

# Poet and essayist featured at Fireside Evening presentation

By Sue Stafford  
Correspondent

Jarold Ramsey will share his love for history and for his native Central Oregon in the third Fireside Stories Evening of the year on Thursday, March 5 at FivePine Conference Center.

The Three Sisters Historical Society hosts Ramsey, an award-winning essayist and poet, as well as a published playwright and a respected authority on traditional Native American literature.

Ramsey's talk is titled "In Praise of Doing History, Sisters Included." He describes his talk as "dealing with local history as something valuable, challenging, and important to do, with an eye on the auspicious beginnings of the Three Sisters Historical Society, and with some suggestions about their undertaking."

Ramsey grew up on a ranch at the edge of a canyon north of Madras, where his grandparents were early homesteaders. His life and writing have been shaped by his growing up between Madras farming country and the Warm Springs reservation.

In 1902, Ramsey's grandfather moved his family west from Missouri to Agency Plains north of Madras. Their farm had once been a way station for bands of Wascos, Warm Springs, and Paiutes who lived on the reservation and traveled back and forth to the Ochocos to dig camas bulbs and hunt.

As his father plowed the fields, Ramsey and his brother would follow

along behind, watching for any Indian artifacts that might turn up. According to Ramsey, that was "the root cause of my lifelong interest in Native history and traditional culture."

When Ramsey's father sold the farm on which he had been a dry-wheat farmer, he kept the family home and purchased an old sheep ranch to the east, renamed it Sky Ranch, and switched to raising Herefords.

Ramsey's higher education began at the University of Oregon, where he earned his bachelor's degree, served as editor of the *Oregon Daily Emerald*, and was elected to the national honorary Phi Beta Kappa. He then earned a Ph.D. in English from the University of Washington.

In 1965, he accepted a position with the English department at the University of Rochester in New York state, where he taught Shakespeare, modern poetry, creative writing, and American Indian literature for over 30 years. He ended his career as professor

emeritus, before he and his wife, Dorothy, moved back to the family home on Agency Plains in 2000 – the home where Ramsey grew up.

During their 35 years in Rochester, they raised three children — Kate, Sophie, and John, who now visit the ranch with their families, which include five young and very lively grandchildren.

Since returning to Oregon, he and Dorothy helped found the Madras Saturday Market. Ramsey is a past president of the Jefferson County Historical Society and has served on the editorial boards of the Oregon Historical Society and the Oregon Encyclopedia. He is also the publisher of *The Agate*, the journal of the Jefferson County Historical Society.

Ramsey has engaged local history, focusing on the homesteading and rail-building era of Central Oregon. This interest led to "New Era: Reflections on the Human and Natural History of Central Oregon." A companion book of essays, "Words Marked by a Place,"

was published in 2018.

In 2017, Ramsey received the Charles Erskine Scott Wood Distinguished Writer Award for Lifetime Achievement from Literary Arts. Other honors include the Lillian Fairchild Award, NEA and Ingram Merrill grants, the Helen Bullis Award for Poetry, and the Quarterly Review of Literature International Poetry Prize.

His books on Indian literature include "Coyote Was Going There: Indian Literature from the Oregon Country," and "Reading the Fire: The Traditional Indian Literatures of America." He has written six volumes of poetry, most recently "Thinking Like a Canyon: New and Selected Poems (2012)."

Ramsey says that his poetry grows out of his love of the austere beautiful range and hill country of his native Central Oregon, and out of a delight in the energies of colloquial speech. He likes to think of poems as ceremonies of love, praise

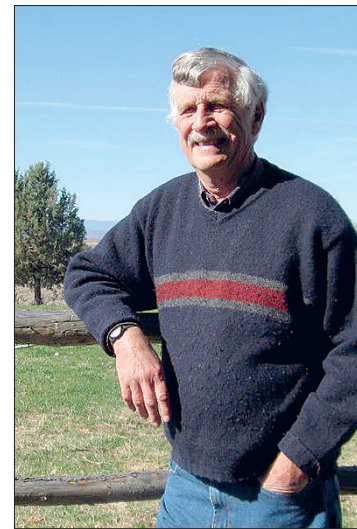


PHOTO BY DOROTHY RAMSEY

Jarold Ramsey will talk history and story at the Three Sisters Historical Society Fireside Evening on March 5 at FivePine Conference Center.

and remembrance.

A number of Ramsey's books will be available for sale the night of his presentation. Doors open at 6 p.m., with the program beginning at 7 p.m. Members of the historical society are admitted free of charge as a benefit of membership. General admission is \$10. Individual membership fees are \$25 and \$40 for couples/families.

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