

Summer 2002

## Women's Research Institute of Nevada Newsletter

Women's Research Institute of Nevada

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# The Women's RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF NEVADA

Improving the lives of women in our state through research and education

summer 2002

## oral histories

October reception recognizes women in entertainment

Our oral history project continues to be the largest and most recognized of all our initiatives. We begin this newsletter with a special focus on three individuals whose histories reveal a unique perspective on the development of Las Vegas.

### Betty Bunch

Betty Bunch exemplifies the energy and talent that was so prevalent in showroom entertainment during the 1950s and 1960s.

Ms. Bunch began dancing as a child in Austin, Texas and at the age of nine decided to make it her career. At 18, she began working in stock theater productions. Shortly thereafter, she joined the Moro-Landis Dancers in Los Angeles. She came with that troupe to Las Vegas in 1956 to open for Donald O'Connor at the Sahara. Bunch continued to

dance in Las Vegas and Los Angeles until she began her family. After the birth of her second child, she retired from the showrooms but not from show business. Her involvement in both film and stage has remained rich and varied. Recently, Ms. Bunch performed as Mamita in the musical *Gigi* with the Nevada Opera Company. The interview was conducted

for our project by Joyce Marshall, a graduate student at UNLV in 1996. The interview focuses on the

*We were generously paid, well treated and it was a glamorous, elegant job.*

time Betty spent performing on the Las Vegas strip, including her long involvement with the afternoon show, *Bottoms Up*, and provides information on working conditions and racial integration in Las Vegas.

*Betty Bunch (center) received her oral history from Senator Richard Bryan and WRIN Director Joanne Goodwin.*



### Pioneer Farm Families



*Tomiyasu children played in front of their Model T*

We had the opportunity to work with community groups to collect the narratives of some of the early families who farmed in the valley. Both the Tomiyasu and Gilcrease families played unique roles in the area's development. Their stories preserve a part of early history that would otherwise be lost.

#### Tomiyasu

Nanyu Tomiyasu described his family's life and work on the 120-acre farm started by his parents. His father, Yonema moved to Las Vegas in 1908 and cultivated the land using abundant water sources from their well. Toyona, his wife, joined him a few years later. Their farm and its fruits, vegetables and livestock became an important source of food for the construction and mining workers in the area.

When the children were not helping with the farm, they attended school in the Paradise Valley two-room schoolhouse. Mr. Tomiyasu's oral history reveals the pains and pleasures of farm life, planting tips, early Las Vegas history, recollections of nearby ranches and farms, and the experiences of this early Japanese American family through the period of World War Two.

This oral history was made possible by the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

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Ted (left), Elda (center) and Bill Gilcrease (far right) in a field of milo maize, 1943.

from Oral History page 1

#### Gilcrease

Ted and Bill Gilcrease have lived on the Gilcrease Ranch near Tule Springs for over 80 years. Born in Reno, Nevada they moved with their parents Elda and Leonard to Las Vegas in 1920. It was the "good land with a natural spring flowing water" that brought the family to southern Nevada.

The two boys and their mother ran the ranch after Leonard left for California. Elda had invested her inheritance in the land and was unwilling to abandon it. She home-schooled the boys in-between farm chores and oversaw the operations until the boys were old enough to take over some responsibilities.

Ted became an omnivorous reader with a strong interest in science and engineering. He created and adapted farm equipment to the desert land's unique needs. His innovations in haymaking, irrigation, and orchards made the Gilcrease Ranch productive through the 1930s and 1940s. Today he continues to oversee the operation of the Gilcrease Orchards.

Bill helped with the poultry and egg businesses, selling the products to Las Vegas restaurants and stores. In 1975, he founded the Gilcrease Bird Sanctuary, to rescue and rehabilitate wild, domestic, and exotic birds.

The Gilcrease family history records the era of bountiful water and flourishing crops in the valley. It also reveals the persistence of early Las Vegas.

# Focus on Projects

*The Institute is dedicated to unifying interdisciplinary research and educational efforts focused on women and gender. The projects listed are a sample of our works.*

#### National Education for Women's Leadership Program (NEW Leadership)

WRIN has been selected by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University to be a partner for their 2003 program. This program cultivates civic engagement in Nevada's college women through on-going interaction with women involved at all levels of civic life. We are currently soliciting program and funding partners.

#### Status of Women & Girls in Nevada

WRIN is a member of a statewide project collecting and studying data on approximately 150 indicators of women's health, education, social welfare, and employment in the state. Upon completion of this research, critical information on the well being of Nevada's citizens will be available for our legislators, educators, and general public.



#### History of Popular Dance and Dancers in Las Vegas

The oral history project added a new dimension last fall. This series will feature five 1/2-hour videos on women in popular dance during the 1940s through 1970s. Episodes feature *The Chorus Line*, *Flamenco with Margo Torea*, and *The Showroom Spectacle*. Stay tuned.

#### Women Community Builders of Nevada

The biographies of approximately 100 Nevada women who have made significant contributions in politics, education, entertainment, or civic activism are included in this book. We are currently seeking funding to cover the costs of publication.

#### Technology Enhancement for Women and Girls

In 2001, WRIN worked with the U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau Region IX to assess the preparation of women and girls entering the technology workforce of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2002, we entered Phase II of this project, which brings the Nevada team of technology experts into monthly regional teleconference meetings coordinated by the Women's Bureau.



# News of Affiliates

Michael Bowers (Professor of Political Science) was one of eight finalists of the U.S. Supreme Court Judicial Fellowship Program.

Barb Brents (Associate Professor of Sociology) received a grant to develop Internet WebCT courses.

Maria Raquel Casas (Assistant Professor of History) received a Fellowship at the Chicana/o Studies Center, UC Santa Barbara.

Sue Fawn Chung (Associate Professor of History) co-hosted the National Trust for Historic Preservation Western Advisors Conference in Northern Nevada in April 2002. In addition, her paper on Chinese miners and merchants of Gold Creek, NV is being made into an educational film by KLVX.

Suzan DiBella was promoted to Assistant Director, UNLV News and Public Information Office, effective February 2002. Sue has been with UNLV for 17 years – all of them with the News and Public Information.

Joseph A. (Andy) Fry (Professor of History) published *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973*.

Evelyn Gajowski (Associate Professor of English) published "'Sigh No More, Ladies, Sigh No More': Genesis Deconstructed in Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado about Nothing*" in *Journal of Theatre and Drama*. She recently delivered papers and organized and chaired sessions at the Shakespeare Assn. of America, the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association, and the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association.

Joanne Goodwin (Associate Professor of History) edited *Women in American History, 1585-Present, Volume 3, The Twentieth Century*.

Lois Helmbold joins the faculty at UNLV as the new Chair of the Women's Studies Department. Dr. Helmbold previously held the position of Coordinator for Women's Studies, within the Social Sciences College at San Jose State University.

Eugene Moehring (Professor of History) recently celebrated 25 years of teaching and research in the UNLV History Department and submitted his manuscript on the development of the urban west to publishers.

Ellen Cronan Rose (Chair, Women's Studies Department) retired from UNLV on June 30, 2002. During her nine-year tenure, Dr. Rose directed the Women's Studies Program and facilitated its transition into a department. She initiated the graduate certificate in women's studies; the first step toward a graduate degree in the field. Dr. Rose also brought the National Women's Studies Association Conference to Las Vegas for the first time in June 2002.

David Tanenhaus (Assistant Professor of History) received a Mellon long-term fellowship from the Newberry Library in Chicago to complete his manuscript on the history of juvenile justice.

Elsbeth Whitney (Associate Professor of History) coordinated the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association Conference held at UNLV in May 2002.

*Do you know someone who would like to know about our work? Give us a call.*

## Kudos

Catherine Bellver – Distinguished Professor of Spanish, published *Absence and Presence: Spanish Women Poets of the Twenties and Thirties*.

Barbara Cloud – UNLV Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, edited *Minister to the Cherokees: A Civil War Autobiography* by James Anderson Slover.

P. Jane Hafen – Associate Professor of English, published *Dreams and Thunder: Stories, Poems, and the Sun Dance Opera: Writings by Zitkala-Sa*.

Evelyn Gajowski – Associate Professor of English, earned the "Professor of the Month" Award of the UNLV Panhellenic Council for February 2002.

Patrice Hollrah – Director, Administrative Faculty, Department of English, won the UNLV Graduate College and Foundation Award for Best Dissertation, 2002. The title is "Political Ramifications of Gender Complementarity for Women in Native American Literature" (P. Jane Hafen, Chair; Joseph McCullough, Sharon Moore, and Joanne Goodwin, committee members).

Martha Knack (Professor of Anthropology), received the prestigious Distinguished Professor Award for 2002. Dr. Knack, a member of the UNLV faculty since 1977, is an expert on Southern Nevada's Paiute Indians. She is at the forefront of applied anthropology and is a pioneer in recognizing the importance of both men and women in Native American studies. Her latest publication is *Boundaries Between: The Southern Nevada Paiutes, 1775-1995* (2001).

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# briefs

## First Visiting Scholar

Professor Jian Zhang from China Women's College continues her residency with the Women's Research Institute of Nevada throughout 2002.

China's universities are building their curriculum in women's studies and are drawing on the 30 years of research compiled by U.S. universities. Professor Zhang has the responsibility for developing the women's studies courses at her institution. Prior to her arrival at UNLV, Professor Zhang visited the University of Michigan. She has visited classes taught by UNLV faculty and presented guest lectures on women in China.

## Grants and Gifts

The Kellogg Foundation and Soroptimists International of Las Vegas Valley support New Leadership.

The Kellogg Foundation has awarded \$10,000 to WRIN to support our New Leadership project. With additional support from UNLV and the Soroptimists International of Las Vegas Valley we are encouraged that we will raise the additional \$40,000 necessary for this summer institute.

## Interns Advance

Megan Wilson (Sociology MA) helped us last summer and then accepted a Graduate Assistantship with the Women's Studies Department, UNLV. In that job, she had full responsibility for all logistics during the National Women's Studies Association Conference held this year in Las Vegas. Congratulations, Megan.

Professor Zhang is also engaged in her own research that examines the portrayal of women in advertising images in China. WRIN hope to host a talk on her research this fall.

## Nevada Woman

Women's Research Institute is featured.

The March/April and August issues featured WRIN and our activities. The spring issue included photos from our fall reception as well as quotes from WRIN director, Joanne Goodwin, on those who have inspired her in her work. The August issue features the work of the Women's Research Institute with a special focus on women in business. Thanks to the writers and editors of the magazine for making our work more visible to the wider community.

## 2002 - 2003 Plans

- ▲ Annual Reception  
(moved to early March)
- ▲ NEWLeadership Nevada  
(Summer)
- ▲ Oral histories to be started:  
Claudine Williams  
Janet Daines
- ▲ Oral histories to finish:  
Renee Diamond  
Dorothy Eisenberg  
Velma Hazelton  
Nancy Houssels  
Florence McClure  
Gail McQuary  
Fran Montez  
Carolyn Sparks
- ▲ Video Biographies of Popular  
Dance in Las Vegas, including:  
Flamenco with Margo Torea  
Fluff LeCoque and the  
Showroom Spectacle  
Women of the Chorus Line
- ▲ Author's Receptions
- ▲ Visiting Scholars

*Professors Hafen, Cloud, Bellver, and Knack at last spring's author reception.*





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