

WOMEN OF WINSLOW



Zada Jones Purdy

(born 1894, died 1988)

*“If death be only half as sweet as life, I will not fear. I’ll shed no tear,
Nor ask my friends to weep; If death be only half as sweet as life,
I will not fear to go. I love life so!” – Zada Purdy*

Zada Purdy was a dedicated teacher, community leader, and vivacious personality.

Zada Evangeline Jones was born on December 1, 1894, in the coal-mining town of Bicknell, Indiana. Her mother was left to raise Zada and her six siblings when her father died in 1902. The only one of the Jones children to graduate from high school, she began her teaching career in 1914 after attending Indiana State Teachers College.

In 1916, Zada moved to Prescott, Arizona, and entered a sanitarium after being diagnosed with tuberculosis at the age of 22. She fully recovered and stayed in Arizona to teach until 1921, when she returned to Indiana to marry John Purdy.

The Purdys moved to Winslow that year so John could work for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway. Zada worked as a substitute teacher and with the P.T.A. while they raised their two daughters, Rosemary and Suzanne. She continued her education by attending summer school at Arizona State Teachers College at Flagstaff (now Northern Arizona University).

The outbreak of World War II brought teacher shortages to Arizona and professional challenges for Zada. She left home to teach at the one-room Manila School, located seventeen miles outside of Winslow. During the bitter period when Japanese-Americans were forced to relocate to internment camps, Zada was lived and taught children at the Leupp Isolation Center, almost forty miles from town, where most of her students were children of camp guards.

Despite their difficulties, these experiences renewed Zada’s desire to sharpen her teaching skills. She enrolled in the University of Arizona in Tucson when daughter Suzanne was in her senior year. Mother and daughter studied, interned, and earned their bachelor’s degrees together, both graduating in the Class of 1947.

Zada was involved with several sororities including Pi Lamda Theta (academic) and Beta Sigma Phi (social). She was a leader of two fraternal service organizations, the Order of the Eastern Star (Worthy Grand Matron of Arizona) and the PEO Sisterhood (two-time president), a philanthropic educational organization. She was a member of the Winslow Women’s Club for sixty-three years and served as President of the Arizona Federation of Women’s Clubs from 1958 to 1960. She was listed in the *Who’s Who of American Women* in 1961.

Always interested in the healthy development of girls, Zada worked as Mother Advisor for the Order of Rainbow for Girls. She was named Arizona’s Mother of the Year in 1958 by the Arizona branch of American Mothers, Inc. She was also a mother with a sense of adventure, visiting her daughters and their families in Egypt, Greece, Iran, Japan, and Saudi Arabia.

An engaging and humorous speaker, Zada was constantly in demand as a program chair and mistress of ceremonies. As a lay speaker for Winslow’s United Methodist Church, she would “pack the house” whenever she substituted for the minister. Also a talented storyteller, she eventually tried her hand at writing them and succeeded in having several published.

Zada Purdy died in Winslow in January 1988, at the age of 93.



Top: Nineteen-year-old Zada learned to ride when she taught school in Mayer, near Prescott.

Middle: Zada, top right, with her class at the Leupp Detention Camp, circa 1942

Bottom: Zada, second from left, with Frona Parr Drumm to her right, and two other ladies dressed for an event