Norma Jean (Mills) Best ’37 (French), lifelong Nevadan and a 42-year resident of Carson City, died April 27 at the age of 95. Norma Jean was born to Fred and Flora Mills on Aug. 26, 1914 in Little Falls, Minn. The youngest of six children (her siblings were Hester, Wayne, Ellen, Betty and Catherine), Norma Jean’s family moved to Fallon, Nev. in 1918 where her third-grade teacher was her sister Hester and her eighth grade teacher was her cousin Laura Mills. It was Laura who instilled in Norma Jean her love for wild flowers, botany and an appreciation for natural history.

Norma Jean met her future husband, Bob Best, on the first day of class in the fifth grade in Fallon, Nev. They were married on Aug. 14, 1937, the same year she graduated from the University. The couple moved to Elko, Nev. in 1938 where Bob was the science instructor for Elko High School. Bob supplemented his job by serving as a summer fireguard in Lamoille Canyon; the job afforded them the opportunity to live in a cabin supplied by the U.S. Forest Service. In 1943, when Bob was named principal at Mineral County High School in Hawthorne, Norma Jean was a music instructor in the Hawthorne elementary schools and taught homebound students. She also volunteered as a Girl Scout troop leader, served with the PTA and helped organize the Community Presbyterian Church.

The Bests moved to Yerington in 1956, where Bob was named superintendent of schools for Lyon County. Norma Jean taught first grade at Yerington Elementary School. Her extracurricular activities included singing in the choir at Community United Methodist Church.

When Bob was promoted to associate superintendent of the Nevada Department of Education in 1968, the couple moved to Carson City, eventually settling in a home they built in Kings Canyon a year later. Norma Jean taught in Gardnerville and Carson City for three years before retiring in 1971.

Living in Carson City gave Norma Jean the opportunity to enjoy her recreational passion of hiking and backpacking in the surrounding Sierra Nevada Range and other nearby mountain ranges.

Norma Jean was preceded in death by Bob and their eldest daughter, Jean. She is survived by her daughter Carol and her son, David (Elizabeth); her three grandchildren, Dennis (Jamie), Patty (Robin) and Mike (Annette); her sister-in-law, Caroline; and eight great-grandchildren, Sarah, Kathryn, Ellen, Jillian, Miles, Sydney, Summer and Kimberly.

Georgianna (Hicks) Perazzo ’46 (English) died March 15 in Las Vegas. Georgianna was born Oct. 13, 1923 in Fallon, Nev. She is the daughter of the late Mary Kirk of Sparks, Nev. and lived in Elko, Hawthorne and various other mining camps in California and Nevada. She is registered with the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians in Elko. She was a graduate of Sparks High School, Class of 1942.

Georgianna received her bachelor’s degree from the University plus a separate teacher’s degree in elementary and secondary education. She taught elementary, junior high, and high school, plus 12 years teaching English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her master of arts degree was awarded in education with an emphasis on English language. She developed original independent research in the linguistic indication markers in addiction recovery.

Georgianna was a reading specialist, a social worker licensed by the state of Nevada and the National Association of Social Workers, and a certified licensed alcohol and drug counselor, also by the state of Nevada. She was employed as a child protective services specialist II with Clark County Family and Youth Services and later in staff development. She served as liaison for the Tenants’ Improvement Group of the Cambridge Community Outreach Center, and coordinator for 12 years of the Community Interface Sharing Program of the Positive Link Resource Organization. Other community activities included the American Association of University Women, PTA, Community Concerts, Classroom on Wheels, the Salvation Army and the United Methodist Church.

Georgianna was the widow of architect Frederick J. Perazzo, the mother of four grown children—three boys and a girl—and grandmother of four and great-grandmother of nine. Her hobbies included cooking, sewing, painting, singing, music, concerts including jazz, writing and reading. She was an avid patron of the arts. A post-polio survivor from infancy, she maintained an active lifestyle, moving around in a powered wheelchair and driving a specially adapted van. Her favorite color was sky blue.

James “Jack” Davis ’50 (arts and science), founding president of Nevada’s community college system, died Oct. 24, 2009 after a short bout with pneumonia. Jack was president of Western Nevada Community College from 1972 to 1983 and also built extended WNCC rural colleges in Fallon, Gardnerville and Elko during his tenure as president. Born in San Diego, Calif. on Nov. 22, 1925, Jack joined the Merchant Marines during World War II and later was an army company commander during the Korean War.

Jack played as a linbacker on the University’s championship football team coached by Joe Sheeketski. He was also a college light heavy-weight boxer.

Jack loved Nevada and its people and served them in an educational capacity for most of his life. He was principal of Battle Mountain Elementary School in 1954, principal of Fallon High School in 1958, and then became superintendent of the Unified Churchill County School District. He became an associate professor at the University after receiving his doctorate from Stanford, and taught here for seven years from 1965 to 1972. He created the Research and Educational Planning Center at the University’s College of Education. He was also an educational consultant to many state departments of education and school districts and actively promoted vocational education in Nevada and on a national level. He authored the book, The Principal’s Guide to Educational Facilities.

He was offered the job as founding president of the still yet to be built, Western Nevada Community College in Carson City in 1972. Jack worked tirelessly for many years to expand the college and its facilities, as well as rural satellite colleges.

In 1978, he was appointed by the governor to the Nevada Athletic Commission. He was the executive vice president of the World Boxing Council, founded the North American Boxing Federation and headed the WBC Ring Officials Committee.

Also in 1978, Nevada governor Mike O’Callahan, proclaimed his “appreciation and thanks to Jack Davis in recognition of the exemplary service, loyally offered to the State of Nevada, and sincere thanks for Jack’s efforts that have so greatly contributed to the economic and social success of the State of Nevada and helped assure the continuing preservation of our free-enterprise system.”

Jack had a great heart and served in other capacities in the Carson City community. He was a fifth-grade Sunday school teacher at the First United Methodist Church for 25 years, president of the Rotary Club, served on the Carson Tahoe Hospital Blue Ribbon Committee and was a member of the Northern Nevada Development Authority. In 2004, Jack was honored by having the observatory on the Western Nevada College campus dedicated in his name: the Jack C. Davis Observatory.

He is survived by his wife, Mary, and their three children, Susan, Maria (Mark), and Greg (Charlene), and four grandchildren, Allison, Katelyn, Natalie and Jack.
Jon Springmeyer '72 (business), Nevada native and Douglas High School graduate, died April 10 at the age of 59 at his home in Carson City. He was diagnosed with esophageal cancer in 2005.

Jon was born April 25, 1950, in Carson City to Melvin “Buzz” and Marjorie Johnson Springmeyer, both of whom were early Carson Valley settlers. While growing up on the family’s J Lazy J Ranch, he helped his father run cattle up to South Lake Tahoe, Calif. It was during this time that his love for the outdoors and his appreciation of Native American culture emerged.

In 1968 Jon graduated from Douglas High School and went on to earn a business degree at the University. It was at the University that his cowboy charisma attracted the attention of Bonnie Connelly. After meeting on a blind date, the two quickly became inseparable and were married in 1971 following a two-year courtship.

Jon went on to McGeorge School of Law and graduated in 1980, after which he established a private practice in Carson City, where he quickly developed a reputation for treating his clients as close friends. Later Jon joined his long time friend and mentor, John Reiser, at Reiser & Associates Insurance. He cared deeply about helping others, both in his professional and personal life and was always available to offer advice and guidance.

Jon’s hobbies included camping, archery, muzzle loading and attending Burning Man. He loved entertaining his friends with anecdotes and practical jokes.

In addition to his wife of 38 years, he is survived by his mother, Marjorie, sons, Erin (Diane) and Ryan (Rachel), and daughter, Sara.

Alicia Parlette ‘04 (journalism) died April 22 at the age of 28. The University of Nevada, Reno graduate chronicled her battle with alveolar soft part sarcoma, a rare form of cancer, in a 17-part series for the San Francisco Chronicle. She found out she had cancer shortly after being hired by The Chronicle as a copy editor.

Alicia was admitted to the hospital on April 2 with hip pain and problems breathing. She and doctors decided to end her treatment, and Alicia spent the last few weeks in the hospital saying goodbye to friends and family.

In her series, Alicia wrote about her mother’s death, also from cancer, and what she imagined from her own memorial services when she died.

“I wanted my funeral to be different. I wanted it to be quirky and youthful and completely specific to me. I wanted songs from Jimmy Eat World; I wanted Ani DiFranco’s version of “Amazing Grace”; I wanted passages to be read from “To Kill a Mockingbird” and Anne Lamott and some of my writing.”

Alicia was a talented young journalist at the Reynolds School of Journalism. The school is establishing a scholarship in her name. Contributions may be sent to the University of Nevada, Reno c/o the Alicia Parlette Fund for Aspiring Journalists, Reynolds School of Journalism, Mail Stop 310, University of Nevada, Reno 89557.

More information about Alicia’s life can be found at her website: http://msparlette.wordpress.com.

Creating a Legacy of Education

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If you have already arranged for a bequest or other planned gift to Nevada, we would like to honor your support so please notify us and we will send you the information to become a Legacy Society member.

If you are still considering such a gift, let us know so we can help you and your advisers complete your gift in a way that benefits your estate and makes clear your objectives in making a bequest to the University of Nevada, Reno. For example, you could choose to support student scholarships, capital expansion, equipment purchases, endowed faculty positions, or the area of greatest opportunity or need at the time your gift comes in.

Involvement in the Nevada Legacy Society gives you the opportunity to enjoy the company of others who, like yourself, care about leaving a legacy to protect and strengthen the University of Nevada. Members receive a Legacy Society lapel pin, invitations to exclusive functions on campus, and more. Your gift can be recognized publicly, unless you prefer to remain anonymous.

For more information about membership in the Nevada Legacy Society or about including the University of Nevada, Reno Foundation in your future plans, please contact Lisa Riley at (775) 784-1352, or plannedgiving.unr.edu.