



# NEWSLETTER

November 2008

Doña Ana County Historical Society



Dr. Gerald W. Thomas, our November Speaker

## President's Comments:

Your board members have been busy preparing for the annual Banquet and Awards Program to be held in January on the 17th. The menu and reservation forms will appear in the December and January newsletters along with membership renewal forms. The October program featuring Ms. Frankie Miller's research of Father Grange, pastor of San Albino Catholic Church in Mesilla, was well received and very informative. Frankie was the recipient of the first *Mary and J. Paul Taylor Scholarship* and is proof that the DACHS scholarship program is worth our continuing support. Ms. Miller was appointed at the last board meeting as Chair of the Education Committee and she is actively working to promote the DACHS scholarship and grant program.

This newsletter will be the third issue cre-

## November Program

Dr. Gerald Thomas will recount his experiences as a pilot in *A Cockpit View of WW-II* at the regular monthly meeting at the Good Samaritan Auditorium on November 20, 2008 at 7:00 pm.

Gerald W. Thomas was born & raised on a ranch in Idaho. He was working for the U.S. Forest Service when WW-II started. After Pearl Harbor he hitchhiked to California and joined the Navy.

Thomas became a pilot in Torpedo Squadron 4 during the War. He saw action in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters of War while serving on three different Aircraft Carriers. He crash-landed on the USS Ranger after his plane was hit by German antiaircraft fire over Norway.

He was aboard the USS Essex when a Kamikaze crashed into the Carrier. The Destroyer

See Dr. Thomas on page 2

ated by our new Newsletter Editor, Mr. Doyle Piland who is, among other things, Archivist of the WSMR Museum and Webmaster of the WSMR Museum Foundation. Doyle is producing the newsletter in two densities, low for email transmission and high for printing. Several reports of missing newsletter attachments have been received and it is suspected that the problem is caused by the recipient's server.

I attended a meeting recently with Ms. Trevor Carter, New Mexico Humanities Council, N.M. National History Day Coordinator. The meeting was hosted by Cameron Saffel at the Farm & Ranch Museum to look for ways to continue supporting the program in light of the absence of Leslie Bergloff who has been so instrumental in the success of the program in the past. If anyone is interested in learning more about this program, please contact me. Several of us expressed concern that lately there have been no participants from the Las Cruces school system. ■

## Dr. Thomas from page 2



**Dr. Thomas sitting in the cockpit of his plane**

USS The Sullivans rescued Thomas from a rubber boat after a splash down in the South China Sea following a strike on Japanese targets on Hainan, China. He was awarded 3 distinguished Flying Crosses, 2 Air Medals, 2 Presidential Unit Citations and combat ribbons in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters of War.

After WW-II Thomas took leave from the Soil Conservation Service to go to Graduate school at Texas A & M under the GI Bill. He has held teaching & research positions at Texas A & M, and in 1958 he was appointed as Dean of Agriculture at Texas Tech.

Dr. Thomas was appointed President of New Mexico State University in 1970. He served 14 years as President of NMSU and was involved in both State and National Affairs. Gerald Thomas and his wife, Jean Ellis Thomas have 3 children and 2 grandchildren. They live in Las Cruces, New Mexico. ■

### Harvey Wilke

We were sorry to learn that Mr. Harvey Wilke passed away at the Good Samaritan Village on September 29, 2008. Harvey and his wife Julia, who died several years ago, were long time members and supporters of DACHS. Harvey R. Wilke was a graduate of the University of Missouri, College of Engineering, served on active duty with the U.S. Army at Fort Belvoir's Engineering School during WW-II and then worked for nearly thirty years as professor of Civil Engineering at Purdue University. ■

## Calendar

- Thursday, November 20, 2008 @ 7:00pm
- Dr. Gerald Thomas: *A Cockpit View of WW-II*
- December there will be no meeting
- Saturday, January 17, 2009 Annual DACHS Banquet and Awards Presentation
- Thursday, February 19, 2009 @ 7:00pm
- Leslie Bergloff: *A Magoffin Family Album*
- All meetings of the Society are normally at 7:00pm on the third Thursday of the months of Feb. - May and Sept - Nov. in the Good Samaritan Auditorium at 3011 Buena Vida Circle.

## Silent Auction

With the change in seasons, many of us are motivated to rearrange our "things" and do some seasonal cleaning. If you suffer from this affliction, you may come across some "things" that you no longer need or want that may be appropriate for our SILENT AUCTION held during the annual banquet and awards program. If you wish to donate something please call Roger 521-7531, Chuck 521-7833, or George 522-3477 for delivery or pickup arrangements. Last year was a sellout so we need your help. ■

## Board Elections and Nominations

Elections to fill vacant or reelect Officer and At Large positions on the DACHS Board will be held at the beginning of the November 20, 2008 regular meeting. The Nominations Committee makes the following recommendations:

Vice President	George Hackler
Secretary	Judy Vaughn
Treasurer	Xandy Church*
Historian	Karen George*
At Large	Donna Eichstaedt, Marcie Palmer* Martha Shipman Andrews, Mary Lou Pendergrass, Jim Eckles

\* Reelect

George Helfrich (President) and Buddy Ritter (At Large) will be serving the second year of their two-year terms. ■

## Courthouse & Amador Status

Jon Hoffman provided the following regarding the former County Courthouse "Work is proceeding, albeit slowly, on the courthouse renovation; most asbestos-containing material has been stripped, old air conditioning equipment has been removed from the roof, and part of the roof has been redone using a foam-based roofing system. Work to do includes finishing more of the roof, reworking the electrical system, and installing a modern HVAC system. Major surgery also needs to be done to the landscaping. Unfortunately most of those nice big cypress trees were planted too close to the building and will have to be removed before they damage the foundation."

Regarding the Amador, it is hoped that at the November 3, 2008 City Council meeting a contract with Kells and Craig of Albuquerque to conduct an architectural and museum study will be approved. This will result in a plan providing a building layout and exhibit design that will be conceptual and diagrammatic in nature. To develop the plan, the contract calls for meetings with interested people and organizations in the community to establish museum mission, audience, role in the community, themes, messages, and other public expectations. Since DACHS has been involved in the efforts to preserve the Amador it is anticipated that our members will attend these meetings as they are scheduled. ■

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### Donna's Book

Donna Eichstaedt, who gave the September program on the Bear Mountain Lodge reports that her book *Silver City's Bear Mountain Lodge, The Untold Story* is in the hands of the printer and should be available at the November meeting. Let's hope so. ■

## Southern New Mexico Historical Review

Opportunity knocks if anyone is interested in assisting with the production of the current issue (2009) of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* with an eye to becoming the editor of the next issue (2010). Please contact the current editor, Rick Hendricks, at 650-3205 or rhend03@comcast.net. ■



Frankie Miller presenting her talk on Father Grange, pastor of San Albino Catholic Church

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## Doña Ana County Historical Society Scholarship Funds

The Doña Ana County Historical Society provides scholarships each year. For more information please go to our website for details and application forms. Please consider making a contribution, memorial, or estate provision to the *Mary and J. Paul Taylor Scholarship* by sending a check payable to the *DACHS Endowment Fund* at DACHS, P.O. Box 16045, Las Cruces, NM 88004-6045 or call George Helfrich at 522-3477. ■

-----Cut along dotted line-----

### DACHS Membership Form

Please renew/enroll my/our membership in the Doña Ana County Historical Society

A check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed. Date \_\_\_\_\_, Check # \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter via E-mail  Yes  No

### DACHS Membership Fees

Individual	\$20	Student	\$8	Benefactor	\$150
Family	\$25	Contributor	\$40	Life	\$300

Memberships are active for the calendar year of enrollment. Membership in the Society is deductible within legal limits for Federal and State income tax purposes. If you are unsure of your status or have questions regarding membership, please contact the Treasurer, Xandy Church at 526-9774 or George Helfrich at 522-3477

We Welcome These  
New Members

No New Members  
This Month



Let's compromise  
..... we'll do it my  
way.



It's hard to be  
nostalgic when you  
can't remember  
anything.

**We wish to thank our  
Corporate Sponsors**

**Bank of the Rio Grande  
Double Eagle Restaurant  
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Around 4:00 am one morning in July 1898, Doña Ana County Sheriff Pat Garrett and four deputies approached a place called Wildy Well to arrest Oliver Lee and James Gilliland for the murder of Albert Fountain and his son Henry. After a fierce gunbattle that left one deputy mortally wounded, Garrett and his deputies were allowed to retreat without being fired upon.

On 18 October 2008, David Thomas and Cal Traylor arranged for a group to visit the old Wildy Well Location. At left is the windmill tower at Wildy Well.

Other than some remains of fences and a water tank, not much else is left.

**2008 Board Members**  
President: George Helfrich  
Past President: Roger Rothenmaier  
Vice President:  
Secretary: Donna Eichstaedt  
Treasurer: Xandy Church  
Historian: Karen George  
At Large Board Members:  
Marcie Palmer  
Frank Parrish  
Felix Praefle  
C.W. "Buddy" Ritter  
Publicity: Lorraine Southward  
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