

David Sundal was devoted to keeping GJ history alive



*David Sundal researches in the Loyd Files Research Library at the Museum of Western Colorado.
Teddy Jordan photo*

By Kathy Jordan

David Sundal, a chemist by day, an historian all of his life, died Feb. 17, 2012 and Grand Junction lost a walking encyclopedia of Grand Junction history.

His knowledge of the homes, business, and people of the area was only surpassed by his willingness and want to share information with anyone with a desire to gain from his knowledge.

His ability to contact with people knew no age difference.

A couple of years ago my husband, Teddy, and I took our grandson, Spencer, and David on a trip to Gateway to go through the car museum. Now most kids would have become bored, but David made it fun. Just last month Spencer wanted to know when we could take David to Gateway again.

David didn't have to have a guide book to know the cars we were looking at. He could tell us how many were built, what famous people had owned them, and of course, all about the engines.

He loved cars. He loved to talk about cars. Not your everyday run of the mill cars. He favored the old luxury style cars of the 1920s and 1930s, like Lincolns, Parkards, Cadillac, Duessenberg, Cords, Buicks, etc.

David liked to talk history. I am going to miss the history chats with David in the summer when he would come over and we would spend a few hours sitting on the porch. I always told him that I would love to be able to insert a CD into his head so the history he knew about our area would not be lost. I am also going

to miss our winter time conversations. It seemed that each season stirred memories for David of one thing or another. He was a never ending supply of history.

He was a devoted volunteer at the Loyd Files Research Library at the Museum of Western Colorado.

David enjoyed helping people find out about those who lived in their homes many years ago. His favorite resource for finding this information was the Polk City Directory's.

He made a game out of finding people with the same name of famous people who lived in Grand Junction.

David, at times, was mischievous and liked to share stories of people and, with a twinkle in his eye say, "now you can't print this but...". Information that filled in lots of holes.

He was a charter member of the Mesa County Historical Society and some of the best meetings were when Dave and Pat Gormley talked about different people or events. They made these memories come alive as they played off of each other to complete the story.

His mind was like an oversized sponge that absorbed all manner of history.

David loved to travel and had lived on both coasts and had a deep appreciation of the history for the different locations he visited. However, he summed up his love for local history when he was quoted by Laurean Mayne-Davis in *125 people 125 years, Grand Junction's Story* when he said "This is an easy place to live. Not much goes wrong here."

Long-time resident Billie Abell once told me that after she and her husband Joe were first married they lived on Main Street and David, who was nine or ten, lived south of Main Street on Eighth Street behind his father's church. She said that she remembers David as a young man walking around the neighborhood, talking to the people who lived there and admiring the architecture of the houses soaking in not only the architecture up the story of those who lived there.

David didn't stick just to his neighborhood. His knowledge of houses and who lived there extended all over the original square mile. More often than not he always had some tidbit of information that made the history of house come alive.

When I wrote the book about the North Seventh Street Historic Residential District David was always there with some little morsel that made the story pop.

David never missed a Historic Home and Church tour. He was always interested before hand as to what homes and churches were going to be on the tour. David added a lot for someone going on the tour if they were lucky enough to be touring a house or church at the same time as David because of the added information he would give. The home owners usually learned something about their house they didn't know thanks to David.

I didn't get a chance to fill David in on what houses are going to be on the tour this year. But I know that he would have been thrilled with a couple of additions and the home owners would have been fortunate to learn a little more from him.

When David told Laurena in the *125 people 125 years, Grand Junction's Story*, "See there? Some of us old windbags do have some value after all," he said it all.