

Nancy Bartlit

World War II Historian



Historian, Preservationist, and Lecturer—

Nancy is an author, oral historian, amateur photographer, and a Chautauqua lecturer listed with the N.M. Humanities Council and the Historical Society of New Mexico. A resident of Los Alamos for 53 years, she formerly was elected to the county council, serving as its Chairman.

Bartlit is known as an environmental, health, and historic preservation activist. When she was President of the Los Alamos Historical Society, she signed the papers for the Society to own the home in which J. Robert Oppenheimer lived during WWII. In May 2011, Los Alamos dedicated

bronze statues of Dr. Oppenheimer and General Leslie Groves, an attraction Nancy championed for seven years. She campaigned for Los Alamos, New Mexico, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Hanford, Washington, to become the Manhattan Project National Historical Park which was signed into law in December 2014. She currently serves on the steering committee of the Los Alamos Creative District.

Nancy graduated from Smith College, Northampton, MA, as a history major, and afterwards taught in Sendai, Japan, for two years, visiting all four main islands of Japan. She revisited Japan five times, once under the University of New Mexico Study of Japanese Business and Technology. Following completion of that program, she studied under Everett M. Rogers, a distinguished professor who headed the UNM Journalism and Communication Department and under whom she received her Master's Degree.



Author, Lecturer:

- Bartlit and Rogers co-authored *Silent Voices of World War II: When Sons of the Land of Enchantment Met Sons of the Land of the Rising Sun*, Sunstone Press: Santa Fe, 2005
- Audiences include international, regional, and statewide conferences
- Presented for veterans, teachers, high schools, adult education, docents, museums, and libraries
- Trained the Los Alamos Historical Society's docents in June, 2015
- Trained the New Mexico History Museum docents in July, 2015
- On June 2nd she visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Japan for the fourth time
- Has visited WWII military battle sites in the Pacific theater, including Tinian Island

Sources interviewed for book:

- New Mexico National Guardsmen on the Bataan Death March in the Philippines, and later POWs
- Navajo Code Talkers from NM and AZ who fought as U.S. Marines in the Pacific
- Japanese-American survivors of the Santa Fe Internment Camp
- Manhattan Project in Los Alamos scientists, SEDs, Marine and Naval officers

Armed with a vision and the passion to tell the stories we never knew...

- To suit the occasion, Bartlit creates from the following subjects (pages 2 & 3) a unique talk which suits the interest and background of the group to whom she is addressing.

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Nancy R. Bartlit

Currently Available Lectures—

Nancy enjoys telling the stories of WWII and how New Mexico and New Mexicans helped to shorten the War in the Pacific. Although a large number of New Mexicans served in the military by the end of 1945, her lectures focus on the four groups whose history is required by the New Mexico legislature for New Mexico social studies and history teachers to teach. “Silent Voices of WWII” is an approved historical supplement for use in all New Mexico classrooms.

Her continuing travels within New Mexico, the Western states and abroad in the Pacific, or in Europe, before and after the publication of Rogers’ and her book has increased her understanding of these events. As a longtime educator, Bartlit gives a PowerPoint presentation of archival and present-day photographs as well as artifacts she has collected, such as the black sand from Iwo Jima’s beach and white sand from the runways on Tinian Island from which the Enola Gay took off to drop Little Boy on Japan 70 years ago.

She can present an overview of all four sections of “Silent Voices of WWII” or the invitee can select one section. She focuses on the similarities and differences between the American customs and culture and the Japanese culture and approach to decision-making. This knowledge helps persons understand the cruel actions of Japanese guards to American Prisoners of War (the Bataan Death Marchers) and the resistance to surrender after two atomic bombs had leveled two Japanese cities, despite the hundreds of B-29 Superforts destroying other cities on the same day.

Explaining “When Sons of the Land of Enchantment Met Sons of the Land of the Rising Sun”

- 1. New Mexico National Guard.** New Mexico’s guard were the first to be federalized and selected to defend Clark Air Force Base north of Manila because of their skills with rifles and anti-aircraft. Bartlit has visited Clark Base, Manila, and taken (by bus) the trip of the Bataan Death March from Mariveles on the tip of Bataan to the two prisoner of war camps. She has photos from archives, interviews, and her trip with veterans and other historians.
- 2. The Navajo Code Talkers.** Nancy explains the Navajo Code Talkers’ indispensable role in the Pacific Theater and how coded language continues to pervade our lives. Nancy and Ev Rogers interviewed many Navajo Code Talkers as well as Mary and Zonnie Gorman. She attended the ceremony in Window Rock, AZ when hundreds of NCT or their heirs were honored with silver medals from Congress. She tells the history of the development of the Code, how it was used in the Pacific, teaches the code translations, and, once the secret was told, describes the activities of the NCT association to tell their story and raise funds for scholarships for Navajo youth.
- 3. The Santa Fe Detainment/Internment Camp.** Life in the Santa Fe Detainment/Internment Camp for males of Japanese descent. Her lecture has a multitude of archival photos Nancy has collected for her books and talks, including traveling to the Japan Cultural Center in Honolulu to do research. These photos are not easily accessed. She has visited many of the WRA camps for families (CA, ID, UT, CO) and was a guest speaker with a Santa Fe Camp survivor at Manzanar, one of the largest camps during the War. Bill has given her his suitcase and his father’s duffel bag which they used to travel between camps. An off-shoot of this talk is one describing the controversy before the Santa Fe City Council when a citizen’s committee asked to place a stone boulder and plaque to mark the location of the camp in 2002. She will describe what life was like in the Santa Fe camp and how it differed from the WRA camps in other states.

Nancy R. Bartlit

- 4. The Manhattan Project.** How New Mexico assisted the successful development of the Manhattan Project with Los Alamos as its headquarters, Santa Fe as its gateway, White Sands as its testing ground, Kirkland Air Force Base as its center for training and supplies, and UNM Engineering Department to assist the design of the B-29 needed to fit the anticipated shapes of the atomic bombs. Bartlit has lived in Los Alamos for 53 years and before that, two years in Sendai, Japan. She has visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki Peace Museums several times.
- 5. “Was the Second Atomic Bomb Necessary?”** Besides teaching about Los Alamos and how the Manhattan Project (named after Manhattan Island in New York) came to reside “on the Hill,” she explains the events among the Japanese decision-leaders after both atomic weapons were dropped. She further explains why it took Japan six days to surrender. Japanese military decision-making is so very different from American that students and history-buffs will be surprised to learn of these events, the Longest Day in Japan’s history.
- 6. “Silent Voices of World War II.”** In this lecture Bartlit explains the four stories and how they are intertwined with the ironies of war. She explains cultural conflicts or misunderstandings which influence behavior and how the war scars continue to impact international relationships among Japan, Asian neighbors, and America.



Nancy presenting a seminar for the Los Alamos Historical Society docents: “The Nagasaki Bomb and the Japanese Surrender.”

Bartlit teaching the four stories in Silent Voices of WWII to ninth graders at the Amy Biehl High School in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

