

2006 Write Women Back Into History Essay Contest



Women: Builders of Communities and Dreams

Sponsored by:
Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
Iowa Department of Education
State Historical Society of Iowa

Celebration Day
Wednesday, March 8, 2006

8:15 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Iowa State Capitol & Iowa State Historical Museum

8:15 a.m.

Winners and their invited guests meet on the ground floor of the Capitol. Students, teachers, principals, and essay subjects are to pick up their name tags.

8:30 a.m.

Introduction in the Senate, second floor, and meet with Senators.

8:45 a.m.

Introduction in the House, second floor, and meet with Representatives.

10 a.m.

Awards ceremony with Lt. Governor Sally J. Pederson, Iowa State Historical Museum, auditorium.

11:30 a.m.

Tour of the State Historical Museum. Meet at the Information Desk on the first floor.

12 noon

Lunch on your own. (There is a cafeteria in the Capitol and a restaurant in the State Historical Museum.)

1:30 p.m.

Tour of the Capitol. (Optional) If we get separated, meet us at the desk on the first floor of the Rotunda for the start of the tour.

Awards Ceremony

10:00 a.m.

Iowa State Historical Building Auditorium

Welcome

by Charlotte Nelson, Iowa Commission on the Status of Women Executive Director

Proclamation Reading by Lt. Governor Sally J. Pederson

March as Women's History Month Proclamation

Awards Presentation

by Charlotte Nelson; and Carol Heaverlo, Program for Women in Science and Engineering at Iowa State University Outreach Coordinator

(As the students' names are called, they should move forward to receive their prizes from Judy Jeffrey, Iowa Department of Education Director, then approach Maureen Korte, Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs Director of Special Projects and Programming, to receive their certificate.

As the teachers' names are called, they should move forward to receive their prizes from Jeffrey.)

Students/teachers will be recognized in the following order:

- 1) 6-7th Grade Category
- 2) 8-9th Grade Category
- 3) Women in Science & Engineering

Brayton Presentation

by Maureen Korte

Closing

by Charlotte Nelson

2006 Write Women Back Into History Essay Contest Winners

6-7 Grade Category

- First Place: Emily Wrider, 7th Grade
Sponsoring Teacher: Jean Oberbroeckling, Harding Middle School, Cedar Rapids
- Second Place: Stephanie Wenclawski, 6th Grade
Sponsoring Teacher: Sarah Remerowski, Harding Middle School, Cedar Rapids
- Third Place: Fontavia Reynolds, 7th Grade
Sponsoring Teacher: Kathleen Fiscus, Waukee Middle School

8-9 Grade Category

- First Place: Paul Hayden, 9th Grade
Sponsoring Teacher: Jane Hanigan, Thomas Jefferson High School, Council Bluffs
- Second Place: Amanda de Neui, 8th Grade
Sponsoring Teacher: Marcia Klinefelter, Dunkerton Community School
- Third Place: Rachel Kuenning, 9th Grade
Sponsoring Teacher: Jane Hanigan, Thomas Jefferson High School, Council Bluffs

Best Essay on Women in Science and Engineering for 6-7 Grades

- First Place: Connor Steffens, 6th Grade
Sponsoring Teacher: Jennifer Stoffer and Lori Danker, Prairie Middle School, Cedar Rapids

Best Essays on Women in Science and Engineering for 8-9 Grades

- First Place: Allison MacKay, 8th Grade
Sponsoring Teacher: Jon Parrott, Urbandale Middle School
- Second Place: Tess Myer, 9th Grade
Sponsoring Teacher: Fay Howie, Mount Ayr Community High School

Editor's Note: Essays were typed as submitted.



6-7 Grades: First Place



Alejandra Pena Gill de Serrati

by Emily Wrider

We stepped off the plane in Asuncion, Paraguay. My family and I had returned to my birth country for the first time since I was adopted 11 years ago. Waiting for us was a woman named Alejandra Pena Gill de Serrati and her husband Osvaldo Codas. As soon as we boarded the buses that would take us to our hotel, Alejandra began to talk about the history and culture of Paraguay. It was immediately obvious that she was a woman passionate about Paraguayan culture.

Rural Paraguayan artists are some of the poorest people in the world. Many of them move to the cities thinking that they will be able to find jobs where they can earn more money. Instead, they are unable to support themselves because the economy is so poor. Most of them end up living the slums and abandoning their handicraft traditions. Alejandra and Osvaldo started Paraguay Hecho a Mano (Paraguay Made by Hand) to try to prevent this and preserve the heritage of Paraguay's indigenous peoples.

Hecho A Mano has set up museums such as the Nanduti Lace Museum and the Nature and Cultural Museum to preserve the handicrafts and artifacts of the past. The Nanduti Lace Museum catalogs samples of lace and explains the symbolism represented through the many intricate designs. Nanduti lace is not made by adding thread, but by cutting threads out of fabric. It can be solid or multi-colored, small enough to trim clothing or large enough for a wall hanging. This particular type of lace is native to Paraguay, and has been made by the indigenous people for decades.

Alejandra is the director of the Museo de La Tierra Guarani: Una Aventura de Naturaleza y Cultura (Guarani Earth Museum of Nature and Culture). This is a museum and zoo near the border with Brazil and Argentina. It preserves over 10,000 years of history of the 17 indigenous tribes along the Parana River. The museum uses touch screen computers and modern technology to educate today's visitors about the past inhabitants. The biodiversity of the area is represented in museum displays and the live zoo that displays rainforest birds.

Paraguay Hecho a Mano is helping artisans to maintain and pass on their handicrafts by opening new markets where they can sell what they make to earn a living. Alejandra has represented Paraguay as a juror at the National Handicraft Show sponsored by the United Nations Organizations for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO). She also organized the exhibition "Popular Arts from Paraguay" that took place at the National Museum of Peru.

Alejandra and Hecho a Mano have recognized the family needs of the artisans. For example, they have begun to help the school in Tobati by providing food, school supplies, and school uniforms. Many of the adoptive families in my tour group brought school supplies to donate to this school.

Alejandra has become important in my life because she took the time to teach me, and other children who were adopted, the Paraguayan part of being Paraguayan-American. I have no memory of living in Paraguay because I was adopted at a young age. Now that I am older, however, I will remember much more. Alejandra really educated me about who I am and where I came from. She is an example of a successful and compassionate Paraguayan woman. She has preserved history and traditions that someday I hope to share with my own children to help them better understand, as I do now, my heritage. I can say with pride that I have two countries to call home.

Resources

Paraguay Hecho a Mano <http://www.paraguayhechoamano.org>

Debates: History and Museums. <http://www.memoriaactiva.org.py>

Special Investigation: Earth Museum Guarani translation from the World Times, Week of 17-23rd of February, 2005 www.tdm.com/InvestigacionEspecial/2005/02/20050217-69XO1O.htm

Brochure from the *Museo for la tierra guarani: A NATURAL AND CUTRURAL EXPERIENCE*.

Travel Guide from Paraguayan Ties 2004: A family Experience - A Travel Experience.

Interviews and Personal Tour of Paraguay July 24-August 6, 2004

Evans, Bea. Adoptive Family Travel. E-mail to Author, January 19, 2006



6-7 Grades: Second Place



Viola A. Gibson
by **Stephanie Wenclawski**

Numerous African American people have changed the world, but there aren't many African American women who have made a difference in our area. Viola A. Gibson was an African American woman who impacted and changed the Cedar Rapids community.

Viola Gibson's journey began when she was born on September 6, 1905. She grew up in Bethel Springs, Tennessee. After Viola's mother died, her father moved Viola and her siblings to Iowa. Despite her humble beginnings, Viola would have a tremendous influence on the Cedar Rapids community.

When I moved to Iowa in early 2003, I was in third grade. I was fortunate to attend Viola Gibson Elementary School. The school rules, also known as the Gator Guidelines, were posted at various places throughout the school. The Gator Guidelines require students to make responsible choices, show mutual respect, avoid put downs, put forth personal best effort, and be active listeners. These rules were the very essence of what Viola Gibson tried to promote in the Cedar Rapids community and will continue to be important social skills for students fifty years from now.

Gibson changed the Cedar Rapids community by promoting human rights and fostering peace. One summer day in 1942 Viola's nephew, Robert Johnson, was denied entry to the Ellis Park pool due to his race. Gibson protested the fact that her nephew was unable to enter the pool. On June 17, 1942, Gibson started the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. After Gibson's successful protest, the rules were changed to allow African Americans entrance to the pool.

Viola Gibson was a strong supporter of equal rights and education. Gibson started a religious study book club for people of different races at the Jane Boyd Community House. The book club, which still meets today, is a tribute to Gibson's strong religious and human rights beliefs. Gibson also made contributions to the education of Cedar Rapids children. Gibson spent time and effort attempting to get black history classes included in the curriculum of schools in Cedar Rapids. Because she was such a strong believer in the importance of education for all children, Cedar Rapids opened a new elementary school on August 26, 2002, and it was named after Viola Gibson.

Viola Gibson also dedicated her life to promoting peace among all people and races. In addition to her activities as a human rights activist and a strong supporter of education, Gibson spent time tending to her responsibilities as an ordained minister at the Christ Sanctified Holy Church in Cedar Rapids.

Gibson accomplished a great deal in her life, was admired by many people, and received many awards including Outstanding Older Iowans and Outstanding Senior Citizen. Gibson once said, "I never did anything for

recognition. I just did things because they needed doing.” If everyone in the world possessed an attitude and approached life similar to Viola Gibson, we would have a more peaceful community.

Reverend Richard John once said about Viola Gibson, “She made you feel good to look at her. She was the glue that kept the whole community focused going in the right direction.” After learning about Gibson’s contributions, I would love to go back in time and meet Viola Gibson.

I admire women such as Viola Gibson who have possessed the courage and strength to say what they believe and act on those beliefs. These women have made many communities a better place for others and continue to act as role models for today’s young women.

Source List

Barett, Ed. “Book club fosters understanding.” Cedar Rapids Gazette 18 June 1988.

Blood, Shirley. “Viola Gibson Has Been Civil Rights Leader In Cedar Rapids 22 Years; Sees Progress.” Cedar Rapids Gazette.

Duffy, Beverley. “Longtime activist Viola Gibson dies.” Cedar Rapids Gazette 18 June 1989.

“Friend recalls community role model.” Cedar Rapids Gazette 21 Feb. 1996.

Rorholm, Janet. “C.R. school named for minister, rights activist.” Cedar Rapids Gazette 24 Apr. 2001.

The Story of Viola Gibson: The School and The Person. 2003. Viola Gibson Elementary School. 23 Jan 2006.

“Viola A. Gibson.” Cedar Rapids Gazette 19 June 1989.

“Viola Gibson can still foster learning.” 27 Apr. 2001.



6-7 Grades: Third Place



Elizabeth Robinson, First African American Chairwoman Of the Iowa Board of Parole by Fontavia Reynolds

The Iowa Board of Parole (IBOP) is established by Iowa code chapter 904A and consists of five members, including a chairperson. Board members are appointed by the governor for a staggered term of four years and are subject to confirmation by the senate. There are two full time members and three part time members. The IBOP chairperson is appointed by the governor and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

The Board Of Parole is responsible for reviewing and interviewing inmates for parole or work release, and granting parole or work release. They also review and make recommendations to the governor regarding all applications for reprieve, pardon, commutation of sentence, remission of a fine, and restoration of citizenship rights. (A commutation of sentence is when you get sentenced to life in prison but the governor, and only the governor, can change that to a number of years making an offender eligible for parole.)

Although all positions of the IBOP are important the Chairperson or in this case the Chairwoman, is assigned certain duties that only they can do. They must act as the board’s liaison with the governor regarding executive clemency (commutation of sentence), parole, and work release matters. They must direct, supervise, evaluate, and assign the day-to-day administration of the board of parole. They must also supervise the development of roles, policies, and procedures, subject to the approval of the board. There are many other duties that the Chairperson is expected to handle which is why the governor picks only the best person for the job.

Although there have been other women to hold the position of Chair, Elizabeth Robinson is the first African American woman to be the chair of the Iowa Board of Parole.

Chairwoman Robinson was born in Alexandria, LA, where her mother and father raised her. Her father was the first African American medical doctor to practice in an all white hospital. Watching her father's love, dedication, and caring for all people changed her life. This made her, as a young child and teen, take a special interest in the well being of children and their families.

Chairwoman Robinson graduated from Commercial Business College. She then went on to study Business Administration at Southern University in Shreveport, LA. She studied Social Work and Criminal Justice at Kentucky University. She earned her certificate from American College of Certified Forensic Counselors as a Criminal Justice Specialist.

Chairwoman Robinson was appointed to the IBOP in 1994 and in 1999 she served as an Administrative Law Judge for the Department of Corrections. She was appointed Vice Chair of the Board of Parole and then in 2001 was appointed Chairwoman of the IBOP, making her the first African American woman to hold that position.

Chairwoman Robinson was appointed by Governor Thomas Vilsack to serve on the Iowa African American Over-Representation Task Force. She is a member of the U.S Department of Justice Reentry, Courts and she served on the Minority Health Task Force.

Although being the chair has a lot of demands she has been involved with many community organizations. She was on the Board of Directors for the Minority- Chamber of Commerce in Davenport, IA; she was a mentor for the Iowa Invests Program, the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Organization, and the United Way Foundation. She also serves on the CJJP (Criminal Juvenile Justice Planning Board) and the IBTSA (Iowa Board for the Treatment of Sexual Abuse).

Chairwoman Robinson has experienced a lot of resistance since taking on the Chairperson position. She reminds us that change can bring fear to people who do not understand the progression of American society. She had to work five times as hard to prove herself worthy of Governor Vilsack's decision. Not so much to the governor but to the people she had to supervise.

I asked Chairwoman Robinson what she thought was important about being the Chair that all young girls from now until 50 years from now should know. She said, "Young girls should always remember that the decisions they make today will make the woman they become in the future. Sometimes life is hard and it is not always fair but I promise if you never give up and always believe in yourself even when no one else does, you will live your Dream. Today you may not even know what the Dream may be, but live right, do good, and always believe."

I am glad that Mrs. Robinson is the first African American Chairwoman because she is a big influence to me. Not because of the many things that she has done but because she goes out of her way to protect my state, my community, and my family. She has taken my family out to eat and spent time with me and my siblings asking us about things we like. She also came to my basketball game even after a long day at work. She is a wonderful person to get to know. She achieved a dream of being the first African American Chairwoman of the Iowa Board of Parole and hopes that all young girls will achieve their dreams.

Chairwoman Robinson should be written into history for all her great accomplishments, but if not she will always be in my history.

Parole Board [205]; Interview questions; Autobiography of Elizabeth Robinson



8-9 Grades: First Place



Write Women Back Into History: A Profile of Edna Griffin

by Paul Hayden

There were many famous women throughout Iowa's history. One of these lesser known, but still important, women was Edna Griffin. Edna played an important role in helping African-Americans combat discrimination across Iowa.

On July 7, 1948, Edna Griffin, her daughter Phyllis, and two of her friends, was refused service at Katz Drug Store in downtown Des Moines, Iowa, because of the color of their skin. Griffin launched a campaign to force Katz to serve African-Americans by organizing picketing in front of the establishment, sometimes picketing all alone. Charges were eventually filed against the storeowner, and the case turned into the first successful enforcement of the 1884 Iowa Civil Rights Act.

On the campus of Fisk University, Edna Griffin was also involved in protesting Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. Griffin was later arrested marching alongside striking teachers in a picket line. In her ongoing effort to reverse the effects of racism, Edna Griffin organized the Des Moines chapter of the Congress on Racial Equality (C.O.R.E.). Edna continued to be an active participant in the civil rights movement throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and a champion of human rights until her death in 2000.

I think Edna Griffin's contributions to Iowa's history need greater recognition because she stood up for African-Americans when few would. She worked tirelessly to achieve equality for African-Americans in the Des Moines, Iowa, community. She received numerous awards for her community service work, and was inducted into the Iowa African-Americans' Hall of Fame and the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame. According to Des Moines Register columnist Adin Davis, "Every community has its Rosa Parks ... and Edna Griffin has been the Rosa Parks of the Des Moines community for a long time. This is a civil rights warrior who knew her battleground."

While championing causes is the thing for which Edna Griffin is best known, it is only a small part of her life. Above all else, Edna was devoted to her family, who shared in her desire to improve the lives of others. She and her husband, a prominent local physician, raised money for approximately 40 individuals to attend Dr. Martin Luther King's March on Washington. Since the early 60s, Ms. Griffin has been honored with the Mary Louise Smith Award, Urban Dreams' Trailblazer Award, and most recently, was honored to have the building where the Katz Drug Store once stood named after her.

In conclusion, not many people have the courage that Edna did. She helped African-Americans gain the same rights as white people. For her bravery, commitment and selfless service to others, Edna Griffin deserves a page in Iowa's history.

Work Cited

Davis, Adin. "Edna Griffin." *Des Moines Register*. August 21, 1983.

"Iowa Women's Archives." "Edna Griffin." *University of Iowa Libraries*. Received on 2 November 2005. Available at: <http://www.ssdc.lib.uiowa.edu/iwa/findingaids/html/GriffinEdna.htm>.

State of Iowa. Iowa Women's Hall of Fame. "Edna Griffin." Retrieved on 5 November 2005. Available at: [http://www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/sw/hall fame/iafame-griffin.html](http://www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/sw/hall%20fame/iafame-griffin.html).



8-9 Grades: Second Place



by Amanda de Neui

Carrie Chapman Catt, a coordinator of the woman suffrage movement and a political strategist, should be remembered for the goal she set to achieve at age thirteen, which was to enable women to vote. This hardworking coordinator from a Charles City farm devoted most of her life so women today could vote. A graduate of Iowa State University, then known as Iowa Agricultural College, she worked as a school teacher and principal. In 1883, she was one of the first women to be appointed as a superintendent of schools. She started working for the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890.

Later in 1892, by Susan B. Anthony asked her to address the Congress about the proposed suffrage amendment. Ten years later, this amazing woman helped to organize the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA). She eventually resigned her NAWSA presidency to care for her ill husband, who preceded Carrie in death by 42 years. After waiting ten years, she again resumed her presidency at NAWSA after it had been badly divided by Anna Howard Shaw's control. At a NAWSA convention in New Jersey in 1916, Catt revealed her 'Winning Plan' to campaign at the same time for suffrage on both the federal and state levels. She also campaigned for partial suffrage in the states resisting change. Under her outstanding leadership, NAWSA won the backing of the House and Senate, also the state support for the amendments ratification. The referendum was passed in 1917, a year later, President Woodrow Wilson was converted to the cause.¹

On August 26, 1920, after all of the suffragists' hard work, the nineteenth amendment was ratified. Again, she resigned NAWSA after its victory. Then in 1921, she joined the League of Nations and became an active supporter. After that, in 1923, she helped write a book called Woman Suffrage and Politics with a woman named Nettie Rogers Shuler. One of the chapters in this book was entitled "The Story of Iowa". She mentions in this chapter that the state motto was "Our liberties we prize, our rights we will maintain".² After 1923, Carrie did a lot of other things including forming a committee on the cause and cure of war in 1925. In 1926, Carrie was featured on the cover of Time Magazine in 1937.³

Carrie was recognized as one of the top ten greatest American women. Because she was a long time friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, she received the Chi Omega Award at the White House in the year 1941. Carrie also worked toward the establishment of the United Nations in 1944. Three years later, on March 9, 1947, she died in her home at New Rochelle, New York, due to heart failure. But even after her death, continued to be recognized. In 1992, Carrie was named one of the 10 most important women of the century. In the same year, she also was presented with an Iowa Award for service of nationwide importance by the Iowa Centennial Memorial Foundation. The Carrie Chapman Catt Center was established for Women and Politics at ISU, and the former Old Botany Hall was renamed Carrie Chapman Catt Hall three years later.

As you can see, this very dedicated woman was honored most of her life and even after her death. This woman is important to me because without her contribution to helping women fight for their right to vote, I wouldn't be able to vote at all, in five more years. This woman is now one of my role models. She has made me think about all the hard work these women did to help fight for all women's rights! As I thought about how Carrie set a life goal at age 13, I think about how I, myself, could set a goal now, just like she did. I could make a huge difference in my lifetime, just like her. If every 13-year old could put in half as much effort as she did, maybe this world would be almost perfect! Right now I want to find a cure for cancer; if I focus on that, maybe I won't think about just how others see things. I will consider my own opinions. Carrie seems to be a perfect example for all young women to follow.⁴

Bibliography

1. U.S. Library of Congress, Carrie Chapman Catt Childhood Home: About Carrie Chapman Catt. p. 1-3
www.catt.org/ccatt.html
2. Catt, C.C. & Shuler, N.R. (1923). Woman Suffrage and Politics. University of Washington Press: Seattle, p. 211.
3. Catt, C. C.: Picture found on Google images at-
<http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://content.barewalls.com/quickview/j8cov1101260614q.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.creativeprocess.net/moreposters/individuals/women/wseries/&h=90&w=68&sz=2&tbnid=fLWU39FV5FbeaM:&tbnh=74&tbnw=55&hl=en&start=2&prev=/images%3Fq%3DCarrie%2BChapman%2BCatt%2B%252B%2BTime%2BMagazine%26svnum%3D10%26hl%3Der%26lr%3D>
4. Catt, C.C.: Biography found at www.iastate.edu/~cccatt%20bio.html



8-9 Grades: Third Place



Profile of an Iowan: Donna Reed by Rachel Kuening

When you mention Donna Reed, many people think of a stereotypical housewife who cleaned her home in pearls and heels while catering to her family's needs. Indeed, in real life she was a charming woman who wanted to project a positive image of her, but also was an intelligent businesswoman. She made her way in Hollywood when it was difficult for women to be taken seriously, and voiced her beliefs about issues important to her. According to writer Barbara Avedon, Reed was, "...A feminist before there was a feminist vocabulary." (Avedon)

Donna Reed was born Donna Belle Mullenger in Denison, Iowa, on January 27th, 1921. Her parents were William Richard Mullenger and Hazel Jane Shives. She was the oldest of 5 siblings and grew up on a farm milking cows and feeding chickens, even winning a ribbon for her biscuits at the Iowa State Fair!

In high school, Donna was elected beauty queen. Later, she attended Los Angeles City College where she was elected campus queen. When her picture was published in the local L.A. newspaper, MGM took notice and screen-tested her. This would be the beginning of a successful acting career.

Reed won an academy award for best supporting actress in the 1953's "From here to Eternity." However, fans claimed her most beloved role Mary Baily in Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life."

She found her way to television where she had one of the most successful television series called, "The Donna Reed Show." Her series, which ran 257 episodes, featured Donna as Donna Stone, wife of pediatrician, Alex Stone. Together with their son Jeff and daughter Mary, they visited America's living rooms each week with funny and heartwarming stories about ups and downs of family life. It was her role as Donna Stone that made her an American 1950's icon of the stereotypical American housewife.

As time passed, in 1971, Reed joined the "Mothers Against the Vietnam War." As her own two sons were of age to be drafted. She was obviously anti-war. Though as many people mistaken her, she wasn't a powerful feminist, she was known for her grace, elegance & charm, but never forgetting her intelligence. Whenever she confronted an issue having to do with women rights, she always portrayed elegance and charm, never came out harsh or cold.

I strongly believe that Donna Reed should be put into the pages of history because she represents a mainstream feminist voice. She didn't try to dominate; she peacefully fought for what she strongly believed in. This is what should be put in our history books. Today, feminism continues to play a major part in women's lives. I

think that younger woman should understand the issues regarding women's rights, though we should learn it in a way where we express our strength through femininity instead of trying to act or look like a man achieve our goals. Donna Reed shows a perfect example of this.

In closing, if Donna Reed were to be put in the pages of our history, I really believe that it would change a lot of young women's minds and views on the world and how they are suppose to be treated. She would be the perfect example of how to show women to act gentle, but maintain intelligence while fighting for their rights.

Works Cited

Avedon, Barbara. *Donna Reed*. On-line. Retrieved on January 12, 2006. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donna_Reed.

University of Iowa. On-line. Retrieved on January 12, 2006. Available at: <http://www.uiowa.edu/uiowapress/fulinsea.htm>.



Best Essay on Women in Science and Engineering for 6-7 Grades



Rachel Carson
by Connor Steffens

"I can remember no time when I wasn't interested in the outdoors and the whole world of nature." This quote was said by Rachel Carson. She was the first woman to take and pass the Civil Service Test. Her interest in nature helps to keep humans and animals safe even today.

Rachel Carson was born on May 27, 1907 in Springdale, Pennsylvania. She was the youngest child in her family. She died on April 14, 1964 in her home in Silver Springs, Maryland.

Ms. Carson joined the United States Bureau of Fisheries as a writer. The Bureau of Fisheries hired her as a full time junior biologist. She rose in ranks until she was the chief editor of all publications for the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Rachel saved birds and fish from a chemical called DDT. DDT thinned egg shells so they were harder to reproduce. DDT was the first chemically made pesticide. Her book Silent Spring informed the public about how DDT was not good for the environment. The pesticide was later banned in the United States because it was not safe for nature. Her book also led to the development of the Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA.

In 1925, Rachel went to Pennsylvania College for Women which is now called Chatham College. In 1929, she graduated and earned a scholarship to study at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1932, she was awarded her master's degree in marine zoology at John Hopkins University.

Rachel had a desire to help others understand and become more aware of the natural world. She encouraged students and young adults to reach his or her potential as a learner and as a responsible citizen. This is good advice because if you reach your potential, you will do well in life.

In 1929, the stock market in the United States fell to a record level. It destroyed the American economy and killed the dreams of young adults like Carson. Millions of people lost jobs. Unemployment in the United States increased from 1.5 million to 12.1 million. Carson was able to stay in school because of her scholarship. She kept studying even though she knew it would be hard to get a job.

Carson liked to read and write, too. When she wasn't doing chores, she read. She asked family members to bring books from Pittsburgh. When she was little, she loved to read about wildlife. She also wrote books. The first book she wrote was called Under the Sea Wind. For her next project, Carson wanted to write a book

with an ecological theme. She would write a book that described the connection between humans and wildlife. This book was called Silent Spring.

Rachel Carson and I have a lot in common. We both like wildlife. We are both responsible and we both care about animals and school. This is important because if it wasn't for Rachel, there might be more endangered fish or animals. I am thankful for Rachel Carson because I really enjoy camping and fishing.

I think Rachel Louise Carson should be part of history because of her personality, her ability to never give up and her books that encourage people to care about fish and wildlife. They should be treated as well as humans are.

Bibliography

1. Brownstone, David and Franck, Irene. Women (1960-1998), Danbury, Connecticut: Combined Publishing, 1999. 87
2. Jezer, Marty. Rachel Carson, New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988.
3. "Problems With DDT and Why it Was Banned,"
<http://cems.alfred.edu/students99/schwergi/page4.htm>. January 16, 2006
4. Women in History. Rachel Carson biography. Created/Last modified: January 16, 2006. Lakewood Public Library. Accessed: January 16, 2006. <http://www.lkwdpl.org/wihohio/cars-rac.htm>.

Best Essays on Women in Science and Engineering for 8-9 Grades: First Place

The Bird Lady of Iowa by Allison MacKay

Who cares about birds? They have no purpose to serve, they don't do anything. Why should we bother with them? Those were my initial thoughts, until I read about how the dedication and tedious work of bird-watchers could have an impact on the survival of our species. A recent example would be Dr. Özens. He predicted the bird-flu out-break in Turkey, and he helped draft the government's response to combat the virus. He used to be teased about his bird watching. No one laughs at him anymore.

Our own Iowan ornithologist was also thought to be eccentric. Gladys Black wore men's clothes, smoked, and complained about human "yo-yos" who messed up Iowa with trash and pesticides. She watched television only if there were going to be nature programs. Her house and yard were not her "top priorities." Her friends admired her for her intelligence, common sense, and frankness, and said that she could also be warm and sensitive. However, she was most admired for her expertise – in birds, wildlife, and conservation. Her devotion earned her an honorary doctorate from Simpson College in 1978.

Gladys was well-known for being able to cite information straight off the top of her head. As a seven-year old, she could name 25 species of birds. Described by her sister as a "walking encyclopedia," Gladys was a constant reader. Later in life, Gladys wrote two books, called Iowa Birdlife and Birds of Iowa. She wrote a column for the Des Moines Register for over ten years, inspiring her readers to preserve Iowa's natural heritage.

As an activist, Gladys battled with the Department of Natural Resources when they went ahead with the dove hunting season plan. The officials did not foresee any problems. They had never come across an irate Gladys Black. "I didn't want doves hunted in Iowa...So when they said they were going to have a season, I said, 'Nothing doing.'" Black protested to the commission members and staff and then continued on to the legislators. She took them all to court, and she won, leaving behind a building occupied with bewildered state officials.

Gladys strongly believed that the environment was becoming contaminated at a disturbing rate by chemicals and abuse. One of her books was written for the Nature Conservancy, an international membership organization committed to protecting and maintaining the natural world. Her yard was filled with cages, where she looked after injured birds. Gladys even moved a malnourished snowy owl into her house when it got too cold. She truly was amazing.

After smoking for 50 years, Gladys was no longer healthy enough to visit her usual bird watching site. "...I did damage to my heart and lungs. I don't produce enough oxygen, so I need this contraption," she said, pointing to the oxygen machine in the corner. Nevertheless, Gladys felt no self-pity. Instead, she spent her time with school kids in the field, introducing them to birds and the environment. "I've often wondered why it is that birds are so attractive to me. And I'm not sure myself why that is. It may be the freedom to fly. The beauty. I certainly do enjoy them. It's been a pleasure doing propaganda for the birds."

You might not have heard of Gladys Black. Yet I believe that it's the small people that make a difference in the big picture of life. I really didn't care about birds until I read about bird-loving enthusiasts who made contributions to their community. Gladys Black represents everything I aspire to: perseverance, compassion, dedication, sensitivity...and spunk.

Gladys Black died on July 19, 1998.

Bibliography

Black, Gladys. Iowa Birdlife. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992.

"Gladys Black, "The Bird Lady of Iowa"." Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. 25 Jan. 2006 <<http://www.inhf.org/gladysblack.htm>>.

Carlson, John. "Feathered Friends hold her Heart." The Des Moines Register 13 July 1997: 1a, 6a, 7a.

Carney, Tom. "Gladys Black: The Bird Woman of Pleasantville." The Des Moines Sunday Register 6 December 1986: 1b, 5b.

Shishkin, Philip. "Doctor-Birdwatcher Finds His 2 Callings United by Avian Flu." The Wall Street Journal 23 January 2006: 1a, 15a.

Best Essays on Women in Science and Engineering for 8-9 Grades: Second Place

A Young Girl's Dream

by Tess Myer

In the year 2000, I was introduced to a woman who has become very influential in my life. Because she graduated from Mount Ayr Community School and was an astronaut bound for the Space Station, we students began reading and writing stories about her, collecting pictures of her, and corresponding with her parents. Who would have thought that by the year 2002, due to my biological father's death, I would meet her, talk with her, and actually become part of her family? My aunt, Peggy Whitson, shows me, through direct example, that women can do or be anything they desire, if they are willing to put their minds, heart, and soul into it.

Peggy Annette Whitson was born on February 9, 1960, in Mount Ayr, Iowa. Her parents are Keith and Beth Whitson of Beaconsfield, Iowa. As a young girl, Peggy was inspired when she watched NASA missions to the moon on television. After her selection as a State of Iowa scholar in 1978, she opted to attend Iowa Wesleyan College and achieved a bachelor's degree in two subjects, chemistry and biology. From there, she enrolled in Rice University and earned a Ph.D. in biochemistry.

Peggy began her astronaut training in 1996 after being employed by NASA as a research biochemist four years. She first went into space aboard the Endeavor on June 5, 2002. During the STS 111 shuttle flight and her

six- month stay on the International Space Station, Peggy orbited the Earth nearly 3,000 times. While at the ISS, she conducted various experiments and hosted three Shuttle assembly missions, with two Russian cosmonauts also aboard the station. Peggy helped install truss elements with the robotic arm. She was the first astronaut without any military experience and the first Ph.D. to actually live on the Space Station. She was named the first NASA Science Officer and conducted 21 biological experiments in microgravity.

Peggy now lives in Houston, Texas, with her husband Clarence Sams, who also works at NASA. She is currently training for another mission to leave aboard the Russian SOYUZ and return to the Space Station. Peggy has visited schools all around the world besides those in the U.S. to introduce and explain microgravity and human life sciences to students. Peggy inspired many people to continue space exploration after the Columbia tragedy where she lost seven friends. She stated at a recent U.S. House of Representatives hearing, “I think space exploration is even more important now, because people have a lot of questions about whether it is worth the risk. I think it is worth the risk. We want to try to minimize the risk whenever possible, and make it as reasonable as possible.”

Peggy Whitson has inspired me to give every task, whether small or large, my utmost attention, because it may become important in the future. She also teaches me to prioritize things in my life, such as love for a family. For Peggy, that “family” includes commitment to people not only in the USA but in every nation.

No matter where a woman comes from, big city or small rural area, wealthy or poor, her dreams can come true. I feel especially blessed to have the opportunity to learn from Peggy’s adventures and example on a personal level. Peggy A. Whitson, Ph.D., should be written into history because she is a woman of intelligence and courage, a woman of character and dedication, and a woman of heart, who is living her dream.

Resources

<http://www.jcs.nasa.gov/Bios/htmlbios/whitson.html>

<http://www.house.gov/science/hearings/spaceO5/june13/peggy.pdf>

<http://arrrl.org/news/stories/2002/09/26/2/?nc=1>

http://www.wndw.comnews/032003/news_18847.php

JUDGES

Jillian Duquaine-Watson, Drake University
Charles Grigsby, Crime Victim Assistance Division
Carol Heaverlo, Program for Women in Science and Engineering
Sophia Magill, General Public
Mollie Michelfelder, Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
Naomi Peuse, State Historical Society of Iowa
Michelle Rubin, General Public
Bill Silag, Iowa Department of Education
Kathy Tumpek, Grand View College



Lucas State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319
Tel: 515/281-4461, 800/558-4427
Fax: 515/242-6119
dhr.icsw@iowa.gov
www.state.ia.us/dhr/sw

Sponsored by

Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
Iowa Department of Education
State Historical Society of Iowa

Additional Prizes Sponsored by

Program for Women in Science and Engineering, Iowa State University
Women in Science and Engineering, University of Iowa