

Making History
By JAN TYLER
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Elaine Clearfield is making history by preserving the history of fellow Coloradan Frances Wisebart Jacobs — a woman who lived long before Clearfield was even born.

History is made not only by pioneers but by those who remember them. This principle explains the relationship between Frances Wisebart Jacobs and Elaine Clearfield.

More than 40 years ago, Clearfield, a journalist and community activist now in her 80s, climbed the 93 iron steps of Denver's State Capitol to view the stained glass portraits there honoring people from Colorado's early history. She was filled with wonder to find one woman among the 16 faces, Frances Wisebart Jacobs. Since she knew little of Mrs. Jacobs, she made up her mind that this woman's contributions would not be lost to the city's collective memory. The result was a book, *Our Colorado Immortals in Stained Glass*, as well as Jacobs Park, a Denver city park (where cherry trees have been planted by SGI-USA members).

Known as Colorado's first volunteer, Jacobs crusaded against poverty, disease and ignorance more than 100 years ago. She lived at a time when tuberculosis patients were flocking to the state with no plans for survival, only with the hope that its dry climate would help. Children of sock parents often roamed the streets. Jacobs established the first free kindergarten in the city, and organized leaders of different faiths to combine their efforts on behalf of the needy. She also established a free clinic where the National Jewish Center for Immunology now stands.

Jacobs' early efforts at fundraising laid the foundation of today's United Way of Denver. She died at age 49, from pneumonia she developed after delivering medicine to a sick child during a rainstorm.

Clearfield worked behind the scenes for years to make sure these two organizations recognized Jacobs as a founder. "I will stick my neck out as far as I can," says Clearfield, explaining her persistence, a quality she polished as a young journalist. At 16, working for her high school newspaper, she reported on a speech by Amelia Earhart, who told the students that women needed to be accepted as competent to fly airplanes. Later, as a 19-year-old student at the University of Iowa in the 1940s, she stood on a street corner asking passersby, "How do you feel about the Sino-Japanese war?"

Clearfield, like Jacobs, is no stranger to acts of compassion. She has raised and still cares for her 39-year-old developmentally disabled daughter, Paula. Elaine proudly shares how she and a tutor worked with Paula for two years to prepare her for a Bat Mitzvah. At age 38, Paula was the first developmentally disabled person in Denver to receive the ancient rite. This experience inspired another book by Clearfield — her autobiography, *...But You're Different*. She also has written a children's book, *A-B- Seeing Colorado*.

What was the most touching quality Clearfield can convey about Frances Wisebart Jacobs? "She was the epitome of *tsadekah* [charity]," answers Clearfield. "That is why she is called the Mother of Charity." Jacobs built a tradition of people working together for the entire community. A U.S. postage stamp will commemorate her in 2000.

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