



MEMORIALS 2023

Alaska Historical Society Conference • October 5-8, 2023 • Central Kenai Peninsula

Sally Jo (Bonnett) Collins

1939-2022 • McGrath



Sally Jo was founding editor of the weekly Kuskokwim Courier and of the Toohak Historical Society in McGrath, and a key player in the development of the McGrath Museum, which was renamed the Sally Jo Collins Museum in her honor in 2019. In 2000, she and husband Ray published *Dichinanek*

Hwt'ana: A History of the People of the Upper Kuskokwim Who Live in Nikolai and Telida, Alaska for Denali National Park and Preserve. In 2010 the couple was inducted into the Nikolai Edzeno' Tribe in recognition of their years of service.

Don Corwin

1953-2023 • Kodiak, Skagway, Eagle



Don was a master carpenter whose work through the National Park Service helped preserve and restore Alaska's gold rush and gold mining history. From about 1977 through the early 2000s, Don performed building restoration work in Skagway for the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, becoming the park's preservation specialist in 2006. In recent years he was the seasonal maintenance worker for Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve.

Gloria Opal Day

1922-2023 • Valdez



Gloria was president of the Valdez Historical Society and was appointed by Governor Egan to serve on the Alaska Mental Health Board. She was a charter member of the Pioneers of Alaska, Valdez Igloo, and served as an officer many times. She was instrumental in initiating preservation of the Valdez Pioneer Cemetery. Gloria served with distinction in the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary in Valdez as the flotilla commander for many years.

Joseph E. Harris

1940-2022, Kenai



Long-time member of the Kenai Historical Society, Joe was serving on the KHS Board of Directors until his death. He was deeply involved in the preservation of historical objects around the Kenai Visitors and Cultural Center, including those that depict the history of the local fishing industry.

Joe was also instrumental in the creation of the Kenai Historic Cabins Park and continued his involvement on that project, restoring and maintaining each cabin and preparing the park for the annual opening each summer.

William Raymond "Bill" Hunt

1929-2022 • Fairbanks



Born in Seattle as the youngest of 13 children, Bill went on to earn a Ph.D. in history in 1967 through the University of Washington. He became a history professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and wrote 15 books, including *Dictionary of Rogues, North of 53°*, *Arctic Passage*, *To Stand at the Pole*, *Stef*, *Distant Justice* and *Whiskey Peddler*. In retirement he continued to write and lived in Washington, Texas, Arizona and Colorado. He returned to Alaska for a stint as historian for the National Park Service.

Oliver Aveogan Leavitt

1943-2023 • Utqiagvik



Oliver was a whaling captain, devoted public servant and advocate for the North Slope Iñupiat. Throughout his life Oliver served in many leadership positions across the state and was a key player in the negotiation of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. He was treasurer of the Arctic Slope Native Association for 24 years, a board member of the Alaska Federation of Natives for 28 years and the first president of the North Slope Borough Assembly. He was also a member of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission and a founding director of the First Alaskans Institute. Oliver was also known for his commitment to his community as a deeply knowledgeable whaling boat builder and whaling captain.

David Terence "Terry" McCabe

1935-2023 • Anchorage



David was employed by the First National Bank of Alaska and managed their branch bank in Nenana. In 1962 he earned a master's degree from Harvard Business School. Back in Anchorage in 1964, David founded the Alaska Mortgage Group, a private financial partnership that provided a source of venture capital in the new state with its expanding and undeveloped economy. David was a member of the Alaska Purchase Centennial Commission in 1967 and helped found the Hope and Sunrise Historical Society.

Eugene "Buzzy" Peltola Jr.

1966-2023 • Bethel



Gene was a pilot, fisherman and Alaska Native leader who was praised for embodying the spirit of Alaska. He was the husband of Alaska's sole representative in Congress, Mary Peltola. Of Yup'ik and Tlingit descent, Gene spent more than 30 years working for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service before becoming regional director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Alaska, serving in that position from 2018 to 2022. He served as vice mayor and council member for the city of Bethel between 2010 and 2012 and sat on various Alaska Native village corporation boards.

Bob Penney

1933-2023 • Anchorage



Bob, a business and sportsman, arrived in Anchorage in 1951 to manage a lumber yard. He successfully pursued many real estate business opportunities, established the real estate brokerage firm Penco Properties and helped found the Alaska Resource Development Council. He was active in Anchorage civic affairs. Of particular concern were the Kenai River king salmon, resulting in the formation of the Kenai River Sportfishing Association.

Florence Matfay Christiansen Pestrikoff/Kuukula

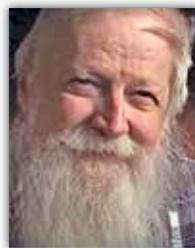
1937-2023 • Kodiak



For over 30 years, Florence contributed to heritage programs in Kodiak, working to revitalize Alutiiq speech and expand understanding of cultural traditions. She helped to teach the first Alutiiq classes at Kodiak College in 1990 and later mentored a new generation of Alutiiq speakers in partnership with the Alutiiq Museum. She was the original voice of the Alutiiq Word of the Week. She sat on the Alutiiq New Words Council, developing vocabulary to help the Alutiiq language grow with the times. In 2009 Florence was honored with the Margaret Nick Cook Award, a Governor's Award for the Arts, for her work preserving the Alutiiq language.

Lee Ernest Poleske

1937-2023 • Seward



Lee was president of the Resurrection Bay Historical Society and volunteer director of the Seward Museum. Along with fellow schoolteachers, he helped to create the Seward Iditarod Trail Blazers, a non-profit organization to promote the history of the original gold rush-era Iditarod Trail. He organized and compiled the Seward area obituary index, which led to the tradition of Summer Solstice Cemetery Tours, starting in 2006. The Alaska Historical Society recognized Lee's many years of research about Seward and Resurrection Bay. He served on the Alaska Gold Rush Centennial Commission and was awarded the Seward Historic Preservation Award in 1998 and 2008. In 2007, Museums Alaska presented him the Volunteer of the Year Award.

Thelma Arlene Schrank

1948-2023 • Slana



Thelma managed the Ellis family roadhouse, Duffy's, at Slana. For many years she took aviation observations for NOAA. In 1983 she began a 36-year National Park Service career at the ranger station at Slana, the northernmost portion of the newly established Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. In 2022 Thelma received the Harry Yount Lifetime Achievement Award from the NPS Rangers Association for all her help to new rangers and the park service. Her knowledge of the Slana area places and people and willingness to share it was invaluable to visitors and rangers alike.

Joseph Engasongwok Senungetuk

1940-2023 • Anchorage



An Iñupiaq artist originally from Wales, Joe created etchings, paintings, illustrations, masks, sculptures and writing. A recurring theme of his art was the impact of colonization and the conflict between Western and Iñupiaq worldviews. His artwork has been exhibited at venues around the globe. Joe taught art at Mt. Edgecumbe High School and Sheldon Jackson Junior College in Sitka, and was an Elder in Residence at Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage for its art program. His autobiography is titled *Give or Take a Century: An Eskimo Chronicle*. He was a regular columnist for the Anchorage Gazette and Anchorage Daily News between 1989 and 1994. As a senior member of the University of Alaska Chancellor's Select Task Force on Native Higher Education and through other positions of leadership, he helped to shape policy and implement ideas to benefit Alaska Native youth and Alaskan artists.

Bill Sheffield

1928-2022 • Anchorage



Bill was the fifth governor of Alaska, from 1982 to 1986. Originally from Spokane, Washington, he moved to Alaska in 1953 and entered the hotel industry. As a Democratic governor, Bill's term was marked by a slump in oil prices which forced him to make significant budget cuts. In 1983, he successfully pushed a change ensuring that Alaska would operate under a single time zone, except for the far western reaches of the Aleutian Islands, and helped consummate transfer of the Alaska Railroad to Alaska. After his governorship he continued to be active in Alaska politics as president of the state-owned Alaska Railroad from 1997 to 2001 and director of the Port of Anchorage from 2001 to 2012.

James L. Simpson

1924-2023 • Seward, Wasilla, Ketchikan



Raised at the Jesse Lee Home in Seward, James attended Seward High School, Chemawa (Oregon) Indian School, Lewis and Clark College, and the University of Washington, where he earned his Ed.D., making him the first Alaska Native with an earned doctorate. His years of K-12 teaching and administration included Wasilla and Ketchikan. He became the first director (1960-1975) of the Ketchikan Community College, then joined the University of Alaska Southeast faculty until retirement in 1980. He served on the Ketchikan City Council. In 2008 he authored *Jesse Lee Home—My Home*.

Alfred Forest Wright

1925-2022 • Minto, Fairbanks



The renowned aviator was born in Tanana Crossing and spent his life in communities along the Tanana River. As a child in Minto, Al became interested in airplanes and later used his Army GI bill to obtain his pilot's license. Al became one of the first Alaska Natives to own a flight service, operating Wright Airways, Nenana Air Service and Wright Air Service in Fairbanks.