Alumni Profile: **Nita Spangler ’44** (journalism)

**Age:** 90  
**Occupation:** Environmental activist/community advocate

**What has your life been like since graduation?**

It’s been very rewarding. I’ve done most of the things that I’ve wanted to do. I’ve been excited by the things that have happened to me that I didn’t anticipate.

I worked for Reno Newspapers, Inc. in circulation, manned the office after closing time and worked the switchboard. I got a regular job as a proofreader at the *Nevada State Journal* on Sunday nights.

Every girl wanted to be a San Francisco girl. A girlfriend and I went to San Francisco after graduation and I put in my application at the California Newspaper Publishers Association meeting at the end of June.

One Sunday morning, a man called and asked if I was interested in coming to Redwood City to work for the *Redwood City Tribune*. He was looking for a general assignment reporter for $30 a week. Later, he happened to be the guy I married.

Redwood City’s train station was right across the street from the *Redwood City Tribune*. So I took the train, walked over and started my job. I loved the job.

I took over some of the beats in the county. The staff was very small; there were only two general assignment reporters. One covered the courthouse and I covered the city. Everyone loved the *Redwood City Tribune*. Four out of five families paid to get the *Tribune*.

I arrived in Redwood City in July of 1944 and got married in September of 1946. After getting married, I lost my job, since I was now married to the publisher, Ray Spangler.

Ray’s family had a friend who had just put together a plan for San Francisco’s redevelopment, and it was the beginning of my environment work. San Francisco was looking for someone from San Mateo County to serve on the committee.

During my work in San Francisco and Sonoma, I learned a lot of lessons on why we should preserve our hills and be concerned about water. Then, San Mateo County asked me to come back to Redwood City and be involved with the environment there. My work consisted of working with planning departments and getting people involved and motivated.

**What are your fondest memories from Nevada?**

My fondest memories are filled with the friendships and the opportunities that we had. Remember, I was in school during wartime. We were limited in many ways. I lost 15 friends during the war at one time. I met lots of nice people and they are the people I remember now. The country was united (at least where I lived) during the war. I knew all of the people on the short street I lived on.

I enjoyed Higgy (Journalism Professor Alfred Higginbotham); he seemed a little odd at times, but he was a very good and caring professor. I think he gave his best. We had Mary Benton Smith as an assistant professor, and she later became a very good friend of mine.

I enjoyed all of my sorority sisters at Kappa Alpha Theta. They elected me president and I was very flattered by that. I recently attended the 90th birthday party for my sorority sister Clara Beth Green.

**What have you done that you are most proud of?**

I ended up spending more than 50 years as an activist and played a pivotal role in such projects as the designation of the Portola Discovery site in Pacifica (Sweeney Ridge) as a national landmark, the restoration of the Woodside Store living museum and the creation of the Edgewood Natural Preserve in Redwood City.

I am most proud of the site at Sweeney Ridge, which is preserved today.

**What advice would you give someone who is just starting out after college?**

I don’t think journalism is dead. The best and highest thing you can aim for is to be a good reporter and writer. You can improve your writing. Everyone does better with an editor. Even Will Shakespeare is better with an editor.

There are so many opportunities. My daughter-in-law got her master’s in journalism and just got a great job working as a technical writer.

Go to the University of Nevada, Reno for journalism. Profuse writing never gets anyone anywhere. Good writing is very simple, but that is hard.

From a conversation with Kristin Burgarello ’97 in August at Nita Spangler’s home in Redwood City, Calif.