



Photo by Theresa Danna-Douglas

Glotfelty edits the first anthology of Nevada's best writing about Nevada

Nevada literature has been an ephemeral thing—writing and storytelling have long existed, but, other than several well-known authors such as Mark Twain, Sarah Winnemucca, Walter Van Tilburg Clark and Robert Laxalt, the words seem to have vanished, as if into the high desert air. In the early 1990s, Cheryll Glotfelty, associate professor of English, saw that Nevada's literary heritage was “virtually *incognita*.” Motivated to change its status, she began working on the first-of-its-kind anthology, *Literary Nevada: Writings from the Silver State*, published this year by the University of Nevada Press.

“Nevada is in a literary renaissance,” Glotfelty says. “This anthology will help a new generation of writers feel like they are writing out of a tradition instead of feeling as if they are starting from scratch.”

The book, a hefty tome running 896 pages and featuring close to 200 writers, is in Glotfelty's words, “a sampler... a nice buffet of imaginative writings and non-fiction.” This is, however, a soup-to-nuts buffet. Beginning with

transcriptions of traditional Native American oral stories, the anthology moves chronologically through our state's history of exploration, emigration, settlement—north and south—and ends with contemporary writings from a paved, malled, casinoed and Starbucked Nevada.

“It's Nevada's best all between two covers,” Glotfelty says.

Reading through the brief essays that preface each of the 13 chapters provides the story of the emergence and unfolding of Nevada's literature. The chapters also move thematically through the Native American, emigrant, and rural experience, as well as geographically throughout the state with essays about Reno, Las Vegas, the Nevada Test Site and Nevada wilderness. Also included are chapters of travel writings, cowboy poetry and contemporary poetry and fiction.

“I felt like an old-time prospector finding these nuggets,” she says.

While Glotfelty has attempted to include Nevada writers in the anthology as much as

Cheryll Glotfelty poses in the Nevada Writers' Hall of Fame in the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center.

possible, she has also drawn from the works of writers not usually associated with the state, such as Jack London, of whom she writes, “his reminiscence of conning a Reno homemaker into a free dinner explores vintage Nevada themes of deception, gullibility, opportunity and luck, and recalls the hobo experience of Reno in the early 1900s, when it was known as a railroad town. ‘Confessions,’ therefore, made the cut.” Other nonresident authors include John Muir, Arthur Miller, Hunter S. Thompson, Joan Didion and Gary Snyder. Photographs of 35 writers are included in a 24-page section.

—Melanie Robbins '06M.A.

For more information on the University of Nevada Press or to purchase this book, visit www.unpress.nevada.edu.