

# ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY *and* MUSEUMS ALASKA

## 2015 Memorials, Cordova

### George Attla Jr., 1933–2015



On Feb. 15, 2015, legendary Alaska sprint dog musher George Attla Jr., the “Huslia Hustler” passed away peacefully at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage after a brief battle with cancer.

George was born Aug. 8, 1933, at a fish camp just below Koyukuk on the Yukon River. He was raised in a subsistence lifestyle and spent the majority of his time at fish camp, cabins and spring camp until he contracted tuberculosis and underwent nearly 10 years of treatment in Sitka.

George began his mushing career in the 1950s becoming a legendary open-class sprint dog racer and musher for five decades. The movie “Spirit of the Wind” was based on his life. His book “Everything I Know About Training and Racing Sled Dogs” is still considered the musher’s guide.

Gov. Steve Cowper proclaimed April 29, 1988, as “George Attla Day.” In 2000, he was named the Best Musher of the 20th Century, and in 2007 was inducted into the first Alaska Sports Hall of Fame. (Excerpt from *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, Feb. 17, 2015)

### Peter L. Corey, 1939–2015



Peter Corey was the longtime curator of collections of the Sheldon Jackson Museum. Born in Brooklyn, NY, he graduated from the Cooperstown Graduate Studies program in the 1960s, and when hired in 1969 to become curator of the Alaska State Museum, he was likely one of the first, if not the first museum worker in Alaska with graduate-level training in museum studies. In 1977, he became director of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, a position he held until the Sheldon Jackson College sold the museum to the State of Alaska in 1984. Peter was curator of collections until retirement in 2002.

His area of expertise was Alaska Native cultures and art. His greatest contribution to the collection of the Sheldon Jackson Museum was the acquisition, over a long period of time, of a large group of Alaska Native baskets, representing the history of the art form in all its periods and variations of patterns, designs, and materials. His many other interests included southeast Alaska Native silver carving and jewelry

Peter was serious, passionate, and sometimes opinionated, but had quick wit and contagious sense of humor, and loved to exchange banter with friends and colleagues. The roar of laughter often emanated from the break room at the museum, where his friends, students, Native elders and artists often met over coffee for fun and serious conversation about Native history and culture. What a great man he was, and full life he had, filled with special people and amazing experiences. (Courtesy of Steve Henrikson, Alaska State Museum)

### Dennis Bel Isle, Ph.D., 1945–2015



As a child Dennis painted a majestic snow-capped mountain scene which became the view from his Eagle River home and where he passed away from an apparent sudden heart attack.

Dennis was valued for his dry humor, intelligence, love of dogs, and interest in computers and writing. Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he enlisted in the U.S. Naval Air Service and was recruited into Naval Intelligence. He married Carol Neuman and earned additional degrees from Cal Poly Pomona and Oregon State prior to Alaska arrival in 1984.

Dennis next attained a OSU/Columbia Pacific University Ph.D. in Behavioral Physiology, and worked for VECO, Red Dog Mine, and British Petroleum before retiring in 2003 from the Department of Defense. He was a long time member of the Chugiak-Eagle River Historical Society, serving as newsletter editor and updating the computer system. He valued his membership and friendships in the Chugiak Senior Center Writers’ Group. Just a week before passing, Dennis completed authoring a philosophical review. (Excerpt from *Alaska Dispatch News*, Aug. 30, 2015)

### Wayne S. Bouwens, 1929–2014



Wayne S. Bouwens, 85, passed away peacefully on Oct. 14, 2014. He was born Aug. 10, 1929, in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, the ninth child of the Bouwens family which arrived in Palmer in 1935 as part of the Colony project. He graduated from Palmer Central School in 1949, worked for the Alaska

Railroad and in the Sutton coal mines until purchasing several farms. He developed a successful dairy operation and later worked in the University Experimental Farm dairy until 1996 retirement.

Wayne enjoyed history and community service and was a member of the Elks, ACCA, President of Palmer Cemetery Association, and member of the Palmer Historical Society. He was a fundraiser for “Alaska Far Away,” a film documentary about the Matanuska Colony Project.

Wayne also shared his passion for the area history by speaking to school children. In retirement he shared his extensive knowledge as a volunteer in the Colony House Museum in Palmer and selling historical society books at the fair and local events. He and wife Margrye raised seven children in Palmer. (Excerpt from *Mat-Su Frontiersman*, Oct. 17, 2014)

### Edwin Butler Crittenden, 1915–2015



Edwin Butler Crittenden, often called “the dean” of Alaska architecture, died on Jan. 10 at age 99. He was born and reared in New Haven, Connecticut. He and Kit, his wife of 65 years, met and married in Ketchikan in 1944, where he was in the U.S. Coast Guard after Yale School of Architecture graduation. He pursued M.I.T graduate work, and there learned about an Alaska Territorial Housing Authority job which he secured and moved his family to Anchorage.

Ed later started his own architecture practice in 1950 designing numerous residences, schools, churches, and buildings across Alaska including the Captain Cook Hotel, the now-Conoco Phillips Building, the Egan Convention Center and many parts of Providence Hospital. His firm developed the UAA campus Master Plan “spine” concept to connect all the buildings.

Ed spent a sabbatical studying northern design, particularly the works of Alvar Aalto in Helsinki, Finland, and Ralph Erskine in Sweden. He co-founded and served the Alaska American Institute of Architects chapter, receiving numerous architectural awards. In 2010, UAA awarded him an honorary Doctor of Humanities. Retiring in 1986, he and Kit spent four years in Sitka, he as campus architect for Sheldon Jackson College. They returned to Anchorage, continuing active in the arts, architecture and painting. (Excerpt from *Alaska Dispatch News*, Jan 14, 2015)

### Rex Fisher, 1932–2015



Rex G. Fisher died in Fairbanks on August 3rd at age 83. Born in LaGrange, Indiana, he put himself through Ball State Teachers College in Muncie, Indiana, and earned an advanced history degree at the University of Wisconsin Madison after serving in the Army Counter-Intelligence

Corps. In 1962 he moved to Fairbanks to teach at Lathrop High School and several years later organized a local chapter of the American Federation of Teachers and served as its first president. In 1968 he co-founded the Alaska Civil Liberties Union.

School administrators and Rex disagreed on school policies and procedures, and his contract wasn’t renewed. A successful legal suit regained his job but he was fired again and lost the second legal suit in a divided Alaska Supreme Court decision.

Rex’s mining history research required many years reading UAF microfilmed newspapers. For the centennial of the Tanana Valley gold discovery, his efforts resulted in a bronze memorial plaque identifying the miners buried in Fairbanks’ Clay Street Cemetery and a related,

self-published book entitled “Dying for Alaska Gold” (2002) about early twentieth-century mining deaths and injuries. Most recently, he completed “Going Crazy for Alaska Gold,” exploring the other human costs of mining. (Excerpt from *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, Sept. 17, 2015, provided by nephew Michael Fisher)

## Wanda M. Griffin, 1922–2015



Wanda Mildred Gelles Griffin, age 93, died on Feb. 15, 2015, at Providence Horizon House in Anchorage. Born in 1922 in the old Anchorage Railroad Hospital on 3rd Avenue, she grew up at 6th and L Street in an original town site house.

Wanda’s childhood nickname was “Happy,” and it fit her. She was the 1940 Anchorage High School valedictorian, worked at the original Providence Hospital, and with husband Ned Griffin raised 4 children. They built and managed the 59-unit Knik Arms Apartments until its 1968 sale and condominium conversion.

Wanda was the longest-term parishioner of Holy Family Cathedral, baptized there in 1922, and assisted with the St. Vincent de Paul Society. She supported the public library and Pioneers of Alaska Auxiliary #4. Her real passion was Anchorage history and as a longtime Cook Inlet Historical Society member she volunteered and donated materials to the Anchorage Historical Museum. For years Wanda was a “go-to person” for identifying photographs or verifying Anchorage history. (Excerpt from *Alaska Dispatch News*, Feb. 19, 2015)

## Beverly Horn, 1926–2014



Beverly Rena Gallant Horn, 88, passed away Oct. 11, 2014 in Kodiak surrounded by family and faithful dog Allie, after a struggle with Parkinson’s Disease.

Beverly was born on a farm in rural Washington, Vermont, the fifth of seven children. She moved to California at 16 and earned a Pasadena Community College Associate of Arts degree. In Pasadena she married in 1948 the love of her life for 60 years, Louie Horn. On the Alaska Steamship “Denali” they sailed to Kodiak where they established a home and raised a family.

Beverly served on the Kodiak Island Borough School Board, Alaska State Board of Education, and State Manpower Council. She was a founder of St. James Episcopal Church and an integral member of the Baranov Museum, serving as a volunteer, registrar, Curator of Collections, and board member. One of her joys was documenting and writing about Kodiak’s history.

Beverly was named Beta Sigma Phi’s 1982 “Woman of the Year” and the 2005 Museums Alaska “Volunteer of the Year”. She was active in many organizations including the Kodiak Historical Society. (Excerpt from *Kodiak Daily Mirror*)

## Walt Johnson, 1922–2015



Merle Walter Johnson died Saturday, June 27 at age 92. Born in Osceola, Nebraska, a small Swedish-American community, he spent his youth on the family farm. By bicycle and boat, he made his way to Alaska first in 1941 then enrolled in the University in Fairbanks in 1942, working summers around Wiseman where the Arctic and its people captured his heart. During World War II, he was a medical laboratory technician at Ladd Field, Fairbanks.

Walt completed undergraduate studies in biology and anthropology then took his medical training at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, graduating in 1953. Two years later he began general practice in Bethel becoming the first UAF graduate to earn an M.D. and return to the Territory to practice. He was next commissioned by the U.S. Public Health Service to work in the lower 48 and also served as Peace Corp medical officer.

Returning to Alaska in 1963 as Medical Director and Tuberculosis Control Officer for the Alaska Native Medical Center, Walt retired from the USPHS in 1980. For the next nine years he nurtured the growth of the University of Alaska “Community Health Aide Program” and was the co-founder of the Alaska Health Sciences Library. (Excerpt from *Homer News*, July 9, 2015)

## Stanton H. Patty, 1926–2015



*Seattle Times* readers of the mid-20th century knew him as “Mr. Alaska,” the columnist tuned into the world of bush pilots and sourdough miners. Stanton H. Patty was the *Seattle Times* reporter for 34 years who wrote global travel stories after graduating from the University of Washington.

He died of complications from diabetes at age 89.

Born in 1926 in Fairbanks, Stan was the son of Ernest and Kathryn Patty. Ernest Patty managed gold-dredging operations near the Yukon River, became the first professor of geology at what became the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, and later served as its president.

With his 1988 retirement, Stan’s garage held a massive collection of Alaska photos, clippings, books and artifacts, later archived at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, which awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2005.

Stan published “Fearless Men and Fabulous Women: A Reporter’s Memoir from Alaska & the Yukon” (2004). Three days before his death, he completed a book chronicling his world travels. His family plans to spread his cremated remains, along with his wife’s and those of a favorite dog, on a hill overlooking the Yukon River near his boyhood home. (Excerpt from *Washington Times*, Sept. 8, 2015)

## Alice Petrivelli, 1929–2015



Alice “Sniggy” Snigaroff Petrivelli, 85, of Anchorage passed, on Sept. 10, 2015, at home. She was born in Atka and lived a traditional Aleut life until the 1942 Japanese bombing of Dutch Harbor after which her village was relocated to Killisnoo in Southeast Alaska.

Alice attended and graduated from Mt. Edgecombe School in Sitka and Haskell Indian School in Kansas. Returning to Alaska, she worked in Bethel, met and married Frank Petrivelli, then moved to Boston, Massachusetts, where she devoted herself to military family life until Frank’s Army retirement in 1969, when they returned to Alaska.

In 1972 Alice started as receptionist at the Aleut Corporation, and in 1976 was elected to the Board of Directors, serving in numerous positions including CEO/President. In Atka during the ‘80s, she served as President of Atxam Corporation. Alice was an advocate for restitution for Aleut WWII relocatees for lost lands and homes. Her goal was to help Aleuts remember their Unangan traditions and succeed in today’s world. She helped create the Aleut Foundation to assist Aleuts with educational and cultural goals.

Alice was an active and devout member of the Russian Orthodox faith in Anchorage and Atka. (Excerpt from *Alaska Dispatch News*, Sept. 12, 2015)

## Patricia Ann Roppel, 1938–2015



Patricia Ann Roppel, a Wrangell researcher and author who wrote 13 books and more than 100 articles, many about the history of Southeast Alaska, died of cancer Jan. 6, 2015, in Bellevue, Washington. She was 76.

A Washington state native, Pat moved to Alaska in 1959. She taught home economics in Ketchikan from 1959 to 1965, the same year she published her first article. Many of her subsequent books focused on Alaska’s fish, timber, and mineral resources and industries, and the people and places of Southeast Alaska. Numerous of her articles were published in the *Capital City Weekly*, now archived and available online.

Two books led to her being named Alaska “Historian of the Year” in 1977 and 2006. She served numerous terms on the Alaska Historical Commission and was involved with museums in Ketchikan, Sitka and Wrangell.

Pat loved being out with her husband of 55 years Frank, on their boat ‘Twinkle’ and riding motorbikes on the Southeast Alaska logging roads. She enjoyed exploring and researching old cannery sites, and was an avid cross-country skier, pond ice skater and outdoors woman. (Excerpted from *Juneau Empire* (Jan 14/Jan. 21, 2015) and *Sit News* ([www.sitnews.us](http://www.sitnews.us)))