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LIVING LEGENDS #50 & #51

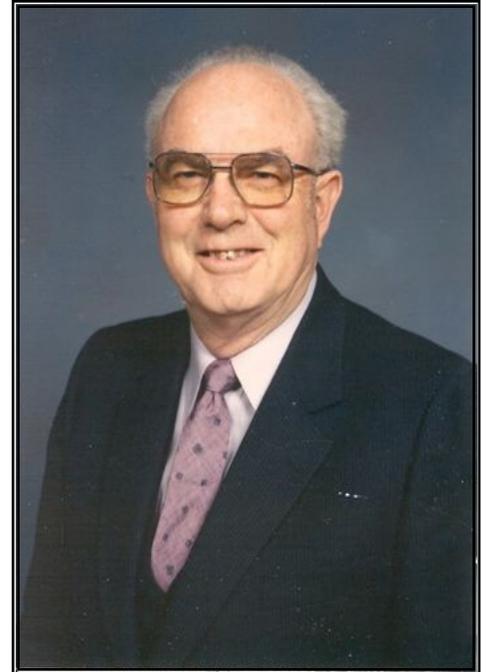
Ellingson and Parker Are Honored

By Laura Arksey

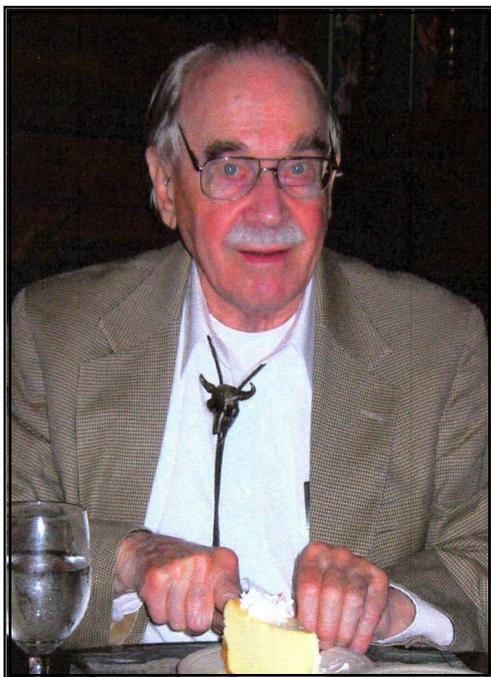
John Ellingson, a member and leader of the **Spokane Corral** of Westerners since 1977, is a true son of the West. Born in 1921, he spent most of his early years on his parent's ranch on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. He rode horseback to a one-room log school through eighth grade. He then spent a year of high school at the Scenic South Dakota High School where he boarded in the school basement. By 1935, successive crop fail-

ures forced his parents to sell the ranch and relocate to Ferry County, Washington, where John's mother had relatives on a ranch near Curlew. Ferry County was then, and still is, a remote, sparsely-settled area in northeastern part of the state. Although the intended destination was Oregon, John's Norwegian-born father declared upon waking up to eight inches of snow, "This looks just like my home Norway. We aren't going any farther."

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John Ellingson



Watson Parker enjoys dessert at a meeting of the Black Hills Corral.

By Ann Haber Stanton

The Black Hills are known for their scenic grandeur as well as the prodigious amounts of mineral wealth extracted from them, but **Watson Parker** is often spoken of as the Black Hills' Greatest Treasure. Now in his 8th decade, Dr. Parker and his family have been Westerners from the first Corral in **Chicago** on down to this very day in the **Black Hills Corral** of Westerners International.

Watson can trace an ancestry of contributors to the culture and history of the

American West, and especially to the Black Hills of South Dakota. The Parkers' participation in preserving the history of the American West dates back to Chicago of 1944 where Watson's father, Troy L. Parker, and Troy's three brothers joined with Sen. Leland C. Case, editor of the Rotarian magazine, and Elmo Scott Watson, newspaperman and educator, to establish the first Corral of WI. Watson remembers attending some of those meetings with his dad and uncles during WWII.

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FROM THE WI PRESIDENT

The **Home Ranch** forwarded me an invitation to speak at the September 15th meeting of the **Brazos Corral** in College Station, Texas. I immediately called Wrangler **Margaret Touchstone**, who had penned the invitation, to accept for Shirley and me. After several calls back and forth we had worked out all the details and it was decided I would speak on "An Easterner in a Western Culture" and she even invited us to stay with her. Our trip was a pleasant surprise since the weather forecast had been for floods in both Fort Smith and the east of Austin area but the weather was beautiful.

Margaret could not have been a more warm and gracious hostess. Not only did she offer to let us stay in her beautiful home for three days but she also had a cocktail party for us the next evening with dinner at her Country Club afterwards. Program Deputy, **Dorothy Van Riper** and her husband, **Dr. Paul Van Riper**; Sheriff **Tom Lynch** and **Rainee Aronald** were with us.

My speech followed dinner at the Corral meeting the first evening. The next day we went to Washington, Texas, where the Texas Declaration of Independence from Mexico was signed. That afternoon we were invited to the Van Riper's home which is on the National Register of Historic Places for tea and a tour. Their home is the oldest home in Bryan, Texas (1878), and filled with beautiful antiques. We also went to the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library, drove around the campus at Texas A&M, toured the Corps of Cadets Museum and visited the

Brazos Valley Museum. I don't know when we have met such nice, friendly and gracious people. They made our trip a most outstanding one!!! We certainly want to thank Margaret and Dorothy for inviting us.

We said our farewells Friday hoping to visit the **Spring, Texas, Corral** but learned it is in dry camp.

We spent the next week in New Orleans where we recruited a new "Westerner" who will hopefully start a new corral.

We were home a few days then on to "The Black Hills" in South Dakota. Which we love. We stayed in Deadwood and while there called both **Rep. Donna Gail Simmons** of the **Black Hills Corral** in Rapid City and **Bernice Landers**, Sheriff of the **Jedediah Smith Corral** in Hot Springs. Timing did not permit us to attend their corral meeting but I wanted to invite them to lunch so I could touch base. Gail could not come as she had a daughter flying in that day but Bernice was able to come. We drove to Hot Springs and were delighted to also meet another member, **Laura Batchelor**. We had a great lunch but more important lots of laughs and talk about Westerners. You may recall that Bernice and several of her corral members appeared in the *Buckskin Bulletin*, Bernice dressed as Jedediah Smith, Laura dressed as Moses "Black" Harris, **Barbara Kane** as Thomas Fitzpatrick, and **Barbara Bogner**, as Edward Rose.

Bernice, who has been sheriff for a long time, told us about a local Indian tribe that used her land for a "Sundance Ceremony" like the one that

was shown in the movies "A Man Called Horse" and "Return of a Man Called Horse," both starring Richard Harris and she was invited to attend the ceremony. Now that was quite a privilege!!!

After we left Bernice and Laura we drove on to "Wounded Knee Monument." We always wanted to go there but were never close enough to justify the trip before. For being such an historical event, we found the site very disappointing. There was about a 4' x 8' sheet of plywood printed on both sides telling of the event but it was very difficult to read as it was quite weather-beaten. The monument itself was nice but in an ill-kept small cemetery. There must be a dispute between the state or federal government as to care of it.

Riding for the Brand
David L. Carter

Next Bulletin

The 4th **Buckskin Bulletin** for 2009 will be out the end of December and will be an on-line only issue. Though the WI Board of Directors has authorized us to do only 3 bulletins a year, we want to do 4 as we said we would. The increase in printing and postage costs are putting a strain on our Home Ranch budget so we are going to do the last bulletin only on our web page. We hope those who have computers will print an extra copy or two to share with Corral members who do not. We post all our bulletins at www.westerners-international.org

Our WI President Goes Visiting



David Carter, left in left photo, member of the **Fort Smith Corral** and **WI President**, poses with Laura Batchelor and Bernice Landers, members of the **Jedediah Smith Corral**. His wife, Shirley, is on the right. Landers is corral sheriff. Below is, left to right, Carter, Margaret Touchstone, **Brazos Corral Wrangler**, and Thomas Lynch, corral sheriff.

Trailing The West

Due to continuing requests to repeat our popular West Dakota program, **Shebby Lee Tours** has added the 8-day itinerary which explores the best of both Dakotas to its 2010 schedule. "**West Dakota**" is planned for July 22-29, and features western artists, legendary characters and extraordinary national parks.

Highlights include Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse, Custer State Park, Fort Mandan, jeep ride to the buffalo, Badlands National Park, Medora Musical, North Dakota Heritage Center, Teddy Roosevelt National Park, historic Deadwood and much, much more.

West Dakota is available for individual bookings or small groups at 10 percent commission. Begins and ends at Rapid City, SD.

Questions? You may contact us at 1-800-888-8396 or info@shebbyleetours.com



Notes from the Editor

Here at the **Home Ranch** we are noticing that more and more of you are communicating with us by computer—asking questions, ordering our WI merchandise, sending meeting notices and pictures. Lots of membership lists are beginning to arrive, too. If your membership list is in the form of an Excel spreadsheet these can be sent to us as an attachment to an e-mail. We can then put them straight into our own Excel mailing list without having to retype all the names and addresses. We are about halfway through redoing our entire mail list which has been a very big job. We have noticed some corrals or poses have not sent us an updated mailing list in a few years. Please check with the person who does yours so we can be sure all our members receive their bulletin. Our e-mail is: wihomeranch@gmail.com

Watson Parker Honored as Living Legend

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Later in those war years, Staff Sgt. Watson Parker went off to serve his country in Europe and the Philippine Islands. In the U.S. Army Medical Department, attached to the 1284th Combat Engineer Battalion, he served in both theaters of war. Watson's irrepressible dry wit mitigates the horrors he witnessed, referring to WWII as "that unpleasantness."

Troy Parker started Palmer Gulch Lodge, a summer resort/dude ranch near Hill City, which the family operated from about 1927 to 1962. It was here that Watson was reared, with a childhood any youngster would envy. Taking over after Troy, Watson managed the lodge from 1946 to 1960.

Troy and Watson were charter members of the **Black Hills Corral**. Originally Black Hills Corral meetings were held at Loocke (pronounced lock) Haven. Carl Loocke's summer place in Keystone. As membership increased meetings were held in various other locations. In each location, Watson was active, always ready to volunteer his services, present a paper, or take time to encourage a newcomer.

Watson's inclination and background led him along scholarly paths. Starting with an BA in Liberal Arts from the University of Chicago in 1948, he went on to earn a BS in Hotel Administration from Cornell University in 1951. Watson continued on to graduate schools, receiving an MA and a PhD in Western American history and Plains Indian Cultural Anthropology, in 1952 and 1965.

While he still had one semester left at Cornell University School of Hotel Administration, Watson and Olga Massel Glassman were married in September of 1950. Olga worked as a secretary in the Home Economics Department at Ithaca while Watson completed that last semester. They were blessed with two sons and a daughter, James and David and Becky were reared in the idyllic atmosphere of Palmer Gulch.

As a University professor Watson taught history of the American West, Military History, Historical Method and Museum and Historical Society Management at the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh from 1965 to 1986. His book *Gold in the Black Hills*, first published by the University of Oklahoma Press, reads like a scholarly thesis, because that is precisely what it was intended to be—a Doctoral thesis. When it was read by his mentors they suggested he have it published. Following this advice, Watson offered it to the publisher and it has since become a requisite part of any worthwhile collection of books on Black Hills history.

Watson has numerous books and papers on American history to his credit, including *Black Hills Bibliography*, *Black Hills Ghost Towns* (with Hugh K. Lambert) and *Deadwood: The Golden years*.

We owe a particular debt of gratitude to Watson and Hugh Lambert for their vision in cataloguing, photographing and describing many of the ghost towns of the Black Hills in their book. Most of those abandoned towns, buildings and mines have long-since vanished.

Watson also has published about 40 scholarly articles on Black Hills and Western topics as well as another 40 scholarly book reviews. His popular talks on Black Hills topics, delivered with his unique flair are sometimes likened to those of Mark Twain. They keep his audience enthralled and have encouraged many a tenderfoot to delve into history, take classes, become involved in historical associations and investigate these intriguing subjects on their own.

Watson and Olga, still sweethearts after almost 60 years, share a streak of imagination that belies their true age and helps keep them youthful. Around 1964 Olga bought Watson a Steiff walrus hand-puppet as a Christmas gift. They soon found they were collecting walruses (or walrui, as they like to call the assemblage). With the help of friends and family the collection has grown to hundreds of whimsical walrui.

The Parkers are currently retired and residing in Rapid City. They spend parts of their summers entertaining family in "Happy Valley," Palmer Gulch, within view of craggy Harney Peak. Watson continues with his interest in Black Hills history and can be counted on to deliver an occasional paper at a meeting of the Black Hills Corral.

San Dimas Corral

Speaker at the November meeting of the San Dimas Corral was David F. Matuszak who talked about Hollywood's development of the Western Myth and how that myth has influenced American culture.

John C. Ellingson named Living Legend

(Continued from Page 1)

The family settled on a ranch at nearby Malo. John attended Curlew and Republic High Schools, graduating in 1939.

Ellingson's college career at Washington State University was interrupted by World War II, during which he was first an aviation cadet with the Army Air Corps. His hopes of flying ended when a medical examination revealed a punctured eardrum. High test scores resulted in his being sent to Stanford University for an Army Specialized Training Program. The bulk of his service was spent with the Signal Corps, during which time he was variously an instructor in Radar and Very High Frequency, a Signal Corps clerk and chaplain's assistant.

After the war, John completed his college education receiving degrees in general studies and education. He had worked his way through college in the Audio-Visual Center, and this background became the focus of his career. He started an Inland Audio-Visual Company in Spokane in 1954, and since his retirement in 1986, his son Larry has carried on the company. At one point John was president of the national Audio-Visual Association.

In 1977 John was invited to join the Spokane Corral. Since then he has served as Sheriff, Deputy Sheriff, presented numerous programs and contributed articles to the Corral's journal, *Pacific Northwesterner*. His most recent article was published in 2001. "Fire Lookout: A College Boy's Summer in 1941," recounts his experi-

ences as a lonely fire lookout for the U.S. Forest Service during the summer after his first year of college. Furthermore, because of John's efforts, the Spokane Corral is probably one of the best documented corrals in the world. For years he has recorded on cassette tapes most of the program presentations, which are archived at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (Eastern Washington State Historical Society) in Spokane. In addition, as Corral Historian, he has compiled photograph albums of members and programs, which also will be archived at the museum.

Ellingson's other contributions to Northwest history go far beyond his efforts on behalf of the Spokane Corral of Westerners. He has served on the board of the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, where he has spearheaded the oral history program. Because of John and his committee, 600 recorded oral history interviews have been added to the existing collection at the museum. John has personally transcribed some 800 interviews, and the project is ongoing, making this heavily used collection one of the most extensive resources of its kind in the West. Typically John Ellingson then became a leader in the relevant organization, attending regional and even international conferences of the Oral History Association.

John also is a member of and has held offices in the following organizations: American Legion, Eastern Washington Genealogical Society, state and local chapters of the Na-

tional Society of the American Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution, for which he served a three-year term as national vice-president; the Sons of Norway, Lions Club, The Swedish VASA Order of America, and Phi Delta Kappa, education honor fraternity. A tireless traveler, John attends most of the conventions of these organizations. In addition, his interest in family history has taken him back to discover his father's roots in Norway.

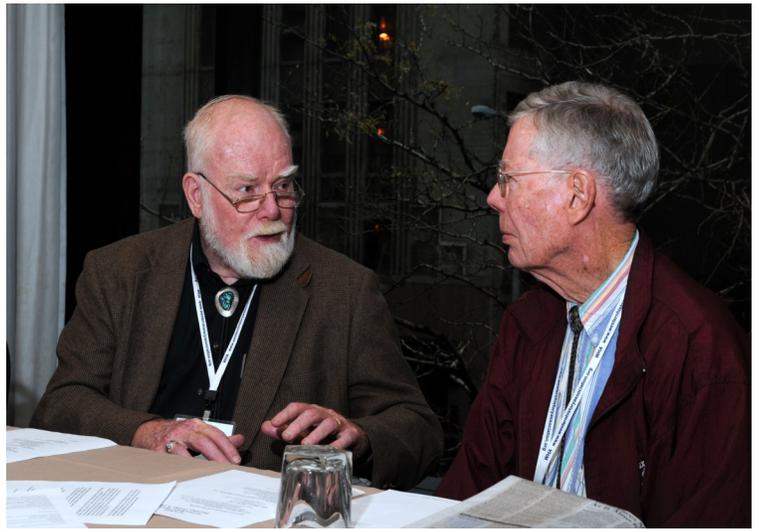
If anyone from the Spokane area, indeed the entire Northwest, deserves designation as Living Legend by WI, it is John Carroll Ellingson.

Changes Made In New Mexico

First the Home Ranch received the sad news that the board of the **Santa Fe Corral** had decided to close the chapter due to low membership and unwillingness by members to take officer positions and keep the group moving. They are, however, keeping their bank account and will continue their scholarship program.

Then came news that the **Albuquerque Corral** was changing its name to the **Central New Mexico Corral** which, of course, gives the Santa Fe members, who live just an hour up the road, an opportunity to continue being a part of a Westerners group if they want. We are hoping this works out well for all.

WI at WHA



David Dary, left, photo above, and John Porter Bloom confer at the WI Fall Board meeting at WHA in Denver. Top left photo, Charlotte Hinger receives her first place Coke Wood Award from Kent McInnis, Chairman of WI. Below left, McInnis stands with Wayne Sundberg, left, and Klaus Krizanovic, both of the Fort Collins Corral, two of our three incredible helpers at the WI breakfast. (Photos by Jim Argo)



Above, Bob Willis, Fort Collins Corral, our 3rd great helper, with Burnis Argo from the Home Ranch. Our three hardy Colorado residents braved a winter storm to be on hand to help at the 7 a.m. breakfast. Right, Bob Clark conducts the annual book auction at the breakfast. That's snow falling outside the windows of the hotel.

From the Chairman



Aaron Wilson, University of Hawaii, is the recipient of this year's Westerners International \$1,000 scholarship for the Best Doctoral Dissertation on Western History by a graduate student member of Phi Alpha Theta. The award was presented Wilson during the WI Breakfast and Book Auction in Denver at the annual Western History Association meeting. (Photo by Jim Argo)

Kansas City Posse Parties

"Good food and great company" were promised for those attending the **Kansas City Posse** December meeting. The group met at the Homewood Country Club in Prairie Village. The program was "Christmas on the Plains" and speaker was **Deborah Buckner**. A gift exchange was held.

In January **Dennis Garstang** will speak about the "Dodge City War" and in February **Erin Pouppirt** will present a program on "Female Espionage." The March speaker will be **John Rotterman** and his topic "Jesse James."

The chairman of Westerners International has an attention span of about 30 minutes. I tell you this because I find museums generally to be a disappointment. It is not the museum's fault, but mine. Fortunately for your chairman, my wife shares this impatience. We will hit an interesting location and be in and out in an hour. For me the issue is how modern museums display their historical treasures. When I was a child of eight or nine, my parents took me to see the Jim Davis gun collection in Claremore, Oklahoma. By all accounts the largest gun collection in the world, every single gun was on display in the 1950s. The museum showed off pistols in endless large spirals, barrels pointed inward. But every display seemed randomly placed. My joy as a child was seeing the sheer magnitude of the collection. When I went back 50 years later, I was disappointed to find the collection on view to be a mere fraction of the total held. The ubiquitous pistol spirals were gone. Cases showed just a few examples. There was an informative explanation for each exhibit. I was devastated.

I tell you all this because Westerners International is the perfect place for me, the dysfunctional historian. WI is a big tent—an organization of academics, journalists, historians, geographers, amateurs, writers, artists, musicians, re-enactors, genealogists, and often real lives lived in an old west time capsule. It is the perfect place to blend all these disciplines into one setting. My own criticism of the study of history can be summed up simply. We tend to study our western history within a silo, isolated from other disciplines. There are scores of organizations specific to a philosophy or subject alone, whether it is the academic bearing of Western History Association or the action-packed competition of cowboy action shooting. Where can you get the big picture, but have fun doing it? Westerners International of course.

BUCKSKIN BULLETIN

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Westerners International
c/o National Cowboy & Western
Heritage Museum

1700 NE 63rd St.

Oklahoma City, OK 73111

Phone: 1-800-541-4650

E-mail

WIHomeRanch@gmail.com

WI Home Ranch Bunch

Kent McInnis, Don Reeves, John Marshall, Leon Nelson, Bill Deupree, Mary Marvel, Cheryl McInnis, Noel Kruger, John & Melvena Heisch, Jerry Burson, Ed Kelsay, Burnis Argo, Fred Marvel, Jim Argo, Sandra and Dennis Noble.

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c/o National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum
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Stockton Corral News



Ed Sleckert shows his old typewriter, right photo. Below, John Talbot talks about "The Tule Breakers," a historical and rare account of dredging published by the Westerners in the 1980s. Dr. Bill Swagerly, left photo, looks askance at the weapon being shown by Ross Carle.



Each August the Stockton Corral has a Show and Tell and Wine Tasting at the Spenker Winery in Lodi, California. The Spenker family are life members of the corral, according to Mary Jo Gohlke who sent us some pictures of this year's event.

