

Buckskin Bulletin

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Living Legend #58

Ester Johansson Murray, Living Legend

**By Karen Andren Green
And Juti A. Winchester**

Cody, Wyoming, is the lucky place where the Mythic West has an actual location on the map. One of the town founders was none other than **William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Frederick Remington** drew pictures of townsfolk at play in 1902, and in 1913 the county fair was opened by **HSH Albert I, Prince of Monaco**. However, Westerners hanging their

hats at **Pahaska Corral** know that the true living legend in Cody is our own Ester Johansson Murray. This tiny bundle of finely-spun steel exemplifies the spirit of Westerners in every sense.

Usually a lady demurs when asked her age, but not Ester, who will proudly tell you she was born in Cody on May 25, 1919. Her first home was a log cabin at the head of Dry Pat Kelly Creek in the scenic Wapiti Valley.

After Ester's father proved up his claim on his Jim Mountain homestead, Ester and her mother lived on that homestead for one fall and winter. The solitary life was not for Ester's mother, so the family moved into town. They spent many summers working on area dude ranches on the North Fork, but their home on Rumsey Avenue has remained home to Ester ever since.

After Ester was graduated from Cody High School in 1937, she went on to study history at the University of Wy-

oming, receiving her degree in 1941. Ester taught school in Kemmerer for a few years, worked as a secretary, married, and after stints as far away as Australia, returned to Cody.

Wyoming history is the lucky discipline to which Ester has devoted her passion for most of her adult life. Wherever she lived, she delved into archived and local lore, researching Wyoming's past. Because of today's computer indexing of records, a simple search under Ester's name reveals some of her tireless service to historical memory, including conducting interviews with old timers in Wyoming and Montana, donating the results of her work to many local historical archives.

A charter member of the Wyoming State Historical Society (founded in 1953) and a veteran of its presidency, Ester was honored by that body in 2010 with the Mabel Brown Cumulative Contribution Award, given in special recognition "to a living Wyoming resident who, over a long period of time, has
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Ester Johansson Murray

From the Chairman ~ Kent McInnis

Daily life, like history, has its inexplicable surprises. Take Westerners for example. Over the past six years the number of active corrals and posses in the United States declined perhaps 15%. Like in many ghost towns of the West, one day you wake up and realize there are no more people. Either the last of the hangers-on pass away, the railroad moves the track, or a drought drives people to greener pastures. That is the simile that best describes what was happening in Westerners. That is – until now.

Here at the Westerners Home Ranch it's like the grandchildren coming back to town to run the farm, because the rail line returned and the rains resumed. We are expanding and we can't explain why? There are efforts to form new corrals and posses in **Waco, Texas; Casper, Wyoming; Kalispell, Montana; Hays, Kansas; Wichita Falls, Texas;** and finally, one more university group from **Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva, Oklahoma.** If we count the third student university chap-

ter we hope to announce very soon, that leaves the count of new corrals and posses at seven. Seven chapters in a span of 12 months is remarkable. I repeat. We can't explain why? We intend to find out.

Perhaps part of the answer lies in this simple example. We are all lucky. It's just that most of us are unaware of our luck, even when it's plopped in our laps. In this case your **Home Ranch bunch** were paying attention. We can give credit to everyone here for seeing the obvious. Yes, I said it correctly. Ever lost your glasses, only to find them on the top of your head? Often looking for the unusual causes us to miss the low hanging fruit. We got calls from a majority of prospective corrals with someone simply asking us, "I want to start a corral of Westerners. How do I do it?" If you know of someone who has that question, send that person to us. We know how to assist. Telling us to look for the obvious low hanging fruit might help also.



From the Editor ~ Burnis Argo

OOPS—Seems we advertised last issue that we would be touring an exhibit at the **National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum** this issue. For a variety of reasons, that didn't happen but it is still in the works and we are shooting for the Spring Issue out in May.

This brings up an explanation of the titling of our four issues a year. If we begin with the **Spring** issue and continue on through **Summer, Fall** and **Winter**, we end up in December—right in the middle of the Christmas

mail rush, generally causing the bulletins to languish in a corner of the post office until after the holidays and you getting your copy of **Winter** in January. Since winter doesn't begin anyhow until nearly the end of December we decided to adjust and do the Winter issue in January which means the **Fall** issue comes out in early November just before the mail rush.

A reminder: the bulletin is always up on the WI web site as soon as it is completed—no waiting for the mail man and you can enjoy the

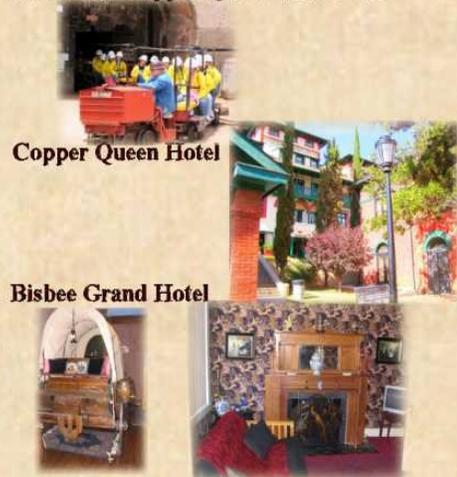
bulletin in **Living Color** as well as the **WI Extra**, a page or two of pictures not included in the mail-out issue. Address at the top of page 1.

Packets with the awards forms, corral record sheets and dues statements have been sent to all "Reps." Make sure someone sends the **Home Ranch** a mailing list so we can update the ones we have on computer and you will always get your copy.



**Bisbee Corral of the Westerners
Mine Tour, Copper Queen Hotel
and Bisbee Grand Hotel**

Saturday, March 9, 8:45 A.M.
Meet at the Copper Queen Mine Tour



Here are a couple of examples from the Bisbee Corral Facebook page. Above is the announcement of a quarterly outing by the group. Below is information on a corral trip to Camp Crittenden.

**BISBEE CORRAL OF THE WESTERNERS
TRIP TO CAMP CRITTEDDED
Saturday, October 12, 9:00 a.m.
meet at Denny's in Sierra Vista.
Breakfast at 8 a.m.**

Camp Crittenden: Established March 4, 1868,
closed June 1, 1873.

Col. Thomas L. Crittenden, 32nd Infantry commanding district of Tucson recommended that after the rainy season, the Tubac garrison should establish a post on the new site. Troops arrived March 4, 1868, with Major Charles E. Norris, 1st Cavalry in command. The barracks, hospital and other buildings were built of adobe with earthen roofs and floors.

In August 1870, General George Stoneman, reduced the garrison strength to a single infantry company. 1st. Lieutenant Howard B. Cushing was killed by Apaches in the Whetstone Mountains on May 5, 1871. Although he was not stationed at Camp Crittenden, his body was taken there and the news of his death came from Crittenden.

On August 27, 1872, Lt. Reid T. Stewart and escort, Troop F, 5th Cavalry, rode out of the camp through Davidson Canyon where they met Apaches and Stewart and Cpl. Black were killed.

In June 1872, General George Crook ordered Crittenden closed. Troop F, 5th Cavalry took station there until after the harvest in order to protect the farmers.

What is the Best Choice, A Web Page or Facebook Page?

By Doug Hocking

To Web Page or Not to Web Page, that is the question. The **Bisbee Corral** decided not to go with a web page but rather with a Facebook page.

If you have a talented Ranch Hand, he or she can easily set up and maintain a web page for you. Technology has advanced to the point where almost anyone can post changes to the site. But web pages are intended to be static. The Facebook page is intended to be dynamic. It only costs about \$10 to secure a domain name, that by which

web pages are identified and by which we navigate to them. Hosting costs about \$40 per year. The Facebook page is free. Facebook is intended to be simple and straightforward to operate.

A Ranch Hand [corral member] simply joins Facebook and then creates, in addition to his own page, a Group Page for your organization. If he leaves it an Open Group, anyone

can participate and see the content. By assigning Administrators, the Ranch Hand designates who can make changes. Under the topic Organization the Ranch Hand should put information about where, when and why, in the general sense, you meet. That's the complicated part. The rest is easy.

Our Facebook page serves as an announcement board, a recruiting tool and as our scrapbook. Under Status we announce the time, place, speaker and subject of our next meeting. These can be typed in, copied and pasted in, or done up as a fancy poster and posted as a photo. We encourage people to "Like" our page. That way they will see our announcements on their Timeline and that helps recruiting. We also Share our announcements into other Groups. That means everyone in those Groups sees our announcement as well. We get information from other organizations in Southeast Arizona about their coming events and attractions. We repost those as well making our page the logical place to come to to find out what's going on. In this way, the announcement board becomes a recruiting tool.

We also post pictures of
(Continued on Page 8)

Living Legend #58 is Announced

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made valuable contributions to the understanding and awareness of Wyoming and its history." Indeed, this year, the society honored her for being a charter member.

A towering pile of books and articles with Ester's name on them attest to her determination to share the story of Wyoming with the world. Three books comprise her major contributions to Park County history: "Red Lodge-Meeteetse Trail," "A History of the North Fork of the Shoshone River" and a biography entitled "Agnes Chamberlin.

Ester has been published in *Wyoming Wildlife* and *Annals of Wyoming*. Articles included were, "Dr. William Sabin Bennett, The Rise and Fall of a Pioneer Doctor," "Short Grass and Heather," "Pete McCulloch in the Big Horn Basin," "Early Cody Bands," "Bert Lampitt and Big Horn Basin Murders, 1909 & 1921." Her most recent article for the *Annals* appeared in the Summer/August 2012 issue and is titled "Dr. Siegfriedt and the Black and White Trail."

Ester was among the first to come through the door when the Pahaska Corral was formed in 1992, was awarded a lifetime membership in November of 2013, and we are mighty glad to have her. Today she is an active member of an author's group, Writers of Wy-

oming, which published "From the Heart," an anthology of essays, stories and poetry that includes three stories by our Living Legend. When asked what has influenced her writing, she responded, "love of Wyoming and sense of place."

Ester is an active member of the Park County chapter of the Wyoming State Historical Society and has served both as its President and several terms as Secretary. She graciously shares her talents, energy and knowledge with other historians and authors from across the country, has assisted many annual summer treks, especially when historical research is involved, stays active on committees, and is currently working on several historical articles which should be published within the next year or so. She has donated a complete record of her school work, including examples that detail a Wyoming student's education from the First Grade through graduation from the University of Wyoming, to the Park County Historical Archives.

To live one's life authentically and with honesty, to treat others with kindness and compassion, to write and research with perseverance and passion, to greet each day with spunk and enthusiasm, to approach one's work with dedication, determination and zeal, and to embrace life with spirit and

Western gusto: that's true Western grit! That's Westerners' Ester Johansson Murray!

(Editor's Note: Both Karen Andren Green and Juti A. Winchester are members of the Cody Corral. Winchester has recently moved to Hays, Kansas, where she has been a leader in establishing the new Old Hays City Corral.)



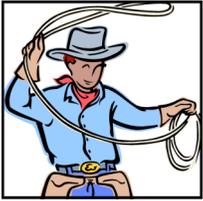
James Donovan

Speakers Named By Omaha Corral

New York Times bestselling author **James Donovan** was the speaker in January for the **Omaha Corral**.

Subject was the Alamo and his latest book, "The Blood of Heroes." He also answered questions about his bestseller "A Terrible Glory."

In December photographer Paul Horsted talked to the group about his latest photography books featuring the Black Hills and Yellowstone.



Corral Roundup

It is always interesting to see how our corrals and posses celebrate the holidays each December.

Things were pretty exciting for the **Yellowstone Corral** Billings, Montana. Attendance was down at their meeting due to snow packed roads and low temperatures and those who made it then had to worry about their speaker, **Zoe Ann Stoltz**, reference historian for the Montana State Historical Museum at Helena.

"She had to drive 250 miles of often treacherous interstate to travel to be with us. We were concerned for her safety and her arrival," said Harry Axline, corral Rep. Arriving safely she gave her talk about children's toys and how they have changed through the years.

The group also exchanges gifts, each bringing an unwrapped book with local historical topic or a local biography, a puzzle or gift pack. They are laid out on a table and then tickets are drawn, each person choosing a gift in turn with the last gift going to the last person drawn.

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Members of the **Central New Mexico Corral** brought unwrapped gifts to donate to the Toys for Tots Campaign.

"Westerners have been one of the most generous donors to the program the last couple of years here in Albuquerque," said the meeting notice.

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The **Los Angeles Corral** has a tradition of serving Cherries Jubilee Flambe for dessert at their annual holiday gathering

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The **Durango Corral** served up turkey with all the trimmings at their December meeting.

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Pictured are Linz, Austria, Mayor Dr. Franz Dobusch, center, Hans Jorg Ratzenbock, left, and Lise Ratzenbock. (Picture provided)

Linz Corral Wins Award

The **Linz Corral**, Linz, Austria, was this year's winner of the Head's Up Award for our Overseas Corrals. They maintain the Cowboy Museum and Gallery, started by **Hans Jorg Ratzenbock**.

"The existence of the museum was threatened," he wrote, "but thanks to our mayor, the museum is saved. We thanked him in the Town Hall."

The corral has received this award before and are always proud of the honor.

To see pictures of some of our overseas groups, which have been sent us over the years, check out the **WI Extra** on line www.westerners-international.org Click on Buckskin Bulletins and go to latest issue.

"Rethinking the Meaning of the Dust Bowl" was the topic of the January meeting of the **South Canadian Cross-Timbers Corral**, Norman, Oklahoma. Speaker was **Alvin O. Turner**, PhD, a former professor of history and dean of humanities and social sciences at East Central University, Ada.

The speaker discussed the evidence for differing paradigms for understanding the Dust Bowl against the backdrop of the Ken Burns documentary.

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Huntington Westerners in California met in January for a High Noon Luncheon and program by **Michael L. Oddenino**. His topic was the Civil War battle, "Ball's Bluff: The Little Battle with Big Consequences." This apparently little-known battle was fought in Loudoun County, Virginia, October 21, 1861.

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Shaunna Gygli was the speaker in January at the meeting of the **San Dimas Corral**. She told the group about the "Hands on History" program for 4th grade students in the area. About 25 years ago Bonita Unified School District teachers and administrators along with city councils, historical societies and community members from San Dimas and La Verne came together to develop three local history field trips a year for the students showcasing three eras of California history. The



local Westerners helped in developing the curriculum.

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The "**Rushville Riot**" of 1886 was the topic of the program at the January meeting of the **Pine Ridge Corral** in Nebraska. Speaker was **Jim Potter** who told the history of lynching in Nebraska which apparently defined other extra-legal forms of punishment like whipping or tarring and feathering. It was the latter which occurred in Rushville when the town folk stripped

him down and applied a coating of tar to lawyer and land agent C.C. Akins, then rolled him in feathers and marched him through town. He apparently had been filing frivolous "land contests" against bona fide settlers.

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San Francisco Corral heard a program in January by **Abraham Hoffman** titled "Actor, Outlaw, Author and Lawmen" regarding encounters between William S. Hart, Al Jennings, James Franklin "Bud" Ledbetter and William Tilghman.

The interchange between these men makes for a fascinating and little-known episode in the early history of Western Films, according to the meeting notice.

Westerners Holiday Events

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The **Pahaska Corral**, Cody, Wyoming, held their annual "White Antelope" book exchange. We aren't sure how it works but members were instructed to bring a "Western" book, wrapped as a Christmas present, but with no name attached.

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"On the Brink," a music group, entertained at the December meeting of the **Fort Abraham Lincoln Corral**, Bismarck-Mandan, North Dakota. It was a festive night, they reported, with Good Food! Friendship! Laughter!

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Unfortunately a few celebrations were cancelled. The **John G. Neihardt Corral**, Columbia, Missouri, had to cancel because not enough members could attend. In Oklahoma City the **Indian Territory Posse** and their guests, the **Chisholm Trail Corral**, were unable to meet because of an early (for that part of the country) snow storm. Especially missed was the annual Western Trivial Pursuit competition, a December event eagerly anticipated by both groups.



Premier landmark in the Black Hills of South Dakota — The Presidents, above. A fall attraction is the Buffalo Roundup. (Photos by Jim Argo)

Trailing The West

Let's face it. This has been a terrible winter in one way or another. No rain some places, too much all at once in others, sleet storms, piles of snow, frigid temps, sheets of ice. So maybe we should concentrate on the vacation season not that many weeks away. Don't know where to go? Fortunately Westerner **Shebby Lee** has some suggestions. She has arranged a number of trips for her Shebby Lee Tours.

Old West Trail is set for July 12-18. Some of the attractions are a walk in the

Oregon Trail ruts, a visit to Fort Laramie and Fort Robinson, then on to Mount Rushmore, Custer State Park and the Crazy Horse Monument.

Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup September 24-29. This includes touring the Badlands National Park, Wall Drug, Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse Memorial and the Town of Deadwood. Highlight is a morning spent at the Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup.

There are a number of other tours she offers. A few include **The Oregon Trail, Yellowstone Safari, Alaska Inside Passage, Bay of Fundy, Wine, Rail and Redwoods, and Grand Tour of Italy.**

For more information write Shebby Lee Tours, Box 1032, Rapid City, SD 57709, Fax 403-343-7558, call 800-888-8306 or you can even go online: www.shebbyleetours.com



New Award Is Announced

The **Home Ranch** is pleased to announce that the executive committee unanimously voted to start awarding a \$1,000 scholarship to a member of a corral sponsored by an institution of higher learning. This will apply to any dues paying student member of **Westerners International** during any part of 2013. The winner will be selected by the university sponsor based on equal parts of scholarship and leadership. A writing sample will also factor in to the final selection.

This makes the second award Westerners gives history students. For years we have cooperated with Phi Alpha Theta in rewarding the best Ph.D dissertation by a scholar of history. Entry forms have been sent to the 2 current university groups. Entry deadline is April 30.



FROM THE PAST

Through the years our overseas corrals have been sending pictures of their activities from time to time. We haven't always had space to run them but now we do. Enjoy looking at some of these interesting photos. From the Riders Corral, Seraing, Belgium, are two photos, at left and bottom of this column. The Trappers Corral, Prague, Czech Republic, on campout, are shown in the middle and lower photo at left. The Indian Corral, also from Prague, is pictured directly below.

