

The Ellensburg Poet Laureate Program Presents
WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

*Poetry
Extravaganza*

Featuring WA State
Poet Laureate
Rena Priest



A Crown of Sonnets will celebrate eight historical women from the Kittitas Valley:

Ida Nason Aronica by Katherine Camarata
Donna Nylander by Sarita Dasgupta
Ethel Craven by Nan Doolittle
Rachel Page by Cory Eberhart
Irene Rinehart by Marie Marchand
Sarah Spurgeon by Katharine Whitcomb
Clareta and Leta May Olmstead Smith
by Maya Jewell Zeller

**Additional readers include Xavier Cavazos
Jampa Dorje and Joanna Thomas**

Friday, March 3, 2023
7 p.m. ■ Gallery One ■ Ellensburg, WA



INLAND POETRY





RODNEY HARWOOD/DAILY RECORD

Ellensburg Poet Laureate Marie Marchand will be one of seven local poets participating in the Crown of Sonnets entitled "She Lives On" presentation honoring eight Kittitas Valley women March 3 at Gallery One Visual Art Center.

Connecting past and present

A night of poetry planned to honor eight Kittitas Valley women as part of Women's History Month

RODNEY HARWOOD
staff writer

Since 1987, March has been Women's History Month — a celebration of women's contributions to history, culture and society.

The Ellensburg Arts Commission and the Ellensburg Poet Laureate Program on March 3 will host a night of poetry and special recognition to honor eight women from the Kittitas Valley.

The Crown of Sonnets titled "She Lives On" will be performed by seven local and regional poets and also include a special reading by Washington

State Poet Laureate Rena Priest.

"It's about connection. Each poet chose to write about historical women in the valley that really spoke to us and inspired us," Ellensburg Poet Laureate Marie Marchand said. "We each researched a woman from the list to understand their contribution. For example, I did a lot of research into Irene Rinehart. In addition to writing the sonnet, I reached out to her descendants and spoke to her daughter and grandson. Others did the same, and some of them will be at the event."

A sonnet is a poem of 14 lines using any of a number of rhyme schemes, having 10 syllables per line, Marchand said. The poets have written seven sonnets that make up what's called a Crown of Sonnets, which is a sequence of interlinked poems where the first line of each sonnet is the last

line of the preceding sonnet.

"'She Lives On,' is a celebration of Kittitas Valley women's history. The poets that are participating are women, as well," Marchand said. "It's about connecting the present to the past. The Crown of Sonnets itself is a form that connects one to another."

THE CROWN OF SONNETS INCLUDES:

Ida Nason Aronica by Katherine Camarata
Donna Nylander by Sarita Dasgupta
Ethel Craven by Nan

IF YOU GO

What: Poetry Extravaganza

When: March 3

Time: 7 p.m.

Where: Gallery One Visual Arts Center

Address: 408 N. Pearl Street

Historical women of the

Kittitas Valley: Ida Nason

Aronica, Donna Nylander, Ethel Craven, Rachel Page, Irene Rinehart, Sarah Spurgeon, and Clareta and Leta May Olmstead Smith.

Website: <https://www.gallery-one.org/events/poetry-extravaganza/>

Doolittle

Rachel Page by Cory Eberhart

Irene Rinehart by Marie Marchand

Sarah Spurgeon by Katharine Whitcomb

Leta May and Clareta Olmstead Smith by Maya Jewell Zeller

In addition, original work by poets Katherine Camarata, Xavier Cavazos, Sarita Dasgupta, Jampa Dorje, Nan Doolittle, Cory Eberhart, Marie Marchand, Joanna Thomas, Maya Jewell Zeller, and Katharine Whitcomb will be read.

DAILY RECORD

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2023 |

Published in the Heart of Washington / DailyRecordNews.com



SPORTS

Wildcats women's basketball headed to regionals

PAGE B2



LOCAL

Ellensburg High School musicians receive

PAGE A3

Honoring women

Crown of Sonnets poetry reading held at arts center



Local poet Nan Doolittle, left, and Ethel Craven-Sweet are all smiles after Friday evening's Crown of Sonnets reading titled "She Lives On" at Gallery One Visual Arts Center.



Katherine Camarata reads her sonnet on Ida Nason Aronica to begin the night as seven local poets paid tribute to eight women from the Kittitas Valley.

RODNEY HARWOOD
staff writer

Ethel Craven-Sweet bowed her head in silent reverence, sitting in the front row, as local poet Nan Doolittle recited her sonnet in tribute to her mother Ethel Craven. It was part of Friday evening's Crown of Sonnets program titled "She Lives On" at Gallery One Visual Arts Center.

When Doolittle finished, Craven-Sweet raised her hand, index finger extended, as if to acknowledge something her mother told each of her 13 children when they were growing up: "We are somebody."

The night, coming as an extension of the First Friday Art Walk at the downtown gallery, was an evening of poetry and a community gathering, paying tribute to eight women from the Kittitas Valley as part of Women's History Month.

"It was absolutely wonderful," said

Craven-Sweet, who grew up in Roslyn and went on to become the second African-American woman worker hired at Boeing. "It just makes my heart feel so good that they would honor my mother this way."

"All 13 children were born and raised in Roslyn. (My mother) made sure that we all went to high school and some of us to college, which was very important. So, tonight's poetry reading about her is perfect and a great show of respect."

Seven local and regional poets delivered their thoughts and reflections on the historical women of the Kittitas Valley: Ida Nason Aronica, Donna Nylander, Ethel Craven, Rachel Page, Irene Rinehart, Sarah Spurgeon, and Claretta and Leta May Olmstead-Smith.

"I thought it was a fantastic community celebration of poetry and women and women's contributions. I also thought it was a beautiful coming together of community," Ellensburg Poet Laureate Marie Marchand said. "There was a lot of hope and positivity, and that's the beauty of what poetry can bring."

More POETRY | A6

Poetry/ from A1

“‘She Lives On,’ was a celebration of Kittitas Valley women’s history. It’s about connecting the present to the past. The Crown of Sonnets itself is a form that connects one to another.”

In keeping with the March theme of Women’s History Month, the poets themselves were women. Seven poets stood in descending order from the top of the stairs to the bottom rung, passing the microphone upward as each sonnet tied to the next.

Katherine Camarata (Ida Nason Aronica), Sarita Dasgupta (Donna Nylander), Nan Doolittle (Ethel Craven), Rachel Page (Cory Eberhart), Marie Marchand (Irene Rinehart) Katharine Whitcomb (Sarah Spurgeon) and Maya Jewell Zeller (Leta May and Clareta Olmstead-Smith) shared their spoken word to a capacity audience that filled the main gallery and mezzanine.

“Mom would be pretty embarrassed because she was kind of a quiet person,” Ida Nason Aronica’s son Allen said with a smile. “But she’d be honored, and later on she’d appreciate it. It’s a good thing she’s included and I’m sure she would have liked it.”

The Ellensburg Arts Commission and the Ellensburg Poet Laureate Program played host in special recognition to eight women from the Kittitas Valley. The Crown of Sonnets included

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ida Joseph Nason Aronica was born on June 4, 1888 near Cashmere. She was the great-granddaughter of Yakama Chief Owhi and a member of the Yakama Nation. She raced horses, created beadwork, weaved baskets, gathered food and gave demonstrations of native traditions at schools. The Ida Nason Aronica Elementary School was named after her in 2021 to honor her resounding legacy.

Donna Nylander was a woman of vision and kindness who saw potential in everyone. She encouraged children to participate in the plays she wrote for the Ellensburg Children’s Musical Theater, which she founded in 1976, and for which she was recognized as an Ellensburg Arts Treasure.

Ethel Craven was born in Roslyn in 1906. Ethel and her husband Sam made appearances in town businesses and schools when their children reported discrimination and prejudice (a daughter earned the role of valedictorian but lost the appointment because of racism). According to one of Ethel’s daughters, Ethel often said, “We are somebody.”

Rachel Page (née Hodgson) was born in 1836. She married Heman Page and they moved to Bloody Kansas Territory as slave state or free vote actions sparked violence on the brink of Civil War. Four children were born before Heman was conscripted to fight for the Union, four more children followed his eventual return. Mid-life and starting over, it took five months by wagon to reach the Kittitas Valley, September 1875. The family settled west of Ellensburg on ceded land in the Taneum. Rachel served as midwife since doctors were scarce.

Irene Rose Mann Rinehart was born on

May 27, 1916, in Charlottesville, Va. In 1932, she was part of a small group of women admitted to the University of Virginia. She completed her Ph.D. in English in 1942 and taught at Louisiana State University and the University of Montana where she met Keith Rinehart. They moved to Ellensburg in 1953. Irene worked at the Ellensburg Public Library. Starting in 1967, she served on the City Council for 16 years, leading many efforts including the building of sidewalks, enhanced library services, and parks — including the riverfront park land purchase that was later named after her.

Edna May “Sarah” Spurgeon was born in Harlan, Iowa in 1903. She attended the University of Iowa, where she received her B.A. in Art in 1927, and M.A. in Art in 1931. At the university, all four of her primary instructors were women. In 1939, she moved to Ellensburg to accept a position in the Art Department of Central Washington College of Education (now CWU). Spurgeon retired in 1971 and in 1978 CWU dedicated the Sarah Spurgeon Gallery with an exhibit featuring 55 of her former students, including artists Jane Orleman and Richard C. Elliott.

Clareta and Leta May Olmstead Smith’s ancestor Samuel Olmstead moved to the Kittitas Valley in 1875 and built their family cabin out of cottonwood logs from around the Yakima River Canyon. The women inherited the original Olmstead homestead from their uncles. In 1968, the Olmstead Smith sisters donated the homestead and its 217 acres to the Washington State Park system, including the original log cabin and family farmhouse built in 1906.

special readings by Washington State Poet Laureate Rena Priest.

“I think it was a tremendous way to honor these women,” said local artist Jane Orleman, who was there to represent her friend Sarah Spurgeon. “These

women all added to our community. My art is with a paintbrush, but I thought the (spoken word) was a nice artistic tribute. It captured the spirit of the evening.”

The night also included

original work by poets Katherine Camarata, Xavier Cavazos, Sarita Dasgupta, Jampa Dorje, Nan Doolittle, Cory Eberhart, Marie Marchand, Joanna Thomas, Maya Jewell Zeller and Katharine Whitcomb.

Women's History Month Poetry Extravaganza features WA state poet laureate Local poets create crown of sonnets to celebrate women of the valley

Jordyn Rossmel
Staff Reporter

The chilly evening air spilled into the packed gallery, mixing with the palpable excitement of people chatting over the lively piano while weaving through the crowd to grab a glass of wine or admire some art for the First Friday Art Walk. The energetic crowd gathered around the staircase to admire a different kind of art, one woven of words.

The Ellensburg Arts Commission and the Ellensburg Poet Laureate Marie Marchand hosted the Poetry Extravaganza event in the Gallery One Visual Arts Center to celebrate Women's History Month on March 3.

The event began with a land acknowledgment statement by Marchand and an opening reading by Washington State Poet Laureate Rena Priest from her book *Patriarchy Blues*, including a poem about what nail polish shade matches best with patriarchal oppression.

Priest encouraged young artists, and said: "Any kind of art is the expression of our humanity, and being human is messy and hard and not always pretty, and so what makes it to the canvas or what makes it to the page and then finds its way out into the public is a blessing for whoever you share that with, no matter what. So don't be hard on yourself, and just keep doing it and find joy in it."

Following Priest's opening, seven local and regional poets presented a crown of sonnets titled "She Lives On" in honor of eight historical women of the Kittitas Valley.

A crown of sonnets typically features seven different poets, and each sonnet's last line is the same or similar to the next sonnet's first line, and the last sonnet's last line is the first sonnet's first line, so they all link together. Following the performance of the crown, local poets read some of their original work.

The focus of the event started as a small idea to celebrate women at a brainstorming session four months ago between three local writers: Jampa Dorje, The Observer Lead Editor Katherine Camarata and the first Poet Laureate of Ellensburg, Marchand.

"As we started talking more and brainstorming more, these amazing ideas came up to write poems honoring the women of the past, from the Kittitas Valley," Marchand said.

Although it started off small, Marchand said the idea quickly picked up speed, and another local poet, Joanna Thomas, proposed the idea for a crown of sonnets.

"It is a great metaphor for connection and things being intertwined," Marchand said.

According to Marchand, the whole event was about creating connections; connecting our past and present by having the women of today honor the women of our past, and connecting the downtown community with the university.

Nan Doolittle, director of the local nonprofit Northwest Expressive Arts Response, suggested the readers make physical crowns to present to the descendants of the historical women to whom the sonnets were dedicated.

The seven poets each researched the significant woman they chose to honor with their sonnets, read in this order:

"We are trailblazers too, and maybe we won't realize it for 80 years or 100 years from now, the trail that we are blazing, because we still live in a society that is misogynistic."

- Marie Marchand, Ellensburg Poet Laureate

The Observer Lead Editor Katherine Camarata for Ida Nason Aronica, Sarita Dasgupta for Donna Nylander, Nan Doolittle for Ethel Craven, Cory Eberhart for Rachel Page, Marie Marchand for Irene Rinehart, Katherine Whitcomb for Sarah Spurgeon and Maya Jewell Zeller for the Olmstead sisters, Leta May and Claretta Olmstead Smith. The poets collaborated on writing and tracking down the descendants of their chosen women.

"The seven poets chose the one woman they were wanting to write about because that woman spoke to them and inspired them," Marchand said. "For me, Irene Rinehart really inspires me and the more I learned about her, the more I was inspired. I am an anti-nuclear activist and that was part of what she did on the city council during her sixteen-year run. And then Sarita, another poet, wrote about Donna Nylander, and they both wrote plays for children. So they were connected in that way."

Marchand highlighted the similarities between the modern

women who read poetry at the event and the women of the past who were honored.

"We are trailblazers too, and maybe we won't realize it for 80 years or 100 years from now, the trail that we are blazing, because we still live in a society that is misogynistic," Marchand said. "Women make approximately 86 cents for every dollar that a man makes. So we have a lot of change to still make."

One of the descendants who attended the event, Ethel Craven-Sweet, the daughter of Ethel Craven (to whom Nan Doolittle dedicated her sonnet), came all the way from Auburn on a bus to attend the event.

"It's wonderful and refreshing that they are honoring poetry now, and I love poetry," Craven-Sweet said. "My mother had 13 children. She had nine straight girls, and I am the ninth and last girl, so she named me after her."

According to Craven-Sweet, her mother would have loved the event.

"Oh mama is smiling, mama is smiling," Craven-Sweet said. "She didn't get to finish high school or anything, but she made sure we got some school and she said how important it was, and I encouraged all my sons to do

the same thing. My mother was a very tough woman. Very tough. She taught us to work hard because she didn't want to see us going astray."

CWU senior and English major Anna Baldwin was moved to tears by some of the poetry.

"I cried a lot," Baldwin said. "I really loved it. It made me feel really good about being a woman. I wish we had more. I feel like in my life, as a woman, I have not felt appreciated enough for just being a female and I have a large inferiority complex really related to that. And so, being uplifted as a woman is really, really important."



Local women read a crown of sonnets featuring historical women of the valley. Photo by Jordyn Rossmel

She Lives On Crown of Sonnets

For Ida Nason Aronica
by Katherine Camarata

How fortunate the snow-turning-rain. Do you miss it, and what you planted?
To Pshwanapum from Wenatchee, five nights, singing fire
Descended of doctor Tek'nupt, who cared for the empty-handed
Picking huckleberries, grandma and mother's child

Logs falling after dishes with Lucy by moonlight
Royal riders racing 'round bright arena nights
The keepers of the thrones, daughters her own
A home in Hal Holmes, Hall of Fame Rodeo

Xapan weaved from cedar root, burning wood by stove
Her name before the children's school, etched into the land
1888 lives on in hearts of those she knows
No sound needed to hear stories, no sound to understand

Throughout her life, she said everything change (everything change)
Yet her legacy burns on and remains the same

For Donna Nylander
by Sarita Dasgupta

Her legacy burns on, beyond measure
This city named Donna an Arts Treasure
Ardent and evolved in her views
Her interests were diverse, of myriad hues
Heritage, learning, the arts, our environment
Are causes for which her voice she raised and lent
Children she perceived as hidden gems
That sparkled when the spotlight shone on them
A vibrant force in the community
Her footprints still remain around this city
The theater, schoolhouse, council, pool, and park
Still echo with her voice and bear her mark
A radiant being like Donna never dies
She lives on in her deeds and in her ties

For Ethel Craven
by Nan Doolittle

I live on, cloaked in storied deeds that tie
Long time after the Curse of 400 arrived
Loaded in cattle cars led by a lie
Ash cakes just a bit out of slavery
My roots wide in explosive charred love
Curtained in pear leaves on limbs high above
Carrying secrets back home to Momma
Whipped by a black snake in a Roslyn school
Raised twelve children with futures to retool
Teacher, boxer, valedictorian

One who marched with Dr. King
One who was the first Black mayor in our state
Me? A pioneer Queen who stopped at 8th grade
Truth be forever told, we are - Somebody.

For Rachel Page
by Cory Eberhart

Truth be forever told we're somebody.
Let's talk of Rachel Page and Mrs. Splawn.
Were they colossuses of history
Or quiet like the doe that leaves the fawn
Hidden in dappled shade of trees or grass?
Here's a good story, if you haven't heard,
That faded from the record of our past.
In the west end it was midwives who served.
When summoned to come as lying-in neared
Rachel took the saddle horse, gone a week
A stretch, to be there when baby appeared.
Same with Mrs. Splawn. They were not unique.
Both well respected, for Rachel, the twist--
Most people don't even know who she is.

For Irene Rinehart
by Marie Marchand

People didn't even know who she was
entering college, 1932
a woman, experiment, spectacle
yet invisible, too, in a man's world.

Now, Irene, every sweet gum lauds you.
The gale through larch and linden commends you.
How you merged human and wild spaces
to bravely protect people and the earth.
The world knew what you stood for and against.
Your anti-nuclear voice saved our souls.

One mile of forested riverbank
grew into our leafy backyard, our home.
Your gift still blossoms. This green canopy,
this blue haven of earth quenches us all.

For Sarah Spurgeon
by Katharine Whitccinb

This blue haven of earth quenches us all,
even in winter's heart the land surrounds
the town like a friend. Sarah Spurgeon calls
a painting *Lumber Yard in Snow*, ground

white in Iowa, snow rake abandoned
on barn roof, like those here out west.
She modeled for Grant Wood in an apron,

sole woman, men in jeans, the best

among assistants, absorbing techniques
while at work on WPA murals. Come 1939
she moved to CWU, to teach mechanics
& processes of painting. So loved in time

by generations of students, artists, & by
Amanda (leave the two there, '55, in Italy).

For Clareta "Birdie" and
Leta May Olmstead Smith
by Maya Jewell Zeller

A man, duh, no, two women, long hair, '68, Kittitas,
Leta May with peonies behind you and your paisley dress

and Clareta with a collar and the same fir and lilies
at your feet. From our cars, the earth sages from scabs to yellow

willow, signs say Land for Sale, Trout for Sale, Free Guided
Tours. Colonial, sunrise, carcass, a bed of old bones sleep jagged

and sideways in snow. We see how you desired things to stay the same —
don't we all want things to stay the same?; we confuse your name

with other people with your name. You said leave it, be frugal, be winter,
buy nothing new. Our eyes flip back to 1875, you walk the perimeter,

thinking of your book, *The End of the Trail*, your hems dark with mud,
The Trail Leads West, did you feel it too?, the cabin made of cottonwood?,

and we feel it: that desire to dig, dig in, not take anything for granted.
How unsteady the snow-turning-rain. Do you miss it, and what you planted?