



THE RIO BLANCO COUNTY PIONEERS ASSOCIATION  
proudly confers the  
**Spirit of the Pioneers Award**  
upon  
**Ethel Stone Starbuck**

Ethel Stone Starbuck was born on a Dairy Farm in Hutchinson, Minnesota, August 31, 1917. Her Father (Arthur Mark Stone) died of TB when Ethel was 4. The entire dairy herd was slaughtered by the health enforcement agency. The doctor insisted that Ethel's mother (Ada Bell Stone) pick up her three children and move to a dry climate because of TB exposure. There was no Social Security, and her mother was too proud to ask for a "Window's Pension." They moved to Colorado, and Ethel's mother obtained a teaching job near Briggsdale. In 1924 they moved to Agate. In 1927 Ethel's diligence earned her a Gold Star Pupil award in Kiowa, Colorado. Sandstorms, blizzards, wildfires, wild horse bands, and rattlesnakes threatened this struggling family.

The good times of 1927 and 1928 were replaced by the black clouds of the dust bowl days, the crash of 1929, and grasshopper plagues. Days were tough for this pioneering family. Bread lines and fire sales, and her mother's and her sister's teaching jobs, saw them through. Ethel's quest for education was unstoppable. She graduated valedictorian from West High School in Denver at the age of 16. At the age of 19, she received her bachelor's degree from what is now Colorado Northern University. She started her teaching career at the age of 21—Hayden and then Adams State College. Later she received her M.A. at Western State College.

Ethel Starbuck came to Meeker in 1941 as Coach Paul Starbuck's new bride. In 1941, she taught the Fall Term at the Rio Blanco Rural School. After launching her two children, Paula and Gene, she began her teaching career as business and commercial studies teacher at Meeker High School in 1952. For 30 years she was a master instructor (tough at times) who challenged her students and prepared them well.

She was one of the first instructors in Colorado to bring the computer to her classes. She retired in 1983. She belonged to several professional organizations and helped improve vocational education in Colorado. She took part in many activities including the Methodist Church choir and Women's Society, PEO, and The Meeker women's softball team. She belonged to the Meeker Golf Association and scored the first hole-in-one ever at the local course. She was an avid photographer, willing to share as she took classes and strived for perfection. As major supporter of the Meeker Cowboys sports teams, she took photos, cheered enthusiastically, and even traveled to nearby towns to prepare scouting notes for Coach Starbuck. She and Paul shared 53 years of married life, and as a pair touched many lives until he passed away in 1994.

As a partner of Joe Sullivan's for the next 20 years, she supported many community activities including the Rio Blanco County Historical Society and the Milk Creek Battlefield projects. Together, they served as Marshalls for the annual July 4<sup>th</sup> parade.

Part of her Philosophy of Education describes why she was so loved. She believed that "education should prepare the individual for a lifetime of growth." "Education should encourage the formation of constructive attitudes which contribute to feelings of worth as an individual and as a member of society. These attitudes should foster belief in ethical conduct, moral integrity, and good citizenship."

Today she is very proud of her past students. These students exhibit the qualities that she taught and those qualities that she found so dear. The Spirit of the Pioneers Award was created for the purpose of honoring those hardy and determined individuals and families who exemplify special and long-term servant leadership representative of the early day pioneers who traveled in challenging, trying adversity to ultimately settle in the White River Valley. Homesteads, ranches, businesses, and professional services were established by those courageous men, women and children who settled into this wonderful country and contributed to the creation of our community. Their enviable and proud legacy lives on in the pioneer descendants, some of whose families have remained throughout many generations in Rio Blanco County.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and seal this First Day of June, 2019  
Sam and Ginny Love, Bill and Karen Stick, Co-Presidents