

The ROCKY RIDGE REVIEW

Winter 1996

Laura Ingalls Wilder - Rose Wilder Lane Home Association, Mansfield, Missouri 65704

ROCKY RIDGE DAY DRAWS LARGE CROWD

The fifth annual Rocky Ridge Day at the Wilder Home and Museum was a big success, weather-wise and other-wise. Over 800 visitors filled the home, museum, book-shop and grounds on a picture-perfect autumn day in the Ozarks. Some were return visitors, some traveled from far-off states to be there, and other tourists happened by and were surprised at the day's planned events.

Special guest for the day was actress *Alison Arngrim*, who created the role of "Nellie Oleson" for TV's *Little House on the Prairie*. Alison was making her first visit to the Wilder Home. Her Missouri trip included appearances at area schools and the Children's Literature Festival at Drury College.

"The role of Nellie follows me to this very day," said Alison when she spoke at the 2 p.m. program on the grounds of the Museum. She got the crowd's attention when she opened her remarks with "I'm the girl who got to beat up Laura Ingalls". Questions from the audience were answered by Alison, and when asked if she would participate in a reunion show of *Little House*, she responded that she "would be there with bells on".

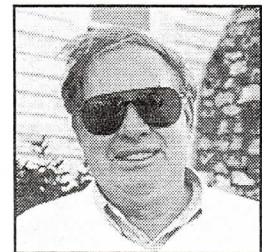
Visitors got a chance to meet the actress informally at an autograph session which included William Anderson and Leslie Kelly.

The Rocky Ridge Day event included a tribute to the late board member *Roger MacBride* by president, *Jean Coday*. Researcher *Laura Waskin* of California spoke of locating the descendants of the real life Nellie Oleson, and learning of her later life. Musical entertainment was provided by folk singer *Judy Domeny* and a barbershop quartet group from the local high school.

The playing of Pa's fiddle, always an annual treat, was ably performed by Mansfield junior high student *Erica Spyres*.

Plan to join us for the 1996 Rocky Ridge Day!

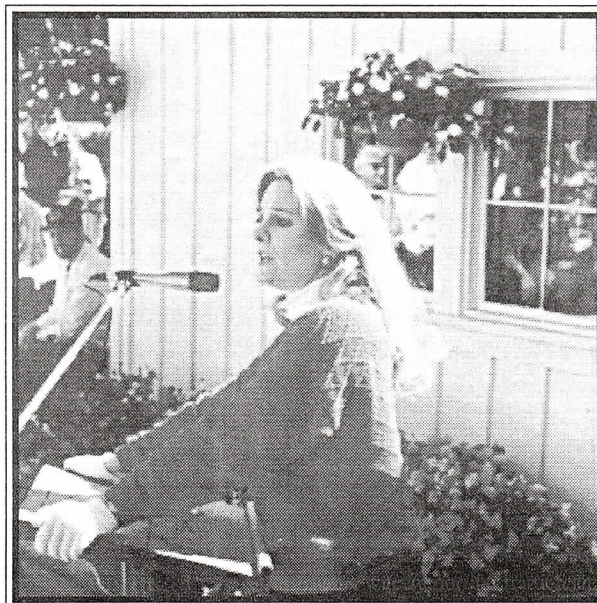
WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER!



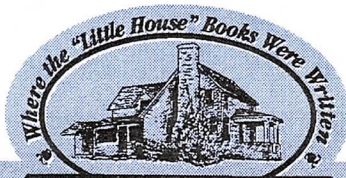
Dale Freeman

Welcome to new board member Dale Freeman, who was elected at the annual meeting in October. Dale is a Mansfield native and well-known through the Ozarks as a journalist. For years his widely read column, *The Ozarker*, appeared in the *Springfield News & Leader* of which he was long-time editor. He has also served as editor-in-residence and lecturer in journalism at Southwest Missouri State University. Dale's memories of growing up in Mansfield include being magazine delivery boy for the Wilders, with such publications as the *Country Gentleman* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. His parents, Gorman and Ruth Freeman were close friends of Rose Wilder Lane, and the families were often entertained in each other's homes.

Dale's book, *How To Talk Ozark in One Easy Lesson*, will be available in the Book Shop.



Alison Arngrim captivates a large crowd
at 1995's Rocky Ridge Day



THE WILDER HOME NEWS FROM THE HOME & MUSEUM

Historical items relating to the Wilder family often trickle back to the Museum, where they can be preserved and enjoyed by visitors. This year a handbag once belonging to Rose Wilder Lane was donated to the Museum and is now on display. The bag was a gift to Rose from her friends Sinclair Lewis and Dorothy Thompson, presented on their return from Nobel Prize ceremonies in 1930. During the Lewis' absence in Sweden, Rose baby-sat their young son and presided over their home in Connecticut.

When 30,000-40,000 visitors pour through the House and Museum each season, there are bound to be some interesting and unusual reactions. One mother, trying to impress her son with Pa Ingalls, showed him his picture and told tales of Pa. Not very impressed, the four year old said, "Who in the h-- is Pa?"!

Other visitors have inquired about the whereabouts of a picture of "Albert" – a completely fictional character from the TV show.

A couple in California who appreciate the Home and Museum sent a beautiful arrangement of fresh flowers to the tour guides, which was much appreciated.

The first wedding was held on the grounds of the Wilder Home! On October 21, Association employee Louise Brentlinger was married to Raymond Cass at sunset on the steps of the front porch.

Information provided by Elva Bogart

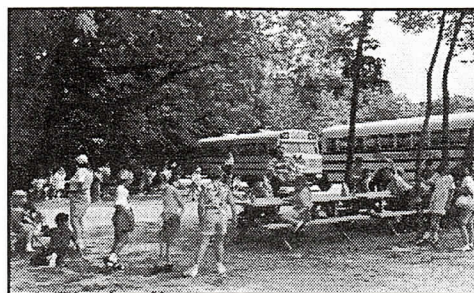
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Check pattern on front page streamer is duplicated from
flyleafs of original Harper & Brothers editions of the
Wilder books and favored by Laura.

MAINTENANCE, RESTORATION AND REPAIR: AN ONGOING PART OF LIFE ON ROCKY RIDGE

With increased acreage, additional buildings and increased demands from visitors for their welfare and enjoyment of this historic site, maintenance is an ongoing project. This is overseen by Gaylerd R. Miller.



*New picnic area across the road from
the Museum complex is
a welcome addition*



This now provides a spacious, attractive area in which to browse and select books and gift items. Warehouse space is only a few steps away, and adequate office space is now available. The country kitchen of the building is a place for employees to relax and prepare their lunches throughout the season.

The interior of the Book Shop carries out the blue motif of the Association. The exterior of the building is now painted a gray-green to differentiate it from the historic Wilder Home.

The former Gift Shop, in reality the 1930s reminder of the Wilder garage and workshop, has become additional office space for the Association. The first Association meeting and October board meeting was held here last October.

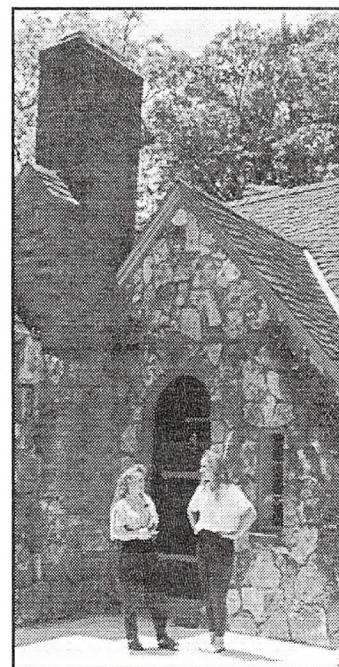
On the other side of the ridge, work is continuing on the 1928 Wilder Rock House. The house is re-emerging as a gem tucked away in the Ozark woods. Repairs and restoration are bringing back to life the many beautiful features of the house which Rose planned and gave to her parents. A walk-through open house was held to show progress on Rocky Ridge Day. Heating and cooling systems were installed later in the fall.

The historic Wilder House will receive the next major attention. Early this spring, it will be re-roofed with shake shingles. At the same time, the many layers of paint will be stripped away to avoid future chipping and "fish-scaling" effect so common on older frame construction. Repairs will be made to any surfaces, and visitors next season will be greeted by the site of the snowy white house on the green knoll.

Gaylerd Miller's task as ground's keeper was considerably enhanced this year with the purchase of a new mower which he describes as *fantastic*. He says: "I feel like Alice in Wonderland when mowing. Take a look at the grounds . . . and see if you don't think it does a good job – in half the time".

In 1995, a number of projects were started and finished. Expanded parking, with a new picnic area, was established across the road from the museum complex. A new septic system was installed and is working successfully. A more efficient AT&T phone system streamlined communications considerably.

The most visible accomplishment this year was the conversion of the former Curator's House into a much expanded Book & Gift Shop facility.



*The Rock House is
re-emerging like
a jewel in
need of polishing.
Association employees
Carrie Gray Keith
and Christi Blaine
examine the progress.*



NEWS FROM THE BOOKSTORE

One of the big sellers of this season was the *Laura Ingalls Wilder Country Cookbook*, which is so closely tied to the Rocky Ridge Farm era of the Wilders. Visitors have inquired and we are happy to say that Roger MacBride's *Rocky Ridge* series will be continuing, despite his death earlier this year. Notes, outlines and plans for remaining volumes will be used to bring this series to its completion.

The Springfield Tablet Company, which was in business when Laura wrote her books, has re-created those lined tablets and reproduced the covers, for a unique item especially for our bookstore. They are priced at \$2.75 each.

For those who have been collecting the Ashton-Drake doll series, it may be of interest to know that the last of the series, *Grace*, is now available. Most of the other molds in the series have been broken, but the Little House Bookstore still has all of them in stock – except for *Mary*. Orders for these items and any others can be made by phone or fax (417) 924-8580. Credit card orders are welcomed. The Bookstore will fill orders and answer inquiries throughout the winter.

Judy Cantell is a new employee in the Bookstore this year. She and her husband were among Mansfield fourth grade students who were invited by Laura for a party in the early 1950s. They toured the farmhouse and were served refreshments. Later, Laura visited their elementary school and had lunch with the students.

The Traveling Exhibit, especially developed for schools and libraries, has been on loan all year long. It has visited the states of Ohio,

Louisiana, Minnesota, Texas and Missouri. For further information on booking this display, contact JoAnn Gray at the Bookstore.

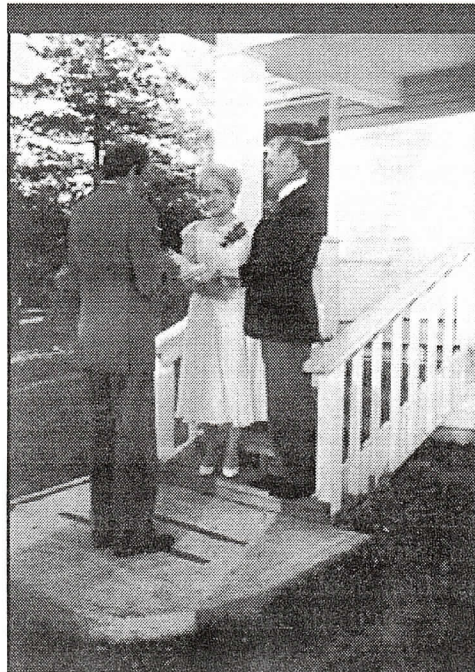


**Bookstore Manager
JoAnn Gray with one
of the "Fifty-Fifty's"**

A new project of the Association is to produce a reproduction of the *Shepherdess* – which was always a part of the Ingalls home. A composite design has been completed, based on the books' descriptions and other data, and a high-quality collectible figure will be available in 1996. Missouri artist *Cheryl Harness* has designed the prototype and she brought it along to Rocky Ridge Day where the work was enthusiastically approved by the Board of Directors. Cheryl, a longtime Wilder fan, is the author and illustrator of

such books as *Three Young Pilgrims* and *Young John Quincy*. We are excited about this forthcoming artful collectible.

Information supplied by JoAnn Gray



**A Wilder Home
wedding ceremony held
this past fall**

OAK HILL STUDENTS VISIT THE WILDER HOME

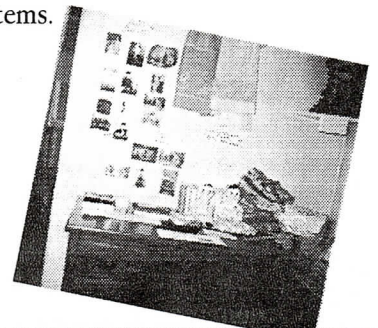
School tours are part of the Museum operation from spring to fall with many summer school programs now making the trek to the Wilder Home. Shown below is the fourth grade class of Oak Hill School, Salem, Missouri. The students collected and saved money to donate to the *Rock House* project. Their teacher, Debbie Baker, starts each school year by reading the Little House series to the class. This culminates in a "Wilder Day" attended by parents.



**Fourth Grade Class of Oak Hill R-1
School, Salem, MO
April 18, 1995**

THEN AND NOW

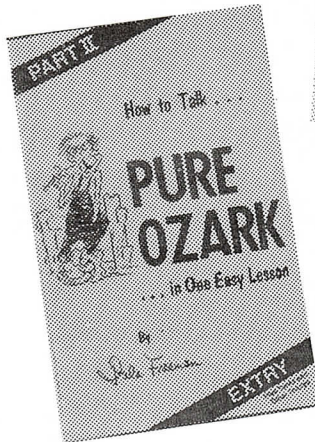
The *Gift Shop* at the Wilder Home & Museum started out in a corner of the dining room of the historic house in the late 1950s. *Little House* books, a few post cards, and Ozark crafts were sold. Today, the expanded *Little House Book Store* offers a wide array of books, teaching aids and gift items.



Our expanded Gift Shop

DEAR LAURA

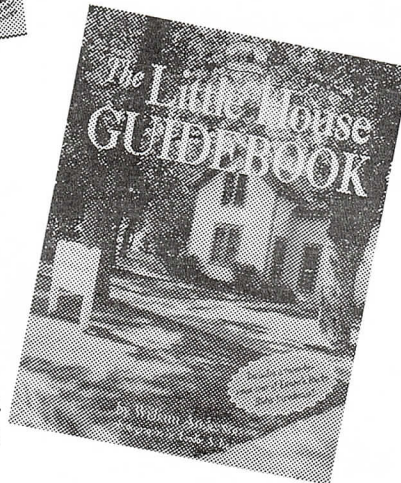
A heartwarming collection of letters, art work, poems and greetings sent to Laura in the 1930s - 1950s. These have been culled from the originals here at the Museum. \$16.95



HOW TO TALK PURE OZARK

... In One Easy Lesson. Part II
A humorous home-made "dictionary" of the Ozark language. \$3.95

Also available: Dale Freeman's
Grins, Groans & Guffaws \$3.95



THE LITTLE HOUSE GUIDEBOOK

Everything you'll need to know about touring the sites; accommodations, attractions, history and directions. Includes extensive room-by-room tour of Rocky Ridge Farmhouse. Text by William Anderson, photos by Les Kelly. Orders taken after 04/01/96 \$8.95

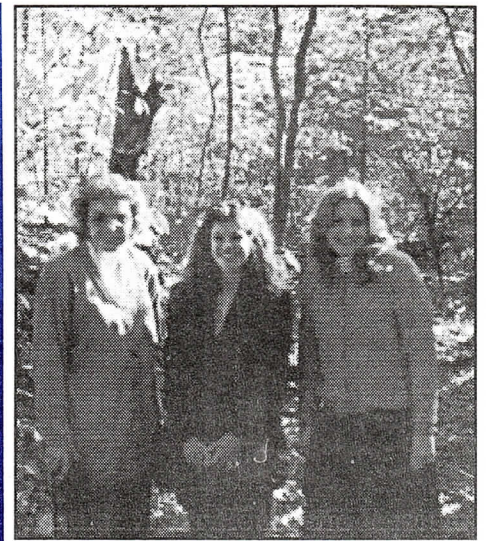
RECENT AND WORTHWHILE . . .

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL by Roger MacBride

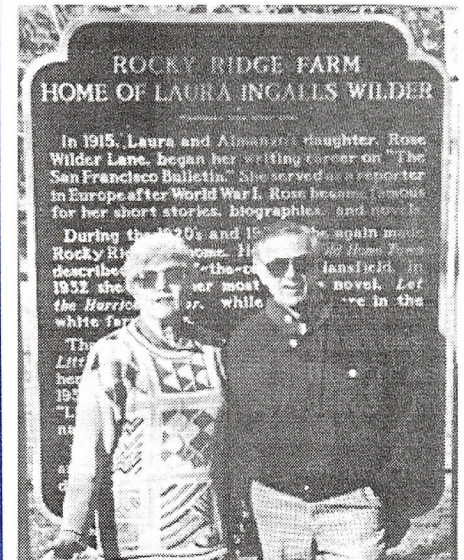
Hardcover. \$14.95

LAURA INGALLS WILDER COUNTRY COOKBOOK \$24.95

Write for a copy of our current price list.



ENJOYING THE AUTUMN WOODS
on Rocky Ridge Day are long time Association member Julie Davis of Michigan, with Laura Waskin, and actress Alison Arngnim of California.



Husband & wife author/illustrator team, Fred & Barbara Brenner, posed near the new historic sign on Rocky Ridge Day. Many tourists are using the sign as a place to pose for photos. Barbara recalled meeting Rose Wilder Lane in New York, where she was beginning her career and Rose was already an established name.

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