

ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY *and* MUSEUMS ALASKA

2013 Memorials, Haines

Katie John (Mentasta Lake, 1916-2013)



Athabascan elder Katie John, a powerful and effective advocate for subsistence rights passed away in Anchorage at the Alaska Native Medical Center.

Katie John was the lead plaintiff in a series of lawsuits ensuring Alaska Native fishing and rights. Her legal actions polarized public opinion between those who believed she was entitled to take salmon from her traditional land, which the state had closed to fishing, and others arguing that such taking amounted to special treatment. The resulting court rulings led to major changes in wildlife allocation.

Stated Heather Kendall-Miller, attorney with the Native American Rights Fund, “Her strength was apparent as she described how she had raised and fed 20 children—including 6 adopted children—by the generations-old customary and traditional subsistence practices that she had learned from her parents. She was determined that her children and grandchildren would carry on those practices as well.”

Her Ahtna Native Corporation stated she was born and raised in Slana and Batzulnetas to Chief Charley and Sarah Sanford. She married Mentasta Traditional Chief Fred John Sr. when she was 16. She counted more than 250 descendants. Passionate about preserving Athabascan culture and language, she helped create the Ahtna dialect alphabet, and received an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2011.

(Excerpted from *Anchorage Daily News* article by Mike Dunham, May 31, 2013, p. 1.)

Oliver Rickard “Dick” Kent (Juneau, 1929-2013)



Dick Kent passed away peacefully from a stroke at age 84. Born in Chicago Heights, Illinois, he graduated from High School in 1947.

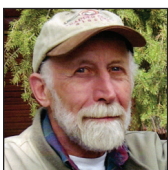
Dick entered the Army and after active duty service, he remained in the Reserves, retiring in 1989 as a Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves, Engineers. In 1956, Dick began his civilian career with the U.S. Forest Service and retired in 1984 as a contract specialist/officer.

Along with his family Dick enjoyed hiking, exploring, and photographing the Juneau area and helping others with genealogy. He and wife Marie received the 2002 First Lady’s Volunteer Award. He co-founded the Gastineau Genealogical Society and with Marie compiled 1918-1927 Juneau burial records, Alaska Juneau Mine personnel index for Alaska Juneau Mine, and Alaska Gastineau & Perseverance Mine, the name index to the Alaska gold rush pioneers of the Juneau-Douglas area 1880-1921, Gastineau Channel Memories series, etc.

Dick worked on joint projects with the Alaska Historical Library, the Juneau-Douglas City Museum, and the Juneau Convention and Visitors Bureau. He was President of the West Juneau Neighborhood Association, and a member of Resurrection Lutheran Church serving as President in 1973.

(Excerpted from obituary, *Juneau Empire*, March 5, 2013)

Ludwig J. Rowinski (Fairbanks, 1929-2013)



Lifetime Alaska Historical Society member Lu Rowinski passed peacefully at age 84.

Lu was born in Passaic, N.J. He worked summers at the American Museum of Natural History, pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in ornithology from Cornell University, in 1951.

After military service, he came north to the University of Alaska Fairbanks for a master’s degree in wildlife management when he was hired by Ivar Skarland to work on museum collections.

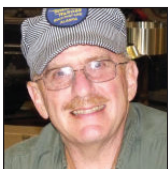
Lu met Christi Haff at the museum whom he married in 1958. As director of the University of Alaska Museum in 1961, Lu brought together collections from all over campus to a central location in the old gymnasium, now Signers Hall. He was proud of his talented staff at the young museum.

In 1970, Lu and family spent his sabbatical in Copenhagen to study at the Danish National Museum, and he visited regional Scandinavian museums for ideas on a future UA Museum. He retired after completion of the new museum building in 1980. Lu also collaborated with Claus-M. Naske on three Alaska pictorial history books.

Upon retirement, Lu pursued his dreams of being a hay farmer and a highly successful ski bum.

(Excerpted from obituary, *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, April 2, 2013)

William “Bill” Shechter (Fairbanks, 1944-2013)



William “Bill” Shechter passed away Feb. 26, 2013, in Seattle, after suffering a stroke. He was 69 years old. Bill was born in Philadelphia, attended Delaware Valley College and the University of Pennsylvania Veterinary School before pursuing his dream of becoming a fire fighter.

After an adventurous car trip to Alaska, Bill was hired by the City of Fairbanks Fire Department and decided this would be his home. In 1970, he became University of Alaska Fairbanks assistant fire chief, working and training student firefighters. Bill married Patricia in 1971 and had three children: Todd, David and Jenny.

In 1986 he returned to the Fairbanks City Fire Department and ended his career as the Borough emergency manager. Bill’s volunteer organizational and computer skills will be missed, particularly as conductor of the 113-year-old steam engine at Pioneer Park where he

was active with the Friends of the Tanana Valley Railroad. He and Patricia were in charge of the special Halloween “Spooky Train” and the Holiday “Santa Express” runs.

(Excerpted from obituary, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, March 2, 2013)

Barbara Sweetland Smith (Anchorage, 1936-2013)



Barbara Sweetland Smith died March 12, 2013, age 76, in Portland, Oregon. She was born in New York City and raised in Oregon where her father was a newspaper publisher.

Barbara graduated from Mills College then attended the Russian Institute at Columbia University where she met her husband, Floyd V. Smith. After two years at the Harvard Russian Institute she returned to Seattle as a KING-TV news analyst and entered graduate school studying late 19th century Russian philosophers and theologians.

In 1970, Barbara taught Russian history at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. Her study of Alaska Orthodox Churches and long lost records resulted in 1982 recognition by the American Association of Archivists as the best book published on religious archives.

Barbara worked for the Aleutian Pribilof Native Association to rectify the WWII Aleut and Pribilof civilian losses, which yielded restitution and church restorations or replacements. Her museum exhibitions included: Alaska as a Russian Colony, the Orthodox Church in Alaska, and Russia’s Voyages of Exploration to Alaska. In recognition she received the Order of Friendship of the Russian People and the Order of St. Herman.

Barbara served 28 years as President of FISH, Soroptimist Club President, Board Member of the National Archives of the Episcopal Church, and held numerous positions with the Alaska Historical Society.

(Excerpted from obituary, *Anchorage Daily News*, May 12, 2013)

David G. Stone (Juneau, 1957-2012)



David G. Stone, Deputy Commissioner of the State Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development died unexpectedly at age 55. He previously served as Lt Governor Mead Treadwell’s chief of staff before rejoining the State Dept. of Labor.

David was born in Oregon and moved with his family to Juneau. A 1975 graduate of Juneau-Douglas High School, he earned his Bachelor of Science in geology from the University of Alaska Anchorage in 1979.

David’s career included the Alaska Electric Light and Power Company, AJT Mining Properties, and Echo Bay Mines. A public affairs executive and negotiator, he joined the McDowell Group. David was elected to the Juneau City and Borough Assembly from 2003 to 2012, serving his final year as Juneau’s deputy mayor.

Dedicated to public service, David was active with the Southeast Conference, the Alaska Municipal League, Rotary International, and the Chapel-by-the-Lake Presbyterian Church.

David and Barbara Stone wrote “Hard Rock Gold”, a comprehensive history of the hard rock gold mining company and he became the “go-to guy” for information. David was past-president of the Alaska Miners Association and a trustee of the Alaska Miner’s Hall of Farm.

(Excerpted from *Juneau Empire* story, Sept. 14, 2013)

Molly Grace Chamberlin Tryck (Anchorage, 1922-2013)



Molly Tryck passed away at age 91 from complications resulting from a fall.

Born in Seattle, Molly and her family moved to Ketchikan then to Anchorage in 1937 to join family businesses. Molly married Charlie Tryck of Wasilla in 1942 and lived in exciting Anchorage during the booming WWII years. Newly wed life in Anchorage during WWII included blackouts, shortages, rationing and housing shortages. After the war Molly raised her 5 children, and her family always came first.

She helped organize the “Little Man for Statehood” campaign with Roger Cremo and Cliff Groh which became the successful “Operation Statehood” movement. She served 2 terms on the State Historical Commission.

An adventurer and traveler, Molly enjoyed sightseeing road trips with family and friends, visiting friends in Alaska and went to the Yukon to see Queen Elizabeth, and later traveled extensively in the lower 48 and abroad.

Molly was an advocate for women and a charter member of the League of Women voters, served 8 years on the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Board, 4 years as chair. She joined the Center for Children and Parents and helped with its Family Resource Center.

(Excerpted from obituary, *Anchorage Daily News*, Sept. 1, 2013)

Jane Norris Williams (Fairbanks, 1914-2013)



Jane Norris Williams passed peacefully at age 98. She was born Nov. 6, 1914, in Ohio, received a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science degree from Otterbein College (Ohio) in 1938, followed by a master’s degree in biology at the University of New Mexico.

Jane married Homer O. “Red” Williams in 1942, and together they raised five children in Ft. Yukon, Cantwell, Central, and Fairbanks where Jane taught biology at Lathrop High School and later served as the director for the school district science department and the educational television department. She later directed the media services and archival film library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Teaching was Jane’s gift and talent. While at Lathrop High School she was recognized as the Alaska Biology Teacher of the Year. Jane’s special interests included Circle District Historical Society, Central Museum, the Wickersham House Museum at Pioneer Park, Alaska Conservation Society, Creamer’s Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Fairbanks Community Food Bank and the development of youth hostels in Alaska. She was a founding member of the Fairbanks Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. In 2011 she received the AHS Ester Billman Award.

Jane stated she was “first and foremost, a pacifist, an environmentalist and a conservationist.”

(Excerpted from obituary, *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, August 27, 2013)