



# The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 40, Issue 4

July - August 2014

## Calendar

### Sunday, July 13

Swap Meet,  
8:00 AM to 1:00 PM,  
Heritage Junction; see page 8

### Monday, July 28

Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 PM Saugus Station

### Friday, August 1

Deadline for the September-  
October *Dispatch*

### Sunday, August 10, and every second Sunday

Swap Meet,  
8:00 AM to 1:00 PM,  
Heritage Junction; see page 8

### Monday, August 25

Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Check [www.scvhistory.org](http://www.scvhistory.org) for  
other upcoming events.

Articles and inquiries  
regarding *The Dispatch* may  
be made to 661 254-1275

## President's Message

by Alan Pollack



**H**ave we told  
you lately  
that we love you?  
We're talking about  
you, the valued  
members of the  
Santa Clarita Valley  
Historical Society.  
We want to take  
this opportunity to

thank you all so much for your continued support over the years, and for helping us keep this noble ship afloat. The vast majority of the income we receive each year comes from members just like you by way of your membership dues. Without your help, we would be unable to maintain the 50 acres of Heritage Junction, a most valuable treasure for the community of Santa Clarita. Without you, we could not put on interesting events, purchase and maintain artifacts of importance to our local history, nor maintain

and repair the marvelous historic buildings at the Junction. To those who have signed up or renewed your memberships already this year, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. If you have yet to renew your membership, or if you are new to us and would like to become a member, we sincerely hope that you will take the opportunity to sign up or renew, and support your Historical Society. We really need your help to carry on our mission as the repository of local history for Santa Clarita. Thanks again everyone!

### SANTA CLARITA HISTORY BUFFS ON FACEBOOK

If you have not checked out and joined the Santa Clarita History Buffs group on Facebook, you are missing out on some cutting edge historical research on the SCV, and the exciting interchange between many Santa Clarita historians and the 1200-plus members of the group. Thanks to Leon Worden, and intrepid researchers like Lauren

*Continued on Page 2*



## President's Message

*Continued from page 1*

Parker, Tricia Lemon Putnam, Stan Walker, Ron Kraus, Jason Brice, Don Ray, Ann Stansell, Bob Buechner, Sarah Brewer Thompson, and others, we are learning much never-before-known information about our local history, correcting many "facts" that really weren't, and discovering many new photos and documents from our past. Following is some new knowledge that we have shared on Santa Clarita History Buffs.

In September, 1875, the ranch known as Lyons Station was for sale. Perhaps the Lyon brothers had figured out that the coming of the Southern Pacific Railroad would wipe out their business, since the tracks would bypass their station. For sale were 381 acres, 200 of which were deemed suitable for growing oranges, lemons, limes, and other tropical fruits. The advertisement boasted of numerous flowing streams able to irrigate 1000 acres; two houses, with one containing nine rooms, all furnished; one barn and stable with storage facilities for 800 tons of hay; and 6000 cords of the best firewood. They must have been fairly desperate to sell, as they offered a bargain if applied for before the 1st of October, 1875!

The St. Francis Dam flood in 1928 wiped three entire school districts out of existence. First was the Bee School District, located near Powerhouse #2, about 1.5 miles below the dam site. Thirteen of the fifteen students of the district perished, along with all of their parents. Only one student was left in the San Francisquito School district, about 30 miles from the dam site. Their only teacher, along with 12 students and two school trustees, were lost in the flood. The Saugus District lost ten of its eighteen students.

One of the heroes of the dam disaster turned out to be a dog. Don, a dog belonging to Chick Chivvis of Pasadena, received a gold medal from the Pasadena Post for saving the lives of Mrs. Chivvis and her two children during the flood.

Tony Harnischfeger, the St. Francis damkeeper and one of the first to die in the dam disaster, was not the first one in his family to meet with tragedy. His father, Anton Harnischfeger, a Deputy LA Constable in Garvanza, was killed in March, 1889, when he was shot in the head just above his eye with a revolver in the hands of B.F. Sprague. Sprague was arrested for murder.

Cowboy movie star Hoot Gibson was broke as of September, 1933. Gibson plead poverty before a court commissioner when he was summoned for examination as to his assets and ability to pay a \$2500 judgment obtained on a promissory note in December, 1928. Gibson stated that he owned a one-third interest in Hoot Gibson, Inc. which owned the Hoot Gibson Rodeo Arena, later the Saugus

Speedway The arena had debts of \$60,000, some of which were past due. Gibson had not worked in a movie for several months, he was behind on his automobile payments, and an airplane he had recently sold cracked up in Mexico before it was paid for. Was Gibson a spendthrift, poor investor, or did they not pay actors well in the thirties? At any rate, Gibson sold out the rodeo arena to Paul Hill in 1934.

In fact, September, 1933 was an especially bad month for Mr. Gibson. That month, screen actress Sally Eilers and motion picture director Harry Joe Brown were married in Yuma, Arizona. The previous month, Miss Eilers had been granted a Mexican divorce from Mr. Gibson in Chihuahua, Mexico. The two had been married at Gibson's rodeo arena in 1930. They separated and were reconciled several times before the divorce was granted. Those Hollywood-style marriages never happen today, now do they?

John C. Haskell, pioneer, wealthy ranch owner, and namesake of Haskell Canyon, dropped dead on a restaurant stool on Main Street in July, 1909, while waiting for lunch to be served. The cause of his death was a pulmonary hemorrhage.

Castaic lawman and gunslinger William Wert Jenkins did not die of gunshot wounds sustained in the long-running range war with William Chormicle over land claims in Castaic. In reality, he perished quietly at age 81 on October 19, 1916, of a cerebral embolism. Chormicle also died of natural causes when he succumbed to chronic kidney disease on March 25, 1919. The two primary participants in the bloody range war ironically survived the bullet fest in Castaic. Chormicle was buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale. The Jenkins-Chormicle land feud, which had been fought on the range and in the courts since 1887, was supposedly settled in October, 1904, at least in court, when Chormicle was awarded 1600 acres of Castaic land previously claimed by Jenkins. Attorney J. L. Murphy was quoted in the Los Angeles Times: "The case has cost far more than the land is worth, but it was a fight for principle with the settlers that could not be given up when once undertaken." However, Chormicle's troubles did not end with the settlement. In September, 1910, he was sued for slander by 8 year old Castaic schoolgirl Mary Cook. She asked for damages of \$25,000.

George Campton, Newhall's postmaster and first general store owner, was awakened in his house and store at 1:00 AM on March 4, 1882, by an explosion, which resulted in the whole building burning down. Campton and family barely escaped with their lives as the building was reduced to ashes minutes after they got out. The fire was thought to be the work of an incendiary in the rear of the store and soon reached a store of gunpowder. There was no water around,

*Continued on Page 5*

## What Do We All Have In Common? by Rachel Barnes



The days where any average citizen could easily identify the five people in this picture are numbered. Just in case you do not recognize these smiling faces (okay: three are smiling), they are, from left to right:

*Will Rogers* (1879 - 1935), a famous ropester, comedian, movie star, and newspaper columnist who was beloved for his sarcastic wit and “everyman” speak. He died in a plane crash in Barrow, Alaska, in 1935.

*Amelia Earhart* (1897 - 1937), the renowned aviatrix who became the first woman to pilot a plane across the Atlantic and Pacific, and was attempting to be the first lady to pilot a plane around the world at the equator, when she disappeared in the South Pacific.

*Wyatt Earp* (1848 - 1929), the famous Old West “lawman” who participated in the Shootout at the OK Corral in Tombstone, AZ. After his rather colorful life on the Western frontier, where he did work as a buffalo hunter, saloon owner, and brothel manager, he relocated to Los Angeles and became a consultant on early Western films.

*Uncle Sam* (1917 - ), the iconic image of the United States of America, Uncle Sam was in fact created by a famous cartoonist named James Montgomery Flagg (1877 - 1960) during World War I. That recognizable caricature of Uncle Sam, with the finger jabbing right at the viewer, is a self-portrait of the artist.

*Maurice Chevalier* (1888 - 1972), another famous movie star from the 1920's and 1930's, also known for his musical numbers, especially *Thank Heaven for Little Girls*. He died just two years after singing the title track for the 1970 Disney animated film, *The Aristocats*.

And what do these guys all have in common?

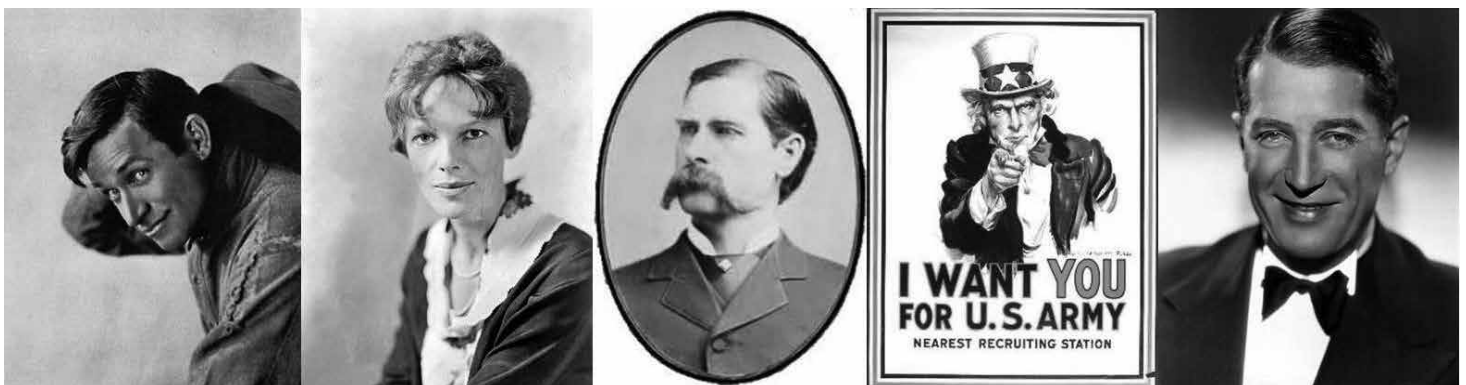
Our very own movie star, Bill Hart of course! An international celebrity of his caliber would call other international celebrities close friends, and that is the relationship Hart had with these five individuals. In certain cases, it is unclear when and how he met them. Will Rogers, for example: The two possibly met during Hart's Liberty Bond Drive of 1917 – 1918, when Rogers was performing in New York in the Ziegfeld Follies.

Hart may have met Wyatt Earp on the set of a film. Or he may have met Earp after the former lawman contacted the movie star in 1920, asking for help in making an authentic biopic. Even in his own lifetime, Earp was becoming a legend, and he spent the rest of his life trying to set the record straight ... with his new buddy Hart's help.

In other cases, the stories of the how they met Hart are among the more entertaining nuggets in the chronicle of these friendships. Let's take James Montgomery Flagg. The renowned cartoonist also made short films, and a particularly comedic gem of his was the 1918 flick, *The Hart of the Dreadful West*. Poking fun at the most famous cowboy movie star in the world - guess who that might have been - Hart's friends tried to dissuade him from seeing the film. Hart insisted, however, and he was so tickled by Flagg's flamboyant portrayal of him, he reached out to the artist/ comedy film director, and they became good friends, a friendship that lasted until Hart's death in 1946.

Amelia Earhart is another charming anecdote. Famous stunt pilot Paul Mantz was flying over the SCV testing one of Earhart's Vegas, and never one to shy away from the exciting, he started dive bombing on a glorious, white, hilltop home. “He d---n near shook the bricks out of the chimney,” Hart grumbled, since said glorious, white, hilltop home was his own. Hart filed a complaint - having no idea

*Continued on Page 5*



# Rancho Camulos Museum presents “Ramblings at the Rancho”

An Historic Presentation & Music Series

**Saturday, July 19 - High Noon:**

## THE VICTORIAN STRIP



Can't stand the heat? Come to the air conditioned Rancho Camulos schoolhouse for some edu-tainment. Ever

wonder what those Victorian ladies wore under those fancy gowns? Dorothea Phelan as Mrs. Horace Swazey, and Joyce Nielsen as Phoebe, her “maid”, will educate and entertain you about Victorian clothing of the late 1800's and present a spoof on the revealing removal of the many layers of the clothing worn at that time.

The \$5.00 suggested donation also includes a docent- led

historic tour. Reservations are not required but are appreciated.

Rancho Camulos Museum and National Historic Landmark is on Highway 126, 2 miles East of Piru and 10 miles west of the I-5 at the Newhall Ranch Road exit in Santa Clarita, and it will be open for tours at 1:00, 2:00, and 3:00 PM. See [www.ranchocamulos.org](http://www.ranchocamulos.org) for more information about the museum. Bring a picnic basket and blanket and enjoy where the history, myth, and romance of old California still linger...

### School Tours

by Barbara Martinelli

The 2013-2014 School Tour Season is at an end, and once again we had a wonderful group of volunteers helping out. Over a total of 32 days we served 200 Kindergarteners and first graders, 875 third graders, 73 other young people (brownies, cub scouts, home schoolers, youth groups, etc), and 49 adults (Red Hat Ladies, DAR, etc)

We couldn't have done it without the following Historical Society Docents: Bob Feder, Francesca Gastil, Harold Hicks, Sean O'Connell, Brent Roberts, and especially RuthAnne

Murthy and Debra Martin.

Once again the Questers turned out in force for most of those tours. Thanks to them, the students experienced everyday life in the 1880's and 1930's. Helping us this year: Helen Barlow, Joan Collette, Ann Grayson, Fritz Grayson, Cynthia Harris, Roberta Harris, Libby Hinze, Judy Holland, Pat Horanburg, Sandra Knopf, Dee Roche, Louise Schultz, Jenewyn Van Wie, and especially Linda Hinz, who organized it all.

## What Do We All Have In Common?

*Continued from page 3*

the plane in question actually belonged to the famous aviatrix - and when word reached Earhart, she and Mantz packed in and headed out to the Horseshoe Ranch to apologize. A friendship was born, and it lasted until Earhart's disappearance in 1937. In fact, Hart wrote a letter to his dear friend in February of that year, just 4 months before she was set to embark, inviting her to come visit the Horseshoe Ranch if she needed time to relax before her epic journey.

Regardless of how Hart met his good friends, many of them did visit him at the Horseshoe Ranch, and traces of their presence are still seen in the collections today. The two cowboys standing side by side in that picture in the Foyer? That is Hart with buddy, Maurice Chevalier, taken when the latter visited the former ... and borrowed the cowboy gear from his friend for the photo! That Alaskan Kodiak bear skin rug in the Living Room? A gift from Will Rogers. That American flag with a scrawl across the front? A gift from Amelia Earhart. Several of the astounding paintings that grace the walls of the home? Completed by James Flagg.

So if you haven't had a chance to come up the hill to the Mansion and meet some of Hart's good buddies, it's never too late!

## President's Message

*Continued from page 2*

and nothing could be done to save the property. The \$10,000 building, only \$4000 of which was insured, was deemed a total loss.

The majestic Southern Hotel, built by Henry Mayo Newhall, burned down in October, 1888. According to hotel clerk John Matter, the fire was caused by a defective flue when the hotel's dining room fireplace was lit for the first time that year. The hotel was being run at the time by Newhall family member J. O. Newhall. It was never rebuilt, but was replaced later by what is known as the second Southern Hotel. Two months earlier, the Southern Pacific depot at Lang's Station in Soledad Canyon also burned to the ground. That was a bad year for historic structures in the SCV!

These are but a few of the historical tidbits to be found on Santa Clarita History Buffs. Check it out the next time you are on Facebook!

## Thanks to those who volunteered since the last issue of the *Dispatch*:

### Weekend Docents and Open-House Volunteers:

Laurie Cartwright	Debra Martin
Linda Casebolt	Barbara Martinelli
Sioux Coghlan	RuthAnne Murthy
Sarah Floyd	Sean O'Connell
Francesca Gastil	Alan Pollack
Harold Hicks	Brent Roberts
Anna Kroll	Gordon Uppman
Theresa Marg	

Interested in becoming a docent? Visit our website at [www.scvhs.org](http://www.scvhs.org)

### Those who open and close for the docents:

Linda Casebolt	Barbara Martinelli
Duane Harte	Cathy Martin
Ed Marg, Jr.	Alan Pollack

### Weekend Questers and Open-House Volunteers\*

Linda Cornelia	Louise Schultz
Fran Grayson	Kate Waterson
Fritz Grayson	Genewyn Van Wie
Cynthia Harris	Dee Ann Wood
Linda Hinz	

### School Tour Docents:

Barbara Martinelli	Brent Roberts
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### Grounds:

Kathleen Lucan	Gerry Sokolowitz
Ed Marg, Sr	Glen Terry

\* Don't know who the Questers are? See [www.questers1944.org](http://www.questers1944.org)

## A Short History of SCV Conmen

by John Boston

*“Organized crime in America takes in over \$40 billion a year and spends very little on office supplies.”*

- Woody Allen

One of the complicated stitches in the quilt of Santa Clarita is the nefarious. Every few years or so, someone in the limelight steals a million or opens a trench coat at a bus stop. At the very least, sometimes the parties involved just can't handle large sums of money. It is sad, maddening, funny, and basically, tragic.

Not quite a decade ago, in the blueblood circles of the valley, the Boazes were the cream of the crop. Young, charming and delightful in public, they quickly turned a local delivery company into supposedly a multimillion-dollar national player.

They added their name to the newest jewel in the Santa Clarita crown - College of the Canyons' Performing Arts Center. It's an interesting question. You visit any Little League field in America and the outfield fence is littered with the company logos of septic tank pumpers, pawnshops and bail bondsmen. The charming pastime mutated into the uncontrollable when college football bowl games were named after potato chips.

Poor COC. The well-meaning campus was trying to do its version of selling an empty spot on the Little League fence and ended up the center of a maelstrom.

The Boazes gave the school about \$1.98 million shy of the promised \$2 million for advertising their company name, Vital Express. The Boazes sold their tony Sand Canyon home and moved just about as geographically far away from the SCV as possible without leaving the country: They bought a home in a ritzy North Carolina enclave outside of Charlotte.

Certainly the young couple aren't the most famous in the history of this valley's controversial.

Tiburcio Vasquez, our very own womanizing pistol fighter and road agent, was the subject of the largest manhunt in California history. That world-famous rock formation in Agua Dulce still bears the bandit's name - Vasquez Rocks. Old Tibby had at least three houses in the valley, plus his brothers lived locally. He passed himself off as a gentleman horse trader and, from time to time, sat at the dinner table of community leaders like John Lang and Col. Thomas Mitchell.

Tibby's outcome wasn't as genteel as the Boazes: He was hanged in San Jose.

Milfred Yant was worshiped as a financial god here in the 1930's. His specialty was selling mineral rights in Placerita Canyon to hundreds of pensioners during the later days of the Depression. He served time in Folsom, then came back to Newhall to try the oil scam all over again. Small problem: He went into partnership with a local wealthy rancher and was going to soak him by drilling an oil well. Only thing was, their well was a gusher and Yant accidentally made millions.

In the 1940's, not too many locals knew that one of their neighbors who quietly lived on Arcadia Street had from time to time had a rather interesting career. He was a gangster. His name? Bugsy Siegel.

A few years later and a few doors down, some L.A. gangsters rented a house right next to the local judge. They used the residence as a training brothel.

Thirty years later, there are still people swearing at Richard Schindler. He earned the unasked-for nickname of Schindler The Swindler and was convicted of bilking investors - most of them local - out of tens of millions of dollars.

I remember that when the story broke, I didn't think there were tens of millions of dollars in the combined Santa Clarita AND Antelope valleys. Even The Signal was involved, offering free publicity for his bogus "world's richest gold mine" and Ponzi schemes. Funny. With so many people after him, Schindler was arrested in Florida for failing to return a rental car. After serving three years of a nine-year sentence, he retired to a modest community outside Palm Springs, and there strangled his wife and committed suicide.

New York City had its nefarious pervert, Anthony Weiner.

Santa Clarita had Harold and Kathy. Mr. and Mrs. Weiner were the darlings of SCV society and were even co-chairs of the Boys & Girls Club Auction. Their smiling countenances were hung around the valley as if they were the kindly despots of some sand sheikdom. People were shocked when the couple was convicted for a white collar crime. On the bright side, they at least put Santa Clarita on the map. It was one of the biggest real estate fraud schemes in California history.

It's certainly not comforting, but at least, predictable: Somewhere down the line, this year or maybe in 10, there will be another Schindler the Swindler or the Weiners to razzle-dazzle the Santa Clarita.

*Continued on Page 7*

## Got Rattlers?!

### (Not the Barbeque!)

by Frank Hoffman

**A**s many as 45,000 poisonous snake bites occur each year in the United States, most of them from rattlesnakes. While only 15 to 20 of these are fatal (more people die annually of bee stings or being struck by lightning!), the rest suffer a painful, often dangerous and debilitating recovery. Snakes do not bite people out of an aggressive desire to kill, but because they react to what their instincts interpret as an attack. Probably 90% of all snake bites could be prevented by following one simple rule:

“ALWAYS WATCH WHERE YOU PUT YOURS HANDS AND FEET”. The practice of this rule is quite simple: You should be able to SEE your feet and hands at all times when in areas inhabited by venomous reptiles.

Watch where you put your feet by watching the trail ahead of you. This will not only prevent your coming up unexpectedly on a resting rattler, but will help prevent falls over equally unexpected obstacles. Don't step over a log or rock if you can't see what might be below it or on the other side. Do step up on top of such an object, then way out and over it. Do wear good, high boots with loose jeans or pants outside them when hiking through brushy country that might be inhabited by rattlers.

Watch where you put your hands: Don't climb a ledge or rocky hillside by reaching up beyond sight for your next handhold; who knows what may be sunning itself on that next ledge? Don't reach under a rock or log that you can't see under and don't put your hands into any holes you can't see into either.

Most importantly, Don't play around with, tease or hassle rattlesnakes. At least one third of all snake bites occur to people who for one reason or another, are trying to do something to the snake – kill it, tease it, catch it. An act of bravado can be expensive; a momentary lapse of attention can be dangerous!

If a rattlesnake is in an inhabited area, it should be captured and relocated by an experienced herpetologist or Animal Control Officer; destroying it is a last resort.

If the rattlesnake is in the wild, let it go its own way. It will get away from you as fast as it can, and rattlesnakes are an important part of the balance of nature.

Other things to know...

You cannot determine a rattlesnake's age by counting its rattles. A new segment is gained each time the snake sheds its skin, which can be at least two to five times a year, depending on how well it's eating. Additionally, the longer rattles of older snakes frequently break off.

Almost 85% of all rattlesnake bites in California occur from the waist up, on the upper extremities (hands and arms).

Most rattlesnake encounters occur between 3:00 PM and sunset, when the temperature is declining. This is also when most nocturnal prey animals (rats and mice) start to stir and move about.

An average of 220 rattlesnake bites occur in California every year, most in the southernmost counties, including San Diego, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino and Kern.

Be careful and be safe!!

## John Boston

*Continued from page 6*

They will drive fancy cars. They will be somebody's neighbor. Champagne corks will be popped. Backs slapped. Donations made to politicians. Fawning society photos snapped.

And bank accounts pilfered and hearts broken. . .

© 2014 by John Boston

*(John Boston has earned 119 major awards for writing, including being named, several times, America's best humor, and, best serious columnist. You can read his John Boston Report and Time Ranger history column every week in the scvbeacon.com. Read his Mr. Santa Clarita Valley column Sundays at <http://www.santaclarita.com/johnboston/>. And, Twitter @THEJohnBoston.)*

### Join the SCV Historical Society Today!

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Life Member with spouse	\$500.00
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Family Member	\$55.00
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Memberships make great gifts for your historically-minded friends and family! To join or renew online, visit <http://www.scvhs.org>.



The Heritage Junction Dispatch  
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Open to the public each Saturday and Sunday  
1:00 to 4:00 PM  
Kingsbury House is open the first Sunday  
of each month from 1:00 to 4:00 PM

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*"Preserving the best of the past for the good of the future"*

**Society Info: [www.scvhs.org](http://www.scvhs.org)**  
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**July 13 and August 10**

**Come and Join Us!!**

