Wilhelmine Sallie "Sally" Springmeyer Evans Dyche Zanjani

At a Glance:

Born: November 21, 1937, San Francisco, California

Died: February 23, 2018, Reno, Nevada

Married: Archie Eugene Evans, 1953;
James Glenn Dyche, 1958; Esmail Zanjani, 1963

Children: Donald Eugene Evans Springmeyer and Mariah Debra Evans

Primary Place of Residence and Work: Reno, Washoe County

Major Fields of Work: Writing, studying and teaching political science

Sally Springmeyer Zanjani
Photo from
Zanjani Family Collection

Political science professor wrote books about Western women

A descendant of the prominent Douglas County Springmeyer family, Sally Zanjani traveled extensively through her younger years, only to return to northern Nevada and contribute greatly to the canon of literature about how Nevada came to be the state it is, writing 12 books and 19 published articles.

Wilhelmine Sallie Springmeyer was born to George Springmeyer and Sallie Maria Ruperti Springmeyer in San Francisco in 1937. She was their only child.

Sally married serviceman Gene Evans as a teen in 1953 and travelled to Japan with him when he was stationed there. The stay there was the impetus for her first published article, called *Our House Smelled of Grass: A Japanese Memoir,* appearing in a 1961 issue of *Glamour* Magazine. Written after she'd returned to Reno, it gave a poignant and detailed description of the Japanese lifestyle, seen through the eyes of a young American girl.

With Gene, she had two children, Donald Eugene and Debra Maria, who later changed her name to Mariah Debra. Sally finished high school at Reno High School, attended the University of Nevada for a few years, divorced Gene, and married her second husband James Glenn Dyche in 1958. He was stationed at Stead Air Force Base, north of Reno.

In 1961, Sally, at the urging of her mother, entered a contest to write a new slogan for the Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere, Inc., or CARE. She forgot all about

entering, until there was a knock at the door informing her that she was the Nevada state winner. The prize was a two-week tour of Europe, which she took with a childhood friend and ended up staying in private homes in Rome, Athens, Istanbul, and Paris. Upon returning home, she gave presentations about her trip and CARE's work in those cities to different service organizations in northern Nevada.

In 1962, she traveled to New York University to finish her bachelor's degree in political science, graduating *magna cum laude* in 1964. While there, she represented NYU on the "Youth Wants to Know" show on the NBC television network.

By this time, she had divorced Dyche and in 1963, she wed Esmaiel Zanjani, a pre-med student at NYU. By 1967, she had a master's degree, and in 1974, she was awarded her Ph.D. in political science from NYU. She named her thesis "The Minority Party Innovation Theory: The Case of Nevada 1886-1918."

The family returned to Nevada, where Sally Zanjani eventually became an adjunct professor in political science at the University of Nevada.

Her travels throughout the state took her to Tonopah, where in 1992 she was the curator of a traveling exhibit for the Central Nevada Historical Society of Tonopah on the life of Jack Longstreet, a legendary Nevada prospector. While there, she had some adventures she did not recall fondly, telling *Reno Gazette-Journal* columnist Cory Farley about the time she got a truck stuck outside of town, only to receive no help at all for days from the sheriff's department, even after they'd been told about her disappearance. Seeing some deputies when they finally made it back to town, her husband confronted them about not coming to their rescue, and one deputy's reply was to complain about a woman who had "called too many times."

The 1970s and '80s were productive years for Sally Zanjani, when she wrote 19 published articles and three books: *The Unspiked Rail: Memoir of a Nevada Rebel,* which was about her father; *The Ignoble Conspiracy: Radicalism on Trial in Nevada,* which is said to have contributed to union radicals Morrie Preston and Joseph Smith receiving posthumous pardons; and *Jack Longstreet: Last of the Desert Frontiersmen,* which detailed the interesting story of a shunned prospector who ended up living with and even marrying several Paiutes.

In 1993, she was awarded the Western International Co-Founders Award for her fourth book, *Goldfield: The Last Gold Rush on the Western Frontier,* published by the Swallow Press of Ohio University Press. The group presenting the award had been founded 50 years before to stimulate research in the history of the American West. She was praised for bringing a real sense of the life people lived in a boom-and-bust town like Goldfield.

Her next book came in 1994, when she authored a collection of 17 Nevada history stories called *Ghost Dance Winter and Other Tales of the Frontier,* published by the Nevada Historical Society.

Sally Zanjani
NWHP Photo Collection

1997 brought publication of *A Mine of Her Own: Women Prospectors in the American West, 1850-1890* from University of Nebraska Press. At that time, she was elected vice president/president-elect of the Mining History Association. She was asked if she had mentors in her life to get where she was, and she was quoted as saying, "I'm the lone wolf who rode into the saloon and shot it out." That was the year that the Nevada Women's History Project inducted her into its Roll of Honor. Sally was also honored by the NWHP in 2013 as their Woman of Achievement.

In 1999, she was inducted into the Nevada Writers' Hall of Fame. It was noted how she so often included women as primary players in the drama of Western American history. In 2002, she received the Evans Biography Award from Utah State University for her book *Sarah Winnemucca,* which was said to have contributed to Sarah Winnemucca's statue being included as the second statue to represent Nevada in the National Statuary Hall Collection in the U.S. Capitol.

Sally Zanjani was an adviser to a Death Valley exhibit in the Autry Museum of Western Heritage in Los Angeles in 2003.

Her next book was called *Devils Will Reign: How Nevada Began,* which was published by the University of Nevada Press in 2006.

She was interviewed numerous times for newspaper and television stories about a myriad of topics in Nevada history and made presentations and speeches too many times to count.

Her notable life of studying and writing about women, mining, Native Americans, and other aspects of the history of the American West ended in February of 2018, when she was 81 years old.

Honors and Awards:

1993 Westerners International Co-Founders Award for *Goldfield*
1997 Roll of Honor, Nevada Women's History Project
1998 President, Mining History Association (first woman president)
1999 Rodman Paul Award from the Mining History Association for Outstanding Contributions to Mining History
1999 Nevada Writers Hall of Fame
2001 Westerners International Co-Founders Award for *Sarah Winnemucca*
2002 Evans Biography Award for *Sarah Winnemucca*
2013 The "Laura" from Women Writing the West
2013 Women of Achievement Award, Nevada Women's History Project

Books Published:

1981 *The Unspiked Rail: Memoir of a Nevada Rebel.* University of Nevada Press: Reno, Nevada.

1986 *The Ignoble Conspiracy: Radicalism on Trial in Nevada.* University of Nevada Press: Reno, Nevada. Nevada Studies in History & Political Science. With co-author Guy Louis Rocha.

1988 *Jack Longstreet: Last of the Desert Frontiersman.* University of Nevada Press: Reno, Nevada.

1992 *Goldfield: The Last Gold Rush on the Western Frontier.* Ohio University Press – Swallow Press: Athens, Ohio.

1994 "*Ghost Dance Winter" and Other Tales of the Frontier.* Nevada Historical Society: Reno, Nevada.

1997 *A Mine of Her Own: Women Prospectors in the American West, 1850-1950.* University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, Nebraska.

2001 *Sarah Winnemucca.* University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, Nebraska.

2002 *The Glory Days in Goldfield, Nevada.* University of Nevada Press: Reno, Nevada.

2006 *Devils Will Reign: How Nevada Began.* University of Nevada Press: Reno, Nevada.

2011 *Helen J. Stewart: First Lady of Las Vegas.* Stephens Press, LLC. Las Vegas, Nevada. With co-author Carrie Townley Porter.

2016 *From Siberia to Reno: A Memoir by Olga Kipanidze.* Nevada Publications: Reno Nevada. (Zanjani, editor)

2018 *Another Life: Tales of Nevada's Last Gold Rush.* Nevada Publications: Reno Nevada.

Researched by Patti Bernard and written by Kitty Falcone, 2025.

Sources of Information

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Ancestry.com. *New York, New York, U.S., Marriage License Indexes, 1907-2018* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2017. [Wilhelmine Sally Springmeyer to Esmaiel Dabaghcian Zanjani]

Ancestry.com. Year: *1940*; Census Place: *Reno, Washoe, Nevada*; Roll: *m-t0627-02281*; Enumeration District: *16-22.* [Welhelmine (sic) Springmeyer]

Ancestry.com. Year: *1950*; Census Place: *Reno, Washoe, Nevada*; Roll: *2301*; Page: *71*; Enumeration District: *16-50.* [Willy Springmeyer]

"Degree awarded." *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada), 22 May 1974, p10.

Dyche, Sally. "Our House Smelled of Grass: A Japanese Memoir." *Glamour Magazine*, June 1961, p.40, 61-63.

"Evans Biography Award." *Reno Gazette-Journal* (Reno, Nevada), 30 March 2002, p.6D.

Farley, Cory. "A local look back in time." *The Reno Gazette-Journal* (Reno, Nevada), 27 Jan 1995, p.1E.

"Home From Trip," *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada), 5 Oct 1953, p.9.

"Jack Longstreet Country Exhibit at Fernley Branch Library." *Mason Valley News* (Yerington, Nevada), 14 Feb 1992, Sec.2 p.7.

Land, Barbara. "Celebrating independent Western spirit." *Reno Gazette-Journal* (Reno, Nevada), 31 Jan 1988, p.5E.

"Lessons are learned when you're in the middle of nowhere." *Reno Gazette-Journal* (Reno, Nevada), 9 Feb 1992, p.1C.

"Married: Sally Springmeyer Evans and James Glen Dyche." *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada), 16 Sept 1958, p.6. [photo]

Melarkey, Alice. "Sally Springmeyer Married in Georgia." *Nevada State Journal* (Reno, Nevada), 9 Sept 1953, p.5. [photo] [Sally Springmeyer to Gene Evans]

"Miss Springmeyer Wed at New York City Rite." *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada), 3 June 1963, p.10.

"Road to Success." *Reno Gazette-Journal* (Reno, Nevada), 6 Feb 1997, p.4C.

"Reno Girl Becomes Bride in Florida Rite." *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada), 3 Sept 1953, p.9. [photo]

Speers, Mrs. Roy. "Cpl. Eugene Evans and wife and small son, Don Eugene…" *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada), 2 Aug 1954, p.6. Sec: Sparks Social Notes.

"UNR writer honored for book on Goldfield." *Reno Gazette-Journal* (Reno, Nevada), 24 Dec 1993, p.8E. [photo]

"When the Doorbell Rang." *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada), 2 March 1961, p.6.

Your Neighbor and Mine. "Mrs. Esmail Zanjani, the former Sally Springmeyer of Reno, was graduated…" *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada) 18 March 1964, p.9.

Your Neighbor and Mine. "Sally Springmeyer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Springmeyer is attending New York University…" *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada), 21 March 1962, p.10. Sec: Society and Clubs.

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