President’s Comments
By: George Hackler

Time marches on. The Doña Ana County Historical Society has been around for almost a half century. Our supporting volunteers are growing older along with the rest of creation. Attendance at our membership meetings and awards banquet is falling off. And last but equally important the average age of our membership is creeping up. None of these things are fatal by themselves but they are leading indicators of trouble down the road. I want to start a conversation on how we can meet these challenges and achieve our mission.

The mission statement of DACHS is; “It shall be the purpose of the Doña Ana County Historical Society to encourage in every way possible a greater appreciation of New Mexico history, especially that of Doña Ana County, through aid and assistance, when practical, and as funds are available, for the following purposes: the publication of historical material; the marking of historical routes and sites, both public and private; the establishment of historical collections and museums; the preservation of historic documents; artifacts, and published materials of historic importance; the purchase and preservation of historic landmarks; and all other related activities.” Any and all suggestions and ideas as to how we can best live up to our mission statement are welcome.

To collect ideas and to stimulate this discussion we are attaching a survey form with this newsletter. Please take the time to ponder our future, make suggestions, and answer the questions. If you have e-mail and are comfortable with it re-
—After her son and daughter had safely graduated from college six years ago, she sought adventure and new horizons and accepted an offer to become University Archivist of NMSU where she acquires, processes, and promotes the use of the records of New Mexico’s first institution of higher learning. Articles on the early history of the school have earned her the Doña Ana County Historical Society’s Gemoets and Stoes Prizes for outstanding historical writing. This past year she was awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor.

Among the papers of the College of Engineering she discovered the remarkable—and unique—collection of correspondence carried on by Dean Daniel B. Jett during World War II and housed in the NMSU Archives is truly a local treasure. Few institutions are so lucky to have collections that perfectly and dramatically illuminate the life of an unsung but nonetheless extraordinary individual as they also bring alive the events of a monumental era in our State’s history.

On October 21 in honor of the upcoming Veteran’s Day, Martha Andrews, University Archivist, will be joined by Lt. Col. Stephen Groll, Dr. Richard Rundell, librarians Cindy Pierard, Molly Molloy, Theresa Westbrock, and Charles Stanford, and singer Daniel Sandino-Molloy as well as AFROTC cadets from New Mexico State University to present a reading of a small sample of the nearly 5000 letters contained in this remarkable collection. The selected letters will follow a few of Dean Jett’s Aggie correspondents from advanced training through deployment in major actions in every theatre of World War II and from within every branch of the Services.

2010 Award Series

At the Annual Banquet held the 30th of January, the Society’s Awards Committee presented several awards. With this issue, we continue featuring some photos and the award story for various people and/or places honored with awards.
ENDANGERED BUILDING WORTHY OF PRESERVATION

This award is given to a building that is distinguished by its age and historical character, its historical significance, or that represents architectural character.

De La O Saloon, Cristo Rey Street, Doña Ana

Lying along the original El Camino Real in the historic village of Doña Ana, the De La O Saloon building served for years as a bar and a community gathering place, as well as a residence. Historians believe the one-story adobe was built sometime between 1845 and 1852, shortly after the founding of the village of Doña Ana.

For the last several years, the deteriorating condition of the building and its 150-year old adobe walls has forced it to become boarded up and vacant. In November 2009, the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance named the De La O Saloon to its annual listing of New Mexico’s Most Endangered Places.

Recently acquired by Doña Ana County, along with the Henry Wertheim Store building next door, the De La O Saloon will soon become a centerpiece of a $1 million project to restore and convert both buildings into the village’s first visitor’s center.

The Doña Ana Heritage Corporation is working with the county and the Santa Fe-based architectural firm Conron and Woods Architects to develop a renovation plan that adheres to the building’s historical identity while insuring public safety and accessibility.

Funded through capital outlay funding secured in 2007 by State Sen. Mary Jane Garcia, D-Doña Ana, a village historian and member of the Doña Ana Heritage Corporation, the project could be completed within the next two years. It is the latest phase in restoration projects, the most significant being the restoration of the historic Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria church that sits across the old El Camino Real from the De La O Saloon.

Boarded up vacant De La O Saloon circa 2009
At our last membership meeting on September 16, we were fortunate to have our program speaker come to us all the way from Santa Fe. Margaret Moore Booker discussed her recent publication entitled “The Santa Fe House: Historic Residences, Enchanting Adobes, and Romantic Revivals.” Margaret used a very well done, informative slide show along with her presentation and talked us through the various periods of architectural styles. Her slideshow illustrated the overall styles with example photos as well as some of the intricate details that were unique to certain periods. After her presentation, Margaret had books for sale and signed books for those who purchased them. It was a very informative and interesting presentation enjoyed by all.
SURVEY FORM

1. What do you think of our current Membership meeting time and place? (Good Sam’s, 7:00pm Thursday evenings)

2. What do you think of our annual Awards Banquet time and place? (Hotel Encanto, evening late January)

3. Your evaluation of the Southern New Mexico Historical Review (SNMHR) this year. CD format? Etc.

4. Your evaluation of the News Letter

5. Any thing else on your mind?

Mail completed form to: Dona Ana County Historical Society, PO Box 16045, Las Cruces, NM 88004 OR e-mail to riburn@q.com