

Dorothy Knop was the collector and contributor of a majority of the Museum's ethnic dress collection.

Dorothy's mission in life began with dreams of travel as a young wife and mother in Chicago in the 1930s. When Dorothy's youngest child left home to become a Pan Am stewardess, Dorothy's dream became a reality. As she traveled she fell in love with the ethnic dress of the native populations of the lands she traveled in. She became aware of the fact that in some areas particularly Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and parts of Central and South America and Africa, clothing worn was very much like that worn centuries ago.

With the help of museum curators, and knowledgeable tour guides, Dorothy began to collect representative examples from the countries she traveled in. Mrs. Knop said; "The story of mankind is written in the clothing that has developed because of the climate of an area and the education and lifestyle of the people." She sensed that in modern times younger generations were beginning to turn their backs on tradition and that some of this clothing heritage may soon be lost; turning her collecting into a new, more urgent mission.

After donating the bulk of her collection to the West Valley Art Museum in the early '90's, she became an invaluable volunteer asset to the fledgling Museum, often helping "dress" an exhibition. In 1993-94 the largest exhibit of ethnic dress ever held by the Museum took place, with Dorothy assisting then curator George Palovich set the show. In 1997 a large portion of that exhibition traveled to Sky Harbor Airport. Dorothy again was called on to assist in setting the costumes for the show.

Amidst all this activity, she was also able to write a book about her travels and the marvelous collection. Entitled "Collections and Recollections", the book recounts her adventures in seeking out and finding authentic examples of peoples' native dress and considerable related history. The book is a rare combination of historical accuracy and chatty stories of travel.

In her later years, though limited to only local forays, she often visited the Museum to visit her treasures and reminisce about ethnic dress.