

Gloria Farley died on March 18, 2006, after a long illness.

She was born and grew up in Heavener, a small town in eastern Oklahoma near the border with Arkansas. It was a recently settled frontier community in what was previously Choctaw lands, and her father was the local physician.

She exhibited a curious, exploring nature right from the start. A local resident knew of an inscribed rock on a nearby mountain and took his daughter and her friend, Gloria, to hunt for this peculiar rock. Young Gloria noted the letterings. A few years later she learned about the Runic alphabet, and realized that the inscription near Heavener contained Runic letters. Her common sense told her that the inscription was ancient, it was not fresh. The rock was too hard to make the inscription a casual piece of graffiti, and only someone familiar with runes could have created the letters.

No such person existed, or had recently existed, in the area. The Smithsonian had (without visiting the site) dismissed the inscription as the recent fabrication by a rune-savvy person. This did not correlate with the attendant circumstances, and young Gloria did not accept it.

Thus, unwittingly, Gloria as a teenager had exhibited the personality traits of a great mind of discovery. Curiosity, an eye for detail, the tendency to connect facts not originally believed to be related, and enough independence and self-confidence in her own rational deductions to reject the simplistic conclusions by professed experts. It has been my observation that innovative thinkers, explorers, and discoverers are born rather than made. Education is useful to these persons, but not nearly as important as their internal drive.

The 'Housewife from Heavener'

Gloria described herself deprecatorily as "the housewife from Heavener," which is about as accurate as describ-

IN MEMORIAM



Gloria S. Farley (1916-2006) A Lifetime of Discovery by Julian Fell

ing Einstein as the junior patent clerk from Zurich. Gloria was the most successful locator and recorder of rock inscriptions in the south central



From Gloria Farley, *In Plain Sight*

Farley (lower left with sons Mark and Scott), at the Heavener Runestone in 1965. Farley first saw this stone as a teenager, and later when she learned about the Runic alphabet, she realized that the inscription on the rock contained some Runic letters. Inset is a drawing of the letters.

United States, and thereby a major contributor to the discovery of prehistoric diffusion.

Starting in 1950, when she and her husband, Ray, returned to Heavener, and for 50 years thereafter, Gloria tracked down and recorded a huge number of inscriptions. Some she found herself, and others came to her attention by word of mouth. Her patience, innate friendliness, persistence, modesty, and unshakable reputation for trustworthiness enabled contact with the most reserved and private of land owners.

The ultimate measure of the contribution people make to the world is to compare the state of their specialty before they started to that after their departure. Gloria's specialty was history, or more precisely, the process of turning unknown pre-history into history. Regionally, her impact can only be characterized as massive. I personally would describe Gloria as being the right person in the right place at the right time.

Heavener may be considered a backwater locale, but it just happens to sit in the middle of a swathe of several rivers that provide access from the Atlantic and Mississippi to the mid-continental high plains, where mountains do not form a continuous barrier to transcontinental trekking. The ancients that followed these routes left behind an abundance of rock inscriptions that went unrecognized by untrained American experts. This region is one of the most heavily inscribed regions of North America. Fate, providence, or grand-design (take your pick) placed Gloria in the middle of this abundance with all the drive and interest to record it all.

What makes Gloria great? In few words, the sum of what she achieved over her lifetime. What made Gloria become great? It was a combination of traits: Insatiable intellectual curiosity. Common sense. Deductive and independent

thought. Trust in her instincts. Meticulousness in recording detail and noting attendant circumstances. No ego, acknowledging error and giving credit where due to others. Scrupulous honesty, trustworthiness, humility, and always keeping her word. Patience, long-term drive, workaholic habits. Unfailing cheerfulness in the face of private misfortune. Generosity and kindness to man and beast.

As Gloria's works accumulated, she

attracted and joined a select group, of similarly innovative explorers, all with the highest of academic credentials, multi-talented and multi-disciplined. Among this crowd she was considered an equal, and in certain circumstances a leader.

Gloria and Barry Fell

Gloria shared a special relationship with my father, Barry Fell, and family as both a colleague and a personal friend. Barry had studied and deci-

phered ancient Mediterranean scripts, and was later astonished to discover that these same scripts were to be found in North America, and in locations all over the world. Gloria had been accumulating a massive record of inscriptions from Oklahoma and adjacent states, and among these were some very important ones. The pairing of discoverer and recorder with a translator was a natural result, and each greatly aided the other. There was a

Gloria Farley, Barry Fell, and the Role of The Amateur in Intellectual Advancement

Barry Fell always had an historical view on life and his works, not seeing it as something of the moment but more as a moment in a long sequence of time. His books and papers are full of references to historic persons in advancing the subject under discussion. It added color to his writings. The persons he mentioned were innovators, independent, creative thinkers, and experimenters; and invariably their results were controversial. They were often in conflict with the inertia of orthodox beliefs, mostly held by the clergy and vested or entrenched interests.

In the past, there were few institutional career choices for those who made a living with their minds. There was the church, the military, or the administrative/political bureaucracy. These were bastions of conservative thinking. Holding ideas contrary to the conventions of the day was regarded as disloyalty, and risked a career stall or outright dismissal or expulsion. In turn, promotion and advancement meant complying with the opinions of those senior to oneself. For the last 150 years, the role of the church has been reduced and largely supplanted by academia, a mass of colleges and universities where the security of orthodoxy still rules, and inertial resistance to discoveries that contradict the dogma of the day is as firm as ever.

Major advancements, breakthroughs, and innovations come from persons who were curious, observant, creative, and possessing enough self-confidence to defend and promote their views in contradiction to the fads and prejudices of the day. Today we call these persons mavericks or outsiders. Historically, these innovators were mostly amateurs. By amateur, I mean the word in its original and proper meaning—literally, a person who loves their work and does it for this love.

The schools of orthodoxy have changed this meaning by using it as a term of disparagement implying incompetence, lack of skill or knowledge. They promote themselves by demeaning the competition. By using the term amateur, they label the works and the innovator as insignificant and inconsequential. In reality, the distinction of amateur and professional relates to sources of employment income, not to competence. The terms are used correctly in sports.

The whole process is perpetually dialectic. Conformance allows incremental change only. Radical advancement generates conflict until acceptance. Thus all creative innovators will face unpleasant controversy and remain outsiders, shunned by the minions and colleagues who remain silent so as to not endanger their career security. Being an intellectual

leader is economically risky and requires courage. No person who is not independently wealthy chooses to be an outsider. The shunning—the slings and arrows and isolation—is not pleasant.

As an innovator, Barry found himself frequently in the role of outsider. Being under such attack generates a tough hide, and can cause outsider-amateurs to develop suspicious or cranky personas. Establishment archaeologists had no interest in Gloria's discoveries, and in her role of outsider she endured constant attacks, yet she remained constantly cheerful. She had a rebellious heart but it was couched in a sweet disposition.

As a biologist, Barry was very appreciative of the assistance, observations, and collecting by amateurs (lovers). They provided the distributional and behavioral information, particularly in regard to migrations. In no field are the observations of amateurs more important than ornithology. Amateurs collected much of the fossils and new species that Barry studied, and their role was always acknowledged in his papers.

In linguistics and epigraphy, amateurs have always been the leaders. No major decipherment has been the work of a mainstream historian or archaeologist: Champollion, Rawlinson, Ventris, Fell, Knorosov—amateurs all.

—Julian Fell

huge mutual respect, and their correspondence was so huge that each had to keep their mutual files separate from their other correspondence, as the rate of expansion was disproportionate.

Gloria's book *In Plain Sight* (1994) stands as a monument to herself and a milestone in epigraphic discovery. It is my favorite book, not because of any outstanding event or discovery therein, but because it provides such a broad and thorough treatment of its area of specialty. It provides a unique picture of the process of epigraphic discovery.

The generous financial support of a sponsor enabled the inclusion of personal details and photographs, names and accounts of helpers, and biographies of principle participants of this era and process. It is not just a revelation of history. It is a history of the history, and in my view the most accurate and thorough account thereof. I am very pleased that it appeared in print in a preliminary form only days before my father's sudden death. I know from his notes, and comments to colleagues subsequently related back to me, that he was immensely pleased with the book.

Gloria is now internationally recognized and admired for her achieve-

ments. She is acknowledged in her hometown Heavener (and Oklahoma) as the person most responsible for identifying the runes of Oklahoma. She has been named as Oklahoma's "Woman of the Year," and is a member of the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame. Her book *In Plain Sight*¹ is an epigraphic classic, and another is in preparation. She has published more than 95 papers in scientific and news journals, and she has herself been the subject of over 20 articles. She has held membership and officer position in numerous historical, epigraphic, exploration, and museum organizations.

Gloria's monument will be her books, her place in the discovery process, but I believe perhaps most of all it will be in the high opinion of her held by all of those that knew her.

Diffusionism Not a Fad

Diffusionism is not a fad. No one became a diffusionist because it is trendy. Diffusionists are currently outsiders, and pay a price for it. All the diffusionists that I have known came to the belief as a result of discoveries that were in conflict with the "Columbus was First" idea that we were all taught (or indoctrinated in) in school.

There is a plus side to being a diffu-

sionist. Barry found himself in the company of like-minded individuals who had all made discoveries that contradicted the Columbus dogma. These were all brilliant minds in many fields, and when they gathered, a most intellectually stimulating session was created. These persons were mostly academicians, engineers, or professionals in some specialty (or several).

Gloria Farley was a natural (and most welcome) addition to this group. Gloria noted in her writings what great company she found herself in, and she acquired many lifelong friendships. It is also obvious from the profusion of remarks from these people, that Gloria was in turn held in the highest regard by them. The extent of her discoveries evoked awe and admiration, and she was most pleasant company.

Julian Fell, a marine biologist, has written two parts of a biography of his father, Barry Fell, which appeared in 21st Century, Winter 1999-2000 and Summer 2001. A third part is forthcoming.

Notes

1. Gloria Farley, *In Plain Sight: Old World Records in Ancient America*, (Columbus, Ga.: ISAC Press, 1994), hardcover, 483 pp., \$37.00. A review of *In Plain Sight* appeared in the Summer 1999 issue of *21st Century*.

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