

Couple in Sisters honored

By **Jodi Schneider McNamee**
Correspondent

Sisters resident Mary Finnegan recently had two major life changes. She retired from 34 years’ service as a librarian, and moved from Corvallis to Sisters with her husband, Stev Ominski, a professional artist.

“We’ve always loved Central Oregon, and Debbie Dyer from Ponderosa Properties found us a home in Sisters and we are very happy,” Finnegan says. “We used to camp near here.”

Originally from Ohio, Finnegan earned her master’s degree in library science at Indiana University in 1979, and then married Ominski in 1985.

“After library school I moved to Portland and lived with my sister, and then met Stev in Eugene,” Finnegan explained.

They moved to Kansas for three years when Finnegan received her first position as a librarian at the University of Kansas. Then it was back to the Pacific Northwest to Portland where she worked as a librarian at the Multnomah County Library.

“I’ve worked in Oregon libraries during my career including Salem Public Library and Corvallis-Benton County Public Library.

“Every year the Oregon Library Association has an annual conference, and this year it’s in Bend,” Finnegan added. “I was nominated for the distinguished service award.”

Friday evening Finnegan received the 2016 Oregon Library Association

Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her outstanding service to Oregon libraries, staff and patrons.

“I was surprised and honored to get this award. It meant a lot since it comes from my colleagues in the Oregon Library Association,” Finnegan said.

While Finnegan worked as a librarian away from home, Ominski worked as a full-time artist at home. From huge murals to exhibits at the Portland Art Museum, Ominski has had an eclectic career.

“I have always been a full-time painter all of my life. I actually got discovered in third grade as an artist. The school I attended was in the Portland area, and they put me in an art class a couple of days a week,” Ominski said. “I just wanted to paint.”

Ominski is primarily self-taught, and began his professional career in art in the early 1970s with emphasis on landscapes. He has experimented with style and subject matter and uses a wide variety of mediums including pencil drawings, watercolor, acrylic or oils on panel or canvas.

“For years my paintings were for sale in the Kirsten Gallery in Seattle,” Ominski told *The Nugget*. “I’ve also done wall murals because I enjoy painting on a large scale.”

Ominski painted a mural for the Albany Hospital in Oregon. The Forest Mural was produced in his artist’s studio on canvas. Later the canvas was trimmed to its final size and hung like traditional wallpaper.

Over the past 10 years

Ominski has been illustrating the past by creating paintings in reference to the Missoula Ice-Age floods. His work has been included in numerous publications from the *Oregonian* to the *New York Times* to the cover of Bruce Bjornstad’s book “On the Trail of the Ice Age Floods.”

“Bruce is an incredible geologist, and we have been working together for four years. It was a meeting of the minds and a great collaboration of art and science,” Ominski said.

The book explores the origins, timing and frequency of the Ice-Age floods and describes each of the 19 geologic features that were left behind.

“I am donating a huge acrylic on canvas painting, ‘Horse Heaven Hills



PHOTO PROVIDED

Mary Finnegan receiving award in Bend with her former library director.

Mammoths,’ to the Coyote Canyon mammoth dig,” Ominski said. “The painting illustrates what the shoreline of temporary Lake Lewis in Washington may have looked like if a modern geologist were to go back in time.”

Lake Lewis was a temporary lake in the Pacific Northwest region, largely formed by the Missoula

Floods in about the 14th millennium B.C.

Ominski has a collection of paintings and drawings about the Missoula Ice Age Floods. They depict the events at the end of the last ice age when Glacial Lake Missoula broke past its ice dam and raced west to the Pacific Ocean.

His collection of paintings

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