

Jay Carpenter Fund preserves Nevada's heritage

By John Trent

Ann Burgess has always had a soft spot in her heart for old mining maps. For Burgess, a 1969 University of Nevada graduate, mining maps represent not only a key piece of Nevada's heritage, they are emblematic of her own family's history.

Her mother, Elizabeth Carpenter Riker, attended school in 13 different one-room schools throughout the various mining districts of Nevada and California.

"All because of her father," Burgess says of her own grandfather, Jay A. Carpenter, director of the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology and director of the Mackay School of Mines from 1939 until his retirement in 1951. "He would move from mining camp to mining camp, and his family would go with him."

To honor her late grandfather, as well as her mother, a 1934 pre-medicine graduate of Nevada who passed away in March 2002 at age 90, Burgess established the Jay A. Carpenter Fund. The fund consists of two parts, an expendable fund and an endowment. The expendable fund has been used to purchase a state-of-the-art scanner that has quickly become a vital aid in helping the Bureau of Mines and Geology digitize one-of-a-kind, large-format (up to 52 inches) historic and geologic maps.

Interestingly, Burgess' late husband, James, who graduated from Nevada in 1968 with a degree in business, was also from a mining background. His grandfather, Joseph Burgess, was a mine owner. Joseph Burgess and Jay Carpenter were acquaintances, although they never knew their grandchildren would one day marry.

Jon Price, director of the Bureau, said that over the years, his department has accumulated files of maps from the more than 500 mining districts of Nevada. Before creation of the Carpenter Fund, the cost was too prohibitive to digitize the data.

"It would've cost us a couple hundred thousand dollars," Price says. "Now, thanks to Ann Burgess, we're scanning all of our maps and making all that information available to the public, over the Web. Many of these maps are of critical importance to exploration geologists who are looking for the next big gold strike. It's really given us a great jump-start in getting this enormous task done efficiently and inexpensively."

Burgess said her grandfather, known as a "working dean" by his colleagues because of his encyclopedic knowledge of all the mining districts in Nevada, would be pleased.

"My grandfather was a very moral person, very much a family man," she says. "He was not a flashy person. He was a good citizen; a good spoke in the wheel. He loved traveling about Nevada, checking out the mines and the people who worked in them."

In a recent ceremony to honor Burgess for her generosity, Price and others presented her with a number of replicated mining maps.

"The scanner is fabulous ... one of the maps they gave my family was of the Manhattan Mining District," Burgess says. "My mother would've known that map well ... because she lived there as a child."

Thanks to the memories of both Jay Carpenter and Elizabeth Carpenter Riker, the state's rich mining heritage is one step closer to being preserved forever.

Individuals interested in donating to the Jay A. Carpenter Fund are encouraged to discuss their donation with Jon Price, director and state geologist, Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, Mail Stop 178, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, NV 89557-0088.

Photo courtesy of Ann Burgess



Jay Carpenter, director of the Mackay School of Mines from 1939-1951, stands beside gold bullion from the West End Mill in Tonopah.