

Remembering Our Colleagues and Mentors

**Museums Alaska/Alaska Historical Society
Joint Annual Meeting
Valdez, Alaska
2011**



Ernest S. (Tiger) Burch, Jr.

Tiger was the preeminent authority on Eskimo history and culture with a depth of knowledge not surpassed by anyone. He held the position of Research Associate with the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center, but for most of his academic career, he remained an independent scholar, leaving his mark on all northern specialists.

Tiger Burch held a PhD. in Anthropology. His first field work, at age 16, was a trip to Labrador, Baffin Island, and Greenland on the Donald B. MacMillan 1954 Expedition. Tiger is best known for his work in Northwest and Arctic Alaska, beginning in 1960 and continuing until his death.

Anaktuvuk Pass ethnographer, Grant Spearman said of Tiger, "He was the best: thoughtful, generous with his data, and a role model to be emulated." Will Schneider remembers Tiger for his specificity, "pushing me to see my field notes as a thin slice of a much deeper and more finely layered history. Tiger didn't generalize about the past, he built historical discussion on detail, precision, and nuance."

1938-2010

Robert (Bob) Neil DeArmond

Lifelong Sitkan, Bob DeArmond was Alaska's historian. As a newspaperman under legendary gold rush journalist "Stroller White", he practiced in Sitka and Ketchikan and covered many Territorial legislative sessions in Juneau.

Bob wrote for the *Ketchikan Fishing News* and is known for his regular column on history and maritime history "Abaft the Beam". Bob's journalistic interests focused particularly on fisheries and mining and continued as he edited the "Alaska Sportsman" magazine and the quarterly "Alaska Journal" devoted to the history and arts of the North.

In the 1980s he set off as a free-lance historical researcher and writer, working extensively on the history of Juneau, Sitka and Alaska for local publications. In 1985 he began a weekly column in the Sitka Sentinel which totaled well over 1,000 articles about people and events in Sitka's history. His many magazine articles and books are supplemented by his contributions to the Alaska State Historical Library in Juneau which serve as significant resources for researchers.



1911-2010

Desdia Neva McKittrick Egan



1914-2011

Neva Egan moved to Valdez, Alaska in 1937, taught grades 4-6 and music. She was a gifted pianist who loved to sing "Alaska's Flag." In 1940, she married William A. Egan who was already active in Alaska politics. Bill Egan, with Neva by his side, was active in the fight for statehood. The family moved to Washington, DC, for 19 months while Bill lobbied for statehood. Neva said, upon their return, that she did not wish to leave Alaska again.

After Bill was elected Governor of the new state of Alaska in 1959, Neva embraced the role of Alaska's first lady. (Bill was Alaska's first and fourth governor, terms totaling 12 years). Neva told many stories about those first years of statehood. She stated, "We had such high hopes for Alaska and were very optimistic. Everyone wanted to contribute."

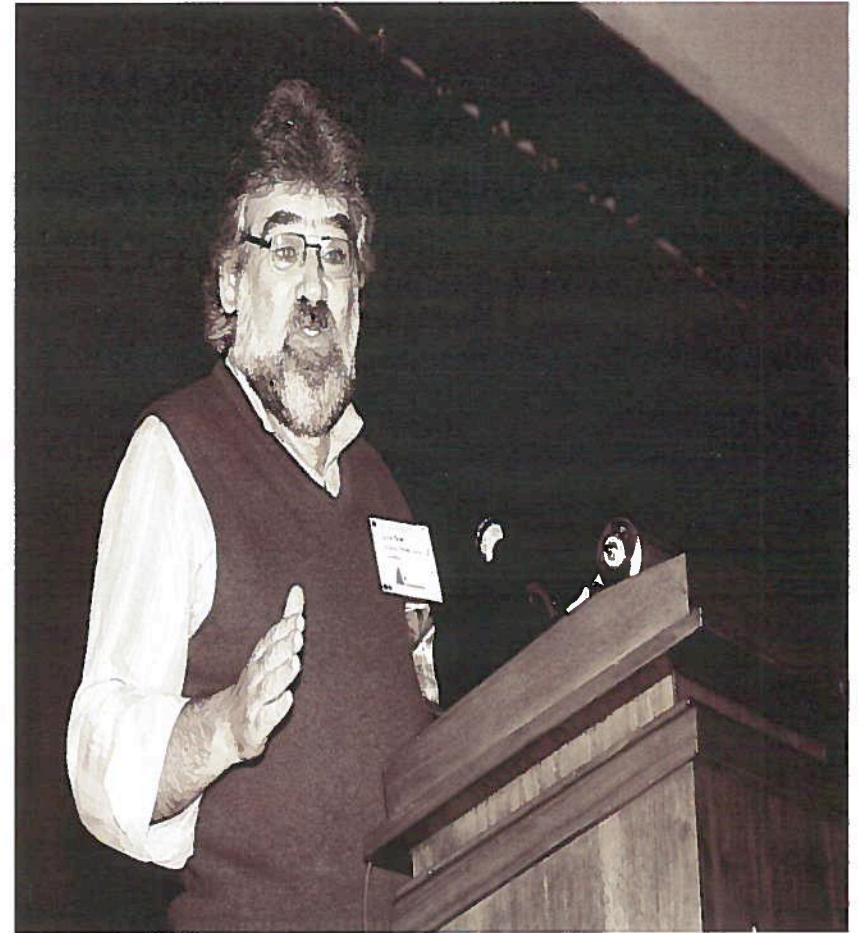
As a member of the Alaska Historical Commission, Neva provided her English toffee for every meeting. At her last meeting as a member she gave out her recipe but not the "only" pan to use.

Richard “Dick” Bruce Engen

Dick Engen arrived in Alaska to direct the Alaska State Library in 1967. As director of the State library, he became a strong advocate for libraries all across the state. During his 19 year tenure, the number of libraries increased from 37 to over 100. He developed a statewide library network linked for the first time by computers, set up a state film library, and provided facilities and services for the blind and handicapped. He also initiated the free “fly with a book” program for passengers awaiting flights in Alaska airports and the Southeast Alaska “book boat” which delivered library service to small villages and logging camps. Later, responsibilities for the State Library were added.

Dick was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters by the University of Alaska Anchorage in 1996. In retirement with his wife Rebecca, he moved to Oregon.

Long time bush librarian Isabel Mudd, now retired in Fairbanks, chuckled and recalled Dick Engen as a “breath of fresh air” when he arrived and immediately started working with even teeny-tiny libraries, getting all libraries in the state to work together. “He had a way of getting us to do all the work that had to be done.”



1927-2011

Светлана Григорьевна Фёдорова Svetlana Grigor'evna Fedorova



1929-2011

Svetlana G. Fedorova was a long-time researcher at the Institute of Ethnography, Academy of Sciences, USSR (renamed in 1991 the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences). Specializing in the history of Russian America, she is best known to Alaska history buffs for her book *The Russian population in Alaska and California, late 18th century-1867* and for her compilation and annotation of two volumes of the Alaskan notes of Kiril T. Khlebnikov .

While in residence at UAF in the early 1990s, she team-taught a graduate seminar on Russian America with Lydia Black and Richard Pierce. Uncomfortable with speaking English, she relied on Lydia Black to interpret in the classroom, but in individual conversation with students who had some rudimentary grasp of Russian she relied upon her flair for the dramatic and gift for pantomime to get her meaning across when words failed. If misunderstandings still arose, her hearty and infectious laugh banished any sting of embarrassment.

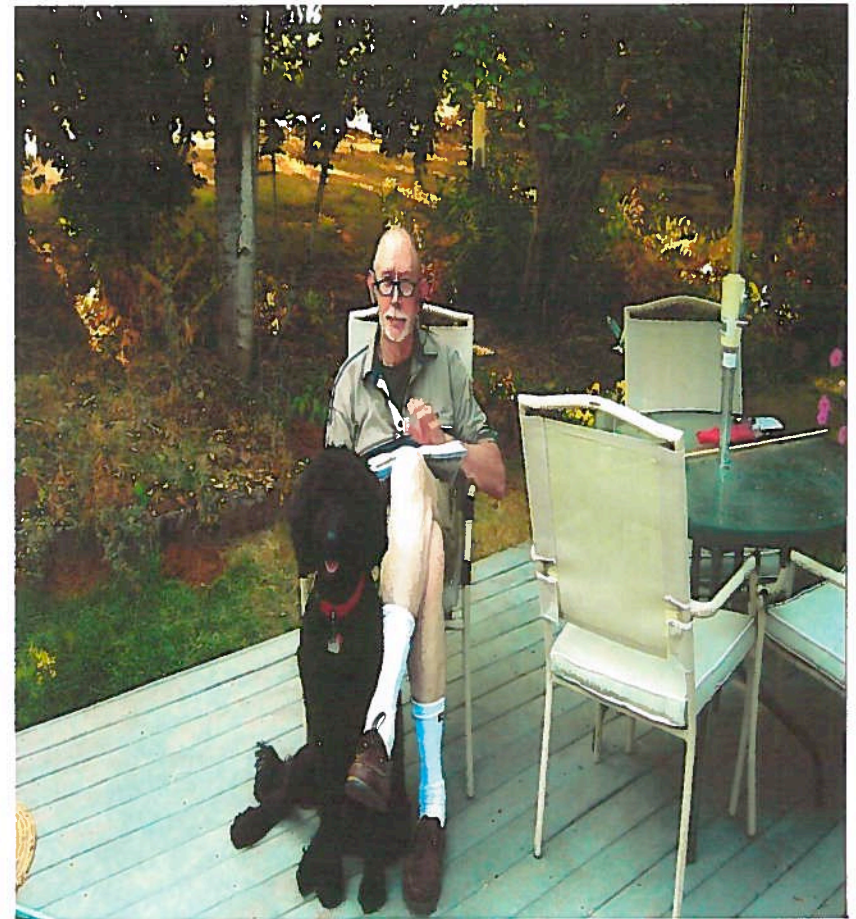
Her laugh rang out all the more merrily when the joke was on her. During her UAF residency the television news was monopolized by some US political scandal. As she later told the story, she had become more and more astonished at the coverage until she finally figured out that they were talking about the case and witnesses for the *prosecution*, not the *prostitution*!

William (Bill) S. Hanable

Bill Hanable's Alaska adventures began in 1956 with a 12 year stint in the U.S. Air Force Security Service in Alaska and Washington, D.C. Upon leaving the Air Force in 1969 he and wife Eloise came to Anchorage where he attended Alaska Methodist University, and completed several degrees culminating in a Ph.D. at Walden University which began his extensive career in public history, teaching, researching and writing on Alaska and the Pacific Northwest.

In 1970 he became the historian at the Alaska Division of State Parks, developed the state's historic preservation plan, and became director of the Alaska Historical Commission in 1980. In 1987 he became the National Park Service historian later adding the Air Force until retirement then relocated to Westport, Washington state in 1994. Bill continued his public history work, managing the Westport Maritime Museum, the Oregon Heritage Commission, and private consulting.

Historian Pat Roppell recalls that in the early 1970s when the Alaska Historical Society met on the White Pass & Yukon Railway, coming back from Whitehorse, the stove in the railcar didn't work so Bill graciously shared his gloves and hat with several folks without complaint". Virginia McGillvary, the head of the Ketchikan Museum, put his great big gloves on her feet – ape sized feet!



1938-2011

LeRoi Heaven



Longtime Wasilla resident LeRoi Heaven was born in Seldovia and later adopted by Foster and Daisy Heaven. LeRoi lived in Anchorage before moving to Matsu where he attended school, and became active in the Future Farmers of America and 4-H. He was a contract Wasilla mail carrier from 1960 to the 1972, then ran a private Amway business.

Active with the Wasilla Historical Society, the Wasilla-Knik Historical Society, and the Palmer Historical Society, LeRoi was instrumental in preserving and restoring the Herning-Teeland-Mead building, the original Wasilla general store. Always interested in history and historic structures, he and wife Margaret purchased the 40-acre hayfield south of their home and began acquiring and restoring endangered homestead cabins to relocate to the edge of the hayfield. In 2008 the hayfield was preserved in the Alaska Farmland Trust so it would always remain farmland.



1939-2010

Fran Seager-Boss of the Matsu Borough Cultural Resources Division remembers LeRoi's passion for history extended beyond his involvement in local historical societies – he enthusiastically shared his knowledge of the area by drawing from personal experiences such as his involvement in 4-H programs as a child, his work at Teeland's store as a young man, and his experiences as a mail carrier when distances were great and roads were few.

Collin S. MacCarty, Jr.

The Pratt Museum community suffered a major loss this summer with the passing of long-time museum volunteer Collin (Cowboy) MacCarty. Cowboy's generosity and talents spanned many years and touched just about every part of the Museum. He was a mainstay in the Marine Gallery, where he volunteered each week as a gallery docent and in the Harrington Homestead Cabin as an interpreter. He led the Pratt's Homer Harbor walking tours - many school children over the years enjoyed his stories as he shared his vast knowledge of the area. He made a special and lasting contribution to the Pratt Museum.

Collin S. MacCarty, Jr. was born in Rochester, MI, and obtained his BA, BS, and MS of Science degrees at Black Hills State College, Spearfish, S.D.. He accepted a teaching position in Homer, where he lived most of his adult life. In addition to teaching, he spent 15 years fishing the North Pacific and the Bering Sea as a deck hand on the Time Bandit and other vessels. In recent years, he occupied his time substitute teaching and serving as a harbor guide and gallery host at the Pratt Museum. In his spare time, he pursued his life-long interest in motor vehicles and auto racing, becoming a fixture in local competitions.



1942-2011



1942-2010

Gail Parsons

Between Homer and the villages across Kachemak Bay lies a cultural gap that sometimes runs as deep as its icy seas. Gale Parsons, an artist, teacher and exhibits director and cultural liaison of the Pratt Museum, has been praised on both sides of the bay as a person who brought together the diverse cultures of Kachemak Bay.

A Pratt employee since 1995 and a volunteer for 15 years before that, Parsons is best known for seeking out and listening to Native Alaskans in Seldovia, Port Graham and Nanwalek, and bringing their knowledge to Pratt programs. Most important of these projects was Tamanta Katurlluta, the biennial Gathering of Native Tradition. She helped make the gathering happen after Nick Tanape of Nanwalek said he wanted to paddle traditional kayaks to Homer and land them on the beach. The gathering grew into a weekend-long celebration of Kachemak Bay's Alutiiq cultures, with dancing, singing, drumming and potlucks. "She opened the door for the world to see who the real people are from here," Tanape said.

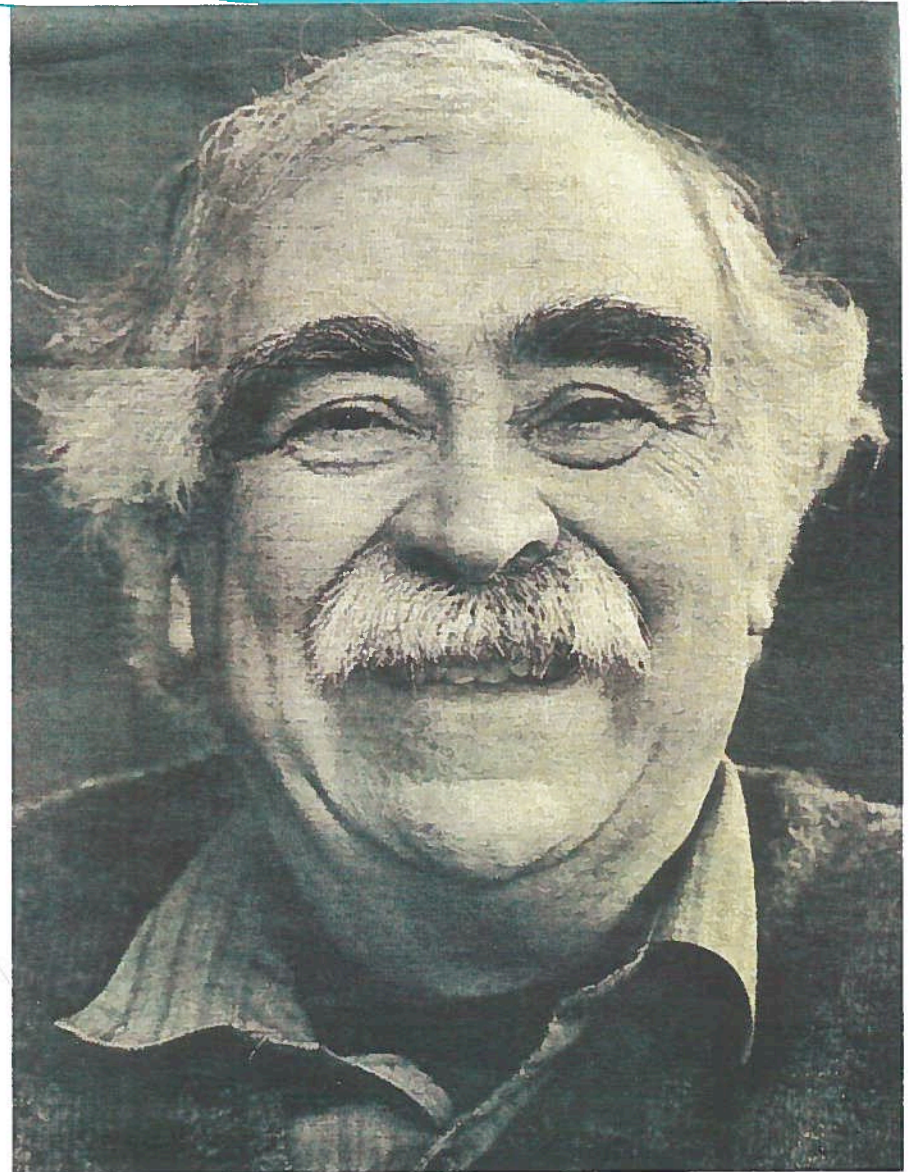
"This experience has been one of the most joyful and rewarding challenges of my life," Parsons wrote in a letter to the Homer News in September 2006. "All these years I have been one thread in what I hope will be the weaving of an unending tapestry of culture and friendship."

George Rogers

George Rogers, Alaskan economist and statesman, came to Alaska in 1945 to work on raw fish prices and stayed to advise territorial governor Ernest Gruening. It was Gruening who encouraged Rogers to further his studies at Harvard, and to return to Alaska where he focused on the interactions of politics, economics, and natural resources.

Rogers served as a consultant and secretary to the Alaska Constitutional Convention and called that period of great hope a highlight of his life. His association with the University of Alaska led to the founding of the Institute of Social and Economic Research. His many publications included *The Future of Alaska*, a title selected as one of the *Alaska* 67 best history books by the Alaska Historical Society.

George Rogers' impact on Alaska went far beyond his professional work in economics. He was elected to the Juneau Assembly, did the architectural design for the Juneau Teenage Center, created art for posters and programs, acted and sang in dozens of opera and theater productions, and even had a bit part in the Walt Disney movie "White Fang."



1917-2010

Walter Alexander Soboleff, Sr.



1908-2011

Born in Killisnoo, Dr. Soboleff belonged to the Raven moiety, L'eineidi clan (dog salmon), Aanx'aakhitta House in Angoon. He was placed in the Russian school in Sitka in 1916 until the Russian Revolution forced its closure in 1917; he later attended Sheldon Jackson School

Walter graduated from Dubuque University Seminary, returning in 1939 to the Juneau Memorial Presbyterian Church to serve the Native community, serving from 1940 to 1962. He broadcast church services on KJNO and produced the weekly "Tlingit News", a broadcast of news and current events translated into Tlingit. He served as itinerant minister to Southeast communities on the church vessels Anna Jackman and Princeton Hall.

In 1970 he began teaching position at the UAF Fairbanks where he served four years as the first Director of Alaska Native Studies. His groundbreaking work in university level Native studies brought Alaska Native elders from around the state into the college classroom to share their knowledge with the students.

Dr. Soboleff joined the Alaska Native Brotherhood in 1930 and served in all the offices of the Grand Camp ANB earning the title ANB Grand President Emeritus in 1999. He was active in the Alaska National Guard, served as a trustee of the Sealaska Heritage Foundation, Sealaska board of

William (Bill) George Stroecker

Fairbanks-born Bill Stroecker loved history, baseball, music, and going on long weekend walks. He participated in the economic and civic life of the Interior and particularly reveled in the history which produced and surrounded him. He either was either related to or knew everyone in Fairbanks through birth, marriage, or his associations with the Goldpanners baseball team, the Salvation Army, or his musical group the "Frigidaires". He walked to work every day, hiked the Chilkoot Trail in overshoes at age 77, and took long weekend hikes with his beloved Labrador retrievers, sometimes on snowshoes, to one of his 17 remote cabins scattered over the Interior. He loved hunting and fishing, but ONLY in Alaska. An avid collector of books about Alaska and the Arctic, his First National Bank of Fairbanks office had the look and feel of a museum, and he served on the board of the Friends of the University of Alaska Museum of the North.

Upon his death the W.B.Stroecker Foundation was created which may become as significant to Fairbanks as the Rasmuson Foundation is to all of Alaska. Bill Stroecker leaves lasting legacy for his favorite place on earth.

1920-2010



Elizabeth (Betsy) Tower



1926-2010

Physician Betsy Tower moved to Anchorage in 1954. Betsy initially practiced medicine but then for 25 years supervised with public health nurses in Southcentral, Southwest and the Aleutians until retiring in 1986 to begin a new career writing about Alaska history.

She received the AHS 1996 "Historian of the Year" award for her book "Icebound Empire," a history of the Kennecott Copper Co. She also wrote biographies of Sheldon Jackson, Stephen Birch, Michael Heney, Austin E. "Cap" Lathrop, and William Egan. Her passion for Alaska-Canadian relations resulted in a book "Over the Back Fence" and a University of UAA endowment for Canadian Studies.

While working at the University of Alaska Fairbanks library, Ron Inouye remembered Betsy coming to use the book and archival collections for yet another book on notable historical Alaskans or topics about which little had been written. As skiers, both delighted in her compilation of local and regional Alaska ski areas. Many conversations with Betsy would end with "I wonder why there isn't a book written about..." . Then off she would go, searching through books and the archives, thinking about that next project.

Many thanks to Ron Inouye for gathering information for this memorial.

Photographs and Biographical Information Courtesy of:

William S. Schneider

UAF Alaska and Polar Regions Archives

Sitka Sentinel

Alaska State Library, Historical Collections

Jo Antonson

Statesman-Journal, Salem, Oregon

Anchorage Daily News

Kathryn Arndt

Russian America Society/ Общество "Русская Америка" <http://russianamerica.livejournal.com>

Margaret Heaven

Fran Seager-Boss

Matsu Valley Frontiersman

Holly Cusack-McVeigh

Homer News

Bruce Merrell

Ross V. Soboleff and Toni Kahklen Hoffman

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