questions about possible communist activities in the art world.

"I'm a dancer, not a singer," she replied defiantly.

Forty years later, she successfully sued the NEA over the anti-obscenity clause written into grant contracts, arguing that although she had never choreographed anything that could be seen as obscene, she and others might want to do so in the future and ought to have the right.

At 88, Aileen's Still a Champ

WHEN THE OFFICIALS called in 1984 to see if Aileen Riggin Soule—a swimming star at the 1920 and 1924 Olympics—could attend the '84 Games, they asked if she could still walk. They clearly had not done their homework: Aileen, who was then 78 and still swimming (and, yes, still walking), would go on to set six world records for swimmers in her age group in 1991.

Today, at 88, Aileen is believed to be America's oldest living Olympic gold medal-winner. Her Olympic experience started young: As Aileen Riggin, she won the three-meter dive at the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium, when she was 14. Then, at the Paris Olympics in 1924, she captured both a silver medal in diving and a bronze in the backstroke.

"The 1920 Olympics were the first where the U.S. swim team sent women to compete," said Aileen, who was given her medal by King Albert of Belgium. "They didn't start having awards ceremonies with the anthems being played until the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles."

When she got home, Aileen found that she was famous. "They made a fuss over all the athletes," she recalled, "especially the women. They had a big parade for us in New York and a banquet at the Waldorf-Astoria." After the 1924 Games, she married Dr. Dwight D. Young. "He was injured in World War II and eventually passed away," said Aileen. "I got remarried [to Howard Soule], and all this time I continued to swim for exercise."

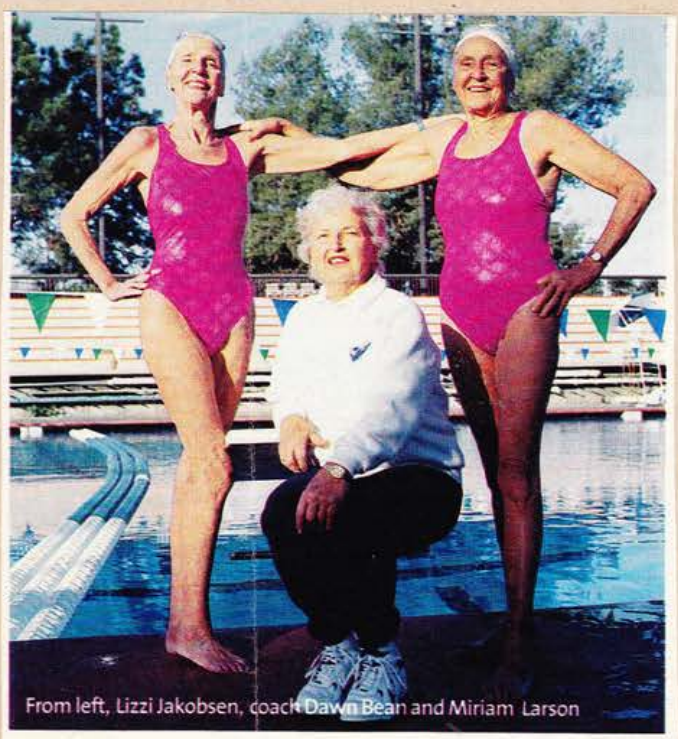
"I live in Hawaii," she went on, "and I go down to the ocean on most days and swim a quarter to a half of a mile. I also try to stretch every day. Friends of mine in Hawaii were competing in World Masters swimming and took me over to a pool, and I competed. That's how I started."

Currently in the 85-89 age group in World Masters swimming, Aileen holds six world records in freestyle and backstroke sprints. She's a bit concerned about her records, however. "There are a couple of younger girls," she said, "who are going to be 85 next year and who are going to be tough competition for me."

Any diet secrets? Aileen said she normally has cereal with low-fat milk and fruit in the morning, soup and salad for lunch, and fish and a glass of wine for dinner. She also likes chicken.

Aileen Riggin Soule has been invited to the Olympics in Atlanta next year as a guest of honor. With six world records in her pocket, it seems unlikely that anyone will ask if she can still walk.

Michael O'Shea, Ph.D., is founder and chairman of Sports Training Institute.



From left, Lizzi Jakobsen, coach Dawn Bean and Miriam Larson

Swimming in a Fountain of Youth

Miriam Larson hasn't forgotten losing swim meets to Esther Williams at the Pasadena Athletic Club during high school, a competitive spirit that continues to this day. Williams may have gone on to fame as a mermaid of the silver screen, but Larson hasn't exactly been treading water.

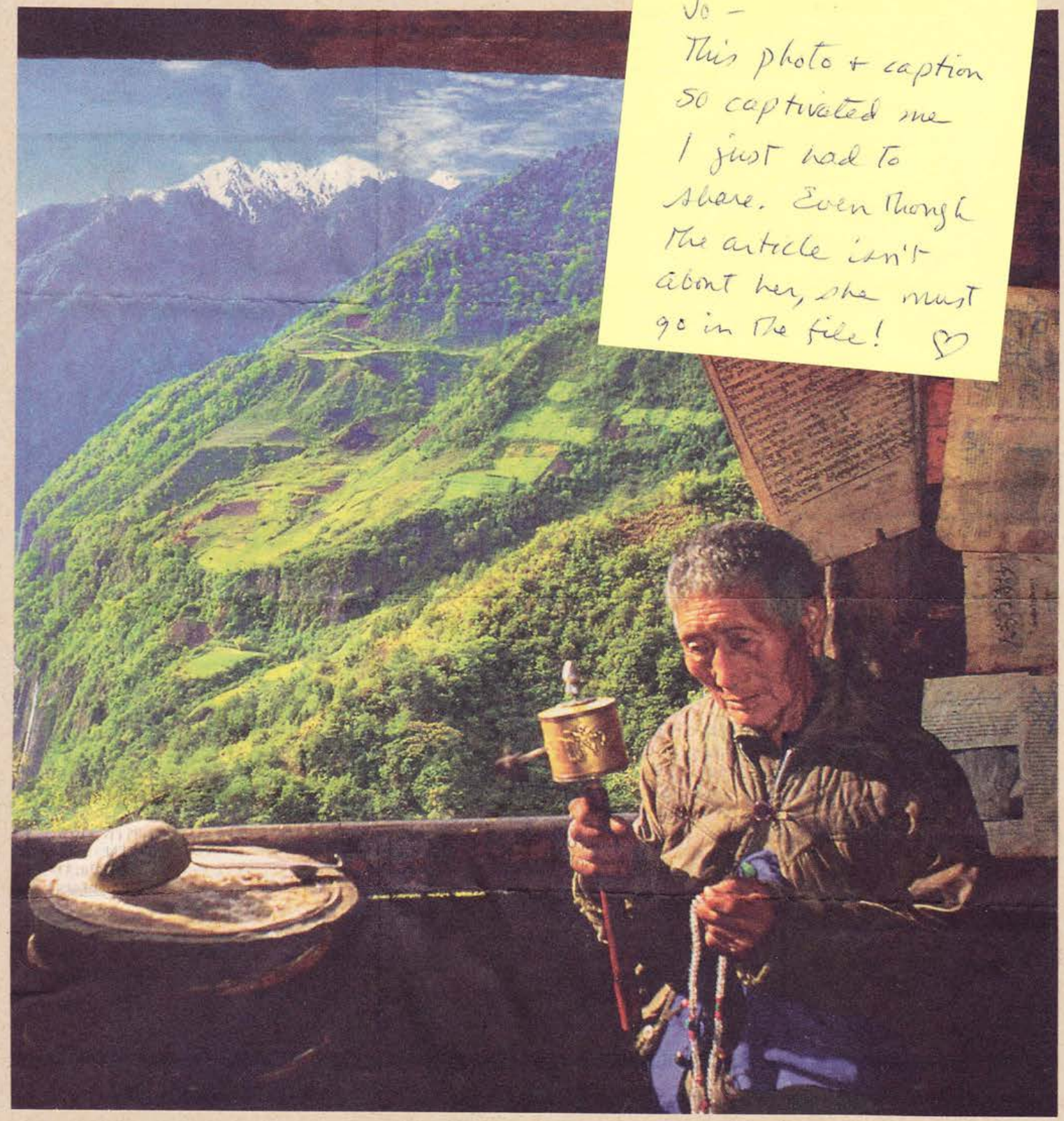
The Unsyncables, the synchronized swimming team that Larson co-founded in 1985, has taken four trophies for overall performance since 1997 in the United States Synchronized Swimming Master's competition.

Sports purists may crack wise, but "synchro," in which swimmers perform choreographed routines with costumes and music, is a demanding endurance discipline going well beyond the "'Strictly Ballroom' with water wings" image. After the sport debuted at the '84 Summer Olympics, Larson, 82, and friend Lizzi Jakobsen of Arcadia joined a class at the Pasadena YWCA, because, according to Jakobsen, 74, "regular swimming can get boring." Seventeen years later, the Unsyncables owe much to the coaching of Dawn Bean, 74, a synchro competition director at the '84 Olympics. The floundering group had sought out Bean in 1992 before entering its first world competition. "I was horrified by what they were trying to do," Bean says.

The Unsyncables welcome swimmers of all experience levels and range in age from 22 to 82. Some members compete, while others just enjoy the sport in weekly practices at the City opf Industry Pacific Palms resort pool. The group of about 30 members stays afloat financially by performing water shows. "I enjoy the shows more than competition," says Jenifer Hanrahan, 30, of Aliso Viejo. "After it's over, you get to drink wine and eat caviar."

More competitive than her younger teammate, Larson maintains a rivalry at national competitions with a fellow octogenarian from another team—shades, perhaps, of those long-ago matches against Williams. Win or lose, the bathing beauties of the Unsyncables delight in their sport. Best of all, Larson adds, "You don't feel old in the water."—**JILL HANNING**

FOR INFORMATION: *WWW.UNSYNCABLESSYNCHROSOCAL.ORG*



Jo –
This photo + caption so captivated me I just had to share. Even though the article isn't about her, she must go in the file! ♡

YARLUNG TSANGPO GORGE, TIBET

A Minba tribal woman sings prayers to the sunrise from her home overlooking the gorge.

SECTION V

MAVERICKS IN THEIR 90'S

Pauline, 90

This former nurse is game for just about anything—as long as it doesn't interfere with her twice-a-week round of bridge.

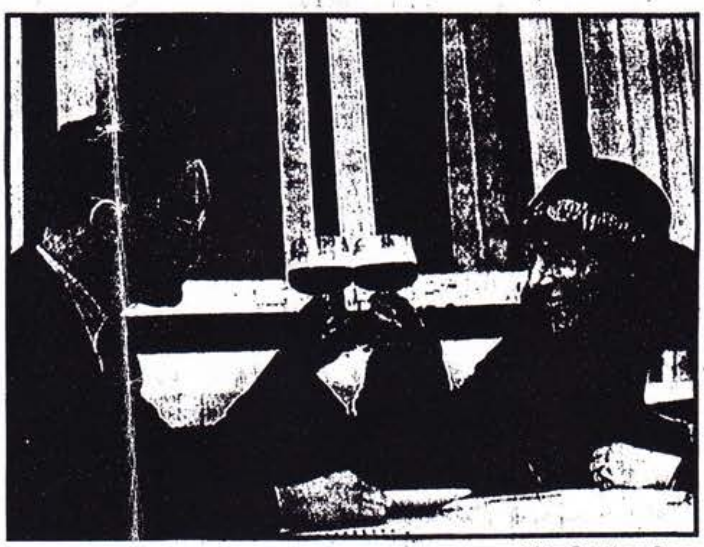
LOS ANGELES TIMES May 27, 2001

Ida F. Davidoff; Family Therapist,

We do not grow old. We become old by not growing.

Ida Fisher Davidoff

By MYRNA OLIVER
TIMES STAFF WRITER



Lifetime Entertainment Services

Davidoff and her husband, Dr. Leo Davidoff, on a visit to Paris (undated photo).

She followed her own advice. When her four children grew up, she had "a lovely depression" about her empty nest, then went back to college to earn a doctorate—at age 57—in marital and family counseling.

When arthritis made it difficult to stoop over to tend her garden, she planted wildflowers in raised boxes. When her fingers got too stiff to play piano, she took singing lessons.

She saw patients until a few weeks ago, and still planned to write a book, titled "Age: A Work of Art," using herself as her primary example.

Ida Fisher Davidoff died May 11 in New Canaan, Conn., where until recently she had baked her own bread, swum nude in her pool, and was "always thinking ahead." She was 97.

Davidoff became a lecturer and expert on aging by aging well. She was interviewed on national television programs and for Betty Friedan's 1993 book "The Fountain of Age."

One advantage of age, Davidoff told Friedan, is that "the older you get, the more you get to be like yourself."

She knew that from personal experience, adding, "I have gained tremendously more self-confidence, even in the last four or five years, become more integrated as a person now, more together."

Yet she had no illusions about the vagaries of old age, describing her health as "superb, considering," and telling one interviewer, "If after 65 you wake up well without any pain or quake, you're dead."

Friedman quoted the nonagenarian's frank comment, "I am constantly aware that I am living on borrowed time."

And yet, Davidoff added in the next breath, "I live as if I'm going to live a long time. I'm planting bulbs, putting in shrubs that will take years to grow. Why deprive yourself of even an hour of beauty because you don't know how long you'll be around to enjoy it?"

Abhorring ageism, Davidoff advised her audiences to create their own image of what aging should be, as well as to exercise, watch their nutrition and nurture friendships. Laughter was another good component of happy aging, she said, never failing to prompt knowing chuckles with her observation that "there are four categories of life: babyhood, childhood, middle age and 'You look wonderful.' "

Davidoff saw nothing unusual about her resolve to "make my own image as an older person" because she had always viewed herself as a pioneer, a rebel of sorts, battling stereotypes.

Born in a poor Jewish section of Boston to Lithuanian immigrants, she was told by her father, "Girls don't go to college." But she earned a bachelor's degree at Boston's Simmons College and a master's at Radcliffe.

She met her husband, Dr. Leo Davidoff, one of the founders of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University, when she invited him to speak to a Radcliffe group about his recent expedition to the North Pole. After three dates, the two were engaged.

For a couple of decades, she became a happy housewife and mother. But when her youngest turned 10, she "looked ahead," going to Yale, the University of Pennsylvania and eventually Columbia University for training to legitimize what her friends seemed to think she already knew a lot about—marital and family counseling.

She hung out her shingle in New Canaan even before she received the doctorate. That was the mid-1950s and, as she said, "the beginning of family therapy."

Davidoff, widowed for a quarter-century, is survived by her son, Frank; daughters Helen Hirsch, Leonore Davidoff and Mary Houts; seven grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

Va -
for the file -
♡

Dedicated to dancing

By Yvonne Wingett
The Arizona Republic

Gussied up in colorful dance costumes, Mary Steiners and Lois Jensen move to tropical Latin beats.

At 99 and 96, respectively, the feisty Apache Junction sisters modestly pride themselves on their ability to put some younger dancers to shame.

"We can rumba with the best of 'em," said Steiners, who has a pacemaker.

Usually, the two widows hit the dance floor twice a week at Stardust Dance Club in Mesa, where they practice the tango, cha-cha, mambo, samba and swing. But considering that they are slated to perform at the Mesa Regal RV Resort on Sunday, they are rehearsing almost every day. The 7 p.m. show is part of the park's annual ice cream social that last year drew more than 350 people, said Jim Burgess, entertainment organizer.

"People want to see them because they're quite entertaining and they have great attitudes," said Larry Caves, who doubles as their instructor and dance partner. "These are ladies that you would stereotypically not expect to see here. But they love to be challenged."

After their husbands died, the two women renewed their interest in hobbies and themselves, they say. Both danced socially with their

See **DEDICATED** Page B7

Michael Ging/The Arizona Republic

Mary Steiners, 99, performs a Latin dance with her instructor and dance partner, Larry Caves. She practices at the Stardust Dance Club in Mesa.

From Page B1

husbands, but they were too busy raising families to really concentrate on it, Jensen said.

Now, though, they are dedicated dancers, donning professionally tailored costumes and performing in amateur dance competitions and exhibitions in the East Valley. At the show, Steiners will heat the stage up with a cha-cha routine while Jensen will perform the paso doble, a fast, Spanish dance.

"It's the most satisfactory way for a single woman to enjoy dancing," said Jensen, a former schoolteacher. "And we've formed a whole body of friendships with people in the studio. I think everybody needs something like this."

The lively dance moves work more than muscles, Steiners said. They exercise the mind.

"It's not just recreation," Jensen said. "We have to memorize the routines and we have to know what we're doing and why we're doing it. It is especially good for us because of that."

The women are proving that dancing is ageless, Caves said, adding that it's rare for women older than 80 to compete.

"They're an inspiration to most of us," the 50-year-old instructor said.

Jensen promises that she won't stop dancing until her doctor demands it.

"Once in a while I push myself to the limit," Jensen said. "But on the day when you feel down in the dance, you come and dance and you come away feeling much better. You've been doing something that has made you feel good. That's why I won't quit."

Reach the reporter at yvonne.wingett@arizonarepublic.com or (602) 444-7940.

For the "file" Love the picture and the red dress. ☺ 2/02

The Arizona Republic 9/99

Fred R. Conrad/New York Times

Oseola McCarty, who gave away her life savings, died Sunday at age 91.

Renowned benefactor dead at 91

Washerwoman gave life savings to kids

By Rick Bragg
New York Times

HATTIESBURG, Miss. — She had not even known exactly what the word philanthropy meant, but the elderly washerwoman who gave away practically every dollar she ever made to endow a scholarship fund for poor students in Mississippi would become a symbol of selfless giving.

Oseola McCarty, who gave away a life savings of $150,000 to help complete strangers get a college education at the University of Southern Mississippi here in her hometown, died late Sunday afternoon in the little frame house where she took in laundry and ironing and made her small fortune a dollar or two at a time.

McCarty was told that she had liver cancer three weeks ago, about a year after she underwent surgery for colon cancer. She wanted her last days to be spent in the little house where she spent most of her life. She was 91.

In anticipation of her death, she decided in the summer of 1995 to give away most of her life savings, saying that there was nothing in particular she wanted to buy and no place in particular she wanted to go. An only child who had outlived her relatives, she lived a solitary existence, surrounded by rows of clothes she made pretty for people who knew her only as the washerwoman.

"I'm giving it away so that the children won't have to work so hard, like I did," she said in July 1995.

She did not want any monuments, any proclamations, people that knew her said. But the selflessness of her gift would bring her worldwide attention. The woman would be honored by the United Nations, would shake hands with President Clinton and would receive more than 300 awards. People all over the world knew who she was and what she did.

The woman who acted in anticipation of death found a life she could have never imagined. She flew on a plane for the first time in her life and laughed out loud when the food did not fall off the tray as the plane rumbled through the sky. She stayed in a hotel for the first time in her life, and before she checked out, she made the bed.

"People treated her like a monument," said Jewel Tucker, the secretary to the president of the university and Miss McCarty's traveling companion in those almost giddy years after the gift. "But she was really a movement. It will keep moving."

Contributions from more than 600 donors have added some $330,000 to the original scholarship fund of $150,000. After hearing of McCarty's gift, Ted Turner, a multibillionaire, gave away a billion dollars.

"He said, 'If that little woman can give away everything she has, then I can give a billion,' " Tucker said.

If anyone can say they felt adoration in their life, Tucker said, McCarty could. People would see her in airports and flock to her. Some people just wanted to touch her, as though she was good luck.

Along with all the plaques and trophies or other honors — she received the Presidential Citizen's Medal, the nation's second highest civilian award, and an honorary doctorate from Harvard University — she was awarded other things that were pure fun.

In 1996, she carried the Olympic torch through part of Mississippi. Later that year, hers was the hand on the switch that dropped the ball in Times Square in New York's wild New Year's Eve celebration. In fact, she said at the time, it was the first time she had actually stayed up past midnight.

WOMAN: 90-Year-Old Heads for the Summit

By RON TAYLOR, *Times Staff Writer*

WHITNEY PORTAL, Calif.—The sun was just peeping over the Sierra Nevada on Sunday morning as 90-year-old Hulda Crooks waved and set briskly out toward the 14,494-foot summit of Mt. Whitney—for the 26th time in as many years.

Outfitted in her favorite old straw hat, a red T-shirt and gray slacks rolled up to the knees and wearing a pair of old garden shoes, the Loma Linda widow immediately set the pace for more than a dozen of her Seventh Day Adventist co-religionist climber-friends who carried supplies, tents and other gear for the four-day trek.

A vegetarian who began mountain climbing and jogging when she was in her 60s, Crooks said she walks at least 3½ miles every day. She said she arrived here at the trailhead four days early to get acclimatized for the climb.

Asked why she climbs the mountain, Crooks said: "Older people tend to feel their lives are over when they reach 65. They think they are all done. But there is a lot of good living after 65 if you have an interest in life.

"Get out of the sedentary life, take care of yourself, get exercise and the right nutrition and have a wholesome outlook," she said, adding: "You must always have hope for the future."

Mt. Whitney is on the crest of the Sierra, about 200 miles north of Los Angeles in Sequoia National Park. The 11-mile trail to the summit climbs, switchback by switchback, nearly 6,200 vertical feet from the Whitney Portal trailhead in Inyo National Forest, east of Lone Pine.

The ascent is difficult because it is so steep and physically demanding. Above 10,000 feet most hikers begin to suffer altitude sickness—headaches and nausea—unless they are in good physical shape and have trained for the climb as Crooks has done.

Born to German immigrant parents on a farm in Canada, Crooks said she had led a sedentary life until she met and married Samuel Crooks, a medical student at Loma Linda University where she was an undergraduate.

After graduation, her husband stayed on to teach medicine at Loma Linda, and he encouraged her to follow her wish to climb mountains—a pastime he could not pursue because of a heart ailment.

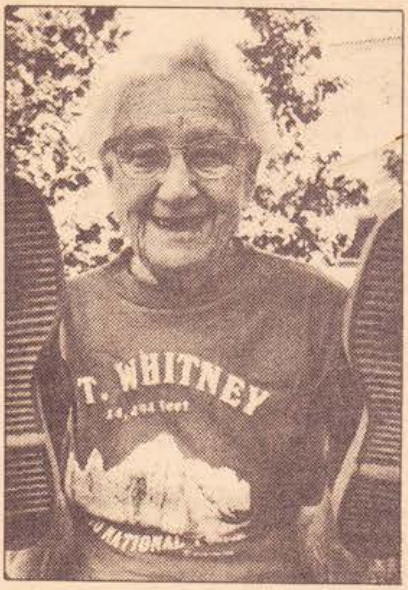
After her husband's death in 1950, she said, she began hiking in the Southern California mountains, and has since earned 97 patches that are sewn onto her favorite backpack; each patch representing a different mountain she has climbed.

But she didn't have the backpack Sunday.

For the first time, she explained, the backpack had been left behind because friends and supporters were kindly carrying all her supplies and equipment up the mountain.

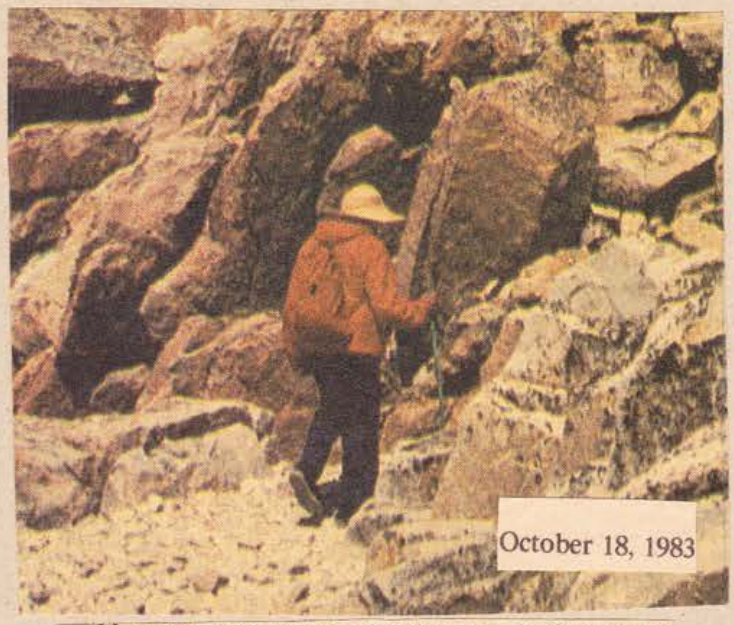
Crooks' personal physician, Dr. Roy Zutzy, 62, a heart specialist at Loma Linda University Medical School, is one of the climbers accompanying her. He said his friend and patient is "in remarkably good health," and added that he could see no reason she should not continue climbing for several more years.

She has already said she wants to make at least two more ascents after this one—just to make it a solid 25 successful climbs.



JOE KENNEDY / Los Angeles Times

Hulda Crooks started climbing 21 years ago—at age of 66.



It was midsummer, one month before Hulda Crooks' 22nd climb of Mt. Whitney, the tallest peak in the continental United States.

The significance of the upcoming trek rested on neither the number of times she had conquered the peak, nor its record height of 14,494 feet. What was impressive was the fact that Crooks didn't start climbing until she was 66—and that was 21 years ago.

At 87, the Southern California dietitian is living testimony to the body's ability to recover from abuse. Once nearly killed by a more typical American life style, Crooks recovered her health and, after personal tragedy, took up climbing when most of her peers were taking retirement.

Then, six years later, at 72, she began jogging because "it made climbing so much easier."

Scaled 86 Peaks

Preparing for her 1983 Whitney adventure, she counted 86 Southern California peaks she had scaled just in the last six years. Some, like Mt. San Gorgonio (11,502 feet), near her Loma Linda home, she had climbed a dozen times or more.

At the height of the season, Crooks usually takes off up a mountain every two or three weeks, unless she chooses a hike on level terrain. She walked the 212-mile John Muir Trail, toting her 24-pound pack, in five separate segments.

"But this has been a terrible year for backpacking," she said with only a hint of disappointment; her friends contend no one will ever hear Crooks actually complain. "There's been a lot of weekend rain in the mountains."

Of course, her appearance of frailty owes more to cultural conditioning than to careful observation. Americans simply do not expect a slight, gray-haired, "old lady" to have more energy and stamina than, say, a writer following her up Whitney who is one-third her age, presumably in excellent physical shape, and unbelievably miserable struggling up the path.

In one sense, climbing through the 80s shouldn't be considered that unusual for a woman who has had to scale some fairly imposing emotional terrain.

Raised on a farm in Saskatchewan, Canada, Crooks was an overweight child who "munched on candy like an elephant."

"By the time I was 16," she recalled, "I was 5 feet tall and weighed 160 pounds."

When she left for college, she became a Seventh-Day Adventist, adopted their vegetarian life style, and trimmed down. Unfortunately, it was then that her health began to fail.

Exhaustion Worsened

"When I left home, I stopped almost all physical activity to study long, long hours. Then I had to work to support myself and I just couldn't take it. I became very sickly," Crooks said.

Chronically tired, nervous and anemic, Crooks developed pneumonia, and despite a year of recovery, her exhaustion worsened.

"I remember working in the garden and being so tired that I got to thinking, am I going to die? Then quick as a flash I thought, well, at least I won't be tired anymore.

"There I was, looking forward to my own death, and I was only in my early 30s!"

At 31, she married Dr. Samuel A. Crooks, whom she credits with turning her life around.

"He was a country boy who'd bring me nature books to get me outside. I soon realized that I always felt good walking or working in the yard. Outdoors I was strong, but inside I wilted," she said.

The Crookses worked together at Loma Linda University; he teaching anatomy and she as a dietitian/researcher. Dr. Crooks died shortly after retirement, and a few years later their only son, also a doctor, died of a drug overdose.

Crooks sought solace in hiking and climbing.

"Sometimes I've had to battle high winds and icy trails. Some years it's been so cold, I've felt as if my face would crack if I smiled, but I've always made it to the top and back down. There's a sense of satisfaction when you're not defeated by adverse elements."

CLOSE UP

Artist of the Century

Ask sculptor Beatrice Wood the secret of her success and there's no hesitation: With a twinkle in her blue eyes, the 99-year-old leans over to confide: "Chocolate and young men . . . and you can take that as you wish."

Wood, who turns 100 next month, still puts in long hours in her Ojai studio, creating her famous lusterware vessels, plates, tiles and whimsical sculptures. "My back may be 100 but my mind is 32, and that's my official age," she says.

Her favorite subject is the relationship between the sexes, perhaps a natural topic for her: In her early 20s, while studying acting and art in Paris, she was part of a love triangle with novelist Henri-Pierre Roché and his close friend, painter Marcel Duchamp. That relationship helped shape her artistic vision—and it provided the inspiration for Francois Truffaut's film "Jules and Jim." It also began a lifetime of close friendships with Anaïs Nin, Krishnamurti, Isadora Duncan and other noted artists and philosophers.

Sculptor Beatrice Wood at a turn of a century

Wood's work in ceramics, which she started at age 40, is on display at the Smithsonian, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. It now regularly fetches prices that she once described as "unreasonable."

She also finds time to chat about life and art with an average of 300 unannounced visitors each month. Some come to talk with an international art figure, some just to be in her aura. Others come for advice on their careers.

"When I was younger, one paid the price for being an artist," she says. "Now it's become kind of a Madison Avenue play toy. I have young people just starting off in pottery, they come and they say, 'Will you help me get an exhibition in New York?'" Wood marvels. "I don't like that kind of thing because I think the great painters were never thinking of an exhibition; they painted because they couldn't not paint."

—Alan Rider

At 99, she's living life for others

She answers the knock at the door, smiles exquisitely, floats through the afternoon light of her Brentwood home with casual grace.

It's another full day for Hedda Bolgar, who sees patients four days a week, teaches on the fifth day, drives a Prius, is planning a trip to New Zealand, and needs to get through this interview before 5 p.m., when her personal trainer arrives.

She turned 99 last month.

"I was put on this Earth to accomplish certain things," says Bolgar, a psychologist and psychoanalyst. "I'm so far behind, I can never die."

Bolgar takes me to the office where she sees her patients. One of them is 88, another 84. Several of them are therapists themselves, and whatever burden they carry into this room — the loss of a spouse, regret, guilt, fear of death — Bolgar knows something about the experience.

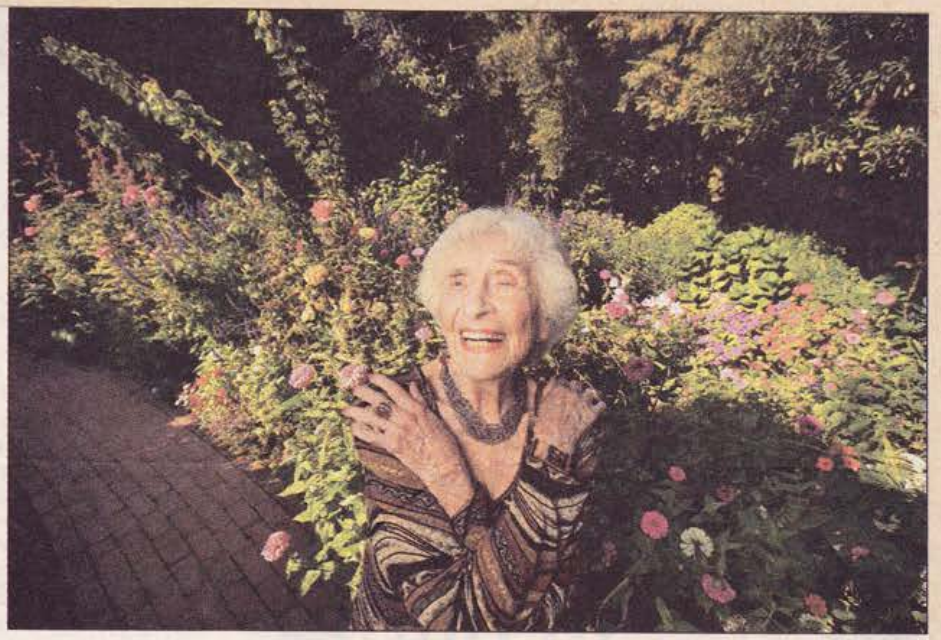
"I've lived through revolutions, famine, war. Things like that," she tells me.

She delivers her lines as if reading from a great novel that makes poetry of history.

At age 5, for instance, while she was vacationing on the Baltic Sea, the Austrian archduke was assassinated:

"There was a war, and I had vanilla ice cream for lunch."

And later, after completing her PhD in Austria:



BRIAN VANDER BRUG *Los Angeles Times*

WORKING GIRL: *Hedda Bolgar, in the garden at her Brentwood home, is a psychologist and psychoanalyst who still sees patients four days a week.*

"I left Vienna the day Hitler came in."

And then on to Chicago for more training, then New York, where she got married, and finally to Los Angeles, where she has made her home since 1956.

The real reason for the visit was that I've been writing a lot lately about seriously ill members of my family, and others who have been forced to make peace with mortality. Who better to provide insight and uplift than a 99-year-old dynamo who says life has never been better than it is right now?

Bolgar says her parents, who were European journalists, told her that when she was in the womb, they discussed dream interpretations with a Swiss friend by the name of Carl Gustav Jung. They also told her that family tradition obligated her to address society's unmet needs.

"I started a lot of things at 65," says Bolgar. That was just one year after the death of her husband of 33 years, a political scientist.

Los Angeles needed better training for analysts, Bolgar thought, and too many people were unable to get treatment because of the high cost. So in the 1970s she founded the Wright Institute of Los Angeles, a nonprofit mental health training and service center, and co-founded the Los Angeles Institute and Society for Psychoanalytic Studies. In 1974, she started the Hedda Bolgar Psychotherapy Clinic, which still treats people who can't afford help elsewhere.

The secret to a long and healthy life, Bolgar says — aside from lucky genes — is to be a citizen of the world. In her case, that has meant things like joining antiwar and antinuke marches on Wilshire Boulevard (yes, she was there in the '60s), and hanging a "Let Truth Be the Prejudice" poster just inside her front door for all guests to see.

"You need to be invested. You have to care about what happens," she says, and her delicate fingers reach across a table for a business card from another group she works with: the Soldiers Project, which offers psychological counseling to soldiers and their families.

Bolgar has no computer. No BlackBerry. She is no prisoner of television, either, but has walls of books and can spend hours tending the "ocean of flowers" in her yard. And, partly because she's been a vegetarian for 85 years, she gets an upset stomach thinking about the NRA poster girl on the GOP presidential ticket.

One of Bolgar's longtime patients tells me she'd never heard of the therapist until a friend made a recommendation.

"You have to see Hedda," said the friend.

"Who's Hedda?"

"Hedda's the best."

And?

"Oh, my goodness," says the patient, calling Bolgar brave, patient and strong. "She's, well, very, very, very perceptive and very, very devoted . . . She carries herself with dignity and hope, despite her tremendous realism."

LA Times
Sept 14, 2008

7/92

Dana Leonard / Staff photographer

Essie Brown trips the light fantastic with Erwin Berliner at the Washington Adult Center, where Brown has been a regular for more than 20 years.

'Twinkle Toes'

99-year-old to mark 100th birthday by dancing

By Laura Plachecki
Staff writer

Essie Brown has been waltzing the nights away for three decades.

On Friday, the Washington Adult Center will dedicate three hours of big band music to wish Brown a happy 100th birthday.

"I knew I was going to live a long time," she said, explaining that past generations in her family also have lived long lives.

"I just live from day to day. I do what I want to do, eat what I want to eat," Brown said.

And she dances. A lot.

"I don't do anything but dance three or four times a week," Brown said. "It's good exercise. It gives me something to do."

The Washington Adult Center, 2240 W. Citrus Way, holds ballroom dancing in the afternoons two days a week and at night on Fridays.

Brown has been gracing the center's dance floor since 1970. She moved to Phoenix on a Saturday and started dancing the following Tuesday.

"I have trouble sitting still," she said, standing to show off her turquoise blue and sequin "birthday" dress.

PROFILE

NAME: Essie Brown
AGE: 99
BIRTHPLACE: Illinois. Moved to Phoenix in 1970
RESIDENCE: North Phoenix
OCCUPATION: Retired homemaker, telephone operator
EDUCATION: High school
HOBBIES: Dancing

"I don't know why I have all this energy," Brown said. "I don't do anything to exert myself."

Some would say dancing endlessly to the "Blue Danube" or "Tennessee Waltz" constitutes a little bit of exertion.

"There are 18 dances (songs) during the afternoons. I don't sit any of them out," Brown said.

"The more I dance, the better I feel."

It doesn't matter whether it's the tango, fox trot, waltz or the stomp — Brown knows them all.

"I don't consider any of them tough," she said. "I'm a quick picker upper."

Brown was born in a small town in Illinois in 1892. After graduating from high school, she worked as telephone operator until she was 25. She then married but was widowed in 10 months after her husband died while serving in World War I.

Four years, later she remarried, had two daughters and became a homemaker. Her second husband, Ira Brown, died in 1956.

"I couldn't imagine getting married again," Brown said. "I had a good marriage, a good husband."

During her housewife years, Brown rarely danced, but after moving to Phoenx in 1970 and finding the option available, she wonders why she didn't move here sooner.

"Up until three years ago, I drove my own car (to the dances)," she said.

Now she has an escort, but don't call him a date.

"We don't do other things that would constitute a date. We just dance," she said. "He's pretty good."

Few can match "Twinkle Toes" — that's what others at the center call Brown.

"I'm supposed to be the best on the floor," she said.

Fla. mayor is a young 96

On a walker, she cruises around just as fast as at 80, in her 'younger years'

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OCEAN BREEZE PARK, Fla. — In a community where everyone is over 55, it's fitting that Mayor Dorothy Geeben's age has made her a celebrity of sorts.

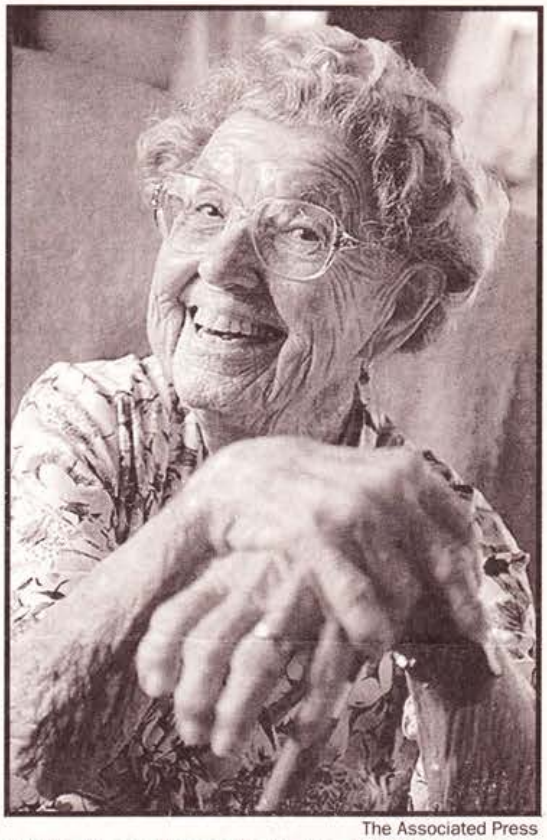
At 96, Geeben may be the nation's oldest mayor. She's so well-liked in her the retirement community of nearly 1,000 that no one opposed her re-election last week, and her next two-year term will last through the end of 2006, or nine months past her 98th birthday.

No records officially confirm the distinction, but the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities have no reports of anyone older, either.

The closest might be a 92-year-old mayor in Pittsburg, Texas, said Sherry Appel, a spokeswoman for the League of Cities, which found at least 26 elected officials who are 85 or older.

In March, NBC's "Today" helped celebrate Geeben's 96th birthday. Jay Leno invited her to share her political secrets with his audience, too, though she turned the "Tonight" show down because she didn't want to travel.

"We can't vote her out because she's so well-known," jokes Camden Griffin, the editor of Ocean Breeze Park's newsletter.



The Associated Press

At 96, Ocean Breeze Park, Fla., Mayor Dorothy Geeben *is a living legend. She was re-elected last week by the retirement community of nearly 1,000.*

Full schedule is secret to longevity, popularity

Geeben said the secret to her longevity and popularity is a full schedule that keeps her moving.

"I have a good time. I'm on the go a lot. I guess that's half the battle," she said.

Geeben moved to Ocean Breeze Park more than a half-century ago with her first husband after they heard about the town on a television program. Her husband died in 1958 but she later remarried.

A widow again, she also has outlived both her siblings.

Geeben now uses a walker to get around, but says she's moving just as fast as she was when she was 80, a time she describes as "my younger years."

The quaint collection of mobile homes that makes up Ocean Breeze Park sits on 85 acres of prime real estate, about 100 miles north of Miami. Harry Hoke bought and developed the land in 1938, eventually incorporating the community into a town.

Hoke was elected the town's first mayor, and the title was eventually passed onto his daughter-in-law, Ruth Hoke, who held the post for 12 years. When she died in 2001, Geeben took charge after already serving as the Town Council's president for 31 years.

Residents recently had to endure their worst crisis in decades. Back-to-back hurricanes took direct aim at the mobile home community. At least a dozen homes in the town were destroyed; many sustained major damage.

"Some have gone, and some have their places up for sale. But as a rule, everybody loves Florida, and they love it here," Geeben said.

Staying quiet is "best way to keep the peace"

She attends church, where she plays the organ every Sunday, and drives to weekly bingo outings and regular appointments at the hair salon. She manages her own finances the same way she learned in the 1920s, using a typewriter and an adding machine.

Her days are usually so busy that she has no time for the kitchen, except when the town's Saturday evening potluck requires her rice pudding. Then she uses the microwave.

"I don't cook much but I manage to eat all the time," said Geeben, who barely reaches 5 feet tall.

She'd much rather talk family than politics, particularly if it involves her great-great grandson or the family reunion last year.

She also believes in staying quiet at town meetings.

"It's the best way to keep the peace," she said.

AZ 12/05

SPRING IN HER STEP 12/02

Exercise 2nd nature to 96-year-old dynamo

By Linda Helser
The Arizona Republic

To walk a mile in Garnett Beckman's moccasins isn't easy.

It's even harder to keep up with the 96-year-old when she slips into her size 6 sneakers.

"I hate to admit it, but after I have to sit down, she's still going," lamented 71-year-old Pam Steffen, a member of Beckman's three times a week SilverSneakers exercise class in Phoenix.

Steffen is hardly alone when it comes to feeling overwhelmed by Beckman, a grandmother of six who weighs in at just under 100 pounds and never found time to exercise until she turned 65.

Even Beckman's own 62-year-old son finds himself in awe of her escapades.

In 1985, she asked him to pick her up at the bus depot after she returned from a trip to the Grand Canyon.

"What she didn't tell me was that on that trip, she hiked by herself down to Phantom Ranch at the bottom of the Canyon," Curtis Beckman said. "All I could say is, 'Mother, you didn't!' "

Beckman says her new passion is her SilverSneakers Fitness Class, an exercise program designed specifically for seniors.

But, of course, the then 78-year-old had hiked the 18-mile round-trip trek after first conditioning herself by taking on Piestewa Peak several times a week for 13 years.

Once the shock had passed, Curtis made one simple request.

"Next time, would you take me along?" he asked.

Every December for the next 12 years, mother and son, and an ever-growing number of younger friends, hiked down into the Grand Canyon.

"I'm not in the same league with my mother," Curtis said, "but she shamed me into it. She shames everyone."

Claiming she is too busy to think of herself as role model, Beckman, never without her bright pink lipstick and blue eye shadow, would not even admit to her age until a few years ago.

"I was three years older than my husband, so I used to tell him 'I'm three years older, so I know better,' but he didn't think it was funny, so I stopped telling my age," she said.

She has lived a healthy lifestyle. She has never smoked, but she's an admitted "wino." She religiously sips 8 ounces of the finest boxed red wine every day. She's always watched her weight and eaten plenty of vegetables and fruits.

Neighbors encouraged Erma Winfield, 94, to create the mural that graces her L.A. home.

BOB POOL

The mural outside Erma Winfield's Mid-City home has a Grandma Moses look to it. And not just because the artist who painted it is 94, either.

The artwork stretches across a 40-foot fence and depicts the four seasons in a linear, primitive folk-art style that captures scenes from Winfield's past, just as Grandma Moses' work did when she took up painting in her 70s.

Like Moses, Winfield was raised on a farm and is a self-taught artist whose paintings are based on photos as well as her own memory.

And like Moses, she paints on unexpected surfaces: Moses favored cardboard, and Winfield used corrugated fiberglass panels as her canvas.

"I started this in March and worked on it about 1½ hours a day for eight months," said Winfield. "The panels weren't easy to paint on."

Along the way, Winfield used up $150 worth of exterior house paint.

"You try to mix house paint. It's not easy," she said.

Born in Natchez, Miss., Winfield is the great-granddaughter of a slave.

"Her work is very meticulous. Anyone who is self-taught and can develop that talent is a gem," said Bennett, a Mid-City resident who specializes in pen-and-ink and watercolor greeting cards and collages.

It was Bennett who suggested Winfield paint a mural on the fence next to her driveway. "That wall needs something on it," she told her.

Those in the neighborhood kept regular tabs on Winfield's progress during the mural's lengthy execution.

Among the onlookers were Los Angeles police, who often circled overhead in a helicopter to watch.

"I knew she would finish it, and it turned out great," said neighbor Hazel McClenon. "Erma incorporated houses she's lived in and her church in the mural. My favorite part is the winter season section."

Lively 96-year-old waltzes circles around competition

First the mamba and fox trot with tall, slender Rafael and then the West Coast swing and cha-cha with a shorter, bearded Matthew.

It was taking both instructors, each half her age, to wear down light-footed Lenore Schaeffer during her recent dance lesson.

Lenore, who just turned 96, was in top form for her weekly session after a vacation in Chicago and a three-week break from dancing.

"She's an incredible lady," said Matthew

Her husband died in 1979, and several years later, when Lenore was only 87, she resumed the dancing lessons in Tucson that she had started as a 12-year-old girl in Chicago.

And for the past nine years, Lenore has mastered everything from the rumba and tango to a novelty waltz and merengue dancing.

Even dirty dancing.

"I learned that on the ship when we went on a cruise," she confessed, "but I wouldn't do it on the dance floor."

Most typically, Lenore enters ballroom-dancing competitions with her instructors. "Otherwise, it's too hard to find a partner," she said. "You almost have to give birth to one to find one."

But ballroom dancing hasn't been her one and only passion. "I used to belong to 11 different organizations, and I used to bowl," she said. "But I gave that up when I was 87 because my fingers started swelling."

Only recently she started tap-dancing lessons at a senior citizens' center near her home.

"That's because I had to have something else to do, and I go a couple of times a week just to get out of my son's hair," she said. "I started in a class with 10 others, and now we're down to two of us."

Either her son, Lou Schaeffer, or a member of the staff from his law firm drives Lenore to her classes and lessons. "I had to stop driving when I was 83," she said.

Exercising at a nearby gym is another favorite pastime. "I go to the health spa and do five or six things like arm exercises, and I do steps."

Rosamond Carr, 94, Dies; Loved Africa and Orphans

A life marked by leopards, elephants, success and service.

By DOUGLAS MARTIN

Rosamond Carr, a Manhattan fashion illustrator whose love affair with Africa long survived her divorce from the dashing big-game hunter she followed there and culminated when she, as an octogenarian, opened an orphanage in war-ravaged Rwanda, died on Sept. 29. She was 94.

She died of pneumonia at her home near Gisenyi in the mountains of northwest Rwanda, said Ann Howard Halsey, her niece.

Mrs. Carr owned a flower plantation in a volcanic paradise, was stalked by leopards, pestered by elephants and cuddled by monkeys and became a close friend of Dian Fossey, the mountain gorilla researcher, who was mysteriously killed in 1985.

Mrs. Carr became a successful businesswoman at a time when they were rare in Africa. She endured political turmoil most Westerners fled. But her world was upended when Rwanda's Hutu massacred another of the country's ethnic groups, the Tutsi, and killings were committed on her property, eight of them in her flower garden.

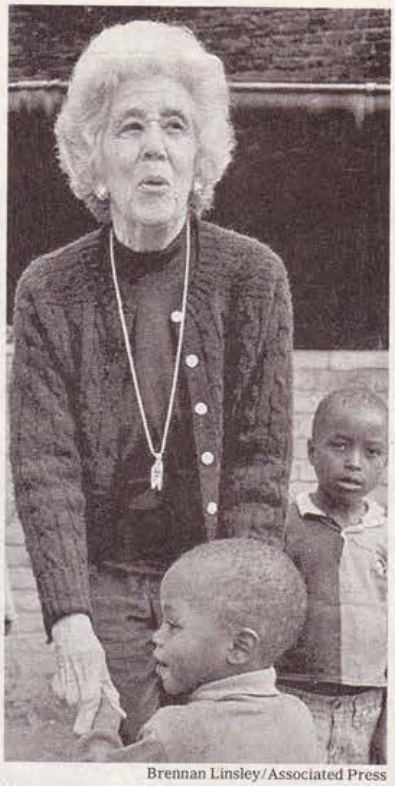
When the spear-wielding mob demanded to know the whereabouts of yet another potential victim, Mrs. Carr exploded.

"You don't mind killing old women," she said, as recorded in her 1999 autobiography, "Land of a Thousand Hills: My Life in Rwanda." "If you want to kill someone, here I am. Kill me!"

Mrs. Carr was forced to flee on five minutes' notice. Once in the United States, as televised images made the magnitude of the tragedy apparent — perhaps 800,000 dead, two million exiled, two million more in refuge camps in Rwanda — she made a decision.

It involved a capacious building she had used to dry flowers. It somehow seemed like the perfect place for an orphanage. With arduous work, it became one.

"One of the few regrets in my life is that I never had children of my own," she wrote, three years after the arrival of the first orphan, a boy named Gahungu, whose mother had dropped dead in front of him. "Today at the age of 85, I am blessed with 72," she said.



Brennan Linsley/Associated Press

Rosamond Carr in 1997 at the orphanage she founded in Rwanda.

Mrs. Carr's life does not merely sound cinematic. The actress Julie Harris played her in "Gorillas in the Mist," the movie about Ms. Fossey. A British company is making a documentary about Mrs. Carr, and producers have bought rights to her book, which Ms. Halsey helped write.

Rosamond Halsey was born in 1912 in South Orange, N.J. Her father was a bond trader ruined by the Depression, and college was not an option. She became an illustrator for department stores.

She happened to see some films about Africa presented by Kenneth Carr, who had lived there for 28 years, hunting big game and working as a tattoo artist, coffee planter and miner. An Englishman, he was a charming conversationalist and gave her a lion's claw covered with gold. They married, struggled financially and soon had trouble getting along. They decided that moving to Africa might help.

"Most people would go to a marriage counselor, but they went to Africa," Ms. Halsey said.

Mrs. Carr, then 37, bought four cotton dresses, a pith helmet "and a lifetime supply of cold cream" and the two sailed away on a tramp steamer. They chugged 1,280 miles up the Congo River in a wood-burning paddle-wheel steamer, then drove a second-hand Ford pickup to the Congo-Rwanda border, where they eventually managed a farm.

It was beautiful and exotic: there was a 50-foot waterfall on their property, wildlife prowled, and Mrs. Carr became fascinated by local culture. She dispensed medicine to the people.

The marriage foundered, and in the mid-1950's, Mrs. Carr bought a 270-acre flower plantation in the foothills of the Virunga volcanoes. She lived in an ivy-covered stone cottage and planted a formal English garden. She grew fields of lilies and other flowers to sell.

After Belgium granted independence to the Congo in 1960, most Europeans (with whom Americans were lumped) left. After Rwanda became independent 1962, the dominant Hutu took control, and persecuted the minority Tutsi, who had historically ruled. Year by year, tensions mounted.

Mrs. Carr stayed. She befriended Ms. Fossey, who had moved to Rwanda because of violence in Congo. Theirs was a close but stormy relationship, beginning with an argument about where Rwandan gorillas were and were not. Mrs. Carr was right.

Rwanda's genocide started in 1994 after President Juvénal Habyarimana was assassinated. The Hutu government and Hutu gangs mercilessly attacked Tutsi. Waves of retaliations by Tutsi and counterretaliations by Hutu followed.

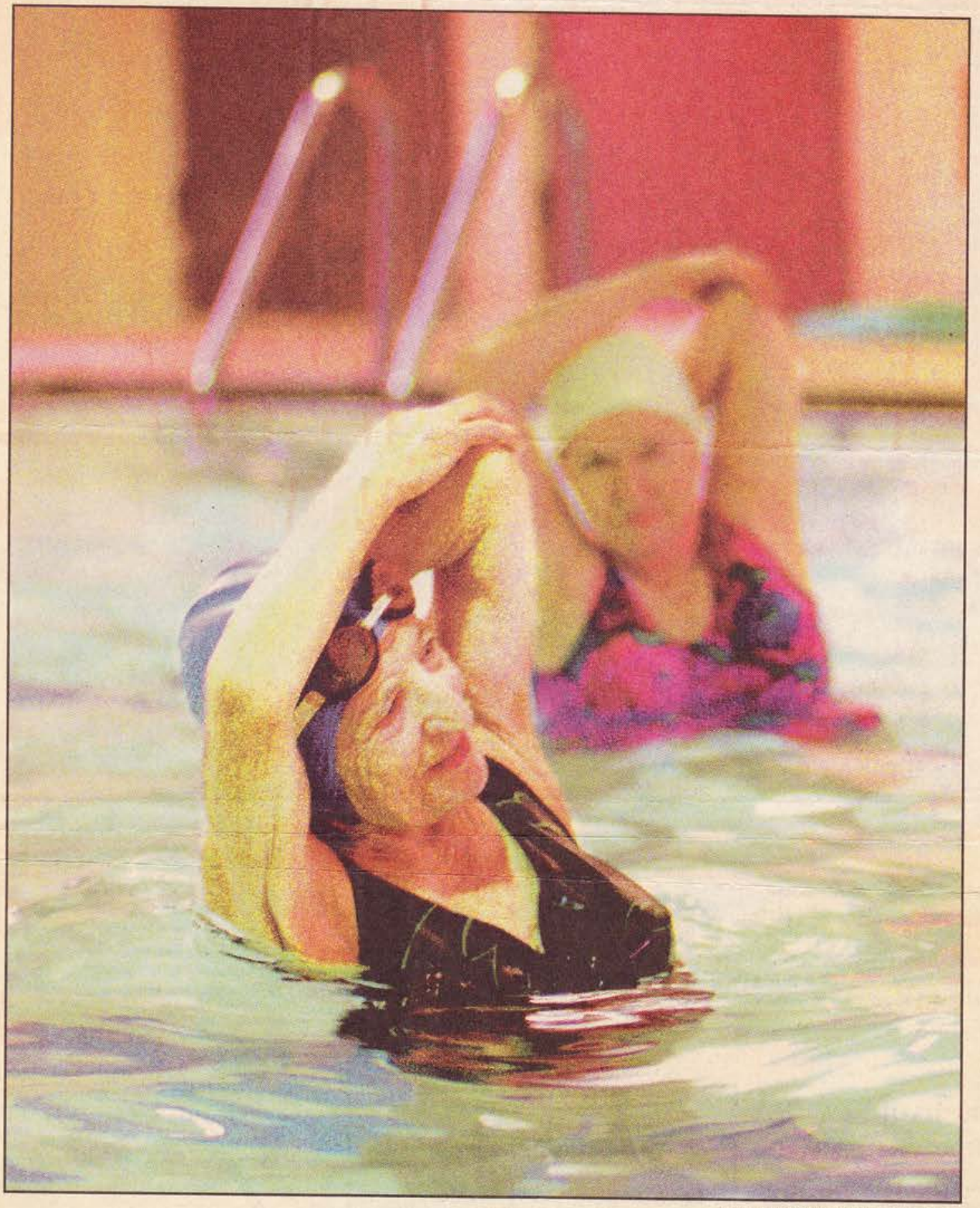
Violence prevented Mrs. Carr and her 120 orphans from returning to their original home until November 2006. The orphanage, now on a larger, more modern campus, is run by her longtime associates.

Mrs. Carr is survived by her brother, William G. Halsey, of Basking Ridge, N.J., and her sister, Dorothy K. Halsey, of Chatham, Mass.

In her book, Mrs. Carr rhapsodized about relaxing at day's end in front of a crackling fire in a cozy cottage that never had electricity or modern plumbing.

"My day is done," she wrote, "and I wonder with a flutter of anticipation what new adventures and surprises tomorrow will bring."

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2006



RICHARD DERK / Los Angeles Times

Rae Terran leads a class at Burbank YMCA. She says she enjoys helping others overcome fear of water.

"Still in the Swim"

Still in the Swim

Rae Terran Conquered Her Fear of Water Late in Life; Now 94, She Continues to Teach a Class in the Burbank YMCA Pool

By ALAN ABRAHAMSON
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Swimming suits Rae Terran. It has ever since she learned how at 67.

Now a couple weeks shy of 95, Terran is still in the pool, still teaching an exercise class twice a week at the YMCA in Burbank, just as she has ever since she learned to do laps.

"Way back when, when I learned to swim, I promised myself, I said, if I take this fear out of me, I'm going to spend the rest of my life taking that fear out of other people," she said.

And so it has gone for a quarter-century.

"What's unusual is that in this day and age, everybody who does something expects something back. She does it because she enjoys it," said R. Glenn Ford, 74, of Burbank, who has been a regular in the Tuesday and Thursday "aqua-cise" class for the past two years. "She's one of those people you want to clone," said Karen Layo, who supervises pool and gymnastics programs at the YMCA. Plans are under way, she said, for a big party on Terran's birthday, Dec. 16. "Cake, of course. And we'll blow up balloons and throw them in the pool for her."

Terran has never asked the Y for a dime.

"From time to time I've had to say to them that I didn't come here for that," she said. "I came here to volunteer."

She started going to the YMCA in the late '60s, when *she* was in her late 60s, to solve a personal dilemma.

She had a happy marriage. She and her husband, Al, who worked in the construction business, had a home in Burbank. They had four children. But she felt she had missed out—on the cold, crisp rivers and lakes in her native New York, then the Pacific Ocean when she and her husband moved west. She had always loved to play outside, especially with the children—but she was terrified of water.

"I couldn't even take a bath in a full tub of water," Terran said. "You know how people love to submerge in a tub full of warm water, just relax? I couldn't do it. I was afraid I'd suffocate.

"That's what pushed me to learn to swim. I said, I'm either going to learn or I'm going to sink. Then I thought: If I sink, someone will pick me up.

"Well, I haven't sunk and I'm still here."

Once in the swim of things, Terran volunteered to teach others her newfound skills. And she took on leadership of the aqua-cise class, designed especially for senior citizens or others who want exercise, or who

Please see SWIMMING, B8

LA Times
11-30-94

SWIMMING

Continued from B1

are under doctor's orders to work out, but need a warm pool to cushion the stress of exertion.

Just as she did back in the '60s, Terran takes the bus to the pool. And as always, someone in the class volunteers to drive her home.

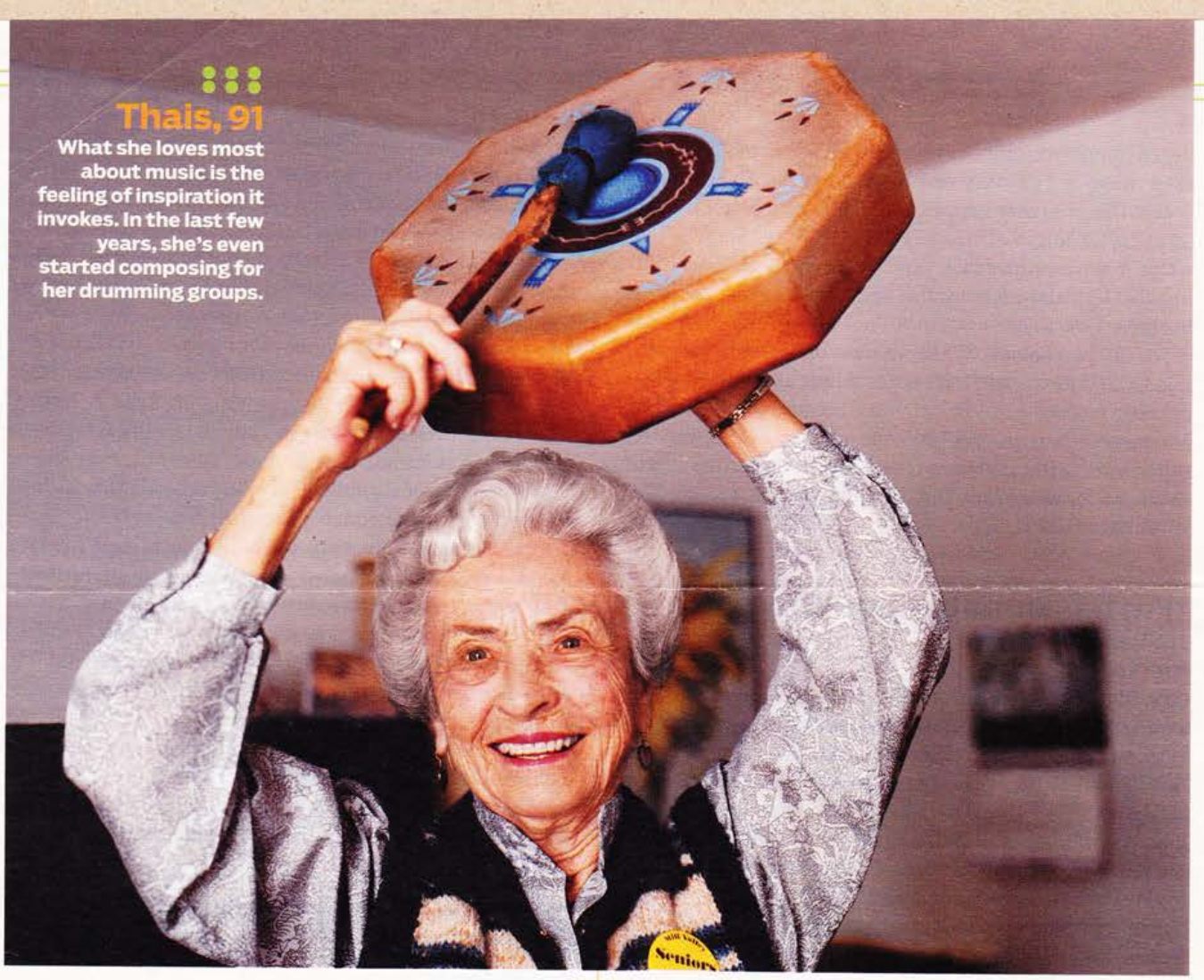
"I've seen so many beautiful, friendly people coming in and out of that Y that you could cry sometimes," she said.

She is forever cajoling her pupils not to dip a toe in the water, but to take the plunge. Immediately.

"She always jumps right in. Boom!" said another class regular, Lori Crawford, 68, of Burbank.

Is Rae Terran going to keep doing this until she dies?

"Yes, I will," she said. "They'll pick me up and I'll be all clean, all warm, in the nice clean water. There's no better place."



Thais, 91
What she loves most about music is the feeling of inspiration it invokes. In the last few years, she's even started composing for her drumming groups.

"I've got the music in me"

Thais Crowell
Age: 91
City: Mill Valley, California
Stress-reducing secret: Playing the drums

Thais Crowell (above) has always appreciated music: she studied piano and voice in college and loved the beautiful feeling of "knowing your tone was improving, of letting the music come from not just your hand on the keys but your whole body." But after college, Crowell's life got tough. Her husband was killed by a land mine in 1945, leaving her with four small children to raise. "It was a difficult time," she says, "but the children got me through it." Crowell soon remarried, and rhythm came back into her life. She and her second husband loved to dance—and even got their kids involved. After moving into a retirement community 10 years ago, she signed up for drumming lessons and was immediately hooked. "I feel myself relaxing right away when I start drumming," she says. She currently belongs to two drumming groups and performs in concerts in the area; the groups have gained enough notoriety that filmmaker David N. Brown included them in a recent documentary. "Drumming gives me the same inspiration I used to get from the piano," Crowell says.

9/30/05

Stef -
a fun one for "the file". I'll call you this weekend
xoxox
Jo

BUSY IN IDYLLWILD: *Dorothy Swain Lewis, 91, left, usually clears the brush on the property she shares with Winifred Wood, 86.*

LA Times
Sun, June 25
2006

'It's something that gets hold of you. If you're not doing it, you want to be doing it.'

BERNARDA BRYSON SHAHN
Artist, explaining her passion

Associated Press

Artist Bernarda Bryson Shahn, here in her Roosevelt, N.J., studio in January, turns 99 next month.

An Unfinished Canvas

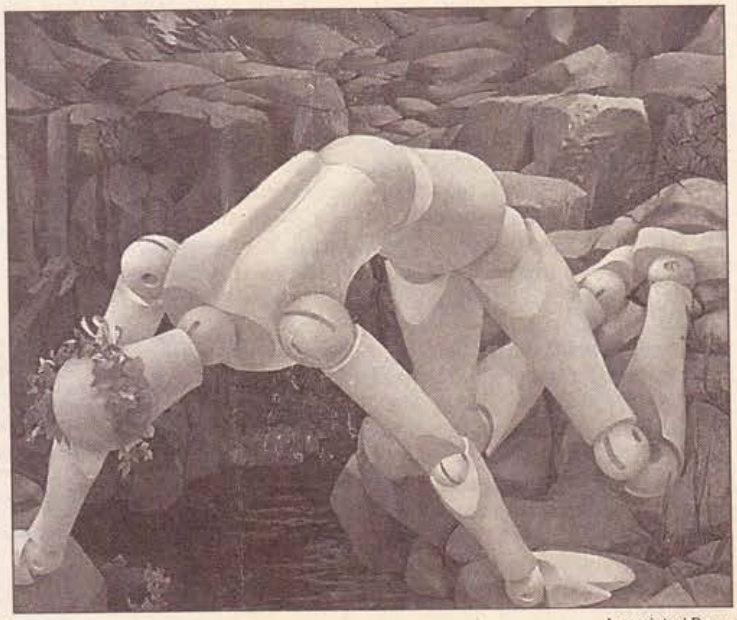
Art •At 98, artist Bernarda Bryson Shahn remains engaged in the world, keeping up on current events and finishing works she began years ago.

By AMY WESTFELDT
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROOSEVELT, N.J.—In a white shed filled with memories, Bernarda Bryson Shahn is touching up a painting she started 20 years ago.

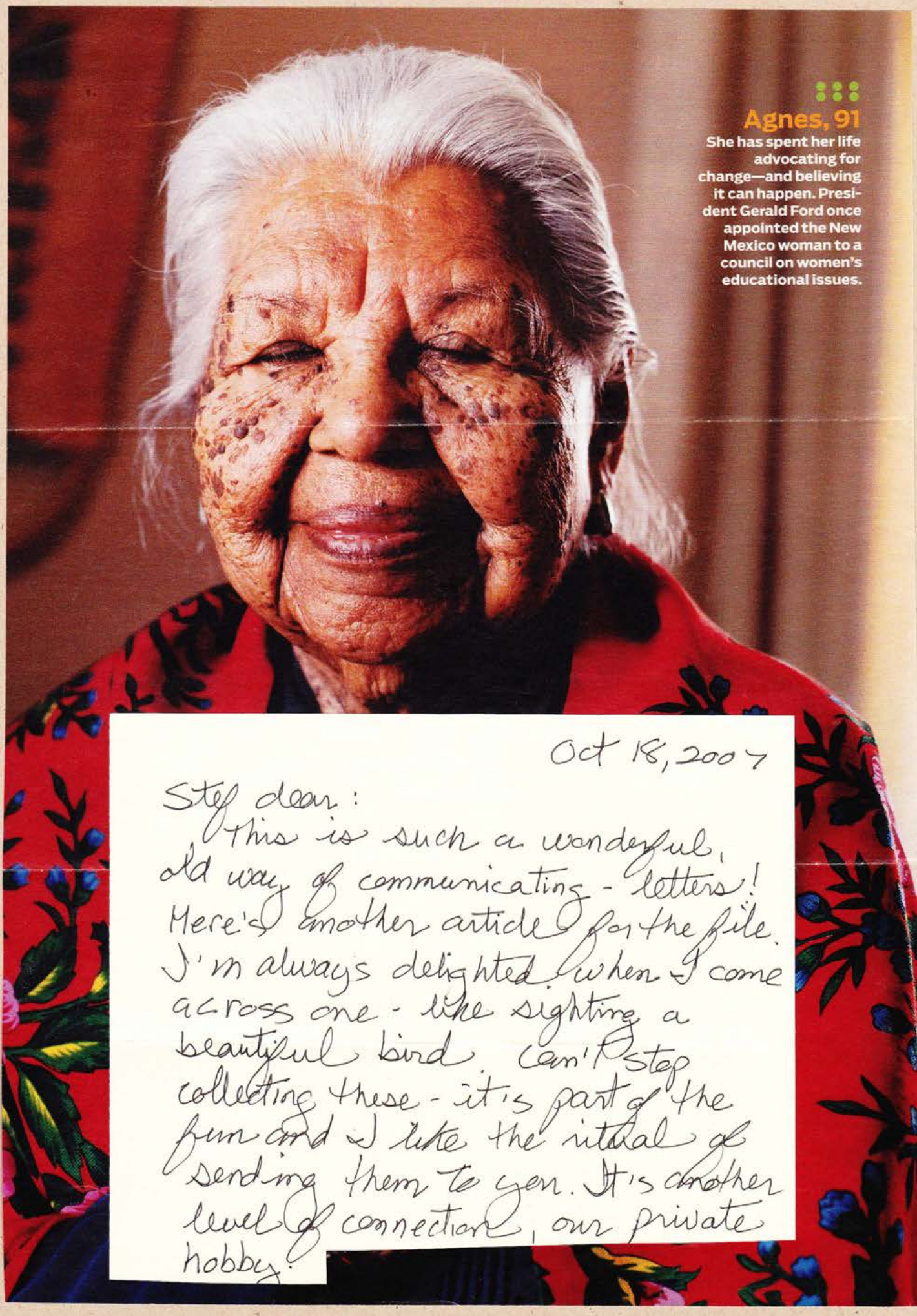
"When I finish it, I think I'm going to like it," she says, staring at the canvas of a woman standing on Rome's Appian Way.

In her spare time, she's doing a little light reading: Hegel's dialectic, a work she read in college but didn't enjoy. She thought she'd give it another try.



Associated Press

"Melancholia," by Bernarda Bryson Shahn, was completed in 1988.



Agnes, 91

She has spent her life advocating for change—and believing it can happen. President Gerald Ford once appointed the New Mexico woman to a council on women's educational issues.

Oct 18, 2007

Stef dear:

This is such a wonderful, old way of communicating - letters! Here's another article for the file. I'm always delighted when I come across one - like sighting a beautiful bird. Can't stop collecting these - it's part of the fun and I like the ritual of sending them to you. It's another level of connection, our private hobby!

SECTION VI

FREE SPIRITS IN THEIR 100'S

"I want to see how many kids I can put on the right track," says Dr. Denmark (examining 20-month-old William Haiglerbar).

Doc of Ages

At 100, Leila Denmark, M.D., America's oldest practicing physician, knows a thing or two about staying healthy

It may take more than a spoonful of sugar to help Dr. Leila Denmark's brand of medicine go down. "When a mother asks, 'Doctor, what makes my baby so bad?' " she reports, "I'll say, 'Go look in the mirror. You get apples off apple trees.' "

After 70 years on the job, pediatrician Denmark, who turned 100 in February, making her the country's most senior medical citizen, can afford to dispense her frank advice in large doses. That back-to-basics approach is what fills the waiting room of her office in Alpharetta, Ga., up to 10 hours a day, six days a week. "She's been in practice so long," says Denise Jacob, mother of two small patients, "she can look at a child and tell you what's wrong."

In fact, Denmark, who graduated from the Medical College of Georgia in 1928 and helped develop a vaccine for whooping cough in the '30s, was practicing holistic medicine long before its return to vogue. "She always focused on family and its relationship to the wellness of a child," says Dr. David Jones, 45, an old friend.

The third of 12 children of a Portal, Ga., farmer and his wife, Denmark practiced medicine at home while raising her only child, Mary, now 67. The secret of her longevity is simple, says the great-grandmother of two: "I eat vegetables and protein at every meal, and I love what I'm doing." She thought of quitting once—when husband John Denmark, a Federal Reserve Bank executive, died in 1990, at 91—but reconsidered. "When I can't see or think well, I'll quit," she says. "And when I go, I hope it will be right here in this office." •

Photograph by Ann States/SABA

THREE LIVES DEPT.

PROLIFIC

Eva Zeisel, the ceramicist and industrial designer, doesn't like to call herself an artist, even though it has been sixty years since the Museum of Modern Art gave her a solo exhibition—a first for a creator of mass-produced housewares. "I am a maker of useful things," she said the other day in her apartment, near Columbia. "Art has more ego to it than what I do." But if it's modesty that makes her wary of enshrinement it's also a pioneer's intolerance for being confined.

Born into a Jewish Hungarian family of freethinking patricians, the teen-age Eva was happiest in the wild garden of her parents' villa. She left its sanctuary eighty years ago and apprenticed herself to a potter and oven-maker in Budapest. For the next decade, she camped cheerfully in a series of makeshift lodgings near the various factories in Germany and Russia where she learned her trade. The months in Jazz Age Paris that Zeisel spent with her childhood friend and sometime lover Arthur Koestler, and an interlude in Weimar Berlin, living near the Romanisches Café, were the idylls in a youth of hard travel, ephemeral romance, and the gritty labor of creating beauty.

By her mid-twenties, Zeisel had mastered every phase of manufacture, from drafting to product promotion. She moved to the Soviet Union in 1932, and by 1935 she had become the artistic director of Russia's china and glass industry. Her mother was visiting her in Moscow a year later, when the secret police knocked at their door. Zeisel was imprisoned for the next sixteen months, mostly in solitary confinement, on the charge of plotting Stalin's assassination. She resisted her interrogators until the day that, as she put it in her memoirs, she betrayed her dignity with a false confession. (Koestler drew heavily upon her accounts of this ordeal for "Darkness at Noon.") But the authorities, rather than shoot her, as they had done to most of her alleged co-conspirators, deported her to Vienna, where she somehow caught the last train out before the Nazi invasion.

Last month, Zeisel celebrated her hundredth birthday. "Still alive, still working—I don't like the word 'still,'" she said. She has lived on the Upper West Side since 1938, when she and her second husband, the sociologist Hans Zeisel, arrived in New York. A few weeks later, she found work in a Manhattan factory designing ceramic miniatures. Her two children were born in the early nineteen-forties, by which time she was also teaching at the Pratt Institute and lecturing at MOMA. The playful organic shapes of Zeisel's Town and Country line for Red Wing and her curvaceous white dinner service for Hall China charmed postwar America.

The mid-century was a second heyday for Zeisel. Her third is right now. To coincide with her birthday, Pratt mounted a retrospective of nine decades in clay, glass, metal, wood, and plastic. The West Fourteenth Street gallery was crowded with design students stunned by her modernity. "What is a hundred?" she asked. "One more than ninety-nine."

The young Eva was a slight, though formidable, girl with an infectious appetite for pleasure. The centenarian has limpid eyes and a crown of white hair. She was nestled in a wing chair under a lap robe, surrounded by her heirlooms. A table of her own design had been drawn up to an Empire divan, and was set with ceramics from her best-selling 2005 collection for Crate & Barrel. Zeisel has always been a maverick modernist, and her formal templates are abstracted from nature: the penguin's belly; the duck's bill; the splash of a milk drop; the oval of an elm leaf; the whorled rim of an ear.

In the kitchen, a young Russian modelmaker, Georgii Bogdevich, was shaving plasticine from the prototype of a chalice-like footed mug that is part of Zeisel's new line of Royal Stafford earthenware. When Bogdevich offered the mug for her inspection, Zeisel chafed it in her cupped palms. Though she wasn't happy with the proportions ("not enough emotion yet"), this "play" with a model, she said, is the defining moment of gestation. "I think with my hands. I design things to be touched—not for a museum. A piece is ready when it has the shape of something to cherish."

—Judith Thurman

Former 'All-Girl' Band Leader, 101

Indomitable saxophonist Peggy Gilbert got the beat back in the 1920s, when Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Duke Ellington and the Kansas City Nighthawks were wowing Jazz Age dance crowds.

She was still blowing a hot tenor sax in 1981 on Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show" and, later, on the NBC sitcom "The Golden Girls."

"The first time I picked up a sax, I said, 'This is it!' I loved the feel of it — free and loose," she said in a recent interview. And the instrument played a starring role in her 95-year career.

Gilbert, who was born in Iowa and lives in Studio City, is nearly 102. But her memories remain as fresh as the day in 1912 when she made her stage debut, dancing a Scottish fling at age 7.

By the time she graduated from a Sioux City, Iowa, high school in 1923, she was playing the saxophone in her five-piece, all-girl band.

She arrived in Hollywood in 1928, at age 23, playing in hotels, nightclubs, radio, movies and television.

Gilbert organized bands for the motion picture industry. Back then, female musicians were expected to sing, act and dance in chorus lines.

"At one audition, a producer made us lift up our dresses. He didn't care who played what, it was who had the best legs who got the job," she said. "It was degrading, but we needed to eat."

Gilbert and her band, which changed names often, played at famous landmarks in Southern California, including the El Mirador Hotel, Cocoanut Grove, Garden of Allah, Club New Yorker, Palomar and Zenda ballrooms.

Gilbert conducted, managed, played and wrote her own music and designed the band's apparel.

"One costume had these black satin pants, and we had to back along the walls onto the bandstand because all the seats of our pants had been patched," she said.

One of Gilbert's more unusual engagements was a stint in Hawaii from 1933 to 1934. En route, aboard ship in the middle of the Pacific, the musicians learned they had been booked to play for a three-ring circus.

"If we could have walked home, we would have," Gilbert said, they were so disappointed.

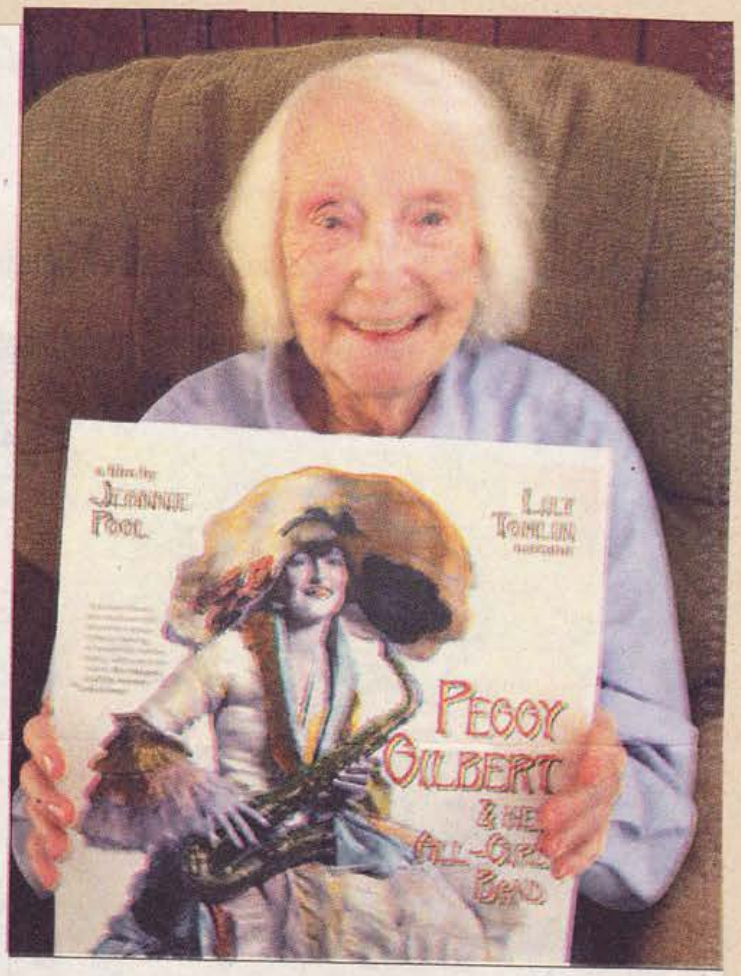
But they loved Hawaii. And while touring the islands, Gilbert fell in love and became engaged. But her fiance died of a heart attack just before their wedding.

Back on the mainland, the group played at trade shows, policemen's balls and fundraisers. Her most memorable gig was kicking off "Hollywood's Second Swing Concert" in 1937 at the Palomar ballroom with big band stars Benny Goodman, Louis Prima, Ben Pollack and Les Hite.

In 1938, her group, then called "The Early Girls," played live on radio station KMPC in Beverly Hills, six days a week, from 7 to 8:30 a.m. With a talent for improv, Gilbert dueled male musicians.

She could hold her own and more — which is why a 1938 article in the musicians union magazine infuriated her. Its title: "Why Women Musicians Are Inferior."

She responded with an article detailing the degrading discrimination that female musicians faced. To her chagrin, the magazine published her response under the headline: "How Can You Play a Horn With a Brassiere?"



BEVERLY SIMMONS

POSTER GIRL: *Peggy Gilbert with a placard from a new film about her. Gilbert, who lives in Studio City, no longer plays the sax.*

During World War II, Gilbert joined an all-female USO show. Transported by plane and dogsled, they entertained soldiers stationed in Alaska. They also visited the wounded on hospital ships, holding back tears. "We had to keep them laughing," she said. "I even played two clarinets at the same time."

Gilbert married a soldier who was a sound engineer, but they divorced soon after the war.

Like thousands of other female workers, Gilbert and her band were out of a job when the war ended. "We were fired without any notice," she said. They were told, "You girls, you've got to move over and give the boys back their jobs."

Gilbert continued to perform and manage bands. She also worked for Local 47 of the Musicians Union and wrote a column for the union paper.

In 1974, at age 69, she organized the Dixie Belles, another all-female band. They played through the mid-1990s, recording Dixieland jazz for Cambria Records. They were featured on several sitcoms, including Ellen DeGeneres' "Ellen" and "Home Improvement."

By her 100th birthday party, Gilbert could no longer play the saxophone — but she could still sing. She belted out "It Had to Be You" to her longtime friends, including actress Lily Tomlin.

"Jazz will never go out of style," Gilbert said. "We don't make the money like the rock bands, but they're overpaid and ride around in limos. We were lucky to get rides in station wagons."

Still, Gilbert says, music keeps her young.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 2006

LOS ANGELES TIMES

PATRICK DOWNS / Los Angeles Times

Rosie Freedman, 100, polishes her dance steps with instructor Russell Hicks, who says, "She swings me all around and then she's asking, 'Are you dizzy?' "

AROUND TOWN / BEVERLY BEYETTE - LA Times

No One Runs Rings Around This Rosie—Even at Age 100

That Rosie Freedman—always lying about her age.

When she was 80, her boss thought she was 65. At 90, she took an art tour of France, letting on she was 80.

Well, the jig's up.

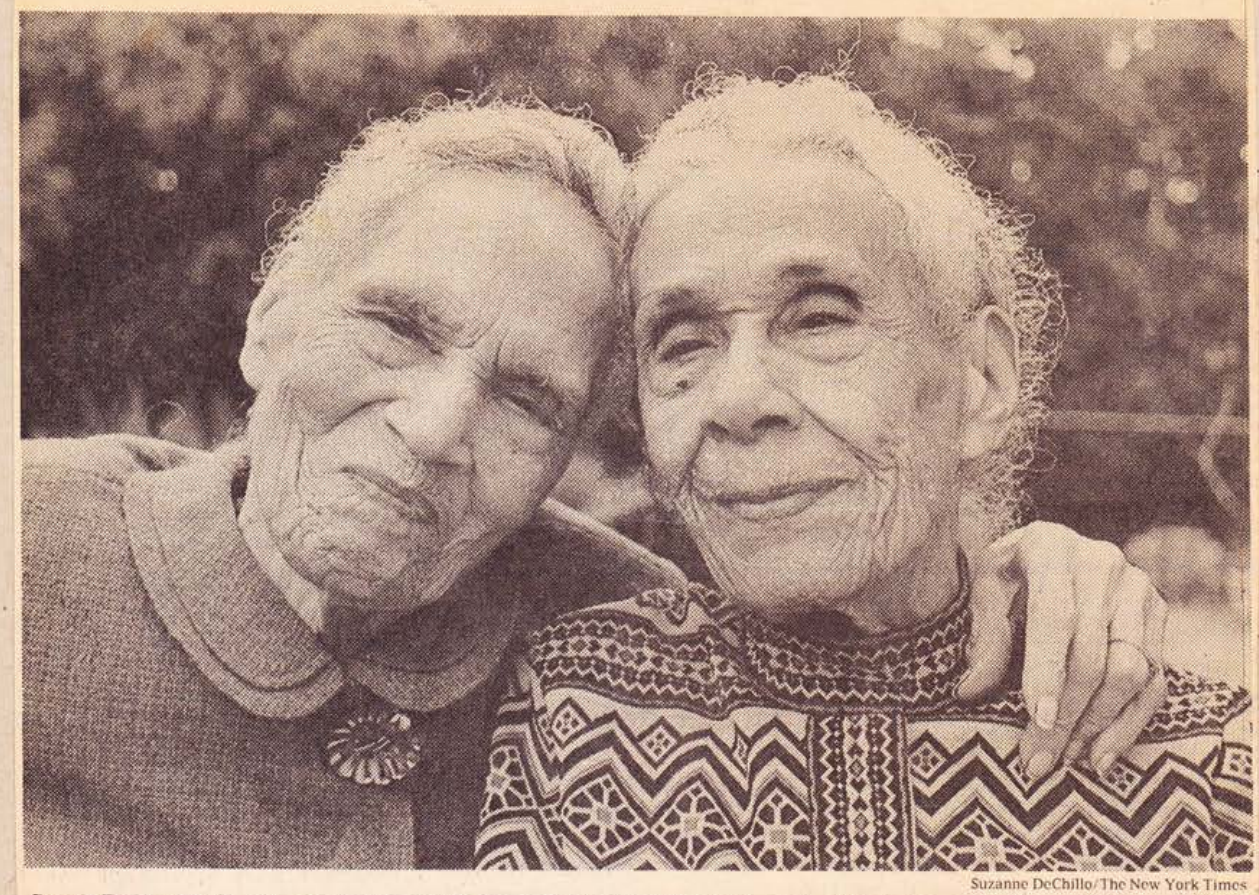
Rosie just turned 100. She did it in style, at a dinner-dance for 100. She was the one in the long pink gown with sparkles.

For weeks, Arthur Murray had been teaching her dancing in a hurry. Funny, she said, her instructor seemed to think she was fragile or something: "She swings me all around and then she's asking, 'Are you dizzy?' "

Rosie hasn't time for silly questions. After all, she has her oil painting. (She took that up when she was 79). And her Spanish lessons. In September, she and daughter Arlene March will live with a family in Mexico while Rosie brushes up on the language (one of her five).

And she has her Lakers. Birthday party guests included Jerry West, who brought jersey number 100 with ROSIE on the back. (She wore it to last Sunday's game).

Arlene likes to tell about Mother's 90th birthday. The family had arranged brunch, a visit to Norton Simon Museum and dinner. After the museum, March recalls, "We went home to rest. She told us to drop her at Loehmann's."



Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times

Sarah Delany, left, 104 years old, and her sister, Annie Elizabeth, 102, at their home in Mount Vernon, N.Y.

2 Sisters Share Secrets of Long Life From More Than Century of Lessons

By MELINDA HENNEBERGER
Special to The New York Times

MOUNT VERNON, N.Y., Sept. 17 — Two days shy of her 104th birthday, Sarah Delany and her younger sister, Annie Elizabeth, who is 102, sat in their front parlor doling out secrets to long life like candy on Halloween night. (Yoga, cod liver oil and a daily dose of garlic, chopped fine and swallowed whole, are all recommended.)

Sadie and Bessie Delany, daughters of a slave who became the country's first black bishop of the Episcopal Church, have also lived to tell how they outsmarted the "rebby boys" of the Jim Crow South and outlasted just about everyone who ever tried to hold them back.

Bessie Delany became the second black female dentist in New York State, while Sadie Delany became the first black home economics teacher in a New York City high school.

The two sisters, who have lived together all their lives, still do their own cooking and look after the place with the help of a housekeeper who comes every other week.

"She's 87," Bessie Delany said approvingly. "She's our speed."

And they still take good care of each other, as they have always done.

"I've never been afraid or alone in my life," Bessie Delany said.

Until Sadie Delany broke her hip in June, they had been in the habit of rising at 6:30 A.M. for yoga. They sleep in until 7 now, when they get up for a breakfast of oatmeal, half a banana, bran and eggs prepared with water and pepper — no salt — and a little grated cheese.

After morning prayers, when the sisters call the names of all those they either hold dear or think could use some help, they have a quiet time for reading before their noon meal, which might include a half-dozen vegetables.

Listening to Talk Radio

The mail arrives at 1 P.M. — an important daily event, since they refuse to get a phone — and in the afternoon, they pay bills, answer correspondence and take a short walk. Supper is usually just a milkshake, though sometimes they have jello made with wine, or some other treat, before going upstairs to watch the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour. And long after her sister turns in, Bessie Delany stays up late listening to talk radio.

And now they are relishing the chance to pass on some of what they learned along the way, in a book written with Amy Hill Hearth, "Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First Hundred Years" (Kodansha). Released here on Sept. 10 and in Japan on Sept. 15, in time for Revere Your Elders Day, it is already in its third printing.

SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 1992

LOS ANGELES TIMES

106 and Still a Free Spirit

A Feisty Karen Carter Has Few Regrets: 'I Have Lived to Be a Happy, Old Woman'

By MICHAEL QUINTANILLA
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Karen Martishie Hancock Carter holds a Bible opened to the 91st Psalm, her favorite. Stuffed between its tissue-thin pages—which she has underlined, highlighted and noted like a used textbook—are letters from those seeking her divine intervention.

The prayer warrior gets busy.

Carter prays for a Pasadena couple trying to have a baby; for an East Los Angeles woman whose son, a gang member, is doing time in prison; for a 40-year-old Burbank man dying of AIDS.

Eyes closed, her cupped palms facing heavenward, Carter ends the prayers by thanking her creator for the simple things in her life.

For being able to hear the clock tick.

For having enough strength to get out of her wheelchair and onto crutches.

For the mulberry tree she sees first thing every morning.

"For giving me another day of life, in this, my 106th year of living. It's so good to be alive."

She opens her eyes and places the Bible on an aluminum tray that holds a roll of toilet paper, a whistle and a flashlight—an emergency kit of sorts always within arm's reach.

"There aren't too many things I can do these days," Carter says, referring to the infirmities of aging—broken hips, failing eyesight, lapsing memory and a heart condition, the latter which she treats nightly with her own remedy: two teaspoons of Jim Beam in a half-glass of water.

"[But] as long as I can do this," she says, wiggling her thumb, "I can pray for people."

And so she does every day from a two-room travel trailer in Sylmar where she has lived for 20 years. And even though she lives alone, she says she really isn't; sometimes she awakens in the middle of the night and sees the faces of angels—young, smooth, round faces—hovering on the wall above her window.

80 AND UP
Looking Back—and Ahead—With Some Older Californians

■ One in an occasional series

"We even worked the fairs," she recalls. "I learned tailoring. I could show you in 10 minutes how to make a pattern. And then I'd make the suit for you, too. I even repaired the machines. I could do anything that I made up my mind to do."

She never finished the fourth grade, Carter says, because she "was put out to work." The family had moved to Colorado and by age 9, she was cleaning railroad bunkhouses and cooking.

"I worked for my boarding and clothes," she remembers. "I washed dishes and scrubbed floors for as many as 20 men in one bunkhouse. . . . I learned many wonderful things from them."

Among the lessons: baking bread, pies and cakes; vegetable gardening, and caring for horses. Later, Carter worked as a housekeeper and, while still a child herself, helped raise other people's children.

"I've had an active life," she says. "There wasn't anything I couldn't do. I remember when my first husband, Lee Woods, and I first had electricity and water in the house. But we had no sewage system, so I got me a shovel and dug us a ditch almost as big as this trailer and put a top on it."

"I've never cut my hair," she says of the long locks she generally wears in a bun. Instead, she performs a ritual she learned as a young girl from the Blackfoot Indians in Idaho.

Every January, during the year's first new moon, Carter wraps a wet dishrag around her hair, exposing from four to eight inches of hair. She then lights a match and singes the ends.

She says the Indians taught her that burning hair "would renew the life and energy in it."

SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 1992

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Karen Martishie Hancock Carter holds a Bible opened to the 91st Psalm, her favorite. Stuffed between its tissue-thin pages—which she has underlined, highlighted and noted like a used textbook—are letters from those seeking her divine intervention.

The prayer warrior gets busy.

Carter prays for a Pasadena couple trying to have a baby; for an East Los Angeles woman whose son, a gang member, is doing time in prison; for a 40-year-old Burbank man dying of AIDS.

Eyes closed, her cupped palms facing heavenward, Carter ends the prayers by thanking her creator for the simple things in her life.

For being able to hear the clock tick.

For having enough strength to get out of her wheelchair and onto crutches.

For the mulberry tree she sees first thing every morning.

"For giving me another day of life, in this, my 106th year of living. It's so good to be alive."

She opens her eyes and places the Bible on an aluminum tray that holds a roll of toilet paper, a whistle and a flashlight—an emergency kit of sorts always within arm's reach.

"There aren't too many things I can do these days," Carter says, referring to the infirmities of aging—broken hips, failing eyesight, lapsing memory and a heart condition, the latter which she treats nightly with her own remedy: two teaspoons of Jim Beam in a half-glass of water.

"[But] as long as I can do this," she says, wiggling her thumb, "I can pray for people."

And so she does every day from a two-room travel trailer in Sylmar where she has lived for 20 years. And even though she lives alone, she says she really isn't; sometimes she awakens in the middle of the night and sees the faces of angels—young, smooth, round faces—hovering on the wall above her window.

She never finished the fourth grade, Carter says, because she "was put out to work." The family had moved to Colorado and by age 9, she was cleaning railroad bunkhouses and cooking.

"I worked for my boarding and clothes," she remembers. "I washed dishes and scrubbed floors for as many as 20 men in one bunkhouse. . . . I learned many wonderful things from them."

Among the lessons: baking bread, pies and cakes; vegetable gardening, and caring for horses. Later, Carter worked as a housekeeper and, while still a child herself, helped raise other people's children.

"I've had an active life," she says. "There wasn't anything I couldn't do. I remember when my first husband, Lee Woods, and I first had electricity and water in the house. But we had no sewage system, so I got me a shovel and dug us a ditch almost as big as this trailer and put a top on it."

"We even worked the fairs," she recalls. "I learned tailoring. I could show you in 10 minutes how to make a pattern. And then I'd make the suit for you, too. I even repaired the machines. I could do anything that I made up my mind to do."

"I've never cut my hair," she says of the long locks she generally wears in a bun. Instead, she performs a ritual she learned as a young girl from the Blackfoot Indians in Idaho.

Every January, during the year's first new moon, Carter wraps a wet dishrag around her hair, exposing from four to eight inches of hair. She then lights a match and singes the ends.

She says the Indians taught her that burning hair "would renew the life and energy in it."

Jeanne Calment, the oldest woman on record, may be a case in point. The 4-foot-11 Frenchwoman died in 1997 at the age of 122. She was known for eating 2 pounds of chocolate a week and didn't quit smoking until she was 117.

JEAN PIERRE FIZET *Sygma/Corbis*

HAPPY 117TH: *Jeanne Calment on her birthday in 1992. She lived to be 122.*

'Never bored' Frenchwoman, 122, dies

By Jean-Marc Matalon
Associated Press

ARLES, France — She took up fencing at 85, and still rode a bicycle at 100. She liked her port wine, her olive oil, her chocolate and her cigarettes, and she released a rap CD at 121.

No wonder Jeanne Calment, at 122 the world's oldest person until her death Monday, said she was "never bored."

She lived through France's Third and Fourth Republics, and into its Fifth. She was 14 when the Eiffel Tower was completed in 1889.

"She was a little bit the grandmother of all of us," President Jacques Chirac said.

Calment died of natural causes at the Arles retirement home where she had lived for 12 years. Though blind, nearly deaf and in a wheelchair, she remained spirited and mentally sharp

— *Please see* **WORLD'S,** *Page A11*

LOOKING BACK

In 1875, when Jeanne Calment was born:

- Alexander Graham Bell would not patent his telephone until the next year.
- U.S. President Grant opened the Oregon territory.
- Tennessee enacted the first "Jim Crow" law.
- The Kentucky Derby was run for the first time.
- The first roller-skating rink opened in London.

— **WORLD'S,** *from Page A1*

until the end.

That was clear to those who attended her 121st birthday — in February 1996 — when she released her CD, *Time's Mistress*. It featured her reminiscing to a score of rap and other tunes.

By then, she was already a media star. A steady stream of foreign reporters had traveled to Arles to interview her.

Born Feb. 21, 1875, Calment eventually became the greatest attraction in the southern city of Arles since Vincent Van Gogh, who spent a year there in 1888. She met him that year when he came to her uncle's shop to buy paints, and later remembered him as "dirty, badly dressed and disagreeable."

"She was the living memory of our city," said Michel Vauzelle, the deputy mayor of Arles. "Her birthdays were a sort of family holiday, where all the people of Arles gathered around their big sister."

For Calment, the keys to long life were olive oil and port wine.

She gave up cigarettes in 1995, and her doctor said her abstinence was due to pride rather than health — she was too blind to light up herself, and hated asking others to do it for her.

At 121, Calment hinted about what it takes to stay interested in even the longest of lives.

"I dream, I think, I go over my life," she said. "I never get bored."

Calment had no direct descendants, having survived her husband, her daughter and grandson.

In her later years, she lived mostly off the income from her apartment, which she sold cheaply more than 30 years ago to a lawyer, Andre-Francois Raffray.

He had agreed to make monthly payments on the apartment in exchange for taking possession when she died, but never got to do so. He died more than a year ago at 77; his family was required to keep making the payments.

Just the same, his widow, Huguette, said Monday she was saddened by Calment's death.

"She was a personality," she told France Info radio. "My husband had very good relations with Mrs. Calment."

The *Guinness Book of World Records* had listed Calment as the oldest living person whose birth date could be authenticated by reliable records.

AFTERWORD

FROM JO AND STEF

When we began this project, it was with the hope that we would become the vibrant, inspiring women we were reading about. Now we are in our 70's and it looks a bit different from this vantage point! In many ways, we have continued to embody the spirit and joy of being physically active, being in nature, and continuing creative exploration. However, our perspective about taking on challenges, facing our fears and moving through them has shifted. We have had to acknowledge that in aging we have physical limitations, our energy is different and the stakes are higher for injury. We have developed wisdom around what we can and cannot do and what we want and do not want to take on. There is wistfulness in letting go of who we were and what we were able to do.

However, we are very aware of the gains that have opened to us. We move more slowly through nature and don't hike as far, but we see and experience so much of what is there. Though we are no longer "on belay" dangling from the side of a rock face, we get outdoors to beautiful places with our camping gear. Stef has added watercolor painting as a way to enjoy nature and Jo has expanded her pleasure through careful attention to bird watching. We both linger over the beauty that is before us. No doubt our perspectives will continue to shift as time goes on, but the essence of what we wanted to maintain and nurture will remain.

The women in this collection gave us vision and mentored us. They continue to inspire us by a spirited can-do attitude that defies age!