Greetings to all of our supporters,

As we say goodbye to what was a successful and exciting year and welcome the new year, I want to thank you all for everything you do.

If you haven’t visited our Museum in the last few months, I strongly encourage you to do so. The Federal inmates in the Creative Arts Program painted a wonderful mural you should all come check out. The entire project was an amazing partnership between all concerned.

Come to the Gift Shop and browse. We have a new book by Susan Jones and we’ll have her here January 11th to personally sign your copy. And lovely jewelry items made by our very own Taylor Ford! The Gift Shop also has some yummy bread, cookies, or brownies made by state inmates in the culinary program.

I am looking forward to the coming year!

Maureen Sheridan,
Chair

“"If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree."
The Alferd Packer Banquet
Held Sept. 30 at the Gibson Mansion

Our host Brendan Pardue in his Civil War coat

Happy Guests included:
Commissioner Debbie Bell and her husband Charlie Bell.

Sandy Dexter with Rusty & Kelly Black

The Serendipity Players entertained all evening

SPECIAL THANKS TO
DIRITO’S RESTAURANT AND
THE ABBEY EVENT CENTER,
MALACHA HALL & THE SERENDIPITY PLAYERS

Malacha Hall & the old-time songs of the 1900s

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO
SKYLINE LIQUORS
AND
GATEWAY LIQUOR
For the Donation of Beer & Wine

“Alferd P.” schmoozing with the guests
Ben & Phyllis Johnson hosted a table of happy guests.

And a VERY Sincere Thank You to all the guests who made the evening such a great success!

“And the winner is......
Donna Murphy!!!”
-by Sandy Dexter

The Packer dinner offered several very nice Raffle items. One of the most interesting items was a meal for six people—prepared and cooked by Museum Board member Elaine Greenlee.

Having had the opportunity to sample Elaine’s cooking in the past, Donna knew what a treat it would be. For anyone who is not aware, Elaine is a gourmet cook. It was also great to have Donna win this gift. Donna has donated so much of her own time and effort into making this event the success it is.

Donna chose three couples to accompany her: Cathe and Mike Meyrick, Roxanne Bradshaw and her husband David Reinke, and Sandy and Don Dexter.

Elaine’s home is beautifully appointed. We dined at an elegant table set with fine china and crystal glassware. Our hostess out did herself serving steak grilled to each guest’s request, even doing salmon for one guest who is vegetarian. Wine and cheese preceded our meal and a luscious homemade apple pie finished it off in style. Elaine’s daughter Julie helped her mother serve.

We had the most delightful evening. The food was excellent and the conversation sparkling.

Thank you, Elaine, for the wonderful donation of your time, your home, and your cooking skills. You can bet if you offer the chance again next year, we know which bag to put our raffle tickets in.

First Woman Chaplain

Pastor Sheilah Rollins was hired by the Department of Corrections to be a prison chaplain in 1986. Her first assignment was in Cell House 3 ministering to a group of men no one wanted to visit. Volunteers from churches and other chaplains were quite fearful of dealing with these particular men. They were HIV positive.

Sheilah Rollins was a housewife in Ohio with three sons and a daughter when her husband received an inheritance that changed their lives. He told her he’d always dreamed of living in the West and raising his boys to be cowboys. It wasn’t long before they were living in Canon City, Colorado. It was 1970.

After a brief stint as business owners at the Daylight Donuts shop, her husband became a deputy sheriff and Sheilah went to college. She graduated from University of Southern Colorado in Pueblo with a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology and went to work for what was then West Central Mental Health, now Sol Vista. She also found time to volunteer at the Women’s Prison giving classes in Parenting. She said it was here the Lord spoke to her saying, “I want you to be a
The next few years found Sheila attending seminars in Denver and Colorado Spring. She was ordained at the United Methodist Church in Canon City in 1985. Now she was ready to be a prison chaplain.

In Cell House 3 she had a table in the cellblock where she could conduct Bible Studies, with televisions blaring, men having conversations in small groups in other parts of the room, lots of noise and distractions, locked in with 15 or more inmates. She had no keys to let herself out, no phones. However, she recalls, “There were guards close by who could have heard me scream if I needed them.”

Eventually she was given a small room up on the 4th floor, the recently vacated home of Death Row. It was the room that held the gas chamber, next to the area for the press and any witnesses of an execution. It was large enough for 15 or 20 people. She called it her “office.” When asked what the reaction was from the prisoners she said, “When they found I was sincere about what I was there for, they loved me”.

Pastor Sheilah, as she has become known, had a heart filled with concern for the inmates and their families. She often would wonder where this concern came from; why did she feel such a strong compassion for this particular group of people and their situation. In 1990, on a trip back to Ohio to visit her father, she discovered something she had not known before. In 1926 one uncle had been executed in Ohio for the murder of a deputy sheriff and his brother spent ten years in prison as an accessory. At last, she understood the connection and the reason for her prison ministry.

In 1995 the State of Colorado eliminated pay for prison chaplains. Sheila Rollins had a job offer from the pastor of a large church in Denver. With complete support from her family, she accepted the position. Her husband quit his job and they moved to Denver where he went into the antiques business. Sheilah spent three years developing the prison ministry in that church, including renovating an old Greyhound bus so families could travel from Denver to Canon City to visit their loved ones in prison, and she conducted a Family Support Group for families of prisoners.

After three years in Denver, Sheilah and her husband returned to Canon City where she started “Mercy Today” Ministries and began giving Bible Studies at CSP and Territorial as a volunteer chaplain.

Twenty years later, after helping innumerable prisoners, ex-prisoners, and so many families of prisoners, Pastor Sheilah is retiring from “Mercy Today.” That’s not to say she won’t be busy. Sheilah has plans to write a book detailing her experiences as a chaplain in the Colorado Prison System. She believes the book may be a tool for helping people to recognize how their lives can be changed.
The year was 1971. The radio station was sending out country music—inside the walls of the Colorado State Prison—but it was not broadcasting over the air. The station consisted of three sets of wires going to each cell. If an inmate didn’t care for country music, he had a choice of rock and roll or CSP news.

The DJ was one of several inmates trained to run the equipment and speak into the microphone clearly and distinctly. Out of more than 150 men who applied for the project, only 11 were initially selected.

The radio station was the brainchild of Joe Finan, station manager at KTLK in Denver. “They don’t know anything about broadcasting,” said Finan, “but they want in the program anyway; they are looking for anything that will help them when they get out.” Finan brought a crew of announcers, electronic equipment, records, trade magazines, and knowledge. He

“Taylor-Made Jewelry”
designed by our own Taylor Ford is now available at the Museum. Remember, the Gift Shop is open without charge during regular Museum hours. Come, shop, and enjoy Taylor’s charming hand-crafted creations.
and his wife Sally would come to Canon City at least once a week to oversee the operation.

Mrs. Sally Finan, with a Master’s Degree in Speech Therapy, gave voice-training classes for those who were selected for the station. “Some of the men could hardly talk when they got here,” said station manager and 14-year inmate Robert Fowler. “In fact one man—you couldn’t understand a word he was saying—now he’s on the radio and he’s shown a 100 percent improvement.”

Warden Fred Wyse said the station is not monitored “unless we get adverse reports.” One prisoner from the group of announcers says, “They ought to know we’re not going to blow it and tell lies and make trouble for the joint (prison).” Finan admits, “If one disk jockey convict says the wrong thing it could possibly throw the whole place into an uproar.”

There actually was a lawsuit filed in 1972 by a prisoner alleging Warden Wyse refused to allow a prisoner’s announcement regarding a prisoner’s access to court review of sentences by the State Clemency Advisory Board. Wyse refused to allow the station to air the tape. The suing prisoner also asked for $25,000 in damages and $100 a day in exemplary damages on a continuing basis until the warden allowed his tape to be aired. (Apparently the suit went nowhere because no further information can be found regarding a settlement.-Ed.)

The station continued to be a feature at CSP until 1979. Warden Bill Wilson had it shut down and the wiring was removed.

The above information is excerpted from the Greeley Daily Tribune, November 19, 1971

By Bill Greer: The Editor also solicited comments from Ben Johnson and Herb Cohagan, who both worked in the prison at the time. If anyone has further information about the radio station, please contact the Museum.

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Susan’s book are available at the Gift Shop in the Museum of Colorado Prisons, 201 N. 1st St., Canon City, CO.

SPECIAL EVENT

Book Signing
January 11, 2018
3:00 p.m. at The Museum
December 11, 2017

WATCH THIS SPACE FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

December 15, 2017

THIS is the “Future Development” !!!

Muralist Matt Taylor, Stacey Cline, Re-entry Affairs Coordinator Jessica Salo, Justin Reddick and Psychologist Paul Zohn with the FBOP Creative Arts Program