



NEWSLETTER

May 2012

DACHS Secretary Linda Galloway's Message

My name is Linda Galloway and I've been asked to tell you a little about myself, but I truly wonder what about my life might be of interest to all the wonderful members of the Dona Ana County Historical Society. In 2011 I was asked to become Secretary of the Society and so, here I am!!

My father was born in the little community of



Left to Right, Sara Wagner, Linda Galloway, and Susan Krueger

Brazito, which is just south of Las Cruces, in 1925 after his family moved to the area and opened a small general store. My mother arrived in that same community when she was eight years old as part of that mass exodus from Oklahoma and the Great Depression. Though my brothers were born at my grandmother's house, I was born at McBride Hospital not long before the Memorial General Hospital was completed on South Alameda.

So, I have watched the sleepy little town of Las Cruces grow very rapidly into the city that it

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Our May Program May 17, 2012

Mesilla Valley Preservation: Preserving the Future of Our Past

Our presenter for the May program is Eric Liefeld, President of Mesilla Valley Preservation, Inc (MVP).

Founded in 2009, MVP was formed to preserve the architectural legacy of the the Mesilla Valley. As a grassroots non-profit organization, MVP strives to raise public understanding and awareness of historic buildings and their social, cultural, and economic potential. MVP's Board of Directors provides specific experience and expertise in critical areas of Architecture, Historic Preservation, Engineering, History, and Contracting, bringing these talents to bear on a range of preservation projects and challenges.

MVP continues to identify and evaluate preservation opportunities in our most valuable and endangered properties. Our focus is on the unique challenges that each project represents, while engaging in key conversations that can make a critical difference. The presentation will cover the importance of the conversation around historic architecture, not just in terms of nostalgia, but as a critical part of the cultural and economic potential of the valley. The presentation will also highlight some accomplishments and ongoing projects and challenges, and maybe an odd story or two.

In particular, MVP would like to use this opportunity to understand how we can better collaborate and work together with DACHS to further our common preservation goals. ■

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Calendar
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Thursday, May 17, 2012

Eric Liefeld;

and his topic will be “Mesilla Valley Preservation:
Preserving the Future of Our Past”

All meetings of the Society are normally at 7:00pm
on the third Thursday of the months of Feb. - May
and Sept - Nov. in the Good Samaritan Auditorium
at 3011 Buena Vida Circle.

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Linda continued from Page 1

is today. My first job, in fact, was with the Las Cruces Public Schools in the Administration Office when I was just 16. I attended Las Cruces High School and New Mexico State University.

The first big gamble of my life was to open Pipe & Steel of New Mexico in 1983. I had worked for a steel company in El Paso and decided that Las Cruces needed a local place to purchase various pipe and steel needs. I'll never forget that my very first customer was the Leggs Plant. With lots of hard work and a dedicated customer base, the business grew into a very profitable enterprise. We delivered product throughout southern New Mexico and eastern Arizona.

In 1993 the business was sold and we began building a lodge in the Gila Wilderness near Lake Roberts. Grey Feathers Lodge had only 16 rooms with a full restaurant, gift shop and conferencing facility. The greatest joy of living in the wilderness was that we could create a bird sanctuary. Literally thousands of hummingbirds came to our feeders in the summer and hundreds of species of birds were seen year round.

While choosing books to put in the Gift Shop, I discovered what a truly rich history there was in southern New Mexico and the entire southwest. I began reading and researching books on the area and fell in love with the past!

Now that I am back in Las Cruces with my family, I am working on both my father and mother's ancestry. Family members have given me insight into what life was like in southern New Mexico in the early 20's and I find it most fascinating. My son and I built a house just north of Mesquite (about a mile from where my father was born). The old Brazito School House has been refurbished, but I remember as a child attending community gatherings there and it brings back lots of fond memories. ■

IN MEMORIAM

Vicente Leonardo Chavez 1934-2011

Vicente was born in the community of Veguita in Socorro County, New Mexico, and grew up in Los Angeles, California. While living in California, he worked as a fire fighter with the Los Angeles Fire Department, married Mary Lou and raised a family of three daughters. When he retired from the Fire Department in 1981, the family moved to Belen, New Mexico where he built a home and began a labor of love: restoring the Belen Harvey House.

Vicente was a talented person: he was skilled as a handyman, a wood carver and a farmer; and from 1992 to 2001, he volunteered at the Belen Chamber of Commerce, helping organize local events.

In 2004, he moved to southern New Mexico, settling briefly in Las Cruces and then moving to Rodey, where he purchased an old adobe church, formerly St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, and began a second labor of love: the continuation of restoration work on the church and outbuildings begun by the prior owners. The Church at Rodey had been named to the State Register of Cultural Properties and it wasn't long before the Chavez family and their work came to the attention of the Historical Society. Then in September 2007, Vicente and Mary Lou invited the Historical Society to hold their annual picnic on the church grounds and to tour the site. It was an extraordinary and memorable afternoon of learning about the many details of the restoration work, walking the church grounds and visiting with Vicente and his wife, two delightful and most kind hosts. ■

Summer Outing

Mark your calendars: we have planned a summer outing for Sunday, June 24, 2012, to the old adobe Church at Rodey, a small community on the outskirts of Hatch. Mary Lou and Vicente Chavez (recently deceased) acquired the church in 2004, and immediately continued, where a former owner left off, the work of carefully restoring the church and outbuildings, and particularly the rectory for their home. DACHS first toured the site in September 2007, and Mary Lou has invited us to return this summer. The event is planned as a bring-your-own picnic. We will send out a flyer with all the details, the address and directions, and who to call if you would like to car pool. It's a special place and a fun trip. ■

IN MEMORIAM

Christine Buder Myers 1924 - 2011

Christine was born in St. Louis Missouri. She had a lifelong interest in books and history, an interest which became the foundation of her education and was nourished by her choice of profession and her choice of professional associations. She came to the Library at New Mexico State University in 1962 with a Master's Degree in Library Science from the University of Illinois and several years of library experience in Canton Missouri and Nashville Tennessee. She received recognition for her work at NMSU for developing the New Mexico and Southwest area collections.

While Christine lived in Las Cruces, the DACHS and its membership had the good fortune to be the recipient of her knowledge and energy. She was a charter and a life member of the Society, serving as the eleventh president from October 1983 to January 1987. She was also a member of the Historical Society of New Mexico and transcribed the proceedings of the Las Cruces Oral History Club for several years. In retirement, she joined the Friends of the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library and when she moved to the Good Samaritan Village, she helped to build its library collection. We all continue to be grateful to her for sharing her good works with us. ■

The DACHS will take the summer off and our next Board meeting will be held on the first Wednesday of September, September 5th, at 3:00 p.m. in the Branigan Cultural Center in the Downtown Mall. After our May 17th membership meeting, the next one will be September 20th. Mark your calendars and plan to join us. The next Newsletter will be the September issue. ■

Our First Project

When the DACHS was founded in 1963, saving Fort Selden, an old military post which was moldering away from the effects of wind, rain and vandalism, a few miles north of Las Cruces, was its primary purpose. On October 3, 1963, the group of Mesilla Valley history buffs working to form the DACHS met informally at Betty Bowen's Design Center on Old Mesilla Plaza to tackle the problem of saving Fort Selden. That night they accepted a slate of officers to direct the newly established DACHS, and the first President Louis E. Freudenthal, appointed the first Fort Selden Committee. The purpose of the committee was to work with local architects to determine what should be done to preserve Fort Selden and to work toward a legislative appropriation at the next session of the legislature. Source: Madeleine Vessel's "Dona Ana County Historical Society 1963-1994." ■

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Doña Ana County Historical Society, P. O. Box 16045, Las Cruces, NM 88004-6045

DACHS Membership Form

Please renew/enroll my/our membership in the Doña Ana County Historical Society. Memberships are active for the calendar year of enrollment and fees are deductible within legal limits for Federal and State income tax purposes. If you are unsure of your status or have questions regarding membership, please contact the Treasurer, Xandy Church, at 575-526-9774 (May-Sept. 575-536-9728) or the President, Marcie Palmer, at 575-496-4736.

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Due to space limitations, the book review of Dorothy Cave's biography of **Father Albert Braun** by George Hackler will be delayed until the September Newsletter.

On April 21st of last year Dorothy Cave, author of "God's Warrior" the biography of Father Albert Braun, Order of Franciscan Monks (OFM), talked about Father Braun at our regular membership meeting. ■

At our April 19 membership meeting, Amando Guzman, who is a graduate student in History at New Mexico State University, gave a talk on his research for his Thesis which will focus on the development of water and agriculture in the Mesilla Valley and the management of water in the Mesilla Valley in the late-nineteenth century. Armando discussed the changing of water management over the years. He also compared the management techniques used in northern New



Amando Guzman who was our speaker for the speaker for our April 19th membership meeting

Mexico with those used in the southern part of the state. He discussed sources he was and will be using for his research, some of that being in El Paso. ■

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