

# Dickinson Library staffers celebrate anniversary

by Barbara E. Minden

"Someone is building a little ranch house on Maryland Parkway," Juanita White remarked to her husband in 1955.

What White mistook for a "ranch house" is the newly remodeled Maude Frazier Hall, part of Nevada Southern University (now known as UNLV). In that first building on campus, the library shared space with everyone.

Today the library houses 600,000 books and is the hub of the campus. Juanita White went on to serve two terms on

the University Nevada System Board of Regents; a building is named after her.

Before the library earned a second home, it spent a short time in Archie C. Grant Hall. Space was cramped, and part of the collection, which totaled 1,800 books, was moved from a closet at Las Vegas High.

Billie M. Polson, head of cataloging, has been employed by the library since those early days. "The space we were given was so small," she recalled, "that the girls

wore poodle skirts and crinolines to work and had to remove the crinolines because they knocked everything off the desk."

The library also had some unwanted patrons when the campus was surrounded by desert. Polson has a vivid memory of one.

"One day I came to work and a rattlesnake was under my desk. The scorpions would come in, too, under

signed to resemble a wheel. The bookstacks would form the spokes and the librarian would sit in the middle.

"This arrangement made sense," she continued, "because manpower was so limited. One librarian could see the whole collection from one vantage point."

As the collection grew, space became a problem. The compact storage bookstacks were moved in and the current maze system was adopted.

"This is the reason the lighting on the bottom floor of the round building is so poor," Polson said. "It was designed to run down the stacks like spokes."

In 1966, the Nevada Southern Library was renamed the James R. Dickinson Library. Dickinson was the first full-time staff member. He was the director of the Nevada Southern University division from 1955 to 1957. He then served as an associate professor of English and chairman of the Division of Humanities and Fine Arts until his death in 1965.

**"One day I came to work and a rattlesnake was under my desk."**

- Billie M. Polson

the doors at night."

In 1963, when the ground floor of the round building was completed, UNLV had a fall semester enrollment of 1,517 students. Muriel M. Parks, deputy registrar at Nevada Southern, said enrollment had "passed all expectations."

According to Polson, the round building was architecturally unique. *The Rebel Yell* called it a "spaceship".

Polson said that originally, "the layout was de-

## Astronomer works on Hubble Telescope

An astronomer in the physics department is part of a team of scientists working on NASA's Hubble Space Telescope.

Donna Weistrop, an associate professor, is participating in research and instrument design activities related to the space telescope, which views the cosmos from Earth's orbit. The Hubble Telescope uses cameras and spectrographs to analyze light from planets, stars, distant galaxies and quasars.

In collaboration with astronomers at the University of Arizona, Weistrop is studying the centers of active galaxies. Pictures of galaxy nuclei, taken with the faint object camera on the Hubble telescope, show detailed structure never previously observed, she said.

"Some of the galaxies have small, bright central cores, while others seem to have sheets of dust that observe our view of the very centers," Weistrop explained. "Observations of the galactic structures could only be obtained from a telescope above the earth's

atmosphere, since the motion of the atmosphere distorts and blurs the light that passes through it."

Analyses of the images and follow-up observations with the faint object spectrograph on board will provide new insights into conditions at the centers of large elliptical galaxies, the professor said.

The investigators also hope the data will contribute to understanding of a particular class of galaxies known as BL Lacertae objects, which are thought to have beams of very energetic particles in their centers.

Weistrop is also part of a team developing the Space Telescope Imaging Spectrograph (STIS). The STIS is one of two instruments that will be installed on the space telescope to enhance its performance. The other instrument is a camera that is sensitive to infrared light. The STIS is capable of replacing the two spectrographs now on the Hubble Telescope and performing their functions more quickly and efficiently.



The James Dickinson Library

Two years later, in 1967, the top two stories of the round building were completed. Only the second floor was used by the library. According to Polson, it was librarian heaven. "Believe me, we were in clover then," she said. "The shelves had plenty of space and the top floor was used for the graduation ceremony."

Through the support of legislators and college administrators, the book buying budget increased each year. More books took up more space and by 1981, the library had sprouted a new wing, complete with "hamster run" access.

The original idea was to build the rectangular building alongside the round building. According to

Polson, a non-attributed rumor circulated that someone called the design a "giant toilet bowl" from an aerial view, but that isn't the reason it was changed.

"It was decided that the long walk around the adjoining buildings would be too long for students. In order to allow a pathway, the tunnel idea was conceived to allow passage through the library," she explained.

Refurbishing the round building has been discussed, but the asbestos insulation complicates things. There is hope for a new building. Mary Dale Deacon, dean of libraries, said one is "at least eight years away."

## Cheerleader flips over weight limit

A University of Connecticut cheerleader isn't doing cartwheels for her school these days.

Instead, she threw the university a loop by filing a sexual discrimination complaint after officials dismissed her from the squad for weighing too much.

The Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities is looking into Michele Budnik's complaint filed in July.

"We feel it is inappropriate to comment on the case right now because it is still pending," said university spokesman Mark Roy.

Budnik, 21, who is 5 foot 6, weighs 130 pounds—five pounds over the squad's limit, which doesn't vary with different heights.

Budnik, unavailable for comment, told the Associated Press earlier that, "It's absolutely ridiculous. You should be judged on your ability and not how much you weigh."

After her initial suspension, Budnik said she starved herself to try to lose the weight, but decided instead to take action.

## Library festivities will be held Sept. 7

The University Library Society (ULS) is sponsoring a birthday celebration for the James R. Dickinson Library.

Celebration activities will begin on Sept. 2 and end with a birthday party on the evening of Sept. 7. Birthday cake will be distributed to patrons leaving the library. Raffle tickets will be sold for daily prizes such as free lunches, a cordless phone and a shopping spree in the ULS bookstore on the bottom floor of the library, round building.

There also will be raffle tickets available for larger prizes such as a silver tea set, a portable color television and a \$500 travel voucher. The drawing for these prizes will be held at the birthday party on the evening of Sept. 7 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the library. Prize winners do not have to be present. Cost for the birthday party is \$30 per person, which includes a buffet and wine. Music will be provided by the music department's faculty and students. For more information, call 739-3286.

## Extended Education gets new coordinator

Ramona Finocchiaro has joined the Extended Education staff as coordinator of senior programs.

Finocchiaro's duties include counseling senior citizens who are registering for credit programs, serving as coordinator of Extended Education's Center for Lifelong Learning, and coordinating the university's participation in the national Elderhostel program.

Finocchiaro earned her master's degree in counseling and educational psychology from UNLV in 1986.

## Attention Gays and Lesbians

Come join the fun in UNLV's Lesbian and Gay Academic Union. LGAU is a social group offering anonymity, support, and friendship to both students and persons in the community. Meetings and workshops are scheduled on the first and third Mondays of each month at 6 pm.

For more information call 594-GAYS.

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