

# CANYON LEGACY

JOURNAL OF THE DAN O'LAURIE MUSEUM OF MOAB

FALL/WINTER 2008 VOLUME 64 \$6.00

1957 - 2008



## 50th Anniversary Edition

*Fifty Years of Preserving Grand County's History*



**Also Inside:** *An interview with past Board Presidents who reflect on the changes in the museum*

**Jean McDowell:**

*Her memories of the years she spent as curator and Director*



# CANYON LEGACY

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*Canyon Legacy* was established in 1989 to publish articles on the history, pre-history and natural history of the Colorado plateau in southeastern Utah and the Four Corners region.

Materials to be considered for publication should be submitted to *Canyon Legacy*, 118 E. Center Street, Moab, UT 84532 or call 435-259-7985.

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**Within** this issue of the *Canyon Legacy* you'll find the thoughts and comments of the people who have been so instrumental in keeping the museum alive for everyone over the last fifty years.

The idea for this issue was not even mine but was inspired by the thoroughly enjoyable Annual Dinner which celebrated our museum's birthday. I suddenly realized that, considering the time span, it's really quite amazing that all of the former curators are still available! Since I completely enjoyed listening to everyone reminisce about their time at the museum, I knew it should be taken one step further and these thoughts documented for those who weren't able to be there or those who may be interested at some future date. All too often history is lost because it's left in the verbal phase and never recorded. With time and failing memories, the story becomes completely unrecognizable, if anyone recalls it at all! We really don't want to lose these fascinating recollections of our origins, and how the dream of the museum was moved forward over time. Such storage of memories has been proven to be a treasure with our oral history program, and its value is growing with each person whose history we add.

So here we have discussions by each of the curators and directors, as well as the available past Presidents of the Board, commenting on what they recall, what it was about this museum that engendered their interest and dedication, and what their ideas are about the museum's future. Editing is often a job where one clarifies the wording, tweaks the content, or changes the punctuation. But in most of these articles I have attempted to leave them as "whole" as possible to retain the voice of the individual as well as the flavor of that person's particular personality. This issue is not meant to be a compact, scholarly treatise, but rather a group of recollections and thoughts.

The times changed, the buildings changed, and the name changed (several times), but the goal of preserving our local history has never changed. Our focus on the education of our visitors, our neighbors, and our schoolchildren has also never changed, and the new directions in which the museum is heading are opening even more vistas for our patrons and guests.

So my final wish is simply to say "Happy 50th Birthday" to the Museum of Moab!

- Rusty

On the front cover, drawings of the old and the new museum buildings.

On the back cover, the old Townhouse Motel, around during the museum's early years, was just one of many built as Moab became a tourist destination.

For information on becoming a member of the Museum of Moab, please write to 118 E. Center St., Moab, UT 84532; or phone 435-259-7985.

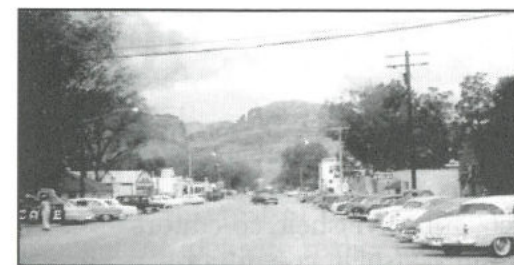
*The mission of the Museum of Moab is to preserve and display artifacts and information, and to promote research and education that accurately reflect the natural and cultural history of the Moab area.*

# CANYON LEGACY

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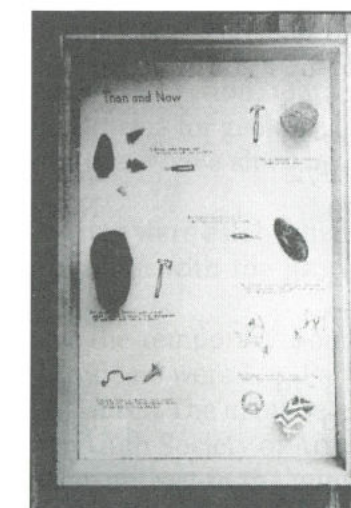
The Museum Board Presidents weigh in on their terms as president and what they see for the future of the museum.

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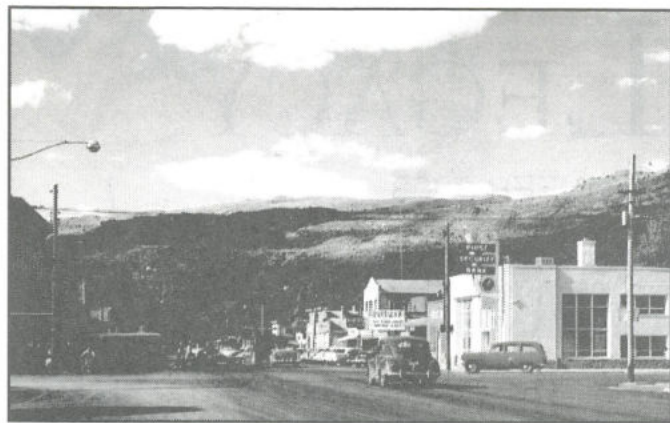


Lloyd Pierson (l, back) and President of the Board Pete Plastow (2nd from left) with guests at the new building's dedication.

Early display of archaic weapons and tools



# Curators/Directors, 1957-2008



Main Street as it appeared on a postcard of the 50s era.

1957-1961	Lloyd Pierson
1961-1969	Billie Provonsha
1969	Virginia Fossey
1970	Jackie Bierscheid Wheeler
1970-1977	Virginia Fossey
1977-1988	Lloyd Pierson
1989-2005	Jean McDowell
2001-2006	Rusty Salmon
2006-2007	Eleanor Inskip
2008 to present	Travis Schenck

# Canyon Legacy Editors, 1989-2008

Spring 1989 – Winter 1994	Jean Akens
Spring 1995	John Weisheit & David Williams, co-editors
Summer 1995 - Summer 1996	John Weisheit, David Williams, Kris Taylor, co-editors
Winter 1996 - Spring 1998	John Weisheit, Jim Page, Kris Johnson, co-editors
Fall 1998	Kris Johnson, Lisa Church, John Weisheit, co-editors
Winter 1998 - Spring 1999	Lisa Church, Jim Page, John Weisheit, co-editors
Fall 1999 - Spring 2000	Lisa Church
Summer 2000 – Winter 2006	Rusty Salmon
Spring 2007 – Summer 2008	Sena Hauer
Winter 2008	Rusty Salmon

# Board Presidents, 1957-2008

1957	Meeting with other groups	1981	Lois Jamison
1958	Articles of Incorporation filed	1982-1987	David White
		1988	Pete Plastow
1958-60	1st President Lew Painter	1990-92	Keith Montgomery
1961-62	Ross Musselman	1993-96	John Weisheit
1963-68	Helen M. Knight	1997	Dave Wood
1969-70	Russ Donoghue	1998	Jim Page
1971-72	Joe Gelo	1999-2003	Tom Stengel
1973	No minutes - unknown	2004	Detta Dahl half year/ Travis Trittschuh half year
1974-76	David May	2005-2006	Jim Tharp
1977	Some minutes; no names	2007-2008	Nick Eason
1978 -79	Marian Pierson		
1980	David Bretzke		

*(compiled by Jean McDowell from museum minutes and other documents)*

# The Moab Museum 1957-1988

*(This article was originally published in the first volume of the Canyon Legacy, Spring 1989, and was written by Lloyd M. Pierson. It is included here to provide continuity for the stories that follow. This history is based primarily on minutes of meetings of the museum Board of Directors and personal recollections unless otherwise indicated.)*

**M**oab boomed during the 1950s after Charlie Steen's uranium strike brought thousands of new people into town. The population of Moab soared from a mere 1250 to nearly 8,000 as prospectors, miners, promoters, stock salesmen and opportunists moved in to pursue and capture the American Dream of becoming rich.

Many of these people were well-educated movers and shakers, itching to accomplish something in this post war period. It was said at the time that any two individuals with the same interest soon became friends; if a third was added they formed a club.

The original inhabitants of Moab had long cherished the idea of a museum to promote tourism through the fascinating human and natural history of the area. Interest of old residents and new finally brought the idea into reality in the fall of 1957.

At a meeting in the city hall on November 13, 1957, representatives of civic organizations gathered together to initiate the museum movement. These included Ray West of the Rotary Club, Essie White of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, L.A. Painter of the Chamber of Commerce, Alvin E. Nash of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers, Bea Maynard of the Points and Pebbles Club, Ross Musselman of the Gem and Mineral Society, Donna Nelson of Beta Sigma Phi Sorority, Moab Mayor Ken McDougald, Betty Jacobs of the Newcomers Club, Lloyd Pierson of the Lions Club (who became the first curator), and Gussie Loveridge of Epsilon Sigma Alpha Sorority, Elenore Simons, President of the Women's Literary Club, presided over the meeting.<sup>1</sup>

At the first meeting, plans for exhibits and types of cases were discussed along with sources of display items. These included the Dr. J.S. Williams' archeological collection, artifacts from Ross Musselman's collection of prehistoric materials, and Ila (Mrs. Jack) Corbin's telephone history collection. Obtaining assistance from the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers for geological and mineral displays from the various mines in the region was also suggested. All of these have since become incorporated within the museum's collections.

At the second meeting on November 20, 1957, fifteen civic club representatives were established as a temporary Board of Directors and plans were made to form a nonprofit organization with the proposed bylaws of the organization to be submitted to a lawyer before being brought to a vote.

At a meeting on December 4, 1957, officers were elected to preside over the temporary Board of Directors until after the annual meeting set for January 15, 1958. The temporary officers were L.A. Painter, President; Elenore Simons, Vice-President; Sally Painter, Secretary; Ray West, Treasurer. The name selected for the organization to sponsor the Grand County Museum was the "Southeastern Utah Society of Arts and Sciences, Incorporated." By the February, 1958 meeting this had been boiled down, at least in the minutes,

Archeology Room, Moab Museum 1965-86





History Room, Moab Museum  
1965-86

to the Moab Museum Association. The Moab Museum name stuck, but eventually the organization was incorporated as the Southeastern Utah Society of Arts and Sciences. At the last meeting in 1957, it was decided to have permanent appointments to the Board of Directors from Grand County, Moab City, the National Park Service, Grand County Schools and Texas Technological College of Lubbock, Texas. Texas Tech was involved in starting a field school in Moab at the time. The author was appointed curator "to co-ordinate the work of the exhibit and the museum committees." Finance, building and publicity committees were also formed. So in the short space of a month and only three meetings, the society and the museum were launched. There was no lack of enthusiasm; all that was needed was a building, exhibits and money!

The year 1958 was a busy one for the museum. At the February monthly meeting the temporary president and treasurer were reinstalled. The temporary secretary was replaced

by Betty Jacobs. Ross Musselman was made vice-president and Elenore Simons was put in the new office of 2nd Vice-President.

Some advice on exhibits and museum work was given at the April meeting by David Jones, regional interpreter of the National Park Service in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Ed Ferdon, curator of the International Folkart Museum in the same city.

Robert Norman, Moab geologist, is given credit for bringing the idea of a "national" museum to the Women's Literary Club and requested that it "not be a regular museum just for old relics or just for Grand County." The club women entered the museum concept in the Sears and Roebuck Foundation's Community Improvement Project Contest. The committee to spearhead the project consisted of Marian Pierson, Chairperson, Elenore Simons, Ila Corbin, Sally Painter, and Lavinia Waldstein. In May, 1958, with the project complete and the museum underway, the club was presented with a check for \$300.00 at the state convention.<sup>2</sup>The money was then presented to the Moab Museum to further its work. By March, use of a "temporary" home for the museum — which was to last for seven years — was donated by Grand County. This was a small, four-room adobe brick house located at 150 East Center where the city offices are today.<sup>3</sup> It was May before the occupants were able to find other lodging and allow the museum crews to begin interior work, although planning and acquisitions had proceeded at a fairly rapid pace.

The roof of the old house was badly in need of repair and the county budget was already over-extended so the local Lions Club generously provided a new shingle

job. Not to be outdone, the Moab Rotary Club painted the interior of the building. That summer it was decided that enough exhibits had been completed to open the building on the 22nd of August in conjunction with a museum ice cream social on the courthouse lawn and the dedication out in Arches National Monument of a new road. Photo files show that the museum contained two cases of archaeological materials, a panel showing the flow chart of the Uranium Reduction Company uranium mill, panels on early settlement and exploration, a large flat wall display on the geology of the region and several old donated "candy" cases with historic artifacts and uranium minerals. Three of the rooms in the small house were used for exhibition purposes. The fourth room, a kitchen, was used for workroom and storage.

By the end of the year a series of local and outside traveling exhibits had been programmed along with a few guest speakers. Volunteers, including the Girl Scouts, kept the museum open on weekends. An accession and catalog system, borrowed from the National Park Service, was established. Monthly movies were being shown to the school children on Saturdays, and a case for uranium minerals was donated by the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers.

The directors report for the first 14 months of operation said some 6,000 people had been through the museum and 125 "interested and spirited Moab citizens donated their time" to keep the museum open when it wasn't feasible to hire someone — meaning lack of funds. A major lecture by Ed Ferdon on Easter Island archaeology and several

movies both for children and adults had been given. Several portable exhibits for the schools had been made. For the coming year, a lecture on outer space and another on geology were planned. Traveling exhibits were to come in the form of Ute baskets from the University of Utah, artwork from the Museum of New Mexico and a display from the American Museum of Atomic Energy.

With a few additions, these early generative years set the stage and direction for the operation of the Moab museum. Improvements in facilities, cases and exhibits were made as time, money, and need dictated. Spin-offs like the Great Books Program occurred. A summer arts program was co-sponsored with the University of Utah and the Moab Chamber of Commerce in 1960. Virginia Fossey, after working only part time in previous years, was hired to work regular hours in June, 1960, as the only permanent employee.

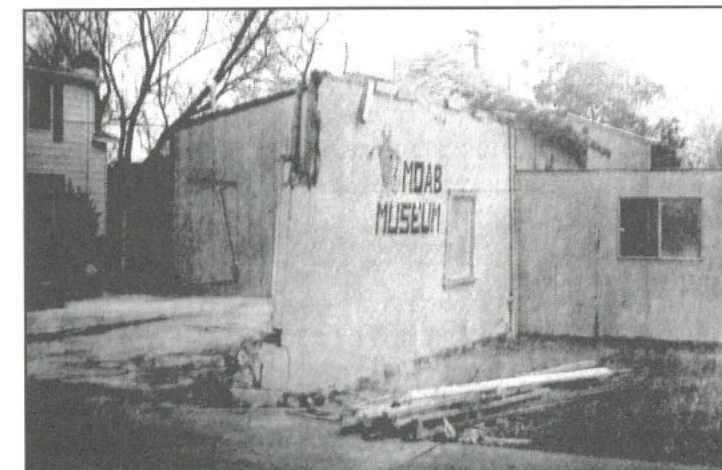
1961-62 saw a change in curators as the author transferred, in June, 1961, to another National Park Service job in Virginia. Billie (Mrs. Harold) Provonsha, a long time member and supporter of the museum, took over the responsibilities in May, 1962. She kept the museum going in a professional manner and, with her connections as a long-time resident of Moab, added many items to the collections for the betterment of the displays. The move into the old city office building at 118 East Center Street in April of 1965 almost doubled the space for exhibits and storage.

The Provonsha era ended when she moved to Arizona in July, 1969, but others took up the banner and the museum continued to function. Much of the day-to-day continuity fell to Virginia Fossey, with her thorough knowledge about operations and past events that had occurred while she was working there. During the period 1969-1977, many large collections were added to the museum including the telephone exhibit from Jack and Ila Corbin, and various minerals and fossils came from members of the Points and Pebbles Club and Jack and Krug Walker. A conservation reading room and library were set up for a time. In the front room, courtesy of Dave May and Carl Davis, a banana plant was ensconced for a while — no bananas ever appeared, however.

During the late 1970s and into the 1980s the museum was stimulated into greater activity, spurred by increased public interest in the past, and in antique collecting and the preservation of these nostalgic items. With the addition of retirees and some younger members to the Board of Directors, the museum entered into a flurry of educational and

social programs. An annual ice cream social was started in 1979 on Utah Pioneer Day. The museum also participated in the Pioneer Parade. A symposium on Southeastern Utah Archaeology with archaeologists pre-eminent in the field was held. A lecture on the Old Spanish Trail by noted historian C. Gregory Crampton of the University of Utah was given in conjunction with an exhibit on Spanish Colonial Trade Materials from the Museum of New Mexico. Many of the movies made in Moab were obtained and screened for the traveling public and local citizens. Grants from the Utah Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute for Museum Services were obtained for some of these projects, and also to place the large pieces of equipment behind the museum under cover, and to get a few metal cabinets and shelves for storage of the museum collection. During the same period, an increase in the use by local and outside writers and researchers became apparent as old photographs from the museum and photos of museum artifacts appeared in many publications, both popular and academic, and on various types of television shows. The museum continued, as it had in the past, to provide curatorial service for some of the salvage excavations of pre-historic materials in the region and to allow research investigators to study them.

In 1979 and 1980, Dan O'Laurie made sizable contributions to the museum with instructions that a "building fund" be set up. Dan was a local phil-



Demolition in 1987 of the old city office building which had been used by the museum is seen in a photo by Kent Dalton

anthropologist who had come to Moab in the 1950s. At that time he was associated with the uranium pioneer and "king," Charlie Steen. After reaching financial security, Dan stayed on in Moab and became a silent but steady supporter of many civic projects. He was especially generous with the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, the golf course and many other organizations including, fortunately, the Moab Museum.<sup>4</sup> He was the first life member of the museum. He also served on the Board of Directors and, at one time during the early 60s, kept it open by personally paying the salary of the hostess.

In 1983 the fund established by Dan O'Laurie had become large enough to undertake the building of a relatively inexpensive addition to the rear of the old city building. The 30 by 33 foot structure was to house the historical exhibits and, upon completion in 1986, was ded-

icated as the Dan O'Laurie History Hall. Dan knew of the plans to name the hall for him and became very much interested in its progress. He also became concerned that the new addition made the old building look rather shabby and was considering how he and the museum could upgrade it. When it was suggested by the author that it might be best to tear the old building down and start over, it did not take Dan long to consider and agree to financing this idea. At the Board of Directors meeting in December, 1986, it was unanimously voted to name the entire museum complex after him. Little did the board members know he had terminal cancer at the time. The old museum building was torn down in early 1987. Groundbreaking for the new structure took place on July 24th of the same year. Despite inclement weather, a large crowd attended the grand opening of the modern Dan O'Laurie Museum on August 20, 1988.

#### Footnotes

1. Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Phyllis Cortes ed., *Grand Memories*, Utah Printing Co., Salt Lake City, p. 171; *Times-Independent* 10/31/57
2. Op. cit. p. 171
3. Location at the time of this article, 1989
4. *Times-Independent*, 1/15/87.

*Lloyd Pierson, whose follow-up article appears later in this issue, was the first curator of the museum from 1957 to 1961 as an unpaid calling while he was employed as Chief Ranger at Arches National Monument. After retirement from 27 years of federal service in 1975, he returned to Moab and in 1977 became the museum curator once again, a position held until January 1, 1989.*



Just a sampling of some of the museum's current or recent exhibits.



# Billie Provonsha: My Years as the Curator of the Moab Museum

I don't remember the exact date that I became the curator of the Moab Museum, but I do remember how. Ross Musselman came to see me one day and said that the Board of Directors was looking for someone to replace Lloyd Pierson as curator since he had moved away. Ross said he wanted to nominate me. I thanked him for his confidence in me but told him that I was really busy and would be for the next several months. I would need time to think about it and suggested that he should try to find someone else. Later on, possibly, I could help out but I would be too busy to do anything now. About a week later when the next edition of the *Times* came out, I was surprised to read that I had been selected as the new curator. When I called Ross about it, he assured me that it was a real easy job and it would take very little of my time. Eventually I forgave him for railroading me into the job, but it took a few years.

When I started, the museum was located in the little old house east of the present location. Virginia Fossey was the receptionist and the only paid employee. Later I met with the County Commissioners and got permission to move the museum to another old house that was larger and in better condition. It was located where the present museum is and was torn down when this one was built.

The move was a lot of work, but some of the Board members were really a lot of help. Dave and Marilyn Delling were really great! I remember Harold and I would meet Dave and Marilyn there after work and we would spend the evening cleaning and then painting before we could move into that building. Their daughter, Jane, was just a baby and we would move her from room to room as we worked. When the building was all ready, several Board members helped with the actual moving. Marvin Ishum started doing carpenter work for us at that time and he would work for less per hour than he usually charged.

One year when it was time to nominate people for the Board, I talked to Helen M. Knight about serving as a Board member. She had been retired for a couple of years and was ready to get involved in something. She was immediately elected President of the Board. She was a big help in planning and setting up exhibits. One time we had a traveling art exhibit, and the two of us spent a considerable amount of time hanging all the paintings. I remember one in particular and we couldn't decide which way to hang it. After turning it upside down and then around several times, we finally decided which way we liked best. After the exhibit was over and we were taking the pictures down and packing them for shipping, I discovered an arrow pointing "up" on the back of this picture. It had been upside down for the whole exhibit! We both sat down and had a good laugh before we finished the packing. We agreed that Modern Art was not for us!

We were always short of money. We would joke about how we could get funds we needed for some project if we would just harvest the marijuana along the irrigation ditch in front of



Although Billie left the museum and moved to Arizona with her husband, the Provonshas have now returned to make their home again in Moab and are active museum members.

Mrs. Knight's home. It grew there every year and Mrs. Knight would have to call and call before she could get the city to come and destroy it.

One winter, Virginia's husband was sick and off work and the boys needed medical attention. I went to the County Commissioners' Meeting and asked them if they could put

Year Report to the Board, he would always jokingly make a motion to double my salary. The motion always passed, of course, and I ended up with a salary with a lot of zeros but nothing in front of them! Mr. Balsley donated his "Yellow Circle" rock to the museum while I was the curator. This was a great addition to the Mineral and Uranium History

timers." It was really a learning experience for me.

Being curator gave me an opportunity to get to know a number of "old timers" that I would never have known otherwise. After some of them got to know me, they would call or send word that they had some item I could borrow. I always felt honored when they trusted me with their prized possessions. The job was a lot of work and worry, but I must admit I missed it when we moved to Arizona!

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*We would joke about how we could get funds we needed for some project if we would just harvest the marijuana along the irrigation ditch in front of Mrs. Knight's home.*

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Virginia on their payroll so she could have medical benefits. They talked it over and agreed.

Charlie Steen's secretary called me one day and asked me to come down to the office. Charlie was in the process of moving to Nevada and he wanted to know if we could use some of his display cases in the museum. I contacted Marvin Ishum again and he moved the cases and set them up in the museum for us. Later, when Marvin was applying for his State Contractor License, I was glad to write a letter for him. That is how we got the lighted mineral display cases and after they were in, I talked some of the Moab Points and Pebbles Club members into giving us some local materials, each in rough, slabbed, and polished pieces, for display.

Maxine Musselman donated the Ross Musselman case and artifacts after Ross passed away. After that case was in, Lucian Tangren saw it and he donated some of his collection.

Howard Balsley was a member of the Board for years. Each time I gave the End of the

section as the Yellow Circle Mine was quite a famous mine. There is also such a fascinating story behind the mine's discovery because of that particular rock.

I have a lot of good memories of my years as curator. The DUP (Daughters of the Utah Pioneers organization) always came through with wonderful quilt exhibits each year. Orice Irish was usually in charge of it. The Moab Points and Pebbles Club also had outstanding exhibits. One man from Grand Junction, Colorado, contacted me asking if he could put in an exhibit of his polished rocks and jewelry. It was an excellent exhibit. When he came to remove it, he and his wife gave me a very nice ring he had made. When Dan Keeler was in Moab working on his book *Town on a Powder Keg*, I spent quite a lot of time with him, especially as he interviewed a number of "old



Quilt exhibits are still featured at the museum as they were during Billie Provonsha's curatorship. Verlyn Westwood, a museum volunteer and active quilter, shows off an historic quilt from a recent Delicate Stitchers' museum display.

# Virginia Fossey, Heart and Soul of the Museum of Moab



Virginia Fossey has been with the museum since its inception, serving as receptionist and, at one time, curator. It is her endearing smile and charming welcome that makes museum visitors feel at home as they step through the front door. The Fossey room was named as a tribute to her when it was originally used for temporary displays and it now holds the mesozoic artifacts. She is not only the oldest County employee, but also the one with the most longevity on the job!

I wasn't involved with getting the museum going but have been involved with it almost from the start as at least the receptionist. They originally tried to have volunteer help for the first few months and it just didn't work. I happened to walk in with my kids to go to the little picture show and they asked me if I would be interested in being the receptionist. I think this was about 1958. When you walked into the old house you went into what would have been the front room and they had closed the kitchen part off from it. There were six rooms - the kitchen where they had the workshop, the room for the kids' shows and the Board meetings and then a couple of other rooms in addition to the two up front which were more or less connected into one big room. It was very light with lots of windows and one room had a great big window in it.

As a bit of background, Dan O'Laurie had come in with the uranium people and I believe Charlie Steen's dad had worked for Dan and his partners in Texas. When Charlie came up here and made his discovery, Dan came up and kept an eye on him without keeping an eye on him, if you know what I mean. I'm quite sure that Dan is the one who got the money for the first shaft at Mi Vida and, of course, he was a Board member of the museum and he was the treasurer for awhile. He got the scout house for the kids and he put a lot of money into the golf course. These things I know for sure. He did so many good little things, but if you weren't on the receiving end, you wouldn't know about it. He made sure that people who needed to go to the doctor were able to, or those who needed medicine could get it. Dr. Mayberry was just out of school and he came up here to visit somebody. They introduced Dan to him and Dan looked at him and said, "If you'll settle in Moab, I'll give you the money to start your practice." This story came directly from Dr. Mayberry himself who told this to me one time when he came in. He said that, of course, he eventually paid Dan back but he said, "Here I was, somebody that Dan didn't even know and he did that." So there are so many people Dan helped and I have no idea who they all were but he even helped some kids through school. He wouldn't buy them a car or do anything frivolous, just necessary things. And he paid my salary for awhile. Ross Musselman was on the first board and Ross paid it once, but then Dan

was paying it for awhile after the museum first started and we didn't have any money coming in except for donations. Then I was paid through the recreation board funds. I didn't go onto the county payroll itself until Billie Provonsha came in as curator.

I eventually became curator after Billie left. Jackie Bierscheid had taken over for a very short time but then she also left. I was still being paid by the County for my receptionist duties at that time but that increased by \$20 a month when I was made curator. Even though I was called the curator, I didn't feel that I was really "curating" anything, although I catalogued things when they came in. During that time here at the museum there just wasn't that much activity going on. I think at that time that my hours were 1 PM to 5 PM and then 7 PM to 9 PM and that was all seven days of the week. Those are crazy hours but that's the way it was for a long time. And we didn't have volunteers to help cover the hours so I covered them myself.

We were already out of the old house and into the old white museum building when I became curator. First that building was a family house, then a mortuary, a feed store, a fire station and I don't know if it was more than that or not. Then the City had moved into it and when they finally outgrew it, we moved into it. When you walked in the front door there were rooms with two great big windows and then you walked into a long, narrow room which didn't have windows, and then there was another room near the furnace room and the bathroom. Then there were a couple more rooms and one of those was used

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*Then one time we had the urns that came out of the ships in biblical times that were used for ballast and I remember that they had round bottoms.*

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as the office. All the old stuff from the original museum building just came down here. We had the black light display and we'd had that up at the old place. We had great big cases that had come from Steen's that they'd given us and we had our artifacts. We didn't change displays or have temporary displays back then quite like we do now, but we used to have some special exhibits. One time we had Alice Stocks' tea cups that were so beautiful and another time we had Colonel Mikesell's guns but they were never advertised because they were so special. Then one time we had the urns that came out of the ships in biblical times that were used for ballast and I remember that they had round bottoms. I remember that I was horribly disappointed that more people didn't come in and see that because I thought it was a wonderful display. Then we had a miniature furniture exhibit and one time we had old toys. One of the parts of that display was two old men (they were sailors, actually) sitting on kegs with a checkerboard between them. I really enjoyed that exhibit and they were fun to look at, they really were.

I can't remember anything specific that was brought in during my time as curator. I know that we had exhibits from the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers then. There was an old hanging lamp that was so beautiful but then the upstate DUP officers

came down and saw that we had things borrowed from the local DUP organization and they were very upset. They insisted that we had to take them out right then and, unfortunately, that included that hanging lamp.

Finally Lloyd Pierson retired from the Park Service and came back and he wanted to know if he could take over being curator here again. I was just tickled to death because he could write so many more letters and do so many more things. And, oh, that was great!

Some of the people who contributed a lot to the museum that I can specifically think of are Bob Norman and, of course, there was Dan O'Laurie. Joe Gelo was the president of the museum at one time but it was Jackie Gelo, his wife, who was volunteering and who came in and drew pictures of the artifacts that had come in from years before. Lyle and Lois Jamison were also wonderful volunteers. Lyle is the one that did a lot of the work in the back room when we first put it up and we had the big old flat cases. He worked with Lloyd a lot but didn't get as much credit for it as he deserved.

Some of my favorite memories include the times when we had films for the kids in the back room on Saturday afternoons. This was in one special back room and most of the kids in town came to them. They were usually only a 20-30 minute films and now I can only specifically remember three of them. One showed the first oil well that was drilled in Pennsylvania. We also had one on when the little Smokey bear got burned and it showed

them taking care of him and his little burned paws and everything. And the last one that I can remember was one on Angel Arch and, at the very end of it, it said that it looks like she's bowing her head and praying that this won't be defaced. Of all the shows those are the ones that I can just REALLY remember. And we got a lot of kids to these shows, probably thirty or so. This was when the museum first started and we didn't have the shows for very long because the library wanted to take over showing them and so they did. I got tired of trying to run the projector and splice film, too. It broke sometimes but it was still a fun time and I loved the kids, I always have. After the film I'd show them around the museum and tell them about the history of it. That memory was in the letter that Bill Meador's son wrote to the museum one time and he gave a donation in Bill's name. He told about how he had been one of those little children who came to the shows and that I had been there and tried to help all of them have a good time while learning about the museum.

Where the black light was at that time there was a little step up and the kids looked into it from up on that step. Not all of them could see and of course this was "back when" so I'd put my foot on the step and the kids would sit on my knee and watch the black light. Now you wouldn't dare, you know? But then it was okay and you can tell I've loved the kids all the way through. Another experience that makes me really happy and made it all worthwhile is to have those kids come back who went through the museum when they were small who have now grown up, married, had kids. A lot of them moved from Moab

and now they bring their kids into the museum to show them where they had fun. That's a gratifying thing. It's also wonderful that the school children that go through take time to make wonderful Thank You cards from themselves or the whole class. When the museum first opened, it wasn't open in the mornings but all a teacher ever had to do was pick up a phone and say "I would like to come down at 9 o'clock" or whenever and I was there. I had one kindergarten teacher say "You know, Virginia, if I called you at 12 o'clock at night and said I wanted to bring my kids down, you'd be there." But that was my donation to the museum. I always opened for the kids to come in. I haven't had to get upset at children very often, so maybe I'm too lenient. But if they start to run I just remind them if there is one thing they can't do, it's run. You know, when you treat kids real nice you get cooperation. In my book, I've never had any kids that were a problem.

I think the most interesting object in our collections now is the aerial map made by John Urbanek. People just absolutely love that! Something else that can't be passed over is the old player piano that everyone likes to pump. And another thing, if they play the piano, is that the first one that ever came to Moab is upstairs and I have had two concert pianists play that and say how beautiful it was.

As for goals for the future, I think Travis has several good ideas. Right now we have the surveillance camera working again, we're rearranging the desk area and realigning the front area. We measured and measured the dinosaur to move him but it looks like he'll have to stay where he is for awhile yet. We're talking about



There's always a twinkle in Virginia's eye when she greets people!

rearranging other things and displays like putting all the mining together and also moving the CCC display. Hopefully we'll set up the loom so that people can actually use it. We should always go for more things for kids to do, more hands-on. We're also still talking about a new front for the building, renovating the bathrooms, and also having a small gift shop. Many times people have come in looking to see if we have a gift shop.

I've got to be grateful for what I can do after all this time. At the events and Art Walks, people come up to me and put their arm around me and that's a wonderful thing after all this time. It's a good thing I don't wear a hat! And it's still so much fun to have people come in and enjoy what we have.

I was 90 years old on April 2nd and I'm working sixteen hours a week in the summertime and ten hours a week in the winter. I don't have any travel plans and don't really want to go away from home now. So I guess my goals are to stay in Moab and work as long as they'll have me!

# Museum History, 1976-1989

(Part of this article appeared in "The Canyon Country Zephyr" in March, 1990.)

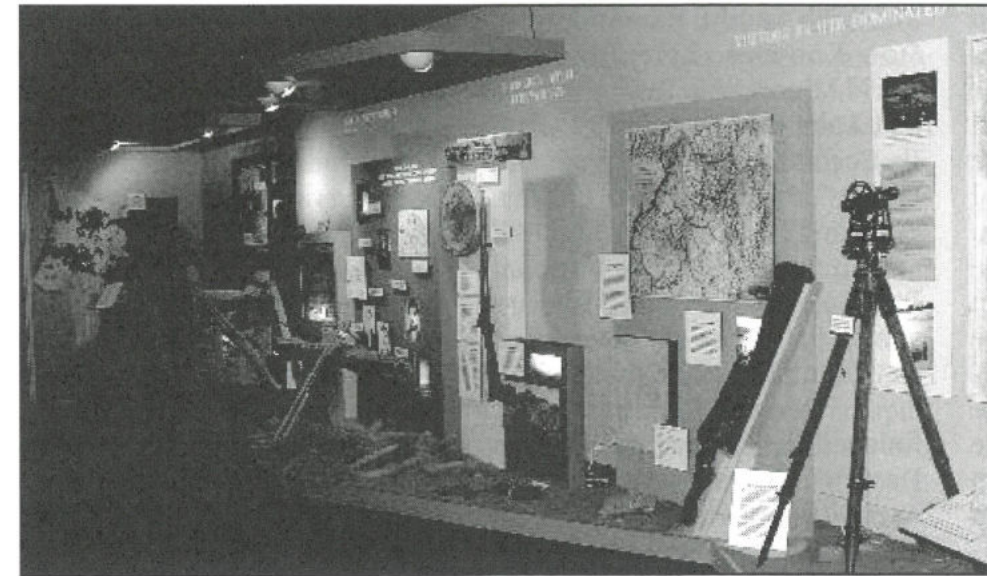
Of all the creatures on God's green and brown earth, man is probably the strangest and most perplexing. From the earliest days of the cave man, he has related to his past and thought about the future, although he realized he could do little about the latter except to hallucinate. He kept the past alive through legends and campfire stories; the future, however hazy an idea of it he may have had, he explained and prepared for through his religion and by his care of the dead. At the same time, to stay alive in the present, he developed an intense interest in his world...what it was made up of, how it worked, and the best ways to exploit it. Lastly, man has been an inveterate collector, often referred to as having the "packrat syndrome" or the "you never know when it might come in handy" outlook. Some collect pretty rocks, others pretty friends and companions. Others collect old cars, airplanes, razors, real estate, animals...you name it and someone collects it.

When one puts all of the above together, one gets the motivation for museums. Mankind, as an individual or a group, tends to want to express himself, to show off, if you will. And a collection has much more value if in a public display where it reflects upon the individual or group's good taste, ability to conquer in a sense, and self-esteem. Museums run the gamut from the mighty Smithsonian with its fifteen or more buildings and millions upon millions of artifacts (only 1% of which are on display) to the curio cabinet in someone's front parlor displaying a doll collection. All are in the tradition of museums from Montezuma's collection of wild animals to those of C.W. Peale and P.T. Barnum in their public museums.

So it was only natural, with the great interest in and dependence upon nature and the intriguing history of the area, that Moab should desire a public museum that would transmit this significance and knowledge to future generations of Moabites and to visitors traveling to the region. Some attempts at preservation of the area's values were by writers such as Faun McConkie Tanner whose *The Far Country* was an update of her first book in the 1930s on Moab, and by the local chapter of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers in their hard-fought battle to preserve the pioneer school and church building



Lloyd has been involved with the museum since its creation and the first "official" Board appointed him as curator. He fulfilled that duty not once, but twice, as he took the reins a second time when he returned to Moab after retiring from his Park Service job. He has been a frequent contributor to the Canyon Legacy with almost twenty articles over the years, and he serves as a continual source of knowledge about the history of the region. Lloyd's wife, Marian, was also actively involved, helping with accessioning and the cataloguing of artifacts and also serving on the museum Board. They were the "dynamic duo" of the museum at that time.



The Pierson History Hall was one of the major projects Lloyd was involved with after his return to the museum.

they now call Relic Hall. But Moab is a unique community in Utah with a different religious mix than most towns in Utah and a much more varied past in a definitely different setting. There was more to the story than was being told and many artifacts of the past to be preserved.

The influx of people brought in by the Uranium Boom of the early 1950s not only brought professional people with the ability to research and design a museum but individuals with a sense of knowing that history, important history, was transpiring at the time; history that needed to be preserved and interpreted. The Women's Literary Club, an old time Moab organization dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with a goodly mix of old timers and newcomers, organized a meeting of representatives of the town's civic clubs to discuss a museum on November 13, 1957. By January, 1958, they were organized and underway. On August 22, 1958, the museum opened as the Moab Museum in a small house on Center Street whose use was

donated by the Grand County Commission.

The parent organization of the museum was incorporated as the Southeastern Utah Society of Arts and Science which still, in general, guides the museum today, some fifty years later. The area of interest was determined to be within 100 miles of Moab and subjects collected and interpreted were archeology, history, geology, mining and milling, paleontology, and minerals. To sustain the interest in the museum of local citizens, a program of traveling or temporary exhibits was started. These included materials from both inside and outside the community. They gave local collectors a chance to show off their endeavors and the outside exhibits brought things to the community not easily seen or available in the somewhat isolated situation of Moab. Complementary to the traveling exhibits were lectures by experts in various fields contributing to the cultural development of Moabites.

After I left the curatorship in 1961, the museum was moved to a small cinder block building at

118 East Center Street, a couple of buildings to the west. The building had served as city offices, a mortuary, a swimming pool headquarters, and other things. When I once again became curator (unpaid volunteer) in 1977, the museum was mostly a collection of historic and archeological artifacts, ill displayed and interpreted in three rooms. Storage was in a small wooden shack tacked onto the west side of the building. Dust and cockroaches ruled the roost.

Before expansion, much of the museum's activities revolved around guest lectures, traveling exhibits, and other programs. My wife, Marian, came up with the idea of having a series of the movies that were made in Moab shown at Star Hall. Lectures were by Terry Tempest Williams, Gregory Crampton, a University of Utah history professor who spoke on the Old Spanish Trail, and a talk and Kung Fu movie by J.J. Wang, which was his introduction to Moab. Crampton's lecture complimented a traveling exhibit from the Museum of New Mexico on Spanish colonial artifacts. Greg Nunn put on a demonstration of his flint knapping skills. A symposium of southwestern archeologists was organized and presented to the public. Much of the day-to-day administration of the museum fell to Virginia Fossey, and she also suggested names of prospective Board members from people who had shown an interest in the museum.

To stimulate public interest, the Pioneer Day Ice Cream Social was begun in 1979 and the museum also participated occasionally in the Pioneer Day parade. The model of Lake Powell



and the Glen Canyon dam was on display for a time. The Charles Peterson book, *Look to the Mountains*, a history of the La Sal National Forest, became available for sale for ninety-nine cents so I bought twenty and offered them as a free incentive for joining the museum. I remember Dan O'Laurie made a special trip to the museum to get his copy.

About then was when he became really interested in the museum. He sent Allen Darby up with a special check to be put in our building fund. That established the building fund! Allen also showed up with a series of stock certificates from the

The Irish family, Ray Anderson, Don Knowles, Lyle Jamison, David Minor, W.L. Rusho and the Salt Lake City Westerners Club, Ila Corbin, Sam Taylor, Jean and Dallas Tanner, Howard Balsley, Billie and Harold Provonsha, Bill and Irene Harding, the National Park Service, and Essie White are some of those I remember contributing historic material.

Lyle and I had just about finished the history room when Dan, whom we were going to name the room for and who continued to monitor our progress, began to worry about the old building in front. He mentioned to Virginia Fossey that

the Board that, with the plans he had been given, he could not construct the building. How he arrived at his bid may have been determined by the fact that Dan had given us \$100,000 rather than the plans. Pete Plastow, Board president, grabbed the reins and approached Chamberlin Architects of Grand Junction and they came up with the plans for the building now in use. There was a debate whether or not to re-bid the construction but in the end it was decided to allow Jim Nelson to do the job and some sort of deal was made to the benefit of all.

Meanwhile, two of the Board members unilaterally went to Dan to try to get him to buy the old LDS church building. I had looked at it and decided it had too many problems and I talked to Dan who didn't buy into their proposal. Dan then decided that the original gift might not be enough and decided to add \$50,000 for the museum in his will as he knew he had terminal cancer. Allen Darby convinced him to give it to us outright and avoid any squabbling with relatives after he passed on. Darby, however, told me to keep it a secret so as not to trigger any further costs to fit our funds but I felt the president, at least, should be informed and did so, asking him to keep it secret. An hour or so after I talked to the president, I was called by the chair of the building committee asking me to confirm the added \$50,000. So much for secrecy in Moab!

One member of the County Commission apparently didn't trust us as he went to Dan asking to see the check. Dan suggested that we get a 99-year lease on the property from the County who owned it. We did so through Bill Bengé, the county

attorney, and he added the proviso that the county would pay the cost of the utilities on the new building. They were already doing this for the old building but this made the new arrangement binding. I thanked Bengé later with a mess of his favorite Louisiana dish, crawfish.

One Board member insisted that the new building should have a basement where the artifacts could be stored. I was against it, saying that basements were usually too damp for good preservation. The contractor tested the ground beneath the building and found a small stream of water there. This put the kibosh on the basement. The water was probably due to the buried swimming pool in the lawn just to the west.

In spite of the lease, one County Commissioner took the county librarian's pleas to heart and gave the library board the land behind the history hall where Lyle and I had built a shelter for some large equipment. We had gotten a grant of money to build the shelter. The librarian wanted the land for a place to park her car. When the county surveyor marked out the gift, I was amused to see that one corner of our lease was two or three feet under the eaves of the library building.

One of the items stored on the land given to the library was a sheep herder's wagon. Dave Bretzke, who had been Board president some years earlier, had found it in Colorado and suggested we buy it at auction for

\$500, a good deal as all sheep-herder's wagons were amazingly the same no matter where they were in use. Dave got the wagon but had to put up \$800 for a trailer to get the thing to Moab.

It rained the day we dedicated the new building on August 20, 1988, and the entire affair was moved indoors. Pete Plastow had designed the exhibits in the new building and, in spite of all the shenanigans, it turned out to be a fine museum building. Pete's exhibits were aesthetically pleasing and added greatly to the entire museum. *The Canyon Legacy* was started under Pete Plastow's presidency and turned out to be an excellent vehicle for

reporting Moab and Grand County history. The Board decided that twenty-seven people was too large of a Board for working together easily and cut it down to nine members. I decided that it was time to retire as younger heads with different, perhaps better, ideas were on board.

Besides, all the fun stuff was done.

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*One Board member, Ed McCarrick, got so excited about the idea that he declared the museum should be named after Dan.*

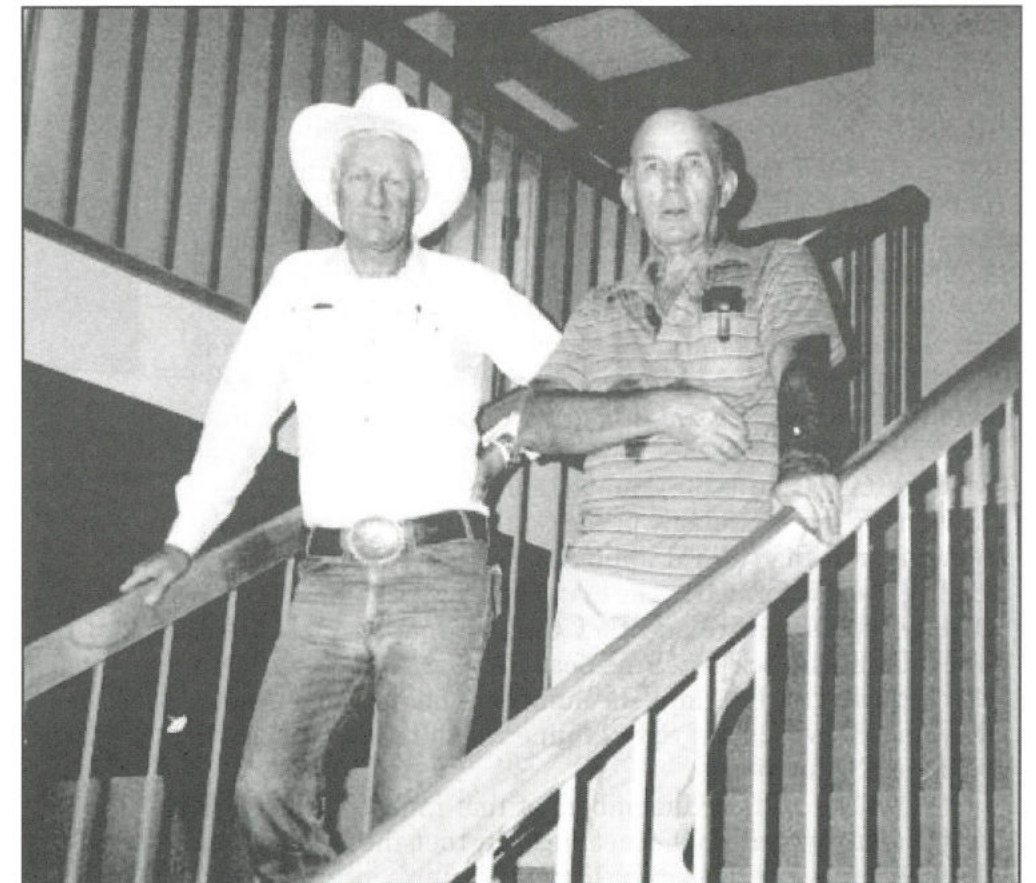
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Mississippi Barge Company with Dan's same request. Later, I saw Dan and Allen in the bank getting ready to cash their stock in so I suggested to the Board that it was time to do the same with ours. We came up with about \$15,000 in the building account and decided that would build the addition on the back, the present history room.

Lyle Jamison and I did most of the work on the history room. We gave Kent Dalton the material and he built four standing museum cases for us gratis. We bought the glass from Rick Thompson and he installed them in the cases at no charge. Pete Plastow had done a painting of Charlie Glass shooting the sheepherder and I convinced the Board of Directors that it was just what we needed in an exhibit. Once the word got out, we began to receive more historic material.

he thought something should be done about the old building. She let me know Dan's thoughts so I was ready for him when he brought the subject up with me. I told him that if it were up to me, I would tear it down and start all over again. It only took him a few seconds to say that if I would do the leg work, he would finance a new building. I suggested that he come to a Board of Directors meeting to tell them. One Board member, Ed McCarrick, got so excited about the idea that he declared the museum should be named after Dan. The Board could not do other than agree. That set the stage for getting the new building done. A committee to get an architect was established and they got what turned out to be a new organization from Salt Lake City to design a western style building. The bid to build it went to Jim Nelson. He then informed

Pete Plastow (l) and Lloyd Pierson (r) stand on the stairway of the new building. Photo courtesy of Museum of Moab



# Moab's Land & People- Both Wonderful & Interesting to Work With

I first got involved with the Moab Museum when they were in the process of tearing the old museum down. The old original house was not open so I never went there or even saw it. But they were ready to build the two-story part at the current location and that apparently took a while. Jim Nelson, the contractor, was waiting to get started on it but, in the meantime, he happened to have built my home's foundation. I think the new museum building officially opened in 1988.

Meanwhile, I went to a local talk that Winston Hurst was giving and while I was there they were serving coffee. Mary Keogh was also there and she invited me to stop by for coffee some time, which I did at a later date. John Keogh, her husband, was the County surveyor at that time and we talked about Alaska and where we'd been and so forth. Shortly thereafter, Mary Keogh called and asked how I'd like to be on the Museum Board but I said, "I don't even belong to the museum." Well, I went to the next meeting and she introduced me as the geologist from Alaska!

When I first started, Pete Plastow was the Board president and Keith Montgomery was the vice president. (Keith became the president later.) The Board itself had 28 members. The object was to have all aspects of the community represented. We had someone from the School Board, someone from Dead Horse Point State Park, from the National Park Service, from the BLM, and some "at large" representatives. We weren't involved with politics so I don't know if they had people from the City or County at that time, although later we always had what we referred to as the County Representative who was Merv Lawton for years. (Nobody in the County government knew or remembered that they'd appointed him so when Merv was leaving I just informed them that Harvey Merrill was the new County representative and they thought that was fine.) And when Karla Hancock joined the Board in 1998, she was the Moab City representative. I think the number of Board members that they have now is about right at nine which it was cut back to before too many years.

Of the 28 Board members at that time, only about 12 people actually came to the meetings. By then the museum was finished and we were upstairs in the museum's meeting space,



Jean McDowell, on one of her many adventures, has always appreciated the outdoors, settling in Moab only after years spent in both Alaska and Colorado. She loves to hike almost daily, even when her trails are snowy and cold.

but they had a very formal setup for meetings with the officers at a head table and the other Board members and people sitting in chairs in the back like an audience. Eventually, after I became curator, we went to sitting around the table as I thought it felt like a more democratic arrangement.

In the beginning, as part of the Board, I designed the geology exhibit and helped out where I could, such as with painting and things like that. Pete Plastow was designing the exhibits specifically by asking geologists, archeologists, or whoever what they wanted in an exhibit, and he'd say, "Give me the objects and the words you want and I'll put them together." And we just simply did it that way. We went to Arnel Holyoak's workshop. Keith Montgomery, Kent Dalton, and Pat Flannigan were there at that stage and they built things and then various members of the Board did the painting – whatever Pete told us to paint – before they assembled it. It was quite the production.

Pete was a president who was really ambitious. He had us start the *Legacy* and the store. We were also having the speakers. I believe there might have been some grant money that helped get some of these things going. At that time they were digging up the Huntington Mammoth over by Huntington and one of those paleontologists came to talk to us. I think he was one of the first speakers. It was pretty impressive and we held it at the Community Center. This was the first of the talks that are still going on in conjunction with the MIC (Moab Information Center). Originally just the museum sponsored the talks and then we had other speakers. Linda Seibert got

speakers from the University and we had those at the courthouse. We didn't have many people who came to hear the speakers at the courthouse, but then they built the MIC and it had the great auditorium. Laurie Winston was with the MIC and also on the

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*...she took the list we had of the Chamber of Commerce people and made fancy invitations and we had a reception all planned. At the appointed time, nobody came except the paid person at the Chamber of Commerce.*

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Museum Board at the same time so the idea was brought up and we ended up doing the joint affair. The MIC paid for the speakers if they were from one of their services – Forest Service, BLM., Park Service - and if they weren't, then we ended up paying for them. (In spite of that cooperative arrangement, though, CNHA never wanted to stock the *Legacys* there and they still don't.) Some speakers that I specifically remember were the fellow who discussed earthquakes, Bob McPherson talking about Indians, and somebody from the State office talking about bats. There have also been a few dud lectures, too, like the time the lights went out! There have been lots of different subjects and some were just better attended than others. I think people attend best when there are either local speakers or something about the rivers and river running.

My next job as part of the Board was when we built the uranium shed and Keith Montgomery and Kent Dalton were doing it and they needed a door. So, for \$30 or so, a local contractor built the door, the frame, and installed the door, but

he kept saying, "I'd like to have my \$30." I got to thinking that it bothered me that bills weren't being paid and I thought I could help by paying the bills and that's when I took over the bookkeeping. I didn't become the official treasurer because we had a

treasurer in name but I kept the books. And my bill paying duties went on until I left the museum.

When I started, Virginia was working at the front desk but back before then she'd been accessing things for the collections. Lloyd Pierson was the curator and Lloyd and his wife, Marian, were also on the Board. After Pete, Keith Montgomery moved up from vice president to President of the Board. Board presidents I served under during my years as curator and Director were Pete Plastow, Keith Montgomery, John Weisheit, Dave Wood, Jim Page, Tom Stengel, Detta Dahl, Travis Trittschuh, and Jim Tharp.

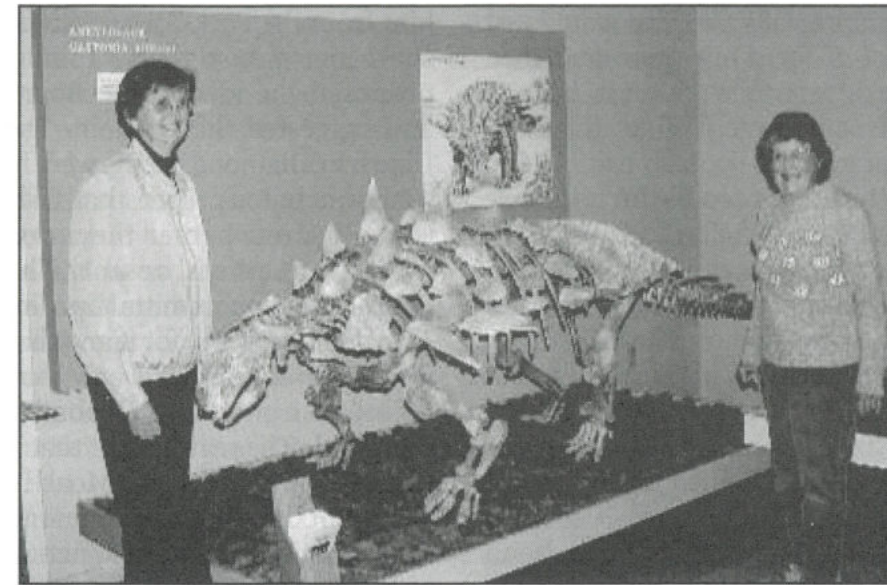
Eventually Lloyd quit and there was no one but the Board taking care of things, sort of like they had to do recently before Travis Schenck came. But they really need to have someone at the museum taking care of things and acting as at least a business manager. Then they can do what a Board should be doing and not doing what an office manager should be doing. They shouldn't be worrying about everyday finances, but should be planning development, contributing ideas

and funding, providing guidance, and working to establish political connections. But back then the Board was just maintaining and that's sort of where I stepped in and started doing lots more things. Eventually it took so much time that I said "Oh, I'd like to be paid something" (to either Dave May or Keith Montgomery) and I started receiving salary for 4 hours a week, so that was when I became the official curator, I guess.

The newsletter was first set up by two volunteers and it was entirely their idea to have one. I think they were learning how to do things on a computer and this gave them good experience. Then later I took it over and did it on the typewriter for awhile. Karla Hancock did some issues of it, as well as Gayle Snow, Vicki Barker, and then Detta, who did it for the longest time.

As for members, we have always had membership drives in one form or another. One time Suzette Weisheit decided we should have more members and so she took the list we had of the Chamber of Commerce people and made fancy invitations and we had a reception all planned. At the appointed time, nobody came except the paid person at the Chamber of Commerce. There must be some other ways to get people. Mitch Williams said, "I think there are people in this community who ought to belong to the museum" so we sent out a letter to that effect and I don't think any of them responded, either. Jim Page, a Board member at another time, tried to get the business people involved and he got zero people to sign up. I think it was also Jim Page who was always trying to give new members some expensive picture to join up. Actually Jim Tharp did

very good with word of mouth to friends and specific invitations and guest memberships. Then Marcus La France and Jeff McCleary were in charge of a specific membership drive recently inviting people and having members guesting people. They also had a very good response. It takes that personal attention. When we had the craft booth out at the fair we had something to give new members we might sign up, sometimes extra *Legacy's*, and Detta also had the little dinosaurs at one time. Her son, Kevin, also made the banks for a drawing and then donated the money to the museum. It was more of a fundraising event but it attracted people to the museum booth where we could tell them about membership. We always had the craft fair booth and at one time we even had crafts where people donated things to sell.



Jean and Detta Dahl look very happy shortly after the *Gastonia*, which Jean was very instrumental in acquiring, was finished and located in its new spot in the museum.

That reminds me of the yard sales which started back in 1994. Those were a lot of work! Marilyn Peterson was in charge of the yard sale (and also in charge of the atlatl throws which she helped set up. We had several events where we had the atlatl.) Now every charity in town has a yard sale but when we were doing it we were almost the only ones and we had tons of stuff and lots of people helping. I sympathized with Bill Meador, though, who finally said he'd be glad to contribute money but wanted us to get out of the yard sale business. With our earnings from the yard sales, we got the ram out in front of the building and the Gail Van Slyke woven hanging. It was separate money that came from the yard sale project and those were things we wouldn't have had otherwise and were nice to have for the museum. And they were things locally made and of local interest. (As an interesting side to that story, the hanging by Gail Van Slyke was originally going to be behind the geology exhibit as it is supposed to represent horst and

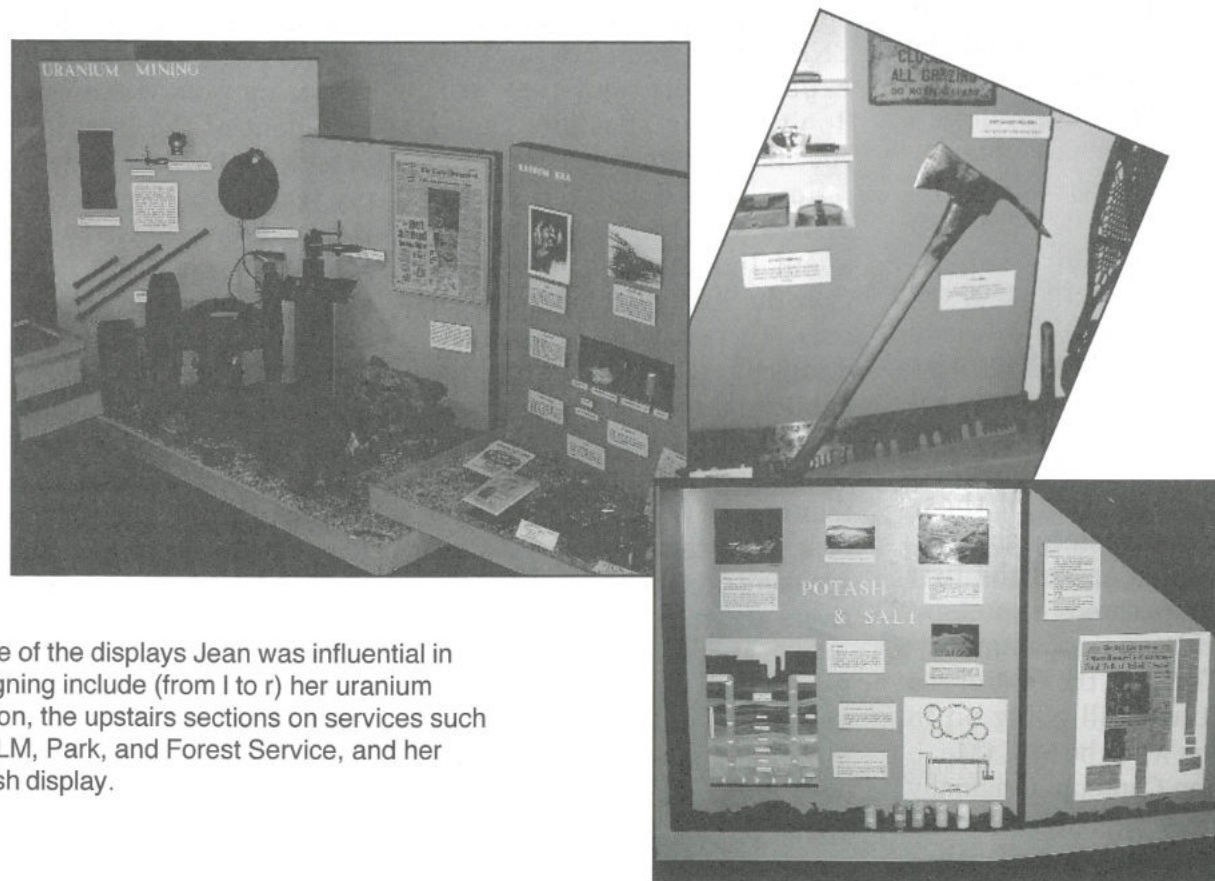
graben geologic features. But it didn't work out there and that's when it was hung at the top of the stairs for years. Then we got the Urbanek three-dimensional map exhibit and then the hanging was just perfect and we moved it to right where we originally wanted it!)

We also had the store to help us make extra money for awhile and we even had a purchasing agent. The store started once the building was built and was in the space that's now the Virginia Fossey room. Marian Pierson was very active in the store's set-up, it was almost her baby, and then we had people like Sam Cunningham and Alice Drogin doing the buying and Joyce Thomas and Anne Urbanek helped, too. At one point we had the RSVP people in there but too often they came to the museum and just visited with Virginia. If there was a customer, Virginia had to go and take care of them so after a while we just did it with museum people and volunteers. Someone set up this system of two signatures on a check. Only we

never had two people available so we just signed checks ahead of time! I think that sort of defeats the purpose, doesn't it? But then came the time when there was the realization that we were grossing \$16 per day, not counting any overhead. It was not too profitable! And the funny part is that I think when I went to my first meeting of the museum they were worrying about the idea that local merchants would be upset because we were competing with them and that there was a conflict of interest!

When they'd started the museum back in the fifties it had been more of a social thing and Marian Pierson was bemoaning the fact that the museum didn't have get-togethers. I had gone to the Colorado Mountain Club dinners in Boulder and they'd had the Annual Dinner with a speaker and that was sort of their get-together. So I thought of Marian and decided that an Annual Dinner would be a good thing to have. It wasn't fancy, just fun, and at the first dinner Kevin Dahl cooked a lasagna dinner and we held it at the Civic center. The speaker that year was the paleontologist from Grand Junction. The following year, in 1996, we had a chili dinner, and then in 1997 we had Damian Fagin as the speaker and the menu was cordon bleu so it was getting a little fancier.

As for the start of the museum's involvement with art displays, I went to the post office and saw that they had Tom Till photos hung there and the next week they displayed somebody else's local art work. We had a vacant wall upstairs at that time and so I thought, "Why not?" and that was the beginning of our art exhibits. We then had different art exhibits upstairs until I wanted



Some of the displays Jean was influential in designing include (from l to r) her uranium section, the upstairs sections on services such as BLM, Park, and Forest Service, and her potash display.

more room for other exhibits upstairs. Doesn't that sound familiar, that I wanted more exhibit room? There had been a few problems with the art, but exhibit space was really the main reason we quit having art up there. Then we could put exhibits upstairs about people I felt we had slighted up to that point. I mean, what percentage of people in Moab work for the Forest Service, the BLM, or the Park Service and here we had no displays downstairs on those. Later they started the Art Walk and, although we didn't have art anymore, we decided to be involved because of our temporary displays. They might not have really been "art" but were unique, like the scissors-cutting display and the tooled leather and such.

As for other displays, many of them have interesting stories. For instance, Bill

symbiotically. An idea would just sort of form out there and then we'd want to work on it, both at the same time. We got the Dead Horse Point- potash exhibit and it started out too big for us but we condensed it to be that part there by the stairs. I should also mention Jeff McCleary for the work he did on the Mesozoic Room as it was his idea to use that room in that way, and he got the artist for the mural, and then Rusty and I helped put the rest of it together.

I may also have been somewhat influential in getting more of our emphasis on dinosaurs. Just ask Bill Meador what he thinks about dinosaurs! Jim Kirkland, the state paleontologist, and others wanted to do all this dinosaur stuff including a dinosaur week in Moab and other things to stir up a lot of dinosaur interest. That didn't take off. But

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*Detta Dahl and I accomplished an awfully lot on many projects, including displays, because we were like Siamese twins and worked together symbiotically.*

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McDougall said, "Hey, you don't have anything to do with Charlie Steen" and so then I did the Charlie Steen and uranium exhibit. I think I spent the most time on that exhibit and a lot of time researching it. Swanny Kerby gave us the scanner to use with our computer and we'd had a whole temporary exhibit about him, so we condensed it to one page of the multiplex as well as the bull horns which are in the display. Detta Dahl and I accomplished an awfully lot on many projects, including displays, because we were like Siamese twins and worked together

I think it was my idea to get so involved with the Dinosaur Diamond. Originally, they had the Dinosaur Triangle, without Moab in it, not a diamond, and then when they decided to have the diamond, it was in the Grand Junction newspaper and they mentioned that Greg Gnesios from the Park Service would be in charge of it. They said that the bottom part of the diamond would be the commercial place down in Bluff. And so I called him and said "Hey, Moab should be that part of the diamond." And he said he was coming over soon and it was their first outing. Terby Barnes knew

him from the Park Service where she'd met him so then I think I proposed the idea to the Board and suggested that we join. The Dinosaur Diamond people were in such a nebulous place that they weren't sure whether they even wanted members or not. The Board was noncommittal but Jim Tharp said he'd pay for it and that was the beginning of our membership in the Dinosaur Diamond. The reason I felt that it was really important for Moab to be part of the Dinosaur Diamond is because it is part of the function of the Scenic Byways and when they made Hwy 128 a scenic byway then it just HAD to be Moab. Detta and I went to some of the meetings in Vernal and over in Grand Junction at the Dinosaur Center and that's when we met John Foster, the paleontologist over there. That's how we got to know him so we could show him where we got the sauropod bones and he arranged them in our display for us. For other dinosaur projects, I wanted to do the restoration on the Newberry bones that Fran Barnes was so involved in, so Terby and I got those done and I'm glad that we did it. I got the Utahraptor foot and finally we got the *Gastonia* replica, but I think it was our own undoing because with those and then the Urbanek display we ended up undoing the geology display! It eclipsed the geology. The paleontology was part of the geology but then it morphed into that other room because of the *Gastonia's* size. Here I came on as the geologist originally and ended up killing my own exhibit!

As for the Urbanek display, when I first got involved in the museum I had been to Capitol Reef and they had a topographic display that showed the trails and where things were

and I thought "Oh, that's sort of neat and we ought to have one." In Green River they have a topo map with lights and I thought that'd be great, too. But everybody felt such a project would cost too much. I knew Anne Urbanek who had been involved with the museum's store and also the art exhibits and I knew her husband, John, was building something similar in his back room. I think even Keith said "Boy if you could get that...." and I might even have mentioned something to John Urbanek at that time about our interest. Finally it got to the point where it was in his shed, sitting on barrels and not even exactly level and so we got it! They were concerned about it being insured so it's now on permanent loan to the museum but still insured by them on their home insurance as far as I know.

During my time with the museum there were many volunteers who helped in many ways. Merv Lawton got Leo, the welder, to attach the mining equipment to a frame over by what used to be the Fat City

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*...there were many volunteers who helped in many ways.*

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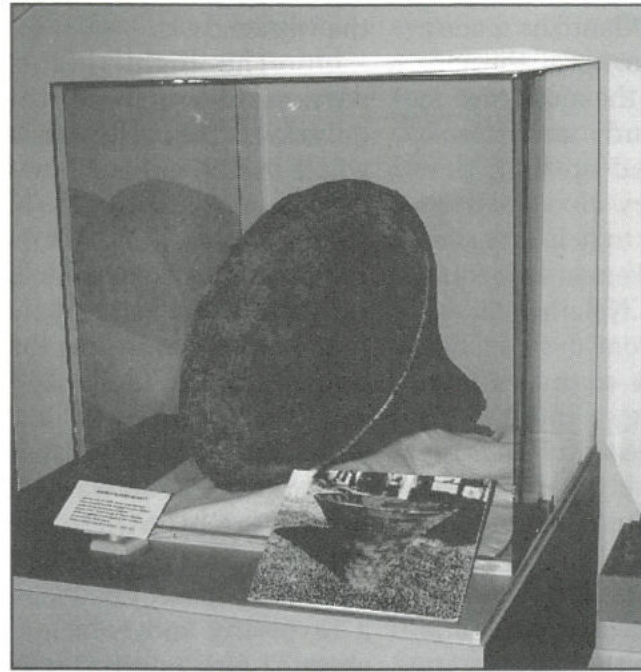
Smokehouse. We got signs to explain the items but it's been difficult keeping those signs over there. We've found them in the bushes or missing altogether. Merv also wrote all the things for the mining displays. Bebee Doherty transferred the information from the Park Service cards to the computer. Roger Huckins was involved with the library and tried to organize the books with the Dewey decimal

system. Joanne Mantikos made a thorough inventory of all the non-artifact items in the museum and then later Sandy and Geoff Freethy carried on with that inventory. They also enlisted friends of theirs to help one time and Natalie Dickerson helped do it another time. Natalie has also helped at the front desk, calling people, and at many events. Jeanne Eardley and Mitch Williams really got involved in the photographs, and then Theresa and Cliff Egging continued to catalog many of them. A fellow named Keith accessed and put the numbers on all those bottles and all the things in the back room. Bob Dahl did a lot of volunteer work including framing and such, and he did the big photo of the steam powered cable drill rig. Jean Akens helped put the archaeology display together and she was also the first editor of the *Canyon Legacy* and did it for many years. Judy Jones, in addition to being a Board Member, additionally did a lot of work on the scrapbooks, managed

to have the State Highway Department put up the official road signs for the museum, and also did the decorations for at least one of the annual dinners. Verlyn Westwood has helped out up front, with scrapbooks, and at events for years. And let's not forget Dorothy Rossignol. She did the volunteer cleaning, has always collected money at the Ice Cream Social and the Annual Dinner, helped set up tables when we did the banquet on our own, went along and helped Detta at events where the museum was represented (the fair or the craft fair), she volunteered in the store, volunteered for Art Walks for years, and finally she was also working on the reception desk on

the weekends.

The highlights of my curatorship include the acquisition of the burden basket, the whole back room and how it was designed to match Pete's front room displays, and the potash exhibit. I also enjoyed doing the railroad construction panels in the multiplex as well as the ones on the Indians. For the back room we again painted the ceiling black which was controversial back when the front part was done and we tried to remain true to the front design. If I'd have had the additional space, I had a plan for a revolving and rotating quilt show. I also wanted the copper mining history, including the most recent copper mine. Somehow we just have pictures of old time people and only black and white pictures which is one of the reasons that I wanted oral histories from more recent people. In other words, our history doesn't have to be somebody old with a spear. We jumped from pioneers to the uranium era with very little in between that was documented. These are just some of the projects that should be done in the future. If the museum ever expands they should definitely try to get a temporary exhibit area as well as a store. I made sketches of other exhibits we might have back when we were hoping to acquire the library space. One of them was a river running exhibit and I even had my boat, a WWII assault craft like they used for their early inflatable rafts, that could have gone in it. We should also have one on biking as we're the biking capitol of the world and it could cover things like when the Slick Rock Trail got developed and that it was originally for motor bikes. Travis Trittschuh always said we needed contemporary input into



Jean mentions the burden basket, a rare treasure found in a local cave and now on display in the museum, as one of the highlights of her curatorship. This is also a favorite of many visitors.

the museum. That would include things like the Jeep Safari. There are people in the town who are here now who were involved in many of these things and this is the time we should be talking to them and getting the information or pictures of the development of these things. We need an active oral history acquisition program as these people are aging. Other displays could be things like the local politics and political changes such as when the County Council was just three Commissioners, or the development of Moab since uranium which is also a big gap in the museum currently. How about the building up of the tourist industry with Mitch Williams and Tag-a-Long, which was one of the earliest river and tour businesses? How about something on CFI with Karla Vanderzanden? To me, we should have the evolution of companies or organizations or various businesses. The old Yellow Front, the changing downtown, none of that is being documented. But I think that's what the Board should

be doing, helping with the creative development of the Museum, providing ideas, providing money, legal guidance, political interactions to keep the museum in the public officials' eye. It's a matter of contacts which is one of the reasons I had the museum join the Chamber of Commerce and tried to establish connections through the Rotary Club and these should be kept up.

I'd still like to have the museum acquire the library just because it's there and I think the museum should still stay in the vicinity. That would expand it without moving.

As for the future, I have lots of options right now with so much more free time. Even though the museum was only a part-time job, it was a time commitment which I no longer have to worry about. If my friends who are also retired call, we can just go do whatever we want to do, such as when a friend from Boulder recently came over and we just decided to hike to Morning Glory Arch on the spur of the

moment. It's nice not to be tied down and be able to do lots of little things such as my hike almost every day down in Mill Creek. I managed to also get some river time in recently with trips in my little one man boat on the San Juan River as well as doing the "daily." I have also done some traveling to locations like China and the Pacific Northwest, as well as what we call "Sandy's Road Trips" as my daughter, Sandy, organizes our trips to places like East Texas or the Dakotas. She and her husband, Geoff, have been very busy lately, though, with their volunteer activities with Trail Mix so we don't have any of those trips planned right now. I'll probably keep traveling but not far, as there are so many things in my own backyard that I still want to see. I don't have wanderlust for distant places when there are plenty of things to do and see in Grand and San Juan County!

# Grand County - Great Place, Grand Years

Rusty Salmon has moved from the Moab region but still considers it as one of the most beautiful places on earth, regularly telling people they haven't seen anything if they haven't seen Moab!



do would change the greater course of such a panorama, yet change it we have and we continue to do so. And it is this change that the creators of the museum wanted to document, in addition to that larger story of the topography itself. As such, the museum continues to record and evolve as our history keeps unwinding towards the future.

I still consider it one of the luckiest days of my life when Jean McDowell asked me if I would consider becoming the editor for the *Canyon Legacy* back in the summer of 2000. My historical interest in the area in general (and a few tidbits in particular) suddenly expanded into a much broader view of Grand County as a whole and new horizons opened in every direction I looked. The uniqueness of this section of the state has always impressed me, in terms of its geological, paleontological, and archeological history, and its more immediate history of settlement is unique in that there are people living today who are the sons, daughters, or grandchildren of some of the earliest Moab residents. To a historian, such an opportunity is exciting and challenging. And to be the editor of a journal that was known for chronicling this information was something I looked forward to with great expectations. Imagine my surprise when I was initially told that some people

The museum to me is like one of the pieces of pottery that sits in the displays. My part in it was perhaps a few brush strokes of the design and painting, or maybe a little bit of the burnishing of the surface's finish, minimal yet integral to the piece as a whole. The amazing part is the history of the museum itself where, like the original potter who first took the mud in her hands, someone imagined how this could be created and what its uses might be. The forethought involved with the creation process was truly remarkable because the tempo of the town at that time was at a height where many other major changes were in progress and yet the past was not only to be preserved but also elaborated on before it was swallowed up completely in the mad race to accommodate the "new."

Moab and its surrounding land inspires people to appreciate its immediacy, its color, its intensity, and it blinds the eye to the smaller machinations of man and his pitiable works among the sheer and dramatic backdrops that surround every part of our history. Whether it's the drama of the Spanish Trail and imagining the hardships of traversing such country, the excitement of the Uranium Boom and the explosion of population in a previously untouched portion of Utah, or the exhilaration of the miners who hacked into the virgin shoulders of the La Sal Mountains looking for gold and silver, the story is never small when it comes to Grand County. Yet that story always seems to want to take a back seat when situated next to the striking beauty that surrounds us in every direction. It's hard to concentrate, to turn inward and examine how we humans affected, and continue to influence, such a monumental landscape. It seems, in fact, almost ridiculous to even consider that anything we might say or

felt that "everything has already been done and there's nothing more to write about!" I hated to disappoint them but I felt the surface had barely been scratched and I still feel that way. Huge concepts and themes for future issues seemed to jump out at me with every question I had about our history and I felt that our readers must surely have had some of those same questions. The Board asked me once, back in 2002, why each issue still had a theme and wondered if it wouldn't be easier to produce the *Legacy* with just any article that happened to come in. The *Legacy* had started out with themes and, because it seemed so much more logical to me to try to acquire articles while working along a common thread of thought, I suppose I let them down in that area.

After spending the remainder of that year as the editor and working closely with Jean and the Board, the next step took me into the position of co-curator with Jean. It actually started out as a joke between us but when we considered our various strengths in different areas, it seemed like a natural fit and we presented the idea to the Board. They responded positively and Jean and I began the task of differentiating who would do what. Jean called me the "people person" since I liked to track down histories and photos so that was the first niche I filled. It also fit nicely with my other duty of *Canyon Legacy* editor. I was also willing to do the computer work when needed and by that point in the museum's growth, lots of our paperwork needed some upgrading. We tackled new job descriptions and forms, as well as policies and bylaws as the Board reviewed and updated procedures

that were at least ten years old. Finally, with the installment of the most recent board members, we began working on the long range goal of accreditation.

During those years Jean and I alternated our work days then spent Fridays together on joint projects. Some highlights I remember include our hike to see the torch brought to Delicate Arch and then later the incorporation of that experience into a display after Sena Hauer donated her Olympic outfit and torch for museum use. We wanted to have the dinosaur tracks rock moved to the museum so we had to wrangle first with the State Roads people (because it was on their easement property) and then the officials upstate to get permission to place it on museum property. Jean's involvement with the Dinosaur Diamond encouraged her to expand our information about that era and we ended up with the *Gastonia burgei* replica, the Utahraptor leg, the Newberry bones, the sauropod spine from a local property, and the Mesozoic Room which developed from a proposal by Board member Jeff McCleary. An informational board I'd done about the Pinhook fight evolved into a new display and its neighboring exhibits were adjusted to fit it in. Pictures were added to the multiplex units when ideas jumped out at us for new themes. We went on field trips and photography adventures where we broadened our knowledge and pondered even more ideas for museum displays. We rearranged, updated and then rearranged some more as new displays were added and old ones were condensed or removed. At the same time, the temporary displays were designed and produced every two months, rotating through such various themes as a

mine cave-in, chess sets, old clothes, art, local Western collections, construction projects, the Colorado River, and artifacts from our back room to name just a few! And in addition, we had the people...the visitors, the researchers, the school-children...continually coming through the door or calling with questions or requests regarding our museum and its collections.

I don't think we realize on a day-to-day basis what a real treasure we have until we consider the broad base of information that's covered in displays and stored in the files of the museum. This is a small town with a total county population less than many cities have in a few blocks. Yet we have managed to preserve and display a very broad range of the many facets of the local history and done it in a very high quality, comprehensive manner that always surprises tourists who've been to much bigger and more highly funded museums. I said in the beginning of this article that the creation process of this museum was amazing and I would now add that this continuing sophistication of style of our exhibits adds to the worth of the museum experience. We owe the originators, like Lloyd Pierson, as well as those who continued to carry on the concepts, such as Pete Plastow and Jean McDowell, our thanks for their steadfast application of the museum's goals over the years. During my time at the museum, I learned many things, made many friends, and truly expanded my interests and views of this remarkable county and its inhabitants, both now and then. I consider myself a very, very lucky person to have had this experience!

## Jackie Bierscheid Wheeler

I was hired to be the curator at the museum in the late 1960s or early 1970. I wasn't a member and I don't know if they even had memberships at that time. But I was unemployed and the employment office called me, and that's how I got the job.

The Museum was still in the little old building and I tried to get different things to draw people in each month. We'd have different collections. I don't remember a lot of the ones that we did but I do remember one because it belonged to my brother, Carl Weaver. I had him display his large collection of Indian artifacts,

which now would probably be illegal, but back then it wasn't. We displayed those through the month.

I didn't catalog things, but I did a little of everything else. Mostly I did the displays because I think Virginia already had everything catalogued. And remember, the museum wasn't very big at that point. We didn't have a lot of people come through and we didn't have all the tourists back then. The local people would come wandering in sometimes, but not like I'm sure it is now, especially at this time of year. I think Russ Donoghue was the



Board president when I was there and I liked everyone I worked with on the Board and at the museum. But it wasn't for me, and I think that's why I hurried up and found another job after about three months.

I'm not a member of the museum now and am pretty much housebound and on oxygen.



## Eleanor Inskip

The inventory project was the whole focus at one point during her tenure and took about six weeks. During that time, she particularly appreciated all the incredible volunteers who showed up to help count the inventory and identify what was there. She says that it was also very obvious that the volunteers really loved the idea of the collections and what was in them. A lot of people who came in had not realized what was back in storage and they were really intrigued with bringing the artifacts to a more accessible level for everyone. She was also involved with the photography of the collections and creating a database.

Eleanor also reminisced about the great success of the Christmas display where everyone brought in their Christmas

ornaments and what "was really precious and valuable to the community." She felt that people were sharing memories and it was a heart-touching exhibit for many.

For the future, she feels that the museum can really offer a lot as a research facility and mentioned, as others have, that space is a big concern. Eleanor also noted that there seemed to be holes in the collecting of history in the community from 1920 to the 1950s and that it should be a priority to get that information recorded and available in the museum.

Although she enjoyed her time at the museum, she is now keeping busy with other projects such as some remodeling, working on her Professor Valley book, and book repair which she has been learning for years.

# Looking Forward to the Past

In a busy, modern world the museum may seem out of place. We cannot compete with the internet, video games, and television as entertainment. We don't have the budget or the huge teams of writers and entertainers behind us, but we have something much more valuable...heritage. In a world that is constantly trying to tear down and rebuild, the museum remains an anchor to an earlier time. The museum is more than a room of relics; it is a vital connection to the past that cannot be duplicated by television or video games.

"Without that past, we'd have no future" is a saying that Virginia Fossey loves to say. The past is the great welding link of all society. You may be of different backgrounds, nationalities, or other groups, but everyone has a past. It is that past that forms the foundation for our future. Foundations can crumble, though, if neglected and it becomes the role of the museum to keep them alive.

The first museum was a place where the people of ancient Greece gathered to be inspired, to seek out knowledge, and to progress. In the Middle Ages, museums emerged as guardians of the sacred as they displayed sacred relics, books, and objects for pilgrims who traveled to see them. Today the museum stands as the guardian of the culturally and naturally sacred, seeking to inspire the people of the modern era in knowledge and progress.



Travis Schenck and his family moved to Moab and are now part of the community where he serves as the new Director of the museum. Travis has great plans and goals for the facility for coming years. He is also busy working on the requirements for the accreditation that the museum is seeking.

For ten months I have served as the director of the Museum of Moab and have worked to both guard our history and to inspire greatness. It is not easy work as the museum must compete with other institutions for funding and attendance. However, we have a great legacy and a strong foundation. I am grateful for all of the directors, staff, and board members who have served here before me. Their diligence has built this museum from a four-room house to the beautiful institution which serves to protect and preserve the heritage of Moab.

Today we work hard to keep the museum relevant and interesting. Some things will

change at the museum and others will reinforced and highlighted. Our programs will expand, as they can, with the goal of inspiring and preserving. Moab's heritage will not be forgotten, nor its future abandoned.

In a busy world the Museum of Moab will continue to help the citizens and visitors of Moab to understand and appreciate the heritage they have. It is our invitation to all to begin looking forward to the past.

# From the Prez

Over the years since its inception, the Museum of Moab has been lucky enough to have had some outstanding members of the community who were willing to not only volunteer their time and expertise to the Board of Directors, but who were also were willing to take on the additional burden of being President of the Board. These Presidents have helped steer the progress of the museum and kept the workings of the Board on an even keel. It is their dedication and foresight, in conjunction with that of the curator/director and the other Board members, that has helped make the museum what it is today.



Lew Painter

Where did these Presidents come from, what do they remember most, and how has their involvement changed the history of the museum? After interviewing some of those that are still available, we find that each has his own story and they are as varied as the Presidents themselves.

The first President officially listed is **Lew Painter**, 1958-1960, who currently lives in Tennessee. Lew says that his wife, Sally Ann, was part of the Women's Literary Club that worked to get the museum started. She then got him involved, although he always felt she was more active than he was. He didn't want to get on the Board at first, but eventually he gave in and joined. It was right at the beginning of the museum's organization and he remembers doing a lot of work with Lloyd Pierson, whom he fondly recalls as being one of his favorite people when it came to acquiring things for the museum and also getting things done. At that time, gathering collections and artifacts was one of the biggest problems that faced the new museum

as well as membership issues, although he doesn't recall whether they had an actual membership program at that time or not. He feels that his biggest personal contribution was helping to collect money for the museum, money to help get it going and to support it. After being President for a few years, Lew left the Board because he got busy with many other things, but states, "I certainly still stayed involved with the museum itself." Later they moved to Tennessee for his work and he lost touch with the museum. When asked about his favorite part of the museum, Lew fondly recalls some dinosaur footprints recovered from near the Portal which, until recently, were part of one of the displays.

The next President interviewed was the 1981 President, **Lois Jamison**. Lois is not only an active and involved resident of Moab but also an active member of the museum, seen often at Art Walks and other events. Lois' husband, Lyle, had worked at Arches National Park in 1959 and 1960 with Lloyd Pierson, and the Piersons and Jamisons became good friends at that time. Lyle was the Administrative Assistant at the Park and at that time there were just five employees, although they used to get one or two rangers just for the summer. The Jamisons eventually moved to Page, Arizona, but when they came back in 1972 there were 35 employees at Arches. It had really grown!



Lois Jamison

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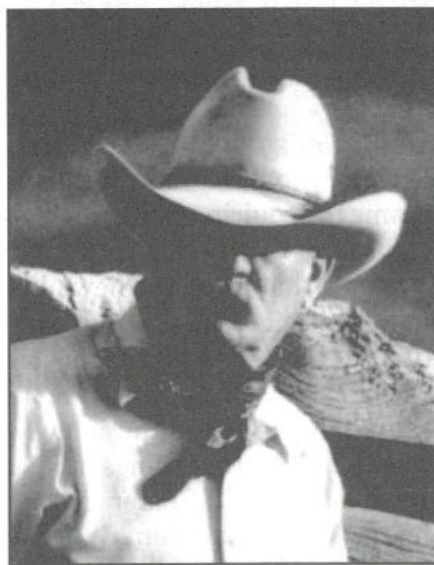
...her favorite part of the museum was seeing people come in for the first time and being surprised at what they saw.

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A year or two after they came back to Moab, the Jamisons joined the museum and Lois eventually joined the Board. At that time Dave May was the president. According to Lois, "When Dave was president, there were about half a dozen ladies who used to come regularly for the museum meetings. We didn't do much of anything but we kept the Museum Board together during that time." When the Piersons came back in 1976, both Lyle and Lois got a lot more involved with doing things for the museum because they were all friends. Lyle worked with Lloyd when they were fixing up the back room, painting and getting it and the exhibits all ready. Lois felt that the main reason that we now have the museum that we have, the actual building itself, is because Dan O'Laurie was so impressed with Lloyd and what he knew and what he'd accomplished with the museum. She felt that was a primary reason O'Laurie was willing to give money for the new building and to put the exhibits in.

Some of the main problems during her era were just trying to keep the museum afloat, trying to get more members, and trying to get acquisitions for the museum. It was just a little bit of everything as they kept trying to keep the museum going and moving ahead. She and Lyle eventually left the Board when the size reduction was voted in. Both she and her husband decided it was time to cut back and "take a break" but they always maintained their membership.

Lois says that her favorite part of the museum was seeing people come in for the first time and being surprised at what they saw. It was fun that they were amazed that "we had as many different things as we do." For now, she feels that the museum is headed in the right direction and is fortunate to have a young director who's full of new ideas and has a good background in working with museums. Her only suggestion is to consider an elevator for people who can't go up all those stairs!



Pete Plastow

In 1988, **Pete Plastow** became President, taking over from David White. Pete had a background in museum creation as he had spent time working with his father making models for the Smithsonian and then he was hired to do a major part of the design and construction of the new Albany Museum in New

York. After moving to Castle Valley, he became involved with the Museum of Moab because he was interested in history and he actually asked to be on the Board because "I thought I could do something to help them." He began dealing with the problems of constructing the new back room of the museum while serving as a Board member and they had the financing, the architect, and approved drawings when Dan O'Laurie made his offer to fund the additional construction of the new front. Pete became President during this time and was able to make use of his previous experience working on building design, consulting with the architect, and determining how the space would be used for exhibits. Once the building was up, he worked out the current color scheme, designed as well as built and set up exhibits, and then installed artifacts. He mentioned that so many people, especially Board members, really pitched in to help with the construction, doing everything from wiring of exhibits to helping with installations.

When asked about the dedication ceremony, he remembers some bunting they had hanging up for the celebration, but it rained very hard that day and all the dye in the bunting ran, ruining some people's clothes! The party was moved indoors where they ended up having much of the celebration.

One thing that he had wanted to do when he was president and that he's "really tickled about" now is the museum's efforts to become an accredited museum with the American Association of Museums. He had been affiliated with the AAM before coming to

Utah and feels that this is a very big job but very necessary, and he's glad the museum is working towards that goal.

Pete considers his major contributions as the building design, the creation of the exhibits, and the *Canyon Legacy* magazine which he instituted during his presidency. His favorite part is still the downstairs and the original front part but feels that a very nice job has been done "of carrying my design from the front throughout the rest of the museum." He also feels that the museum, while small, has done a good job of covering the history of Moab and Grand County but that one of the ongoing issues is still expansion of space. In addition to interior room, he specifically mentioned the potential use of outdoor spaces for displays similar to those of other living museums around the country and suggests that the museum should always improve everything by trying to continually make it a better place to visit. Local involvement is always an issue but Pete also thought that as more retirees move to Moab, their interest and involvement might also increase participation.

As museum projects wound down, Pete got busy with his art and finally resigned from the board, leaving the Presidency to Keith Montgomery (1990-1992), who had been the Vice President. Keith stated that his primary contribution to the Museum of Moab was his work to reduce the Board from the unwieldy large board of almost 30 members to the current nine-member Board.

**John Weisheit** is a river guide who was researching information for his book *Cata-ract Canyon: A Human and*

*Environmental History of the Rivers in Canyonlands*, and utilizing the Museum's primary documents and photos. After developing a friendship with President Keith Montgomery, Keith asked him to join the Board and, after serving as a Board



John Weisheit

member for several years, John became Board President from 1993 to 1996.

Some of the issues he specifically remembers also involved the new building and displays. The museum had just been given the burden basket and a display had to be designed and constructed so that UV light wouldn't hurt it. John said that Nancy Coulam was on the Board at that time and, as the archeologist with the National Park Service, she did an outstanding job with that project. Another issue he mentioned was that the museum didn't have good circulation and Virginia and guests were getting too hot or too cold, so he installed ceiling fans to circulate the air, actually putting them in himself. They also had a problem with the *Canyon Legacy* at the time because editor Jean

Akens resigned and they had to scramble to find writers. John took a leadership role, involving the Board, even though they didn't have the expertise or the software at that time to do it as they would have liked. It was a big struggle and they went from four issues a year to three. John felt that the quality of the magazine suffered but that, indirectly, it piqued other people's interest in it. He stated that he was "certainly glad that it lived on because it was about to die." He also wishes that the museum had worked more closely with the Utah Humanities during his tenure to integrate some of their resources like guest speakers and possibly have gotten grants to do Moab history. He felt that it would also have been great if some of the Museum members and Board members had written articles for something like the *Utah Historical Quarterly* and gotten more integrated into the mainstream of Utah history.

John's favorite parts of the museum include the photos (which he calls a real treasure and the museum's best gift), the documents and the archives, the *Canyon Legacy* which puts those two entities together, and the archeology display. He feels that it has been great that the County has long financed the staffing and a good portion of other building-related expenses of the museum, not only for the community but for the visitors and that the museum should maintain that relationship. He says that "it's critical that the county never waivers in its responsibility to the museum, any more than it should waiver in its responsibility to the schools. The museum is a part of that community and it needs to be maintained."

For John, he thought that his museum experience was a



great precursor for understanding how non-profit organizations work but, as a river guide who feels the Colorado River is in jeopardy, he wanted to do more than just be involved in an educational format like the museum. He has moved into the role of environmental advocacy with a nonprofit organization called Living Rivers, and in 2002 the Waterkeeper Alliance approved John's application to serve as the Colorado Riverkeeper, but he maintains his museum membership with the enthusiastic response of "Of course!"



Tom Stengel

Holding the office of President from 1999 through 2003, **Tom Stengel** was actually drafted as a board member only after he found himself with some time on his hands after getting off the Solid Waste Board. Another museum board member had been trying to convince him for years to get involved with the museum before he finally said, "Why not?" After serving for several years, he became President and had to deal with some of the issues facing his board at that time. One of those problems was financial support as he felt the museum was heavily underfunded and didn't have enough money to really move

forward. As he says, "We had a lot of dreams but then reality sets in about where do you get the funding to actually accomplish the tasks at hand?" Space was also an issue the board was struggling with then as now, but Tom felt that the museum shouldn't get too big in the future because then it becomes unmanageable, more people are needed to run it, and it becomes a Catch-22.

When asked about his favorite part of the museum, he unequivocally answered, "Virginia Fossey. What a darling!"

Tom states that his biggest contribution was developing a 3-year "reachable" plan versus the 5-year plan previous boards had been working with. It seemed easier to see actual goals three years out whereas 5 years felt like a really long time. When he left the Board, he had decided it was time for some new blood and so that others could "keep progressing towards the future." His recommendations for future Board members and Presidents include keeping an open mind for changes and possibilities. He and Suzie are still very active members of the museum, attending Art Walks (the best snacks in town) and the Annual Dinner.

**Detta Dahl** was Vice President for many years and only "officially" served as President of the Board for 6 months in 2004, splitting the year with the late Travis Trittschuh, another long-time Board member. However, the arrangement was due to the many other jobs that Detta was already involved with for the museum, such as being a Board member, brochure preparer, grant writer, and newsletter editor for many years. While living in Colorado, Detta had been a member of several Denver

museums and although she visited them often and wanted to be more involved, it wasn't until she retired and came to Moab that she found her niche helping as a volunteer at the Moab Museum. Because of her background in accounting, as well as some experience working with non-profit organizations, she offered her help as a new member and started with the store book-keeping.

At the time, one problem was that the exhibits seemed to resemble just nice cases of stuff according to Detta, which was more noticeable after Jean and Detta visited some museums in the state that only exhibited their collections in such display cases. After she joined the Board, they decided to tell the story of Moab's settlement using the existing collections. Chris Taylor suggested the story, Tim Morse designed the displays based on Pete Plastow's front area, and Bill Meador placed the sequence of exhibits for the timeline. Additionally, the local dinosaur discoveries were not represented and that was felt to be an area



Detta Dahl

where the museum could expand its exhibits. Jean was building the multiplex holding the uranium pictures and Detta's husband, Bob, was a draftsman so he had all the equipment for copying photos and drafting the diagrams. She had a computer program that helped manipulate photos for display purposes, and whatever the museum needed they'd try to do. Later, after Bob's death, Detta began spending more time working with Jean on displays including the oil and gas exhibit, rock properties display, and the old kitchen.

Detta considers a major contribution to have been those related to her computer skills, such as the newsletter and brochure preparations, but she also enjoyed the extensive work she did with Jean on many of the exhibits over the years. She has many favorite parts in the museum and hopes that future progress, while involving technology and gadgetry, doesn't interfere with the "hands-on" appreciated by so many of the visitors. Her wish list would include a dinosaur lab with real work for children and young adults. She recommends that future Board members visit the museum, listening to what visitors really like, and remember that "museums are a place for the real thing, not just digital images."

**Jim Tharp**, 2005-2006, became a Board member after being recruited by Tom Stengel and Jean McDowell. He had always been interested in museums and he'd lived in Europe surrounded by museums as well as on the same block in New York City as the Museum of Natural History. One of the first things he did on moving to Moab was to join as a member. But it was his fundraising in con-

junction with the library campaign that attracted Tom and Jean's attention.

As a new Board member, Jim thought that the Board was not as focused as it could be, in spite of long-range plans having been made in the past, and that the members were too comfortable with what had become status quo at the museum. The staff was eager to move forward and yet the Board, with little money and small numbers of staff, could not do what a Board needs to do. An additional problem he saw was that some members considered being on the Museum Board as a "glamour position." These problems were dealt with by having solid strategic planning sessions, defining short and long term goals and providing a road map of where the museum wanted to be, including the museum assessment and certification process. During Jim's time on the Board, the museum has increased the funding by a significant margin from sources such as the County, membership, and grant writing. Additionally, the Director position has been expanded from part to full time and includes attendance at conferences for continuing education. The museum is now a member of not only the Utah Museum Association but also the American Association of Museums and the Western Museum Association, where Jim serves as the only non-museum professional on their Board. One of Jim's big contributions, therefore, is his focusing on the professionalism of the organization by encouraging and working with the accreditation process which has helped both the Board and staff understand the museum's position in the museum world.



Jim Tharp

As for big issues still facing the museum, Jim states that there's obviously a space issue, and it's not necessarily in terms of what can be displayed or a larger facility for the public, but storage space as well as preparation and curatorial space. Another really big issue he sees is the lack of educational programming which should extend beyond the *Canyon Legacy* and the temporary exhibits. When asked about what would be on his wish list, he said that, "For many of the things that the museum should want to do, it's not about money and it's not about time. Money helps, time helps, all those things help, but if you have focus within your existing resources you can do a lot more. We haven't figured out how to deploy our current resources as appropriately and as aggressively as I would like to do." He also felt that increased staffing should go hand in hand with increased educational programs that the museum should be doing

Jim likes the quality of the diversity within the museum and that, within the limited resources, the museum has focused in quite precisely on the more important

aspects of so many disciplines with everything done well. His recommendations for future Board members include making certain that each and every board member truly understands their fiduciary and ethical responsibilities as a trustee of the museum. Their legal responsibility is much greater than in many other non-profits because they've been provided objects by people and are responsible for them, and each and every board

*...he believes in new faces on Boards because people have more energy at first, but tend to "run down" if they're on too long..*

member and staff member must truly understand what it means to be a good, professional, ethical organization. As he says, "I love the museum and I episodically work very hard for this museum, but I'm constantly thinking about the museum which is important for any board member."

Finally, we come to the current President of the Board, **Nick Eason**, 2007-2008, who has a background as a Park Service employee working with historic and natural topics, which led him to his involvement with the museum. Board member and friend, Terby Barnes, originally recruited him and he says, "...knowing Terby, she talked me into it!"

Problems that face his Board are some of the same things that others have mentioned, including staff funding and developing the Director position into a full time position. He feels that the new funding arrangement is currently working well with the County (although always subject

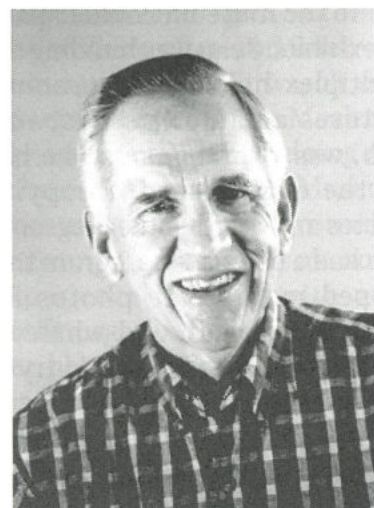
to budget processes), and the current County Council is supportive of the museum. Space continues to be mentioned as a big issue and Nick talked about some interesting options the Board is currently considering. He would also like to see an increased space capability for hosting traveling and temporary exhibits because he believes that is the key to maintaining local interest, as well as some modifications in exhibits in the Pierson History Hall. As for

the future, Nick would like to see the museum also getting into electronic and technological areas that they haven't been able to before, but is pleased that, "We've now been

able to get a website that can be worked with and that provides more information so that's all part of the move into the 21st century." Accreditation will also offer opportunities when it is achieved.

Nick says that he believes in new faces on Boards because people have more energy at first, but tend to "run down" if they're on too long, so he may step down at the end of his current two-year term. Meanwhile, his recommendations for future Board members are to be willing to contribute in the meetings, be open to others' ideas, and to work as a team player. He feels that the Strategic Planning sessions develop team work, a foundation for moving ahead on a one-two year time frame, and a good consensus of where the Museum is going.

While not having a specific favorite part of the museum, Nick particularly likes "to look back and see what Moab was like in the early days." Old photographs and artifacts remind him that it "took a real effort" to build the town of



Nick Eason

Moab and he appreciates the way the museum helps visitors and locals see that history.

Our thanks should go out to these people for their endless work and involvement with the Museum of Moab and also our congratulations for a job well done. A Board position, and particularly the role of President, can take an incredible amount of time to do well. Without community members who volunteer their skills, knowledge, energy and enthusiasm towards the philanthropic goal of enriching the museum through their participation, we would certainly not have the quality museum that we have today. This did not happen overnight, nor has the pursuit of excellence ended. Our hope, as members and supporters of this truly unique treasure, should be that we continue to attract such people and that we can continue to rely on them to take the museum forward into this new century. Thanks, Presidents and Board Members - past, present, and future!!

The Canyon Legacy is available by subscription for \$25 per calendar year and includes full membership to the Dan O'Laurie Museum of Moab.

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