

A Tribute to

For two decades Vivian Paladin has lent her creativity and imagination to MONTANA, twelve of those years as editor. This summer she decided to take a step she considered for some time — Vivian has retired. For a year and more I have been at her elbow daily learning from a master of the craft, and as a teacher she is one of the best. Filling Viv's spot at the editorial desk will be no easy matter, as the comments below from a few of her colleagues demonstrate. What we intend is to keep Vivian's high standards always before us, to tap her expertise from time to time as MONTANA's Editor Emeritus, and to present the best available history of Montana and the West for the enjoyment of our readership. We thought it fitting that some of those people who had worked with Viv over the years be given the opportunity to praise her talents and give her their personal farewell as editor. Not in response to their comments, but as a personal message to our readers, Vivian gives us her backward look at twenty years of excitement with MONTANA. We will miss our daily repartee with her and her irrepressible humor, but we doubt that Vivian Paladin could ever drift too far away from MONTANA.

W.L.L.

K. ROSS TOOLE—University of Montana

Vivian and I started Journalism School together in 1938-1939. She stuck with it; I got distracted. She has always stuck with it. That's one of the things about her. But there are many others.

Montana: The Magazine of Western History is the finest journal of its kind in America. If it hadn't been for me, it never would have made it. I take full credit. I hired Vivian. No one else did that; I did it. As of that moment the magazine's astonishing success was inevitable.

"You can't perform an arabesque on a greased ridgetop," or you can't produce a magazine held in the highest respect by the academics and also the "buffs." Vivian thought otherwise. It had been tried many times before and it had never worked, but it worked for Vivian.

What's her formula? I didn't know then and I don't know now. I suspect there is no formula at all — it's Vivian. I suppose one can guess at the ingredients: instinct; a very critical editorial eye; an ear that hears faint hollow sounds; a distaste for pomposity; a splendid sense of design; an enormous capacity for hard work; extrasensory perception; infinite patience. That's part of it. The rest of it sounds banal. It's called "professionalism." Banal it may sound but it is exceedingly rare — a quality to be deeply respected — indeed, something to be cherished by us all.

I hope they don't give Vivian a gold watch. The fact is she doesn't like gold watches. Which gives rise to the



question, what can they give her? Absolutely nothing. The problem is that what Vivian has given to Montana you can neither pay for nor reward. But maybe it is all right. There she is on every page and every issue from the issue of Summer 1966 to this one. That's better than a statue and it will last longer.

Prose

Vivian Paladin

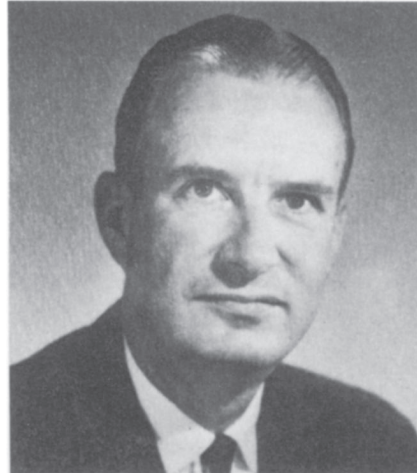
ROBERT G. ATHEARN—University of Colorado

A while back Viv Paladin remarked to me: “Well, Speedy, I think it’s getting about time to hang ’em up.” Her nickname for me, based upon an old and unprintable joke involving one Gonzales, reminded me how long we had known each other and how well. The relationship came about when she inherited me as book review editor upon taking over the editorship of *Montana*. It lasted for years, during which time we communicated frequently, by lengthy letters or just interoffice type memos, and now and then by telephone calls when press time loomed.

By the time Viv turned up on the scene the magazine had come a long way, having begun on a shoestring and having been operated, to some extent, with the reckless abandon that characterized frontier journalism. Among other things the review column had been titled “Buffalo Chips” by an editor who must have known Lucius Beebe. After a good deal of jeering, and not a few scatological comments by my colleagues, I prevailed upon management to employ a more mundane expression. By the beginning of Viv’s tenure the magazine had begun to assume journalistic, if not academic respectability, the chips having flown, thank heavens.

When Viv took over the reins things proceeded with more predictability. She let me run the review column pretty much as I wanted to, although from time to time some extremely irate correspondence from offended authors crossed her desk. I will say this, she took a lot of heat intended for me. I really didn’t have sense enough to appreciate her properly, for this and other reasons. Now and then there would be a momentary misunderstanding, a foul up over reviews, a breakdown in communication between Helena and Boulder. It was during these hell-raising, hat-stomping moments that sent violent noises northward along the Rockies from Colorado that I came to know Viv’s gentle nature, her innate modesty and her unerring ability to make me eat out of her hand. She took the “I’m just a broken-down old newshen from Glasgow, Montana” line with me and it worked like a charm. In no time at all I was plumb halter-broken.

This throw-it-away attitude she assumed about her talents, her abilities, her deep professionalism covered up a certain amount of insecurity in the early years, but as time passed and she showed her stuff, improving each issue over the last, she revealed herself as the real goods. Pretty soon the awards began to come in, the harvest of recognition she so much deserved. Among the many honors was the election to its inner councils by the Western History Association. She had become “one of the boys.” Western historians who passed through Montana,



working at its historical society, came away with very favorable comments about her. I feel pretty good about having had a chance to know the “old newshen from Glasgow,” watch her work, and come to love her.

Her husband enjoys referring to a television program of some years back that featured another Paladin, one whose business card read “Have gun. Will travel.” Now that Viv can get away from the shop for a while maybe she and Jack will take to the road and see some more of the country. I wish she’d hang a sign on the office door reading: “Have done. Will travel.” I’d like to be there to say, “Goodbye, my lovely!”

Bob Athearn

JOHN C. EWERS—Smithsonian Institution

When I first heard that Vivian Paladin was going to lay down the pencil as editor of *Montana* I couldn’t take the idea seriously. To me Viv and that magazine had become synonymous. I recalled that Nora Spanish, Manager of the Indian Arts and Crafts Cooperative on the Blackfeet Reservation had been threatening to retire for more than 30 years. And I hoped Viv’s action might be no more precipitous.

Now that it seems more than likely that Viv is really retiring, and I look back upon her remarkable success with *Montana*, I find it difficult to recall that she had been a little skittish about accepting the editorship twelve years ago. Not that she feared the production problems in getting out the mag. She had thrived on the smell of printer’s ink since girlhood. But she had some curious idea that perhaps the editor of an historical magazine ought to be a professional historian!

Now we know we should be thankful Viv was not an historian. She came to her job free of both prejudices and fears. She had no pet periods or aspects of history to pamper, and no fear of some of the controversial characters or events in western history. Under Viv's editorship contributors have ranged far and wide over virtually every aspect of the 19th and 20th century history of the area, shining lights into many dark and long-neglected corners. Her love of the West did not stop with the boundaries of Montana, and her liking for people included ones of all sizes, shapes, and colors, bearded and clean-shaven, and of both sexes. She knew history as the story of the actions of people — folks who were very much alive — and she saw no reason why written history need be dull or deadly.

Nor has Viv neglected the women in Montana's past — whether they were Sacagawea (the first of note in this region), or prim school mams, or brazen madams. I have found Dorothy Johnson's recollections of her girlhood in Whitefish back in the '20s nothing less than delightful. Dorothy is of my generation. I noted that she was wearing a fringed cloth imitation of an Indian dress about the same time I was playing Indian in Western Pennsylvania in a make-believe Indian suit of the same material and a band of upright chicken feathers round my head. That was long before Dorothy dreamed of A Man Called Horse or I met a real Blackfoot Indian.



In the years preceding Viv's editorship virtually every issue of *Montana* offered a Charles M. Russell painting on the cover. Viv knew one couldn't truly appreciate Russell's work by comparing him only with himself. So she devoted an occasional cover and feature article to another artist. In so doing she introduced her readers who had never heard of another artist to some fellows who had come west — some from as far off as Europe — to picture the scenery and the people they found on the Plains and in the Rockies — men like Karl Bodmer, Alfred Jacob

Miller, Paul Kane, Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran, Peter Toft, Harvey Dunn, Joseph Henry Sharp, and Winold Reiss. Nor did she neglect CMR. She also turned to the rich photographic archives of the Montana Historical Society and kindred institutions carefully to select illustrations which were especially pertinent for articles appearing in *Montana*. Some of those photos went back more than a century to portray Indian visitors to Washington or the canyons and geysers of that wonderland which was soon to become the world's first national park. Her selection of just the right picture to convey the appearance of a landscape, or a structure, or a person discussed in the nearby text contrasts sharply with the lack of adequate visual materials in many historical books and journals. Viv's very effective use of meaningful pictures has brought a new dimension to historical journalism in Montana and the West.

Surely Vivian Paladin will be missed. I do hope the Trustees of the Society can prevail upon her to sit down long enough in future to write an occasional article for the magazine she developed so conscientiously and so well.

ROBERT F. MORGAN—Helena, Montana

If there is one word that would sum up my thoughts on Vivian it would have to be "tenacity." Over the years I have worked with and associated with individuals in various capacities who in one way or another were successes in their fields, but it is Viv who stands out most of all.

I often wonder where the magazine would have gone if Viv had not been at the helm at that moment in time when you either did the job at hand or called it quits. In spite of low circulation figures, budget problems, lack of help and no editorial policy, it was Viv who gave the magazine the direction that was needed. She established guidelines for the magazine and come hell-or-high-water she stayed in the boundaries imposed by herself. The budget was always hanging over her head. There wasn't much to work with, but when cuts were imminent, she was the only voice that came through loud and clear to defend her publication and the goals she had set for it.

The lack of funds hampered efforts to staff the magazine properly and was a constant problem in those years of infancy but her dedication AND tenacity made up for lack of staff. One person, Vivian, organized the editorial staff, all gratis, picked brains here and there as needed, determined the editorial content, and edited the contents after she had determined and selected the graphic material to be used. In her spare time she compiled and edited the society's newsletter and provided technical assistance to the museum staff in labeling and whatever else required the written word. Press releases, assistance to would-be writers, acting as emissary of goodwill and helpful public servant were all within the realm of this editor.

MONTANA *Western History*

MONTANA *the magazine of*
WESTERN HISTORY



It was more than working for a monthly paycheck. It was dedication. It was tenacity. It was my friend, Viv. Many thanks!

VIVIAN A. PALADIN

Valedictories, by their nature, are usually uninteresting to listen to or to read, not only because of their length but also because of the built-in self-consciousness of the deliverer. Hopefully, this one will not suffer from the former, because the writer is well aware of space limitations. It is necessary here to rise above the latter and suffer the reader's indulgence, however, for the time has come to write some personal words at the editorial desk from which I have worked for more than a dozen years.

Thanks are in order, as they always are. To single out many individuals in this case, however, would be quite impossible, because those thanks would extend to 1958, when I first began jousting with galley proofs and picture captions as Associate Editor.

In general, then, the thanks must go something like this: the most difficult hurdle a new publication must cross without disaster has to do with format and philosophy. In the case of this publication, the enlarged format (as opposed to the classic 6 x 9 academic journal) and the idea that western history could be made attractive to a general audience was established by my predecessors, notably Ross Toole and Michael S. Kennedy. Both these elements, plus a scope broadened from Montana to the Trans-Mississippi West, had been established before me, and this fact deserves noting.

Perhaps the one factor which any editor can most appreciate is this: no one, since 1966, has been a stumbling block to the publication, either as to content, design or philosophy. We enunciated, in 1966, a firm commitment to history and not to western art. This has meant that, so far as this popular genre is concerned, cover subjects and articles in depth have been confined to documentary or historic art and artists. Like all well thought-out policies, strictly adhered to, it has made editorial goals easier to implement.

Editorial boards, regional editors, Society directors and trustees have been supportive whenever it counted toward the final product. At no time, however, has any of them, singly or in groups, sought to hold endless meetings in the editorial offices, contending about petty details. The fact that the buck must stop at one place has never been difficult to achieve.

There have been many other favorable factors, among them the undeniable fact that a universal interest in the history of the American West has been burgeoning during the years of my tenure. There has been the growing sophistication of printing techniques in Montana as in larger centers of population; thus it has been possible, by a process of learning and trial and error, to convert illustrations and text into pleasing typography, lay-outs and designs. So it is that thanks must go to the good sense of a world-wide audience to accept Western History with enthusiasm, and more importantly to the many printers with whom I have worked, people who have functioned as true craftsmen to produce an increasingly beautiful product.

To continue the somewhat narrow path between the academic and the popular, I must thank the genuinely unselfish decision of my successor, Bill Lang, to leave the more certain academic world to enter these sometimes perilous waters. He is an academically trained historian (all to the good) but combines with it the desire and ability (also to the good) to continue a magazine which will appeal to a general audience and still hold its own among historians. Indeed, this writer feels without equivocation that he will not only continue but enhance, for that is the nature of things when they are done right.

Finally, my name remains on the masthead of the publication, not merely as a device to honor me, however much that might be pleasing. It is there because I hope to continue, in a very practical way, to play a helpful role. There are "mother hen" motivations here, of course. But more importantly, it will give me a chance to keep my hand in, to watch gifted new people continue something valid in this field, something begun before me but something which it has been my great privilege to serve for more than two decades.

