

Loveland feminist donates life's work to Alice Paul Institute in New Jersey

The book collection and research of Margaret Zierdt, of Loveland, is moving to the Alice Paul Institute in Mount Laurel, N.J.

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Margaret Zierdt, left, her daughter Carolyn Taylor, center, and son-in-law Chuck Riblett, pose for a photo Wednesday at Zierdt's Loveland home as a moving company packs and moves her collection of writings and books on the feminist movement and feminist issues. The collection is going to the Alice Paul Institute in New Jersey. (*Jenny Sparks / Loveland Reporter-Herald*)

Margaret Zierdt, of Loveland, has dedicated over 40 years of her life to the study of women's studies and gender equality.

"I was shocked by the number of books, the writings and the speeches she gave that were in the basement in the folders," said Carolyn Taylor, Zierdt's daughter.

"It's amazing, 17th and 18th century, witches, the 400s to the 1200s ... and then she just took such an interest in the earliest mathematicians, like Hypatia, and how women have been contributing forever and not recognized," she said.

The collection of 650 books, stacks of periodicals and Zierdt's research and writings are being transported from Zierdt's home in Loveland to join the library of the [Alice Paul Institute](#) in Mount Laurel, N.J. The institute is in the childhood home of Paul, a key figure in the women's suffrage movement in the U.S. and women's rights activist. It is a nonprofit to continue Paul's work for gender equality through educational and leadership programs.

"The beautiful circle here is when [\(Zierdt\) marched four years ago](#) in Washington, D.C., in the (Centennial Woman Suffrage Parade), it was Alice Paul who was the prime organizer of that march (in 1913)," said Taylor.

Zierdt is now 96 years old. She taught first grade in Montgomery County, Md., retiring in 1981. Zierdt's interest in women's studies and gender equality started while she was pursuing her master's degree at the University of Hawaii in the early '70s.

"It was her adviser, Dr. Ann Keppel, who just lit a spark for mom's interest," Taylor said. Zierdt was asked to make a connections between the assigned readings from early feminist writers and what she saw in her daily life as a teacher.



Margaret Zierdt, far right, walks with the National Women's History Project during the Suffrage March Centennial on March 3, 2013, in Washington, D.C. (*Special to the Reporter-Herald*)

With her research and interest, Zierdt served on commissions focused on women's issues, gave speeches, and would hold in-service courses for teachers in her area.

Zierdt moved to Loveland in 2010 to be closer to her daughter and son-in-law. In recent years, she has had strokes that have limited her speech.

Zierdt's collection found its way to the institute through a fundraiser auction for the [National Women's History Project](#), in Santa Rosa, Calif.

"Mom had been on the board of directors for the National Women's History Project for some years," said Taylor.

With the help of her husband, Chuck Riblett, Taylor had made a spreadsheet of all of Zierdt's books and periodicals. The spreadsheets were included in the auction. Two women, Roberta Francis and Barbara Haney Irvine, founding president of the Alice Paul Institute, decided to help the project and find a place for the books.

"They collected \$1,500 and asked the Alice Paul Institute in Mount Laurel, N.J., if they would like them," Taylor said. Zierdt is paying to have the collection moved.

"For how much she loves the books and how much we love the books, it was worth the money," said Taylor.

The books will go to the Barbara Haney Irvine Library with faceplates with her name on them.



Margaret Zierdt goes for a walk Feb. 28, 2013 near the Loveland Public Library in downtown Loveland. (*Loveland Reporter-Herald file photo*)

Irvine has known Zierdt for many years through the Zierdt's work on National Women's History Project.

"I also know of her work to preserve and highlight women's history, and her strong support for advancing the rights of women in our country and beyond. Margaret's collection represents her life's work and deserves to remain intact in a location that will use it to continue those things which Margaret supports," said Irvine, of Cinnaminson, N.J, via email.

She felt that Zierdt's collections would go to good use.

"The Alice Paul Institute is in the unique position of working both with scholars who are researching Alice Paul and the 20th century women's movement and young women who are just beginning to learn about women's history and its importance in their lives. Margaret's collection will be a wonderful resource for both populations," she said.

Although Irvine hasn't seen all of Zierdt's research and writings, she was thrilled when Taylor offered to include them.

"They will show the kind of issues and questions that someone like Margaret would be concerned about over the last 40 to 50 years. A very important addition," Irvine said.

Lucienne Beard, executive director for Alice Paul Institute, said the collection will help to expand their resources.

"(Zierdt's) collection is going to really build up our collection on women's issues and some of the history as well," said Beard.

Originally the agreement was to take just the books, but Beard quickly accepted the offer to take the periodicals and research. As Beard pointed out, a lot of writings were lost from the early feminist figures, including Paul and other women of that time. The addition of Zierdt's research and papers may help future generations of leaders.

"We save what we value and future generations value what is saved," said Beard.

For more information on the National Women's History Project, go to nwhp.org. To learn more about the Alice Paul Institute, go to alicepaul.org.

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Mike Minniear with Exodus Moving & Storage, packs books Wednesday, from Margaret Zierdt's collection of writings and books on the feminist movement and feminist issues. The collection is going to the Alice Paul Institute in New Jersey. (*Jenny Sparks / Loveland Reporter-Herald*)