

Catherine Mulholland: Historian and Author

It was a movie—Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*—that in the 1970's catalyzed her entry into the ranks of local historians, said Catherine Mulholland, granddaughter of William Mulholland, architect of the aqueduct that brings water to the San Fernando Valley. *Chinatown's* fictionalized tale of how Los Angeles came to secure water from the Owens Valley, its plot replete with murder, illicit alliances, land-grab schemes and highly convoluted intrigue, galvanized the public's interest and among Angelinos became the talk-of-the-town. With the public all a-flutter over a fabricated version of a feat that forever changed southern California's historical trajectory, Mulholland found her name suddenly triggered intense interest. "Whenever I'd present a check and they'd see my name, I was inevitably asked, 'Is the story of *Chinatown* true?' or 'Are you related to the Mulholland Highway?'" and by extension to the highway's namesake, her grandfather. "I wasn't about to start a symposium at a grocery check stand...but I was definitely stimulated to tell a bit more. I did know a thing or two."

Mulholland said that the movie's thesis offended her, suggesting as it did that her grandfather had been part of a nefarious scheme to "steal" Owens River water so as to enrich himself from land sales in a newly verdant San Fernando Valley. "To counter the idea that the water was stolen," she

said at a Friends of the Library-sponsored luncheon, "I needed to know how the story had gotten such strong legs." She searched for answers among the archives of local libraries, and as she rummaged among UCLA's Special Collections chanced upon a boxful of files that had once belonged to Hobart Johnstone Whitley, the entire lot discovered serendipitously in a soon-to-be-destroyed barn. From those papers Mulholland extracted a treasure trove of information, for Whitley, a land developer, and four other prominent men of the day—Harrison Gray Otis, owner and editor of the Los Angeles Times; Harry Chandler, the Times business manager and Otis' son-in-law; Moses H. Sherman, Los Angeles water board member and owner of transportation systems; and Otto F. Brant, head of a Title Insurance company—had formed a syndicate with the professed aim of bringing water to the San Fernando Valley to facilitate its development. In Whitley's files, Mulholland found the minutes of the syndicate's meetings, and many of them, she said, bore irrefutable evidence that "the Scotsman," the syndicate's sobriquet for the very Irish William Mulholland, often was unaware of the elite consortium's major decisions and commonly learned of them after the fact. "Rather than being in cahoots, the syndicate members and my grandfather were really quite leery of each other." Here, she exulted, was "my personal vindication...evidence that my granddad had nothing to do



Catherine Mulholland

with the so-called San Fernando Valley land grab conspiracy."

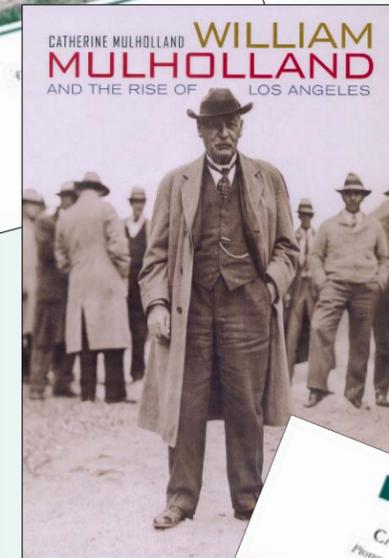
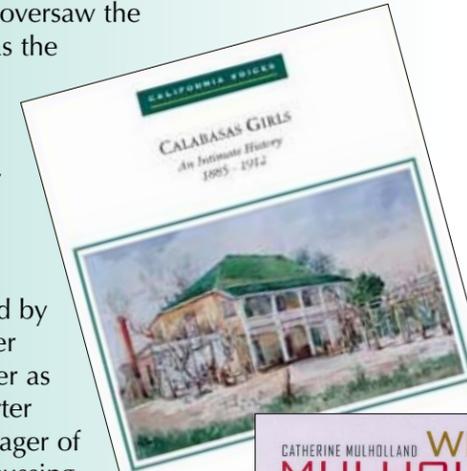
Mulholland's initial effort to clear her grandfather's name was a 1987 book entitled *The Owensmouth Baby: The making of a San Fernando Valley Town*. In it she offered evidence that her grandfather's purchase of a large swath of land in the northwest corner of the San Fernando Valley was not for speculation but "...with a landless Irish immigrant's dream of permanency" and the hope that his children would establish homes where he, the family patriarch, "would end his days, blest amidst his groves and heirs." According to Mulholland, early landowners, including her grandfather, wanted to "...establish country estates patterned after those of 17th or 18th Century England for their children. In western America, that just didn't happen."

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Though certainly no traditional English-style estate, the Mulholland spread of the early-20th Century was impressive: 640 acres of citrus and walnuts extending from the northern border of Owensmouth, a town later dubbed Canoga Park, to Devonshire. Perry Mulholland, William Mulholland's eldest son and Catherine Mulholland's father, oversaw the ranch, known then as the Mulholland Orchard Company. Just north of the Mulholland property was another large holding, the Porter Estate, now Porter Ranch, jointly owned by the Sesnon and Porter brothers. "I remember as a kid listening to Porter Sesnon and the manager of the Porter Estate discussing lot splits," said Mulholland. "They were trying to decide what a minimum split should be: five acres or twenty?"

A child of the Valley, Mulholland was quite familiar with Northridge. Called Zelzah until the 1950's, the tiny burg of her youth was "just a wide spot in the road," she said, boasting "a bank, a pharmacy, a bar, and a beautiful, 1920's modern schoolhouse," that Mulholland attended as a child. The bar, a favorite watering hole for the locals, she recalled, "was purported to house a bevy of girls in its backroom that the ranchhands occasionally visited," though she admitted to no definitive knowledge of such liaisons. A teenager at the time, she found herself more drawn to "Kent's Pharmacy, a place where folks could enjoy an ice cream soda while having a prescription filled."

For all its rusticity and lack of frills, the Valley of the 1920's and '30's boasted a few things the teenaged Mulholland could appreciate, among them abundant bridle paths and a touch of Hollywood. "My brother and I rode our horses everywhere," she said. "Most of the roads were dirt, so they made great bridle trails." A highlight of her teen years, she acknowledged, was passing Gary Cooper out riding his horse. "He tipped his hat to me and said 'Good day for riding.'" She also recalls encountering other Hollywood royalty, Robert Taylor and Barbara Stanwyck "enjoying a soda together on a hot summer's afternoon at the pharmacy's soda foun-



tain." Stanwyck and her sister, married to one of the Marx brothers, owned Marwyck Stables at the corner of Devonshire and Reseda where they bred racehorses, and both resided nearby in large homes, as did comic actor Jack Oakie. At fifteen, Mulholland was again touched by screen royalty at a local horse show "...right on Reseda Boulevard, right across from Kent's Pharmacy, where my family had a box next to Clark Gable and Carole Lombard's. I hardly looked at a horse," she asserted, "but I could see that Lombard had acne.... That's the kind of stargazing 15-year-olds do." Even the studios had a presence in the Valley of her youth, said Mulholland: a bit north of Devonshire "was a Chinese village, complete with little pigs running around, ducks, geese and a manmade lake," that she never tired of visiting, all of it an MGM movie set for the filming of Pearl Buck's *Good Earth*.

In 1940 Mulholland left the Valley for the Bay Area where she remained for 35 years. In the volatile 1960's and '70's, long after her student years at UC-Berkeley, she served as an ombudsman for Berkeley public schools focusing on "...the integration of black and white families. It is as important for parents to integrate as it is for children," she said. "You can't lay the burden of such social change on just the children." It was during her stint in Berkeley that Mulholland took up a new avocation—playwright—and completed a prize-winning play for the Lincoln sesquicentennial. Though never produced, the play led to a three-year

artist-in-residence gig at the Mark Taper Forum and a return to southern California.

While attempting to restructure her play's plot around land development, a Forum request, she came to the realization that many historical accounts of the Los Angeles aqueduct's creation didn't jibe with her own recollections. Some earlier authors had accused her grandfather of "water thievery," and that, said Mulholland, "...went against the grain...so that and *Chinatown* set me to work checking the facts."

Her research culminated in a 2000 biography of her grandfather—*William Mulholland and the rise of Los Angeles*—that drew extensively on newly uncovered

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Dr. Bonita Campbell Creates Endowment for Women in Engineering & Science

She was a woman in a man's world, the first female tenure-track professor of a CSUN engineering department. Her third-floor office abutted a large, oft-visited men's room, but to meet her own needs she had to descend to another floor or, if use was heavy, hike to another building, in either case to decidedly less commodious facilities than those her male colleagues enjoyed. The inequity galled her. So, aided by a sympathetic male colleague she counted the restroom stalls throughout the building. Then, data in hand, she made her case: "If the engineering departments are truly serious about encouraging and retaining women students," she said, "this has got to change." And it did, albeit slowly. "There is now a women's restroom on the third floor," she said, "but the men have two!"



Dr. Bonita J. Campbell

Before the 1970's a woman engineer was a rarity, a female engineering professor virtually unheard of. "When Bonnie began her undergraduate studies," said Sue Curzon, Library Dean, at a retirement soirée honoring Dr. Bonita Campbell, "most engineering schools excluded women professors and some even refused to allow women students to major in engineering." That so, it is not surprising that when hired in 1976, Campbell found the number of women majoring in engineering to be a pitiful few. "The sciences and math weren't doing so hot either," said Campbell. "Women just weren't supposed to do those things." To entice women to these technical fields and to help the smattering of women already among their ranks succeed, the indefatigable Campbell created Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), a supportive organization that proved a draw not only for women students but for the equally lonely female professorate of the male-dominated sciences. "Together," said Campbell, "we raised a little hell and slowly we made change."

Though now retired, Campbell's career-long dedication to mentoring young women in engineering and the sciences shows no signs of diminishing. To ensure that women in the traditionally female-deficient technical fields continue to receive support and encouragement, she has created a \$300,000 endowment—*The Bonita J. Campbell Endowment for Women in Science and Engineering*—the fourth such fund she has established at this University. The new fund will pay for a special study room in the Oviatt Library, a book collection and a special archive, all devoted to the roles and contributions of women in the sciences and engineering. As the endowment grows it will also pay for a speaker series and a scholar-in-residence program that will address the unique roles and needs of women in technical fields.

The WISE study room's official dedication on March 16

was celebrated with a gala reception honoring Campbell. Among her numerous friends, colleagues, and former students in attendance were three women engineers who will serve as the Endowment's Founding Advisory Board:

Lilly Shraibati, of the Southern California Metropolitan Water District; Sharon Cascadden, retired from Hughes Space and Communications Company; and Jackie Wollner, of Moog, Inc., a manufacturer of precision control systems. The group is already at work planning future events, said Curzon, most importantly an inaugural speaker for the fall semester. On the study room's walls reception goers found documents and photos depicting the WISE group's history, all of it intended, said Campbell, to constantly remind the room's users "...that women are in science and engineering, and have been for a long time." On a unique plaque prominently displayed on the room's door is space for the names of future contributors to the WISE Endowment, said Cindy Ventuleth, Library Development Officer.

Before coming to Northridge, Campbell for a decade was a trailblazer among women engineers in private industry. According to Dr. Wanda Austin, now CEO and President of the Aerospace Corporation, "When I was hired...Bonnie was already there. She was an icon...and just about a goddess among other women...She had an innate sense for identifying and nurturing talented women with potential." Because of Campbell's pioneering leadership, said Austin, "...there are now 467 women engineers at Aerospace, 25 women at general manager level, two as corporate officers and four on the board... quite a bit of progress in the 30 years since we started!"

At CSUN, Campbell proved to be an extraordinarily gifted professor, a dynamic administrator, and a bold visionary. She was the driving force in creating a new department—Manufacturing Systems, Engineering and Management—the first of its kind in California, and served as its chair for many years. In addition, she initiated five new degree programs and spearheaded efforts to gain their accreditation; participated in faculty governance for many years; served for five years as the University's Associate VP for Academic Planning; and, almost incidentally, along the way garnered an impressive array of University, regional and national awards. Yet in spite of her jam-packed schedule, her laser-like focus on nurturing young women in engineering and related fields never wavered. It was her enduring passion.

At her retirement gathering, several engineering alumnae spoke to the influence Campbell had had on their lives and careers. Said 1979 alumna Terri Jester, now an engineer at Hudson Clean Energy Partners: "You

Remembering Dr. Milton Feinberg, 1917-2009

This issue of the Friends newsletter is dedicated to a very dear Friend of the Library, Dr. Milton Feinberg who passed away on the last day of 2009. Dr. Feinberg was a member of the Board of the Friends, a supporter, a donor and most importantly, a friend.

How did I come to know Milt? One day I received a call from a Dr. Milton Feinberg who asked to speak with the Dean of the Library. When I came on line, Milt told me that he wanted to set up an endowment in memory of his late wife, Marge. He went on to explain that Marge had graduated with her master's degree in environmental planning at CSUN—a university that she loved. Her thesis was entitled the *Rim of the Valley Park: Proposals for a Green Belt around the San Fernando Valley*. Our chat established a friendship that I would come to deeply appreciate.

Milt did set up an endowment, the *Marjorie and Milton Feinberg Endowment*, for the purpose of adding resources to the Oviatt Library's collection related to the natural history and environment of the San Fernando Valley. Milt, knowing that the Library had a growing collection on the San Fernando Valley, also donated all of Marge's important research on the trail so that future researchers may use her collection. Later on, Milt dedicated a study room in the Library, the "Marge Feinberg Rim of the Valley Trail Study Room." It is a room enjoyed by faculty and students alike.

In 2003, I was privileged to attend the dedication of the Marge Feinberg Rim of the Valley Trail—an important development for all those who love the mountains that

rim the San Fernando Valley. Her thesis and her tireless advocacy had led to the trail's establishment.

One time at lunch with Milt and Cindy Ventuleth, the Library's Director of Development, Milt asked if there was anything we particularly needed. A Library, of course, has many needs, but on our mind was that the Library's van, which we use to pick up large collections of gift books, was failing badly and looking disgraceful. He generously gave us the funds to purchase a new van, which is with us today.

When I first met Milt, he was volunteering at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine where he previously had been chief of pathology. He was an inspiration to his colleagues. He had "un-retired," feeling that he would be more useful continuing his life's work. Some of that work had begun in World War II when he was a medical officer and a major. Milt was part of the "greatest generation" who served their country with such distinction.

My husband and I attended Milt's 91st birthday party. Everyone there couldn't help but reflect upon how many friends Milt had. I knew why though: he was a positive spirit, so interested in people and so interesting himself.

In Milt's final days, my husband and I visited him in the hospital at UCLA's Medical Center. It wasn't easy to say goodbye to a friend. He was all that you want in a friend: generous, supportive, positive, sensitive and fun. Friendship from Milt was a gift. It was an honor to know him.

Susan C. Curzon, Dean



The Timeless Magic of Gilbert and Sullivan

Yum-Yum was there. So were Peep-Bo and Pitti-Sing. Even Nanki-Poo made an appearance, disguised, as is his wont as a wandering minstrel. But these citizens of Titipu didn't come alone. A crew of pirates also showed. And all arrived in full voice, heartily belting out arias from the appropriate opéra comique: *The Mikado* or *The Pirates of Penzance*.

As you surely suspect, all were performers—CSUN opera students—who came to entertain at the gala opening of the Oviatt Library's recently acquired David Trutt Gilbert and Sullivan Collection.

Before the musical performances, opening night guests were hosted in the Library's Tseng Family Gallery amidst a dazzling assortment of memorabilia from the new collection. As I roamed among the displays I found an extensive array of books, instrumental and vocal scores, posters, programs and knickknacks that, according to Tony Gardner, Special Collections and Archives librarian and the exhibit's curator, "...illustrate Gilbert and Sullivan's great collaborations in the production of fourteen operas," the forerunners of today's musicals. On view were numerous works related to the Victorian duo's comic masterpieces, including their first collaboration,

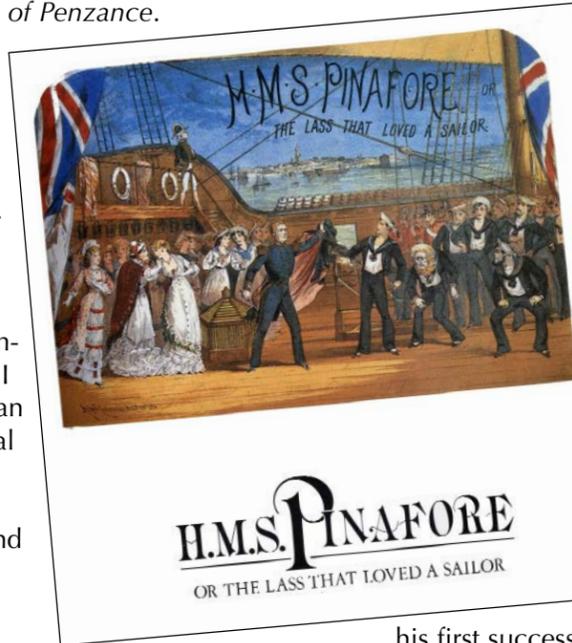
Thespis, a production that opened in 1869 at London's Gaiety Theatre, and their final joint effort,

The Grand Duke, a financial failure that ran at the Savoy Theatre for a mere 123 performances.

But the collection, I discovered, was not restricted to Gilbert and Sullivan's joint works, for I found many of their individual creations also. Of these, perhaps the most significant were four compendia of "Bab" Ballads—drawings and nonsense verses Gilbert published in *Fun* magazine under the pseudonym Bab—that in the Victorian Era were often read aloud at private dinner parties or banquets, and from which the famous duo later derived plots and characters for their operas. Also on view was a copy of *Monomaniac*, representative of the twenty books authored by Gilbert's father William Gilbert, a prolific and gifted writer, and many of Sullivan's solo compositions and music scores, including a copy of

his first successful opera, *Cox and Box*.

An extraordinary array of Richard D'Oyly Carte notabilia was also on view, not surprisingly since D'Oyly Carte both produced the duo's operettas and built the Savoy Theatre, the first in the world wired for electricity, specifically to showcase Gilbert and Sullivan's works. Books penned by famous cast members of G&S comic operas, such as the memoirs of George Grossmith, who appeared in eight productions, and of Rutland



Barrington, who had parts in eleven, also were displayed. And an eye-catching assortment of ceramic figurines and souvenir dishes, all products of a minor memorabilia industry spawned by the highly successful G&S stage productions, filled an entire case, most striking among them a large Tower of London jug by Royal Dalton bearing a likeness of Jack Point of *Yeoman of the Guards*.

My initial reaction to *Fires in Theatres*, a book prominently featured in one display case, was one of incongruence, for the topic seemed out of place in a G&S exhibit. But a reading of an accompanying plate quickly made its *raison d'être* clear; it seems the book's author, Captain Eyre Massey Shaw of London's Fire Brigade and a widely respected innovator of fire-fighting techniques, was the prototype for a character of the same name in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*. Indeed, it is reported that to the amusement of fellow theatergoers on the opera's opening night the protagonist directed one of her ditties to the real Captain Shaw, who was in attendance. A first edition of Alfred Lord Tennyson's *The Princess*, a satire on women's education, initially also struck me as a

discordant component of a G&S collection, until I discovered that its story line was the foundation for the comic opera, *Princess Ida*.

Two stunningly gorgeous costumes were the exhibition's dramatic focus: A late-18th Century frock coat of metallic striped brocade with a lace trim, the attire of the Pirate King in *Pirates of Penzance*; and *Mikado* ingénue Yum-Yum's wedding ensemble patterned after a traditional Japanese matrimonial outfit. Designed and fabricated by Steven M. Dell'Aversano of New York, a nationally recognized couturier for the operatic stage, each is an exact re-creation of a costume previously used at the Summer Savoyards, a venue that since 1961 has performed G&S operettas annually at Binghamton University, New York.

The collection—more than 900 books and many hundreds of posters, programs, advertising cards, ceramics, and other ephemera—is the generous donation of David Trutt, an avid aficionado of all things related to the Victorian duo of opéra bouffe fame. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Trutt, an engineer who acknowledged neither musical experience nor expertise, said he had acquired his collection over two

decades by visiting bookstores, perusing antique catalogs, and most recently poring over the offerings of eBay and other book exchanges. "It all began," he said, "when my wife wanted to attend a *Mikado* performance starring Dudley Moore...I enjoyed it and thought it would be nice to collect a few books about Gilbert and Sullivan...I found seven and thought surely there couldn't be any more." But he was wrong, and over the

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Mulholland cont'd

archives, newspaper articles, and office files, including Whitley's. In contrast to previously published tracts about the aqueduct's construction Mulholland's account offers a granddaughter's intimate perspective on the self-taught engineer's life: his childhood in Ireland and the family's settlement in Los Angeles; his relationships with family and associates; the events leading to the completion of the engineering marvel he oversaw; and the tragedy that ended his career, the 1928 collapse of the St. Francis Dam with a loss of more than 400 lives. As its narrative unfolds, the book also chronicles a history of Los Angeles, its growth made possible by the watercourse her grandfather engineered. Though replete with personal overtones of her family's saga, the book has received wide critical acclaim both for its dispassionate scholarship and for its skillful writing.

Mulholland's story of her grandfather is but one of her contributions to southern California's history. Her first—*Calabasas Girls: An intimate history*—grew from a scrapbook of remembrances that she and other family members had prepared for her mother's 80th birthday. Thirty years after its 1976 publication Mulholland again set pen to paper to compose a sequel based on "...a thick packet of Calabasas clippings" that she had amassed while writing her major opus. "I was astounded that a small stagecoach stop could attract so much attention. But it really was a wild-west town." By 2009 her notes had metamorphosed into *Calabasas Lives*:

Campbell Endowment cont'd

introduced me to the WISE program and through it I got the support I needed to cope....You made a lasting impression on my career and that of many women ... that is truly immeasurable." And among myriad accolades posted on a website established to honor Campbell I found these from grateful former students: "I speak for many women when I say you have ... opened up opportunities that would not have existed otherwise"; "You advised and encouraged me when I struggled with

Gilbert and Sullivan cont'd

years his collection both swelled in number and expanded in scope to become what Gardner called, "...a collection of extraordinary depth and breadth." When downsizing after retirement Trutt sought a repository for his beloved assemblage. "I called Tony to enquire if the Library might be interested....He was so enthusiastic, and it made me feel so good knowing that others could enjoy it....I never thought I'd be so excited to give my collection away, but I'm very happy tonight."

Gus and Erika Manders, the Friends of the Oviatt

Pioneers of a western outpost, a book of "...old fables (and) old stories...that interested me and I hope will interest you... I've enjoyed every minute of my late-life career as a local historian."

Mulholland's connection to Cal State Northridge is an enduring one, for she has donated a large stash of family memorabilia to the Oviatt Library. "I hated to part with it but I wanted it to have a good home. I couldn't think of a better place than CSUN," Mulholland said. Among her contributions are William Mulholland's correspondence during his tenure with the Los Angeles Water Company; Mulholland Orchard papers detailing the ranch's history; more than 4000 books, among them Paul Frisi's 1861 *Treatise on Rivers and Torrents*, a tome her grandfather regularly consulted while building the aqueduct; multiple revisions of her books and copies of her speeches dating back to the 1970's; ephemera such as family scrapbooks, photographs, and music recordings; and a trove of designer gowns from the "Roaring Twenties," all in pristine condition. "The Mulholland family papers and memorabilia are a superb addition to the Library's continually growing collection on the history of the San Fernando Valley," said Sue Curzon, Dean of the Oviatt Library. "Catherine is the heir to a powerful legacy, and hers is an important voice in the interpretation of California's history. We are delighted to have this special partnership with her in preserving a vital historical legacy." —jdole

insecurity and doubt. I thank you for my successful career as an engineer"; and "I have never met anyone who has combined gifts of wisdom and fairness as you have...You have helped and touched me very deeply (and) I cannot thank you enough." Such sentiments make clear the extraordinary and powerful influence Campbell has had on women, an influence that surely will reverberate for generations to come. —jdole

Library, and Stephen Dell'Aversano of D5 Designs, Ltd., New York, sponsored the reception and exhibition. The musical performance was a joint effort by three members of the CSUN vocal arts faculty: Diane Ketchie, who coordinated the program and provided piano accompaniment; Deanna Murray; and David Sannerud. Student vocalists included Babatunde Akinboboye, Nicole Renee Bouffard, Danielle Braus, Travis Elconen, Jackie M. Hayes, Tyler Heckathorn, Robert Norman, Ryan O'Grady, Alexandra Sanfilippo, Britta Sterling, and Emily Works. —jdole

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Congratulations

Anne Kogen!

2009

Oviatt Library Volunteer of the Year

Anne, a long-time member of the Friends of the Library, is currently serving the organization as President.

Congratulations

Dr. Jim Dole!

2010

Oviatt Library Volunteer of the Year

Jim, emeritus professor of Biology, writes and edits the Friends Newsletter and serves on the Friends Board.

