

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

GRACE EDGINGTON JORDAN - 1892-1985

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Grace Jordan taught English, journalism, and fiction writing at four Idaho universities, including Boise Junior College. She was a consistent free-lance journalist, created poetry, and wrote Home Below Hells Canyon which was translated into six languages.

Her books are based in Idaho, and she is credited with acquainting people throughout the nation and world with the many facets of the state. Jordan was also influential in forming the Idaho Writer's League, and helped sponsor a short story contest from which she published The Idaho Reader.

Jordan was born in Wasco, Oregon on April 16, 1892, the daughter of a country doctor and a school teacher, the Jesse Edgingtons. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in English, from the University of Oregon, along with a Phi Beta Kappa Key. Jordan free-lanced for many northwest papers after college and worked as the society editor for the Eugene Morning Register and as a correspondent for the Lewiston Tribune. She married Leonard B. Jordan on December 30, 1924, and moved to a ranch at Kirkwood Bar on the Idaho side of the Snake River in 1933 with their three children.

Jordan is best known for her first book Home Below Hells Canyon (1954), which details the lives of the Jordan family on the Snake River ranch. She and her husband Len lived on a ranch in Kirkwood Bar from 1933 until the early 1940's. Her other books include Canyon Boy (1960), The King's Pines of Idaho (1961), The Country Editor (1976), and The Unintentional Senator (1972). With the exception of The Unintentional Senator, her books concern various aspects of Idaho life that she encountered while living in the Gem State. The Country Editor is the sequel to Home Below Hells Canyon, and describes the life of a woman who edits a small-town newspaper, while The King's Pines of Idaho and Canyon Boy are novels capturing the culture and history of the Idaho landscape. Jordan also compiled and edited The Idaho Reader (1963), a collection of articles and short stories written by published and unpublished Idaho writers.

Her husband, Len B. Jordan, served in the Idaho State Senate, and was elected Governor of Idaho in 1950. Grace accompanied her husband to Boise, Idaho and served as the state's first lady from 1950 through 1954. In July 1962 Len Jordan was appointed to fill the unexpired term of U.S. Senator Henry Dworshak, and was elected to the Senate in November of that year.

In Washington, D.C., Grace Jordan wrote an extremely popular

column which ran in Idaho newspapers for over nine years, "Where Rolls the Potomac." During their nine years in Washington, D.C., Jordan also directed a Congressional wives writing seminar.

Grace Jordan's daughter wrote that her mother firmly believed in goal setting and staying with those goals. She "encouraged us, and people around her, to always look for the best in everyone your life touches. . . . she wanted everyone to live a life that may be a light unto the world around them and to encourage others to do likewise.

Jordan died September 20, 1985 in Boise, Idaho. The Boise State University Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, English Honor Society, sponsors a Grace Jordan Poetry Contest each year.

By Guila Ford and Elizabeth Jacox

(This information has not been edited.)

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