

Friends

Life-long writers honored at Nevada Writers Hall of Fame

The easiest way to begin a story about the 2001 Nevada Writers Hall of Fame is to announce the winners: Morris Brownell, Robert Gorrell and Rollan Melton. But that is most unimaginative – and these three honorees are far from that.

They are gifted, life-long writers with diverse writing interests. Brownell is a biographer, specializing in 18th century figures and their relationship to the arts of the period; Gorrell is a linguist who has written volumes on English usage; and Melton is a journalist whose Reno Gazette-Journal columns have entertained us for years.

The Hall of Fame committee couldn't have picked better recipients. Said committee chairperson Peggy Urie: "All three have spent their lives dealing with words."

How far back does that go? Gorrell's first textbook, *Practice in English Communication*, was published in 1947. Gorrell and two colleagues at Indiana University collaborated on the book for an Army program course they were teaching.

"But the course was cancelled the day the book came out," said Gorrell with a chuckle that bubbles to the surface whenever he laughs at himself. So he revised the text (the other two lost interest) for a broader audience and a second edition was published. Later, at

Nevada Writers Hall of Fame

- 6:30 p.m., Friday, Nov. 30, 2001
 - Getchell Library, University of Nevada, Reno
 - No-host wine bar and hors d'oeuvres, followed by readings at 7 p.m.
 - Mistress of ceremonies: Frankie Sue Del Papa, Nevada State Attorney General
 - Cost: \$15, general; \$10 members, seniors; students, free
-



Hall of Fame Honorees
(clockwise from right):
Morris Brownell, Rollan Melton
and Robert Gorrell



the University of Nevada (as it was called then), Gorrell collaborated with the late Charlton Laird on many textbooks. Their biggest hit, *Modern English Rhetoric and Handbook*, lived through seven editions.

Gorrell's love of language and words began when he was a child. Gorrell remembers before he started school - "maybe around age 5" - making up a story about mouse twins. His mother, he says, kidded him about it, but she readily typed up his narration. "I thought it was very clever with all my names for them, such as Jerry, Terry, Millie and Willie," said Gorrell, chuckling again.

Though nonfiction is his expertise,



Gorrell has experimented with fictional writing off and on all his life. Last year his efforts paid off: his first novel, *Murder at the Rose*, an Elizabethan mystery (conceived long before the movie "Shakespeare in Love") was published by Black Rock Press.

Publications of another type launched Melton's writing career. If you count his sports column in the Fallon Weekly Standard, written when he was 15, his journalistic career began 55 years ago. From then to now, Melton has worn many hats, including pressman, printer, newsboy, reporter, publisher and corporate executive.

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Friends

Fall 2001

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A Letter from Friends President Joanne Hildahl

As my two-year tenure as president of the Friends of the University Library comes to a close I want to take this opportunity to thank the board and library staff for their involvement, hard work and diligence on behalf of Friends. In looking back, Friends' successes are many.

The Friends' newsletter has become a "must read" thanks to the expert editing of board member Sandra Macias. Not only are the articles interesting, but the newsletter also highlights the ever popular tours, providing travelers with varied cultural and educational opportunities — not to mention a healthy dose of fun! Michelle Basta and board members involved with travel arrangements are to be congratulated.

Friends' signature event, the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame, is moving back to the campus library this year to accommodate the growing number attending the awards ceremony. It's an event not to be missed!

The spring 2001 Evening with Emily Dickinson offered an entertaining look at the life of one of America's premier poets. The event, held in the campus library, provided a venue of nostalgia for attendees who were once University of Nevada, Reno students, especially those who spent countless study hours in the current library. That nostalgia, however, will soon turn to excitement as the campus readies for a new library, the plans for which are well in the works.

Lastly, the Friends' endowment continues to grow closer to its goal. Donations are always welcome to this fund, the intent of which is to provide financial assistance for the library in areas where other funding is not available.

These are just highlights of the many Friends activities, none of which would be possible without the involvement of many. I'd say, without a doubt, that the future of Friends is bright!



Great Things Are Happening At

■ The Special Collections Department of the University of Nevada, Reno Libraries has received a gift of \$10,000 from the **Moran Family Trust Fund** to establish an endowment for the preservation and maintenance of rare documents and collections. Professor Bruce Moran has been a member of the university faculty for 25 years. Barbara Moran has been a teacher for the Washoe County School District since 1976. Earnings from the endowment may also be used to purchase preservation equipment, support the efforts of the Black Rock Press, and underwrite staff/student travel to attend appropriate conferences.

■ Thanks to the **Lannan Foundation** in cooperation with Small Press Distribution, Inc. for a gift of 82 literary videos. The purpose of the Lannan gift is to promote the work of contemporary writer, to broaden the audience for literature and to archive writers. A few of the authors represented are Sandra Cisneros, Mark Doty, Carlos Fuentes, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snider and Adrienne Rich.



The Churchill Arts Council sponsored an exhibit of illuminated manuscripts from the library's **Special Collections** during October 2001. The exhibition, titled *The Art of Fine Printing: A Historical and Contemporary View* was curated by Robert Blesse. Many of the same pieces will be on display December 13 at the Friends membership meeting (See related article).

■ The library thanked **Book Nook volunteers** at a lunch at the Palais de Jade on October 17. Book Nook coordinator Clair Wojcik arranged for the gathering where

Silver Pen Awards go to north and south

A casino owner and an English professor wouldn't seem to have much in common. Steven Nightingale shoulders responsibilities as one of the owners of the Club Cal-Neva in Reno and Claudia Keelan teaches literature and poetry classes at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

So where is their common ground? In the love of words and language – which has earned Nightingale and Keelan the spotlight as Silver Pen Award honorees. The award is in recognition of their work as emerging writers.

Nightingale has two novels published by St. Martin's Press and an upcoming book of sonnets to be published by the Black Rock Press in the spring. Keelan has published three prize-winning collections of poetry. In addition, her work is included in poetry anthologies.

Both credit a special teacher for awakening their interest in writing.

For Nightingale, the teacher was Margaret Muth, a legendary English teacher at Reno High School.

"She taught a whole generation of us how to read and love big, difficult novels," said Nightingale. "She'd give us books way over our heads and make sure that we paid the closest attention. She made a difference in the lives of thousands of us and I'll always be indebted to her."



Steven Nightingale

- Novelist and poet.
- Native Nevadan, born in Reno.
- Graduate of Reno High School and Stanford University, BA.
- Novels: *The Lost Coast*, *The Thirteenth Daughter of the Moon*; coming out in Spring, 2002, *Cartwheels*, a book of sonnets.

For Keelan, the power of words came from a college teacher, poet Jorie Graham.

"She spoke with such authority regarding the human condition," said Keelan. "Unlike my other professors, she didn't speak from a distance – she lived through her teaching and we could feel it. She was the first poet I met and she was a major influence on me as a young woman."

In college at Stanford University, Nightingale studied computer science and literature. He connected with such greats as Plato, Homer, Camus, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Pablo Neruda and Emily Dickinson, two of his favorite poets. And he began to write.

"Initially, I wrote sonnets," said Nightingale, adding with a laugh, "one every day and four on Saturdays."

It's a form he still enjoys. "My subjects? Everything. The desert, paintings, casinos, coyotes. You name it, I am willing to write about it," he said.

Keelan, who was a music major in college, followed a roundabout way to poetry, the lit-



Claudia Keelan

- Poet and associate professor of English, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Nevada resident since 1996.
- Graduate of Humboldt State University, BA; University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, MFA.
- Books of poetry: *Refinery*; *The Secularist* (nominated for a Los Angeles Times Book Award and finalist for PEN West award); *Utopic* (Beatrice Hawley Award from Alice James Books and finalist for the William Carlos Williams Award from the Academy of American Poets.)

erary form, she says, that brought her closest to "what is called the truth."

"When I found that the truth I heard in the music of Mozart or Bach, John Coltrane or Thelonious Monk would never be available to me through the clarinet or piano," she said, "I turned my attention to what has become my only instrument: language."

It has been said that the inspiration to write poetry comes from "a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions, recollected in solitude." Pshaw, says Keelan, who agrees with the first part, but not the solitude bit. Keelan is a live-in-the-moment poet: "Writing poetry is my work and I do it within the continued present that is my life," she said.

Hers is a life of interruptions, attending the needs of her son, husband and students. All that finds its way into her work.

"I don't need inspiration," she said. "All I need is a page and the willingness to let what comes in be the poem."

Nightingale has his interruptions, too. Interested in exploring many literary genres, he finds the best time to write is in the morning. With a 5-month-old daughter, that often means before dawn.

"She is part of the early morning," said Nightingale. "She's a joy and so far (the routine) is working out."

— Sandra Macias

The Libraries...

volunteers were acknowledged for their commitment to running the used-book store. Permanent weekly volunteers are Roy Baker, Del Flint, Jean Jones, Marian LaVoy, Gwen Leonard, Jean Marshall, Richard Squires, and Hale Thornton. Substitute volunteers are Tom Allard, Betty Hulse, Phyllis Kaiser, Alice Lohse, Larry Lyons, Faith Spencer, Sarah Stover, Martha Sykes, Carol Wells, and Charlotte Wilcox. A special thank-you, too, to library staff members Karen Cronmiller and Kathy Ouma who volunteer time to the Book Nook.

■ New to Getchell Library is the **Popular Collection**. This collection is housed in the first alcove on the south side of the main Reference area and offers fiction and nonfiction best sellers, music CDs, and videotapes of new releases, international films and vintage movies. With its mix of popular entertainment in various formats, the collection provides convenience for members of the campus community. Keep an eye on this feature; it's growing and getting better each day.

Hall of Fame Honorees

(continued from page 1)

Everybody who knows Melton knows he could retire. He knows it too. So why does he continue to write?

“Why do you breathe, eat, enjoy seasons and love music? Because it is part of life and what you love doing,” he said. “I love being with people and writing about them and I could never turn away from doing that. The only way I’ll retire is to be stopped by the end of life itself.”

Melton’s column has been a fixture in the Reno Gazette-Journal for 23 years. He’s interviewed tens of thousands of people. Some are celebrities, but most are everyday Nevada folks. Melton, who refers to himself as a “storyteller” rather than a journalist, often says that his joy is writing columns about non-public people – “folks who don’t get their names in the paper unless they are born or die or get into some kind of mischief.”

As for Brownell, he writes about well-known public figures of the 18th century. Men like Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson and Horace Walpole, the subject of his latest book nominated for a National Book Award and a Pulitzer Prize.

Brownell’s biographies stretch beyond chronicling his subjects’ lives to painting a picture of 18th century life and his subjects’ place and influence in it. So for example, Brownell’s 1978 prize-winning book, *Alexander Pope and the Arts of Georgian England*, was not only a study of Pope, but also an examination of the literature, landscape and architecture of the period. That interdisciplinary approach is also the core of *The Prime Minister of Taste: A Portrait of Horace Walpole*. In this book, Brownell argues that Walpole was a serious patron, collector and historian of the arts, not a “trifling collector of curiosities,” as previous detractors have described him.

A meticulous scholar and researcher, Brownell toiled over Walpole for nearly a decade. Research included studying 48 volumes of Walpole’s letters, a task few of us would tackle. But Brownell is the first to tell you he belongs to the “old school of work ethic.” With every project, he immerses himself in his work.

Brownell got hooked on research early in life. He traces its genesis to Middlesex School in Concord, Mass., not far from Thoreau’s Walden Pond. There, he studied Latin, French and English and won a history prize for an essay on Genghis Kahn – “the only paper submitted in the contest,” he adds, quick to poke fun at himself.

As a Princeton humanities major, he focused on literature and the arts, followed by graduate studies at the University of California at Berkeley where he fell in love

with the re-creation of letter-writers’ lives. “I also became an addict of the DNB – the Dictionary of National Biography,” he said.

Brownell has professor Bertrand Bronson to thank for his thesis topic: “He handed me a yellow piece of paper I still have: ‘Pope and the Arts: percept, example, influence,’ a sentence that determined the next 15 years of my life.”

While Brownell writes about people and life in England, Melton stays close to home. His love for Nevada and its people is deeply rooted in his writing. Ask him where that passion came from and he’s likely to begin with his nomadic youth. Constantly on the move, he attended 18 grammar schools in four states and three high schools in three states.

When he arrived in Fallon at 15, he was a poor student, so far behind that he’d dropped

out of his last school in Oregon. He enrolled again, and this time, he found not only success, but also a home. “Without knowing it,” Melton said, “I’d found a permanent place to hang my hat.” He’s been paying loving tribute to Nevada ever since.

The easiest way to end this story is with a simple period. But there’s one more thing to add: this Nevada Writers Hall of Fame honor acknowledgement.

“I’ve received honors and plaques throughout my life for alleged contributions to my profession and craft, but nothing pleases me more than this award. When your contemporaries pick you, that really amounts to something,” said Melton, whose words speak for each of the honorees.

— Sandra Macias

Morris Brownell

- Researcher, biographer of 18th century figures and life.
- University of Nevada, Reno professor of English emeritus; University of Nevada, Reno career span: 1976-2001; academic career includes teaching at Tufts, Cornell and St. Edmund Hall, Oxford University. Named University of Nevada, Reno Foundation Professor of English, 1989, Outstanding Researcher, 1990.
- Research Fellowships: Fulbrights, University of London and Oxford; National Endowment for the Humanities, Huntington Library and Oxford. Grants: Clark Library, UCLA; Yale Center for British Art; Paul Mellon Centre, London.
- Born in Boston, Mass.; 25-year Reno resident.
- Graduate of Princeton University, BA; University of California at Berkeley, MA, Ph.D.
- Books: *Samuel Johnson’s Attitude to the Arts*; *Alexander Pope and the Arts of Georgian England*; *The Prime Minister of Taste: A Portrait of Horace Walpole* (nominated for a National Book Award and a Pulitzer Prize).

Robert Gorrell

- Linguist, author of English rhetoric and language books; first-time novelist – a Shakespearean mystery, published in 2000.
- University of Nevada, Reno professor of English emeritus; 35-year career at University of Nevada, Reno, 1945-1980; duties include chairman of the Department of English, dean of Arts and Science and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Early in career, Fulbright lecturer at universities of Sydney and Helsinki.
- Honors include National Council of Teachers of English Distinguished Lecturer; Nevada Humanities Committee Distinguished Scholar and Humanist; University of Nevada Distinguished Faculty Award.
- Born in Bremen, Indiana; Reno resident since 1945.
- Graduate of Cornell University, BA, Ph.D.
- Books include: *Modern English Rhetoric and Handbook*; *Watch Your Language: Mother Tongue and Her Wayward Children*; *Murder at the Rose*; *What’s in a Word: Etymological Gossip About Some English Words*.
- Columnist: 1982-1995, weekly column on English usage in the Reno Gazette-Journal.

Rollan Melton

- Journalist and columnist
- 55 years in journalism and still counting; career ranges from newsboy to publisher of the Reno Evening Gazette and the Nevada State Journal and senior vice president of Gannett.
- Born in Boise, Idaho; 55-year Nevada resident.
- Graduate of University of Nevada, Reno, BA.
- Books: *101 Nevada Columns* and *Nevadans* (collections of columns); *Sonny’s Story* (a memoir). 23 years of columns, close to 4,000 in number

Travel with *Friends*

Since September 11, both the concept and the reality of travel have changed for all of us. The Friends remain committed to promoting cultural travel opportunities that provide educational enrichment to our constituents. We hope that you will continue to support our programs.

Lewis and Clark Odyssey Tour August 11-17, 2002



Many of our readers know scholar Clay Jenkinson, a member of our Friends Board of Directors, and enjoy traveling with him. We invite you to write or e-mail for information about an opportunity to travel with Clay that is neither Library nor University sponsored, but that promises to be a worthwhile choice for travel. If you do sign up, mention that you heard about the tour through the Friends newsletter and the library will receive a \$100 donation from Odyssey Tours.

Odyssey Tours
PO Box 1573
Lewiston, Idaho 83501
208-791-8721 (Becky Cawley)
bek@hibek.com

Copper Canyon and the Sea of Cortez

Set aside December 10-18, 2002 for an amazing voyage.

Join Michele Basta and Special Expeditions for an 8-day odyssey in Mexico. Spend 4 days on a 70-passenger ship exploring marine life in the Sea of Cortez. Then board the Chihuahua el Pacifico railroad in the Copper Canyon for a view of one of the world's most incredible landscapes.

Cost: 8-day land/sea package approx. \$1500 - \$2400 per person depending on cabin selection. Airfare is extra and can be arranged by Special Expeditions. Requested tax-exempt donation to the Friends of the Library: \$300 per person. A brochure will be mailed directly to you from Lindblad Expeditions in spring 2002.

Homer's Greece with Jim Hulse and Clay Jenkinson has been moved to spring 2002. New dates: May 6 - May 20, 2002

Call for itinerary and details
Michele, 784-6500 ext. 265

The Vikings are Coming to L.A.

Join us and see the Getty Museum, too
Jan. 25 - 27, 2002

Don't miss this opportunity to travel with scholar Frank Hartigan to a special exhibit of Viking artifacts at the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History. Also included is a guided visit to the Getty Museum. Call Michele, 784-6500 ext. 265.

Cost of \$675 per person includes:

- Tax-exempt donation of \$125 to the Friends of the Library
- Pre-trip dinner and lecture on Viking history by Professor Hartigan
- Two nights in the Wilshire Boulevard Radisson Hotel (double occupancy)
- Round-trip air Reno/LAX
- Airport/hotel/museum transfers
- Breakfast buffet Saturday and Sunday
- Guided tours of Viking exhibit and Getty Museum
- Scholar Hartigan available throughout tour for expertise
- Plenty of free time to explore on your own via metro, bus or cab (Information provided for theater and shopping opportunities)

January 25: Fly Reno/LAX via Southwest Airlines. Transfer to the Radisson Hotel, Wilshire Boulevard. Afternoon docent-led visit the Getty Museum. Evening free.

January 26: Visit to the Viking exhibit with guided tour. Evening free.

January 27: Afternoon return flight to Reno.

Armchair travel to the Viking Exhibit

Frank Hartigan recommends the following books about the Vikings:

- Peter Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*
- Peter Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia and Europe, 700-1100*
- J. Graham-Campbell, *The Viking Age*
- J. Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*
- D.M. Wilson and O. Klindt-Jensen, *Viking Art*
- A. Lewis, *The Northern Seas, 300-1100* - section on the Vikings
- W. W. Fitzhugh and E. Ward, *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga (exhibit guide book)*.

Friends

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Finding a haven in troubled times

In these times, in these unbearably sad and disturbing times since September 11, most of us experience a need for a retreat. We crave a safe place to go to, a quiet haven. Some of us find it in a church or a synagogue while others of us find it in a secular place, such as a garden, park or museum.

EDITOR'S CORNER

by Sandra Macias

Three weeks after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, I found mine, quite by accident, in a library. Not in the Getchell Library – though it could have been – but in the Free Library of Philadelphia.

In light of our nation's tragedy, I had almost cancelled my trip. But at the last moment, I decided to go (more honestly, I corralled the courage to go). While my husband attended to business, I wandered around that great, old historic city.

I spent hours in the Philadelphia Museum of Art where paintings, contemporary to centuries old, took on new meaning now that my world had changed. I lingered in the Rodin Museum where Rodin's sculptures, bold, sensual and confident, reassured me of lasting strength. I wandered through the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts where pre-Revolution and post-Revolution artwork reminded me that our nation has endured many bloodied struggles.

And I explored the Free Library, an impressive Beaux Arts building that stands solid and sure of itself. Climbing the well-worn stone steps, I entered with intentions of simply looking around. Inside, a large reception and information desk filled the spacious lobby. A directory pointed to upstairs depart-

ments, to maps and the children's section, to prints and arts collections. A grand staircase led to the second floor.

At the top and turning right, I saw a sign "Arts" above a door leading into a room. The room was large and rectangular with high ceilings and sunshine spilling in through tall windows. Volumes of books, in cramped quarters on high-and-low shelves, in book-cases and on mobile carts, were everywhere. Old books and new books, books of every shape and size and on every conceivable subject of art.

Standing in the doorway, I tried to take it all in. I was feeling overwhelmed when my

eye zeroed in on the title of an oversized book. It read: *Michelangelo*. In that instant, I felt grounded and a calming thought swept over me: Beauty and faith still exist.

But looking back on that moment, I realize something more. It wasn't just a book on Michelangelo that triggered my affirmations. It was being in a library.

Here you will find a connection with humanity, reason and knowledge, gigantic ideas and humble thoughts, fictional escape and hard-nose truths. Here you will find a retreat, a place that makes order out of chaos. A library is the sanctum of civilization.

Membership Program and Meeting

Thursday, Dec. 13, 2001

The biennial meeting of the Friends of the University Library and the election of board members and officers for the 2002-2004 term will be held at the home of Anne Hall at 6 p.m. on December 13. There will be a display of Renaissance illuminated manuscripts and a lecture on the topic by Professor Kevin Stevens.

Please reserve in advance by calling Tori at 784-6500 ext. 250 (Dean's Office). You will receive a map and directions upon reserving. You must be an active member of the Friends to attend the meeting and vote.

If you wish to join or renew your membership in order to participate in this event, call Michele at 784-6500 ext. 265.

