Living Legend No. 56
Paul Ihsen Latest to be Honored

By Paul McClure

“The San Dimas Corral of Westerners would like to nominate historian Bob Ihsen to become a ‘Living Legend’ of Westerners International,” wrote Paul McClure.

The Home Ranch Bunch agreed this was an excellent choice and the retired history teacher is certainly one of the most well-traveled Westerners.

Ihsen has traveled to 182 foreign countries, all state capitals except one—Delaware—to 375 of 394 National Parks and a number of out-of-the-way spots around the world including Easter Island, the Galapagos, Kashmir, Rwanda to see the mountain gorillas and Zanzibar.

“He has given many presentations to the San Dimas Corral, been active in local organizations and service clubs and continued to teach Advanced Placement History at Covina, California, High School,” said McClure.

“He also asks a set of trivia questions at each of our corral meetings and hands out Hershey bars to the member or guest who answers first,” he continued.

Ihsen grew up in Covina, was graduated from Covina High School, Pomona College and Claremont Graduate School.

“He taught history at Covina High from 1963 until 1998 when he ‘retired.’ He continued teaching the advancement placement classes,” said McClure.

“Over the years he has seen the landscape of orange groves change into a suburban community. His family’s 10-acre grove is now the site of an elementary school and he has lived in the same house for 65 years. In 2004 it was noted that he had approximately 150,000 slides of his travels, over 2,000 books in his personal library and subscribed to 35 magazines.

“He is still active as a co-advisor of the California Scholarship Federation and in mentoring students at the World Affairs Council as a means of test preparation and is president of the Covina Valley Historical Society. He is active in a number of other organizations including the Sierra Club, Huntington Library, Travelers’ Century Club, Friends of Covina Library, Pasadena Historical Society, Covina Lion’s Breakfast Club and the Old Spanish Trails Association.

“We are honored to be able to nominate corral member, Bob Ihsen, for Living Legend recognition by Westerners International” said McClure.
We are sorry to report that one of our most faithful board members, Melvin Clyde “Mel” Cottom of the Kansas Corral crossed the divide November 19 in Manhattan, Kansas. We could always count on Mel and his wife Mary to make the drive to Oklahoma City for our Summer Board Meeting. As corral “Rep” for many years he kept us up-date on the corral activities and members. An electrical engineer, Mel taught first at the University of Kansas and then Kansas State University.

Executive Board member Leon Nelson has resigned from the board. He has recently completed an inventory of all of our WI sale items and prepared a budget for the coming year. He will be missed.
I feel some embarrassment about writing about myself. I hope I am better in application than looking good on paper. It is like writing a prospectus on a salted mine in Death Valley but here goes.

I was born 27 March 1948 in Oklahoma City. I grew up in Norman and on a farm in southern Cleveland County. Was graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in Business Administration. Since I took ROTC I went to Fort Belvoir and graduated as a combat engineer in the Corps of Engineers.

In 1972 I got a job as a trainman with the Santa Fe Railway, eventually retiring from the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railway.

My western connection is I joined the Indian Territory Posse in 2003 and served in a minor position until my selection as Sheriff in 2011. In 2010 I went to the WHA meeting in Lake Tahoe and in 2011 was elected to the board of WI and went to WHA in Oakland.

My historical interest centers upon the American Experience with stress on the Civil War. My interest in Western history centers around the development of the West by the railroad with a keen interest in the mining booms of Nevada in the early 20th Century.

What do I hope to accomplish with my tenure with WI? It is my concern that WI is declining because of our inability to attract younger members. I am currently working on a way to try and correct this.
OK. So we didn’t move that far west—just one door past our old office but the difference between the old, small office and our new spacious office is so great it feels as if we had moved a long, long way.

The move itself was accomplished by a small WI group, in a short time span in October at the same time as the WHA meeting was being held in Oakland but fortunately we had help from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum employees though they were busy with the opening of two major exhibits themselves. Changing spaces put us in the same room as our WI Library which was too extensive to be in our old quarters and having everything all together again is certainly a plus. We want to say Thank You! to the museum not only for providing WI with office space but for all the other help and support they give us.

Packing up an entire office and moving, even if it is only next door, is a long, tiring process but it doesn’t end there—then you have to decide where to put things, upper photo, left to right, Burnis Argo, Mary Marvel and Fred Marvel. While it is great having our library in the same room again, it is also a bit of a distraction as Fred Marvel, right, finds. There are so many interesting books to look at. (Photos by Jim Argo)
Our new larger office gives us space to display some of the WI art which has been stored in a closet and a nice shelving unit to hold some of our other special treasures. A favorite of all the Home Ranch Bunch is the beautiful blue crystal vase, hand-carried to Oklahoma City in 2000 by some Westerners from the Czech Republic. To see it in full color check on our website: www.westerners-international.org under the section titled Bulletins. The painting below of the court of Judge Isaac Parker is by the late Fred Olds, member of the Indian Territory Posse, and the man for whom the Fred Olds Poetry Award is named.
Pine Ridge Corral, Chadron, Nebraska, met in January to hear a program by Ardith Morse, about her experiences as a rider for the equestrian troupe from the White Horse Ranch near Naper, Nebraska.

The meeting notice also contained an interesting article about ice harvesting in Nebraska, 1928.

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The lives and legacies of Henry and Arabella Huntington was the program given in November for the San Dimas, California, Corral. Liz Thompson, a docent at the Huntington Library for nine years, was the speaker.

Of possible interest: admission to The Huntington is free to all visitors the first Thursday of every month with advance tickets.

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"The Coming of the Telegraph" was the topic of the January program of the Omaha Corral. Speaker was Dennis Mihelich, retired associate professor of history at Creighton University. The Smithsonian recently discovered a diary by Charles Brown which described life and times during the construction of part of the telegraph line. Mihelich and fellow historian James Potter have co-edited that diary.

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The Durango Corral met in December for a turkey dinner "with all the trimmings" at the Strater Hotel. The program was given by Andy Guilliford and topic was "Brown’s Park, Butch, and the Wild Bunch."

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The Winter Rendezvous & Rosenstock Awards Presentation of the Denver Posse was held in December. Speaker at the event was John Voehl and his topic was "Railroads Going West.” A re-enactor, Voehl portrayed Abraham Lincoln during the time he was a railroad lawyer.

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South Canadian Cross-Timbers Corral, Norman, Oklahoma, met for a holiday party in December at the home of Kathie and Owen Anderson.

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Also attending a Christmas party were the members of the Fort Abraham Lincoln Corral, Bismarck-Mandan, North Dakota. Turkey with all the trimmings was the dinner menu.

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Members of the Indian Territory Posse invited members of the Chisholm Trail Corral, both of Oklahoma City, to join them for a holiday party in December.

Highlight of the evening was a lively game of trivia on Western history with tables competing against each other. Some sample questions: "How Long was the Pony Express in operation?" "Where was Jesse James born?" and "Who was the outlaw whose skin was used to make a pair of shoes?" One table suggested it was "Sam Hushpuppy.” That is not the correct answer.

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The Los Angeles Corral has a nice custom at each December meeting. Cherries Jubilee is served, accompanied by a lighting ceremony.

Arizona Group Celebrates

As a program to celebrate the upcoming February, 2012, Arizona State Centennial, the Flagstaff Corral welcomed State Historian Marshall Trimble to our December meeting where we were treated to a highly informative and humorous presentation. Trimble grew up in Ash Fork, Arizona, along historic Route 66 and recounted many fun adventures there from 1947 into the early 1950s. One such memory: he was forced to sleep with his three brothers in their family’s very small trailer home and was quick to say, "I wasn’t able to sleep alone until I got married.” He also shared that his high school was so small the drivers’ education and sex education classes were both held in the same car!

In addition to his many stories of the Old West, he peppers his fun recollections with guitar and harmonica music. He has written numerous books on Arizona history, has plans in the works for more and maintains a busy schedule traveling throughout the state, entertaining and bringing his own brand of humor to his presentations.

Each year Westerners International presents a $1000 scholarship for the best doctoral dissertation in Western U.S. History by a graduate student member of Phi Alpha Theta. This year’s winner is Margaret Bickers, PhD, Kansas State University, for "Three Cultures, Four Hooves and one River: The Canadian River in Texas & New Mexico 1848-1939.”
A Meal Costs What?

Have you ever wondered what other Westerners pay for their dinner (or lunch) at a meeting? Keeping in mind that prices differ from city to city and state to state it is still interesting to read through the meeting notices that come to the Home Ranch to see how costs differ.

The San Francisco Corral members pay $35 each and checks should be sent to arrive a few days before the meeting. The Last Chance Gulch Corral, Helena Montana provides a number of choices for its members. At the October meeting there was a choice of baked ham ($18) or baked halibut ($22) or for $13 a member could have a soup, sandwich, beverage and dessert OR a Shrimp Louie salad, beverage and dessert.

Boulder Corral members pay $22 for their meal, only one choice, apparently.

Members of the John G. Neihardt Corral, Columbia, Missouri, are charged $12 a person.

The Chisholm Trail Corral, Oklahoma City, pays $16 each. The meal actually costs a little less but the extra charge helps keep the corral coffers healthy.

The Prescott Corral charges $24 which covers room rent, speaker gifts, books to give away and tips for the servers as well as the food.

Members of the Santa Barbara Corral also get a choice of meals. They all have the same dessert and salad but can choose between a fish meal or a meal with another kind of meat.

Los Angeles has a very firm reservation policy. They pay $35 if they meet the deadline. Late reservations can be accepted but you are not assured the meal of your choice. Walk-ins, alas, have to pay $40 for Pot Luck.

The Utah Corral also charges extra for late reservations. They pay $35 if the reservation deadline is met but reservations after that have an extra $5 tacked on.

The San Dimas Corral also has two prices, $13 for members and $15 for guests. They also ask that checks be mailed in ahead of time.

There is one thing that most, if not all, of the groups agree on. If you make a reservation and don’t cancel it well ahead of time or just don’t show up—you have to pay anyway.

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WI Home Ranch Bunch


WI Book List Still Available

New members don’t know and older members may have forgotten about the WI “100 Most Outstanding Non-Fiction Books on the American West 1901-2001.” This list was compiled in 2005 from suggestions sent in by our members.

Such a list came about when a call came to the Home Ranch, from a man who had read somewhere there was a list of “100 Best Books of the American West,” compiled by Westerners International. A thorough search of the office turned up no such list and no one seemed to remember anything about it. So it was decided to create such a list.

Finally Fred Egloff, long-time Westerner and former WI President, wrote to say such a list did exist and was compiled originally in 1954 when the Chicago Corral asked all Westerners to send in their personal selection of the “Ten Most Outstanding Books on the West.” The Home Ranch decided to proceed with their project and ask for nominations of books published in the 20th Century.

David Dary, also a past WI president, suggested that the list could include reprints of books from the 10th century “as one figures if a book merits reprinting it is worthwhile.”

Soon the lists of suggestions began arriving at the office and Dary went through them all and compiled the new list.

We still have copies of the book list and will be happy to mail one to anyone interested: Westerners International 1700 NE 63rd St. Oklahoma City, OK 73111 Or e-mail: WIHomeRanch@gmail.com
Pictured are Westerners International supplies available.

Old Joe Bola Ties — $15
Old Joe Lapel Pins — $7.50
Past Sheriff Pins — $6
Square Paperweight — $8
Round Paperweight — $10
Wood Speaker Gift — $15
WI Logo Decals — 10 for $1.50
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