

Susan Luckie Reilly's memorial July 8, 2017

Comments by Ruth Rieman

Susan's Christmas card was the first to arrive in our mail box this past December. While I realize others produced the card and saw to its mailing in her 100<sup>th</sup> year, it reminds me that she was surrounded by those that respect her wishes and made them happen. It also reminds me that I must remain true to Susan's expectations for this place and help continue the work of the Morongo Basin Conservation Association that she and her team of mavericks began in 1969. Susan liked the label maverick as I discovered when my friend said to her you're a maverick and she proudly said "Yes, I am".

The emotional moments came and memories flew by as I pulled the card from the 2016 stack of Christmas cards. I'll share with you today as we celebrate Susan's rich life just a few of these.

The first Minerva Hoyt Award ceremony at the 29 Palms Community Center is filled to capacity in March 2005 to share this important event with Susan. It's the very first time for this incredible award and Huell Howser makes the presentation. Susan greets the guests and glows with pride.

Eight years later in 2013 Susan attended the dedication of Minerva Hoyt Peak that coincided with the ninth Minerva Hoyt Award. While it wasn't easy for her to be there confined to her wheel chair, you could tell she would not have missed this important naming of a peak for Minerva.

Susan didn't just talk the talk she walked the talk.....Hers was the first residential solar that I saw. I left knowing we should all follow her lead and that her example of consuming so little and treading so lightly was an important one.

Susan's story about the drumming of the helicopters overhead her house in 29 when SCE was scouting the route for the electric transmission line through the Morongo Basin to carry coal-fired electricity west from Arizona is drilled into my head. And, the fact that she never gave up working for relocating the line for the 11 years from 1969 until success in 1981 is an example that has led to one of the most activist communities anywhere. Just ask some of our policymakers and elected officials.

An event I didn't experience firsthand but heard much about was critical to having the basin leaders learn about a planned assault on the Morongo Basin to bring huge electric lines across the landscape. This project was called Green Path North by the proponent Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. At the June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007 Basin Wide Foundation's annual event Susan eloquently described why everyone should be concerned and join the STOP Green Path North effort. I patted myself on the back that I did not attend as MBCA's then president and it was instead Susan who represented MBCA that evening. Only Susan's voice and reputation could have pulled off what she accomplished with this audience. Her maverick voice made the difference.

Susan as we celebrate your life today, I thank you for showing us the way...Well maybe I should say challenging us? Yes, we accept the challenge!

On Friday July 7, 2017, I remembered that I had a tape recording of an interview with Susan that I should look for. I had accompanied Gasper Patrico to Susan's house for this session in July 2008. I discovered a real gem of Susan reading some of her poems on the tape. Here's the one I read at her memorial.

### **Spring Tapestry**

March 1949

Poet, Susan Luckie Reilly

The rosy glow of the setting sun casts dark shadows afar.  
A lone coyote with an eerie note sings to the evening star.

His call is wild and free the voice of the desert domain.  
The softly sighing wind echoes back the refrain.

Is it just the wind or is it the crush of a moccasin foot on the sand.  
Can the muffled tread of the tribe long dead be heard in this timeless land?

With the first pale tint of coming day the night murmurs fade away.  
The coyotes howl and the hoot of an owl again hold their lonely sway.