

**Nomination of Verna Detrich for the KAA Lifetime Achievement Award**  
December 2005

Verna Detrich has been a vital member of the Kansas Anthropological Association since joining in 1975, and her association with the organization is definitive. The KAA Mud Creek Chapter nominates Verna Detrich to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award, based on her service, involvement, and achievement.

Born in March 1922 in a schoolhouse in Pearl, Kansas, Verna Book Detrich is a lifelong resident of the Chapman area. She attended Kansas State University for four semesters, majoring in home economics. World War II interrupted her schooling, and she went to work as a seamstress. She did mending and alterations for a dry cleaner and for the troops at Ft. Riley. After marrying Neil Detrich in 1944, she lived for a while in Wichita and continued to work as a seamstress. The Detrichs have three children: Phil, Karl, and Beth. In later years, after she began working part time at the archeology lab in Topeka, Verna enrolled in classes at Washburn University, accumulating 40 more credits in anthropology and women's studies.

Verna first became interested in archeology as a tag along. Her father, a rural mail carrier, knew of sites and showed them to her. Later when she accompanied Neil on bank business trips, she amused herself reading about anthropology and archeology. When the Mud Creek KAA Chapter was getting organized in the Abilene area in December of 1974, she served as temporary chairman of the group. After its constitution was accepted in 1975, she was elected the first vice president of the Mud Creek Chapter. In 1976 Verna served as president, and in 1977 she served as treasurer. Aside from being an officer for Mud Creek Chapter, Verna provided numerous programs for the group. Coincident with her chapter involvement, Verna began attending state KAA events. She joined the state organization in 1975 and later became a Life Member. In 1974 Verna attended a survey class at the Pratt Site. The first state meeting she attended was the annual meeting in 1975. Her first KATP field school was in Scott County in 1975, and she participated in that event every year through 1999 (24 years). Verna Detrich held the office of second vice president of the state KAA in 1978 and 1979. She was president from 1980 to 1983 and stepped in as state treasurer from 1984 to 1991. Under her tenure Verna managed funds well, the treasury grew, and membership registration and mailing lists became well coordinated. She has been credited with helping the KAA get on solid financial ground. From 1992 to 2005 Verna served the state organization as Area 2 representative. In 1993 and 1994 she served on the certification committee, which revised the KAA Certification Program requirements, and was also consulted in the writing of "Certification Guidelines" handbook.

Verna's first article in the *Journal of the Kansas Anthropological Association* was in 1983 (Vol. 4, No. 1-3.) She wrote "Field School 1982: An Amateur Perspective." Verna was also the author of the "Backdirt" article, featured in many issues of the *Journal* from 1985 through 1989 (approximately 14.) When the *Journal* was revamped to become *The Kansas Anthropologist* to have a more professional appearance and content in 1989 (Vol. 10, No. 1 & 2), Verna served as associate editor. She was associate editor for Volumes 10 through 13. In the *Journal* known as the KAA "handbook" (1987, Vol. 7, No. 1-9), Verna wrote the article entitled "History of the KAA." Together with other Mud Creek Chapter members, Verna conducted a systematic site survey of the Turkey Creek drainage in Dickinson County during the years 1978-1980. They described their investigations in the 1996 volume of *The Kansas Anthropologist*. Verna was a major contributor in the effort.

The June 1999 *Kansas Anthropological Association Newsletter* 11(2):1 describes her 21 years of work for the Kansas State Historical Society:

Verna first worked for the KSHS as a crew member during the 1977 Hancock Village Site excavation. The following year she started working in the KSHS artifact lab, where she advanced from a temporary to a permanent position. Her schedule, which was supposed to be half-time, has always expanded to accommodate the professional staff and volunteer workers. Her many accomplishments include organizing records and relating them to objects, developing finding aids, organizing processing and storage spaces and supplies, describing the ethnographic collection, working with KSHS professional staff and students, professional archeologists, and museums outside the agency on collection loans and exhibits, training and supervising volunteers and interns, and directing the field lab at KATP field schools and weekend laboratory events, including teaching classes. Verna took on the major responsibility for the move of the laboratory to new facilities in 1995 and has provided critical continuity for the Archeology Office. What can be seen by reading between the lines of the above list of accomplishments is Verna's dedication to archeology and her thoughtful and professional approach to her job. What may not be readily apparent is her eagerness to learn and her willingness to provide learning opportunities for others. She has complemented the knowledge she has gained during working hours and through the study of sites around Chapman with college courses and independent reading. Furthermore, she always has taken time to allow other individuals to learn a laboratory procedure or gain firsthand experience with an artifact, when it would have been much easier for Verna to do it herself.

Verna took over the management of the KATP lab in 1989, replacing Diane Good. She ran the field school lab until 1999, making it an accessible learning experience for all who wished to participate.

Verna's personal work in archeology has mainly been the reporting of sites in the Chapman area. She has recorded 57 sites, making wonderfully detailed notebooks for each one. In the fall of 1976, Mud Creek Chapter organized a survey in the Herington area where a new city lake was planned. Verna wrote a short report of this endeavor, which she read at the 1977 KAA Annual Meeting at Great Bend. Bruce Jones was the KSHS archeology advisor on the project. One of her most satisfying experiences was in 1981, when she was hired as a field assistant at the Roth Site (14BO319) near Fort Scott, working under Bill Brogan. Fifteen inches of rain fell during the six weeks of the dig in October and November. Verna was entrusted with all record keeping. In the lab after the dig, Verna cataloged all the artifacts and did bone and floral identification. When Brogan left society employment, Verna presented his conclusions in a preliminary report at a KDOT gathering.

Verna also has been involved in the KAA Certification Program. She received certificates in Basic Lab, Basic Excavation, Advanced Excavation, and Basic Surveyor. By the time she was ready to receive her certificate for Advanced Lab Technician, Verna had a part-time position running the lab. She felt it would be unseemly to sign off on her own accomplishments. No one would question that she is qualified in the advanced category, however. Currently Verna

continues to work to fulfill the requirements for Outreach Specialist. In the near future she expects to finish that section of the Certification Program.

Since 1997 Verna Detrich has been involved in the establishment and development of the Chapman Area Preservation Society (CAPS). She has attended almost every monthly meeting the group has held and been instrumental in the work of setting up the local museum and archives. She has used her expertise gained in the archeology lab for cataloging, accessioning, and storage of the collection. She continues to volunteer her time two or more days a week at CAPS.

Other community involvement and accomplishments of interest are that Verna was a Cub Scout leader for 3 years, Girl Scout leader for 17 years, and American Field Service area family liaison for 12 years. She hosted a Colombian exchange student in 1964-1965 and was a licensed bird bander for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Agency for 11 years. Verna was also a Sunday school teacher for fifth and sixth grades at the Chapman Methodist Church and was chairman of the Education Committee. For many years Verna has served on the board of directors of the Ballsiger Foundation, a charitable trust.

Verna Detrich has had a productive life with many impressive accomplishments. Her interest and dedication to archeology and history have underpinned these accomplishments. She continues to be absorbed in learning about the past and preserving it. She is a deserving recipient of the KAA Lifetime Achievement Award.

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