



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 40, Issue 6

November - December 2014

Calendar

Monday, November 24

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Monday, December 1

Deadline for the January-February
Dispatch

Saturday, December 6

Christmas Open House
12:00 - 4:00 PM Heritage Junction
See page 6

Lecture on SCV's Earliest Residents
2:00 - 3:00 PM, Newhall Library
Free; see page 6

Hart Museum Birthday Celebration
See page 5

Thursday, December 18

SCVTV Concert
See page 6

Monday, December 22

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Check 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



An iconic figure of the American Old West played a key role in a local battle, alongside the legendary Edward F. Beale during the Mexican War in 1846. Kit Carson was best known for

his contributions to American history as a mountain man, trapper, scout, Indian agent and fighter, and guide for the famous trailblazing Western expeditions led by John C. Fremont. But he is also known for his heroic actions as he and Beale saved American forces from imminent slaughter during the Battle of San Pasqual in Southern California.

CARSON THE TRAPPER

Born in Kentucky in 1809, Carson spent his early years near Franklin, Missouri, at the

Eastern end of the Santa Fe Trail. Following his father's death, Carson dropped out of school at the age of 14 and went to work for a saddle shop in Franklin. Two years later, after hearing tales of the Far West from the trappers and traders that frequented his workplace, he left the saddle business and joined a merchant caravan heading for Santa Fe. In 1826, he took up residence with trapper and explorer Matthew Kinhead in Taos, New Mexico. During his time in Taos, he learned the skills of a trapper and became fluent in Spanish and seven Indian languages.

Using Taos as a base camp between 1829 and 1840, Kit Carson roamed the West as a fur trapper and mountain man. He met his first wife, an Arapaho woman who went by the name of Singing Grass, at a mountain-man Rendezvous along the Green River in Wyoming in 1835. Accompanied by Singing
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Association of State Dam Safety Officials Board of Directors and State Representatives Resolution Number 2-2014

WHEREAS, ASDSO advocates for and leads efforts to improve the safety of dams to reduce risk to lives and property from dam failure, and

WHEREAS, learning from past dam failures has been invaluable to improving the safety of dams across the U.S. and increasing public awareness of dam safety, and

WHEREAS, the St. Francis Dam (California) Failure of 1928 was one of the worst dam failures in U.S. history, resulting in an estimated death-toll of over 600 people, and

WHEREAS, this failure was the catalyst for the creation of many state dam safety programs, and

WHEREAS, there is a current push by citizens in Santa Clarita, CA to memorialize this terrible event at the national level and a bill has been introduced in Congress by Congressman Howard McKeon to create the St. Francis Dam Memorial and Monument, giving the site national memorial status;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Directors and the State Representatives of the Association of State Dam Safety Officials, meeting on September 21, 2014, that the Association of State Dam Safety Officials endorses this proposal and encourages Congress to vote to approve H.R. 5357, a bill to authorize a national memorial to commemorate those killed by the collapse of the St. Francis Dam.

Tom Woosley
President
September 21, 2014

President's Message

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Grass, Carson worked for the Hudson's Bay Company and famed frontiersman Jim Bridger as he trapped beaver throughout what is now Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming and Montana. As the fur trade dwindled down, Carson attended the last Rendezvous at Fort Bridger near the Green River in 1840.

CARSON AND THE FREMONT EXPEDITIONS

Returning to Missouri in 1842, Carson had a chance meeting with the future Pathfinder, John C. Fremont, on a steamboat on the Missouri River. Fremont eventually hired him as a guide on his first Western expedition to South Pass in the Rocky Mountains in present day Wyoming. Fremont's expedition was an enormous success. After his report to Congress was published, the great migration of wagon trains began heading west along the Oregon Trail. Carson accompanied Fremont as a guide on his famous Second and Third Expeditions to survey the Great Salt Lake in Utah, and further west to Fort Vancouver in the Pacific Northwest in 1843, and Oregon and California in 1845. Fremont's report to Congress on the First Expedition highlighted the exploits of Carson and turned him into a national legend. He became one of the most famous of the mountain men and was featured in many a Western dime novel.

While the goal of Fremont's Third Expedition in 1845 was initially to map the source of the Arkansas River, Fremont inexplicably headed straight for the Sacramento Valley in California, where he proceeded to encourage American settlers to start a war with Mexico. After nearly provoking a battle with a Mexican general near Monterey, Fremont, Carson and their expedition took refuge at Klamath Lake in Oregon. They eventually returned to the Sacramento Valley where they provoked the Bear Flag Revolt against the Mexicans, forming the short-lived California Republic.

CARSON AND THE MEXICAN WAR

The Mexican-American War began in April, 1846. Three months later, Fremont's men, now referred to as the California Battalion, met up with U.S. Commodore Robert Stockton in Monterey. There Stockton and Fremont joined forces with the intention of conquering Los Angeles and San Diego before heading on to Mexico City. Carson's military career began here as he became a lieutenant for Stockton. Fremont's troops took over San Diego without resistance in July, 1846. After taking over Santa Barbara,

Stockton joined Fremont in San Diego, and together they marched to Los Angeles and took over the pueblo without resistance.

Fremont and Stockton asked Carson to convey the news of the conquest of California to President James K. Polk in Washington, DC. On his way to Washington, Carson by chance met up with General Stephen Watts Kearny and his Army of the West at the deserted village of Valverde in present day New Mexico. Kearny's troops had taken over Santa Fe and conquered New Mexico in August, 1846. They were marching West with the intention of conquering California as well. Learning from Carson that the conquest of California had already taken place, Kearny sent most of his troops back toward the East, and had Carson guide him and 100 remaining men back to California, where he hoped to stabilize the military situation.

Carson guided Kearny's dragoons into California and arrived within 25 miles of San Diego in December, 1846. Here they learned from a captured Mexican courier that a revolt had led to the Mexicans retaking California from Stockton except for San Diego, where Stockton's troops were under siege. Between Kearny's and Stockton's forces was the village of San Pasqual. Kearny learned that Mexican General Andres Pico was camped out in San Pasqual with several hundred dragoons. He made a fateful decision to raid Pico's encampment in order to obtain fresh horses for his men.

CARSON AND BEALE AT SAN PASQUAL

The Battle of San Pasqual began in the early morning hours of December 6, 1846. It would turn out to be the bloodiest battle of the Mexican War in California. When it was all over, at least nineteen Americans and possibly six Mexicans would lose their lives. Although outnumbered by the Americans, Pico's men quickly obtained the upper hand in the battle. The troops of Kearny were low on supplies and weakened from their long 2000-mile march from Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. By December 8, it was clear that, without further help, the Americans faced possible annihilation. That evening, under the cover of darkness, Kearny sent a young Navy Lieutenant, Edward F. Beale, along with Kit Carson and an Indian guide to sneak through the Mexican lines and carry dispatches to Commodore Stockton 28 miles away in San Diego to seek troop reinforcements.

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President's Message

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After graduating from the Naval School in Philadelphia in 1842, Beale had been assigned to the squadron of Stockton in 1845. When the Mexican War began, Beale sailed with Stockton to San Diego, where he was assigned to serve with the land forces. Beale and a small body of men under Lt. Archibald Gillespie joined General Kearny's column just before the Battle of San Pasqual.

In order to avoid alerting the Mexican troops as they passed through, Carson and Beale abandoned their canteens and boots, proceeding barefoot through desert, rock, and cactus. Through the first mile of their trek, they crawled on their bellies within twenty yards of Mexican sentries. They successfully made their way to San Diego where they alerted Stockton to the dire situation at San Pasqual. Believing all hope was gone, Kearny was greatly relieved to see the arrival of 200 American troops sent from San Diego on December 10. Now greatly outnumbering the Mexicans, the tide of the battle was turned in the American's favor, causing the Mexican forces to withdraw and disperse. Kearny made his way to San Diego by December 12, and the reconquest of California was set into motion.

By January it was all over. Fremont met up with Pico at the Campo de Cahuenga in the San Fernando Valley, where he accepted Pico's surrender on January 13, 1847, and signed the Treaty of Cahuenga ending the war between Mexico and the United States in California. Beale and Carson were recognized as heroes of the Battle of San Pasqual. Ironically, Beale and Pico would later team up as partners to buy up oil claims in the Santa Clarita Valley in the 1860's, participating in the dawn of the oil industry in California. It was Pico who was first commissioned to deepen a cut in the San Gabriel Mountains to allow for easier passage between the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys. Having failed in this endeavor, the torch was passed to Beale, who completed the famous Beale's Cut in 1864.

CARSON AND THE INDIAN WARS

As for Kit Carson, after the war ended, he returned to

New Mexico to become a rancher. He was appointed Indian agent for the Ute and Jicarilla Apaches at Taos, New Mexico, in 1854. He served in the Union Army during the Civil War. Although he organized New Mexico infantry volunteers at the Battle of Valverde in 1862, he spent most of the Civil War waging a brutal economic battle to attempt to relocate the Navajo Indians. To his credit, Carson was appalled by the belligerent attitude of his commander, Brigadier General James H. Carleton, towards the Navajos, and attempted to resign his post in 1863. Carleton however refused the resignation and coerced Carson into continuing the campaign against the tribe. Eventually weakened by



Kit Carson

warfare with Carson and enemy tribes such as the Ute, Pueblo, Hopi, and Zuni, the Navajos surrendered to Carson in 1864. They were forced to relocate by walking almost 300 miles from Fort Canby, Arizona, to Fort Sumner, New Mexico. Involving 8000 Navajo men, women and children, it became known as the "Long Walk". Hundreds of Navajos lost their lives on the difficult trek to Fort Sumner.

Carleton also sent Carson to deal with the Indians of West Texas in 1864. A combined force of Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache actually defeated Carson's forces at the Battle of Adobe Walls in November, 1864. In spite of the defeat, Carson was credited with his

wise decision to withdraw his troops when faced with a numerically superior Indian army.

After the Civil War ended, Carson was appointed a Brigadier General, returned to the ranching business and moved to Colorado, where he took command of Fort Garland. During his stint at the Fort, he was able to negotiate a peace treaty with the Utes. Due to ill health, he resigned his post the following year. Kit Carson died of a ruptured aortic aneurysm at Fort Lyons, Colorado, on May 23, 1868. His remains were taken for burial near his old home at Taos. The grave of Kit Carson can be found today at Kit Carson Park in Taos.

Alan Pollack

Holidays at Rancho Camulos by Maria Christopher

November and December offer many opportunities to experience local history at Rancho Camulos Museum and National Historic Landmark, where the history, myth, and romance of old California still linger, and new discoveries continue . . .

Attend a FREE living history festival from 12:00-4:00 PM on Saturday, November 8. Tour the historically significant buildings and beautiful grounds, and interact with historical characters and participate in rancho activities such as adobe brick making. Learn about the “Home of Ramona” from historian Phil Brigandi. (Camulos was one of the settings for Helen Hunt Jackson’s California epic novel, “Ramona”). Watch the D.W. Griffith 1910 version of “Ramona”, starring Mary Pickford, which was filmed on location at Camulos and will be hosted by film historian, Hugh Munro Neely. See interesting new exhibits, including artifacts that have not been accessible to the public for over 70 years. This free event is being held to thank the community for their continued support and encourage all to discover or rediscover this hidden gem, which is what remains of Rancho San Francisco, the original Mexican land grant to Antonio del Valle, which once included all of what is now Santa Clarita. Visitors are encouraged to come in costume for an enhanced living history experience.

Help support the 501(c) 3 non-profit museums’ education and preservation efforts by attending the \$50 per person fundraiser, “Ramona Nights”, on the evening of November 8. Dolores Del Rio’s 1928 silent movie “Ramona” will be the feature attraction at the event, that also includes tapas, local wine, Ventura Limoncello tasting, and live music by harpist Xavier Montez. A panel of film historians will relate how this “lost” film traveled from Nazi Germany through the Soviet Union and was found in the Czech Republic. This 81 minute classic was restored by the Library of Congress and re-premiered this spring at the Billy Wilder Theater of the Hammer Museum at UCLA to rave reviews. Seating is limited, and advance purchase is



required for this unique event. Reserve by contacting info@ranchocamulos.org/ 805 521-1501.

No matter what Holiday you celebrate, don’t miss the opportunity to experience the magic of “Christmas at Camulos, A Fiesta of Lights” on Saturday, December 6, and Sunday, December 7 from 2:00 – 7:00 PM. Step back to a simpler time as you walk through the enchanting display of lights on the historic buildings and grounds, immerse yourself in historic traditions, and enjoy seasonal music and entertainment.

The 1852 main adobe will feature nineteenth-century-inspired decorations, and costumed docents will share stories of Christmas traditions and customs celebrated at Rancho Camulos during the rancho era. The museum’s 1930 schoolhouse will showcase a holiday theme based on 1930’s and 1940’s era decorations. Adding to the festive charm will be an old-fashioned Christmas market and gently-used-book sale, providing the perfect solution for discerning individuals on your gift list, along with tasty holiday fare to enhance the fun.

A 2:00 PM performance by the Newhall Nazarene Celebration Choir of excerpts from “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” will be a highlight on December 6. This is a swing-time radio musical about family and hope set in 1941.

A 3:00 PM performance of “The Three Queens” by the group Women of the Bible will highlight the December 7 entertainment. This lighthearted presentation depicts the Nativity from the perspective of the wives of the Three Wise Men. Reservations are not required but are appreciated. Admission is \$5, and children under 12 are free.

See www.ranchocamulos.org for more details about these special events, as well as our current docent-led tour schedule. 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.

Birthday Parties: Some History, One Coming Up

by Rachel Barnes



In the book of Genesis, it is written, “Thus it came about on the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants,” (Genesis, 40:20). Right there, sandwiched in between Pharaoh’s decisions to

execute some of his staff based on Joseph’s dreams, is the first reference to “birthday party” in written history.

Is this where the concept of birthday begins? The baked, arid, sand-swept land of the Pharaohs?

Well, kind of. According to Dr. James Hoffmeier, a renowned Egyptologist, there was no honoring or celebrating the physical birth of the regular, every day, common Joe in the ancient world. Rather, the focus was on the gods and goddesses. In Egypt, a king’s coronation was a transformation into a living god, a transition from human to divine, and that did not happen every day. Therefore, the pharaoh’s “birthday,” as mentioned in Genesis, commemorated his coronation day, his “birth” as a divine being on earth, and not the day his mother welcomed him into the world.

In ancient Greece, this honor and deference to the gods continued. There were no celebrations or rituals to mark the day you were born. There were celebrations and rituals to pay homage to the volatile, prickly, temperamental, and yes, quite high-maintenance pantheon of deities that oversaw everything from their humble abode atop Mount Olympus. To honor Artemis, the goddess of the moon, the ancient Greeks left offerings of moon-shaped cakes, lit with candles. The soft glow from the candle flame was reminiscent of the moon’s own pale light, and thus, brought the cakes closer to the goddess. Scholars today believe this ancient practice has carried on through the millennia – guess where the tradition of candles on our birthday cakes may have started?

Moving into the world of ancient Rome, one sees the beginning of the true birthday celebration. Roman men (men only) held celebrations with friends and families commemorating the anniversary of their birth, and public holidays were implemented to honor the birthdays of

prominent citizens. Sorry, ladies; your parties didn’t start until the 1100’s.

What I want to know is why Julius Caesar’s birthday is not a public holiday anymore??

Anyway, as the ancient world passed away into the Middle Ages and Medieval era, the tradition of commemorating the anniversary of your birth spread across the globe. With the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in the late 1700’s, many of the customs associated with birthdays today – like cake – became more prominent and widespread. In fact, you can thank 18th century Germany for the whole idea of the birthday cake. German parents celebrated their children with *Kinderfeste*, a party that included a cake with a candle for each year of the child’s life. Now that sounds familiar!

But why all this talk about birthdays? And birthday history?

Because this December, our very own cowboy movie star celebrates a big one. Yes, Hart Friends, good old William S. Hart turns the big 1-5-0 on Saturday, December 6, and we are continuing a tradition started 3,000 years ago in the wilds of ancient Egypt. We are having a birthday party.

First, we invite everyone to come up to the hilltop mansion for a free guided tour of the birthday boy’s glorious home during our normal hours of operation on Saturdays (11:00 AM – 4:00 PM, tours starting every 30 minutes, with the last tour starting at 3:30 PM), and have some good old fashioned birthday party fun while you’re at it. We’ll be making party hats, playing classic games like pin the tail on . . . Fritz, and following treasure maps to find buried gold. But that’s not all! The Friends of Hart Park, that intrepid body of volunteers whose dedication to the preservation of Hart’s legacy is unsurpassed, is hosting a very special, members-only birthday celebration as the sun goes down on December 6. If you join the Friends at Family Level or higher, you receive 2 free tickets to this once-every-150-years event, which will include candlelight tours of Hart’s hilltop home, followed by sumptuous wine and hors d’oeuvres and the jazzy musical stylings of the legendary cowboy band, CowBop. You can join the Friends by visiting their website at <http://www.friendsofhartpark.org>, which you will want to do ASAP so you don’t miss this extraordinary celebration.

Maybe we’ll add a whole new tradition to the celebration of birthdays.

Christmas Open House at Heritage Junction December 6, Noon to 4:00 PM

by Cathy Martin

Christmas Open House at Heritage Junction Dec. 6th 2014 from Noon to 4:00 PM. By Cathy Martin

The lights are up, the stockings are hung, cookies are baked, and there is a pot of coffee brewing. The only thing that is missing is YOU. This year there will be a lot of fun things happening at the Junction for our Christmas Open House:

- ✓ Our favorite event is back this year, The Animal Blessing at the Ramona Chapel from 1:00 to 1:30 PM. You will receive a certificate of your pet's Blessing.*
- ✓ Want to take the family Christmas photo with the Mogul locomotive? Yes! There will be a photographer there to assist you.
- ✓ Santa will be hearing your Christmas wishes on the front porch of the Newhall Ranch House.
- ✓ Kids' crafts will take place inside of the Saugus Train Depot from Noon to 3:30 PM.
- ✓ Touring inside of historic buildings more your speed? All of the houses will all be open.
- ✓ Want to renew your SCVHS membership? Anne and Francesca will be there to help you. Their booth will be inside the Saugus Train Depot.

- ✓ In the spirit of the season, we will be collecting non-perishable food items for the Food Pantry. You can make a food donation inside the Saugus Train Station.

New this year, we will be the first stop on the city's Holly Trolley that will take you from Heritage Junction down Main Street all the way to Newhall library, and bring you back again. The trolley will be running from Noon to 4:00 PM, with boarding and drop-off in front of the Saugus Train Station and at various locations along Main St.

As always, all of the events are free. It's been a pleasure seeing all of you throughout the year, and I hope you will be able to take the time to come and see us once more before the year is over.

* If you choose to bring a pet to be blessed, you must observe the following rules:

- ✓ For your and your pet's safety, they must be in your control at ALL times.
- ✓ Pets must be on a leash, harness, or in a pet carrier.
- ✓ As a courtesy to others, you need to pick-up after your pet. Plastic bags and trash cans are nearby.

News Flash!!

SCVHS members can now receive 15% off of tickets to the *SCVTV Presents The OutWest Concert Series!* Make your reservations now for Western music award-winning singer/songwriter/performer **BELINDA GAIL** appearing Thursday, December 18, 2014.

The January - November 2015 Season will be announced shortly. Hosted by Jim and Bobbi Jean Bell of OutWest and sponsored by SCVTV, with continuing support of Repertory East Playhouse, this concert series presents a wide variety of live music featuring top performers of Western, Bluegrass, Blues, Americana, and Roots music.

Stay tuned for more details in the next issue of the *Dispatch!* Call the ticket hotline to reserve "An Evening with Belinda Gail" now at 661 255-7087! Tickets are \$20.00; SCVHS members \$17.00.

December 6 Lecture

Find out about the Santa Clarita Valley's earliest inhabitants Saturday, December 6, at 2:00 PM, when COC Anthropology Professor Dr Laurie Solis gives a talk at the Old Town Newhall Library as part of the SCV Historical Society Lecture Series.

The lecture is titled, "Ancient Enterprises: How the prehistoric Tataviam survived and thrived in an ancient landscape". The lecture focuses on environmental subsistence patterns among the Tataviam and other California native groups.

Dr Solis authored the book, "Tataviam: People Who Face the Sun," the only book ever published on this group.. She is an archaeologist and Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at College of the Canyons.

Hart Park's Calendar of Events by Eric Reifman

Hart Walking Club (Free) - Fridays beginning at 8:00 AM: Health and Fitness Program that hikes the Santa Clarita Valley, all ages

Hula & Tahitian Dance Classes - Wednesdays 4:00 to 6:00 PM: Ages 5 to 11 yrs old, & 12+, Teens & Adults

SCV Junction Outdoor Marketplace at Heritage Junction— 1st Weekend of the Month, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Arts & Crafts Vendors, Food Trucks, Music, Beer Garden (Select Events only), and More! For more information go to www.SCVJunction.com.

In Hart Hall:

Friends of Hart Park Meetings – Every 2nd Wednesday, 7:00 PM

Happenings at Hart - Third Friday of Every Month, 2:00-4:00 PM

Fun Afterschool Programs! Come have some “Hoppin’ fun at the Hart!” Cost is FREE! K-5th Grade! November: “Pom Pom Critters” - Make your own animal friends out of pom poms. December - Candle Making - Make your own candles out of crayons!

**December 6-7 – “Christmas Celebration”

Other Upcoming Events

SCV Rose Society's 21st Annual Wild West Rose Show, November 1-2. Everyone is welcome to exhibit their home-grown roses at the show. You do not have to be a member of the rose society to exhibit, and there are no entry fees. Simply bring your roses in a bucket of water, and the rose society will furnish the vases and the entry tags. There will be prizes and awards. More information is at www.scvrs.homestead.com/roseshow.html.

3rd Annual Hart Holiday Boutique – November 29-30. Hart's Holiday Boutique and Craft Fair is as much about charm as it is about shopping, with local artisan and vendors offering handmade crafts, fashion accessories, jewelry and gift baskets, along with an array of unique fall and holiday gift items. Admission to this event is free to the public. Contact Norm Phillips or Eric Reifman at 661 259-1750 for more information.

Bill Hart's 150th Birthday – December 6th

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

Weekend Docents:

Linda Casebolt	Anna Kroll
Sioux Coghlan	Barbara Martinelli
Evan Decker	RuthAnne Murthy
Rick Ferrante	Sean O'Connell
Sarah Floyd	Alan Pollack
Francesca Gastil	Gordon Uppman
Harold Hicks	Mia Villamayor

Interested in becoming a docent? Visit our website at www.scvhs.org

Those who open and close for the docents:

Linda Casebolt	Cathy Martin
Duane Harte	Alan Pollack
Barbara Martinelli	Roberto Torres

Weekend Questers*

Becky Basham	Roberta Harris
Linda Comela	Judy Holland
Nancy Cordova	Kate Waterson
Ann Grayson	Robin Wallace
Fritz Grayson	Judy Wood
Barbara Harris	

School Tour Docents:

Harold Hicks	RuthAnne Murthy
Barbara Martinelli	

School Tour Questers:

Ann Grayson	Linda Hicks
Fritz Grayson	Cynthia Harris

Grounds:

Marcial Herrera	Gerry Sokolowitz
Kathleen Lucan	Glen Terry
Ed Marg, Sr	

* Don't know who the Questers are? See www.questers1944.org

On Fake SCV Politicians and Iron Eyes Cody

by John Boston

More than a few years ago, I was involved in a local parade prank that kind-of/sorta backfired. For years, several of my closest friends and I would pass ourselves off as politicians. We'd make up bogus names, like Orlando Bone (pronounced, BOE-nay) who was allegedly L.A. County's 6th District Supervisor (we have, alas, only five) or Carl Sinatra, Frank's kid brother and Mayor of Palm Springs.

One year, the regulars were out of town or had excuses so for the first time in years, there was no Re-Elect Your Leaders In Action float.

Improvising, Camille Stuart, my pal and the granddaughter of Cowboy Hall of Famer Andy Jauregui, came up with an idea. Disguising ourselves, we took some glamour movie shots. Camille was, and is, one of the planet's most beautiful women. Passing ourselves off as the stars of a future mini-series on the life of local film legend William S. Hart, we asked Newhall's 4th of July committee if we could ride in their upcoming parade.

Before everyone had a home computer and printer, it was a little harder to forge documents. I created a letterhead of a made-up production company and used a friend's home in Beverly Hills as the return address.

Our aspirations were modest. Camille and I planned to just ride in our own convertible, wave and let the joke play itself out. About the worst thing that could happen, we figured, was a lot of laughs, some good-natured boos and possibly a water balloon or two thrown in our direction.

Things quickly mutated. Cammy and I received a quick and perfunctory reply that the local parade group would LOVE to have us. A few days after that, the chairman left a message on my friend's second line, which was now the made-up home of Mega Global Artists Productions, Ltd. The parade committee asked if we'd consider being Division Marshals. A new convertible, of course, would be provided.

Camille and I giggled. While perfectly good topless vehicles have been wasted over the years on questionable public officials, we decided the "correct" thing to do was accept the Division Marshal-ship but say that we'd provide our own vehicle.

It got worse. A week later was the call, asking if we'd honor the Santa Clarita Valley by being the Grand Marshals of the parade. This was followed up by an invitation to be guests at a special dinner in our honor at the Hart Mansion.

Clearly, this had gotten out of hand. Cammy and I quickly forged another document, on Mega-Global stationery, apologizing. It seemed funding for the mini-series had dried up and we were putting the project on hold. Perhaps some other time we'd be happy to visit the SCV.

Phew.

Of course, we were pretending to be somebody we weren't for just a day in July. Iron Eyes Cody did it for most of his life.

Thirty eight years ago, Cody was the grand marshal of the now-defunct Frontier Days Parade. It was THE event in Canyon Country and rivaled Newhall's historic 4th of July events across town. In 1976, the actor's fame and popularity were at their zenith.

In March of 1970, the first Earth Day had been launched. Its purpose was to raise awareness about how our misuse of natural resources was hurting the planet.

About a year later, the federal government came up with their "Keep America Beautiful" campaign and paid for TV commercials to remind its citizens to do just that. They hired Native American Iron Eyes Cody to star in one of these powerful and memorable spots for the second Earth Day in 1971.

In that 60-second public service commercial, the camera has a wide shot of an Indian paddling his canoe on a river polluted with chemical foam and trash. He keeps rowing, past a nightmare of modern technological America, complete with smog and smokestacks. The Native American walks along the shore, to the edge of a highway. There, passengers from a speeding car thoughtlessly heave trash out the window. The bag lands at Iron Eyes Cody's feet and bursts open. Another cut and we see a single tear fall from his eyes. The announcer gravely points out: "People start pollution; people can stop it."

It made the Cree-Cherokee an international celebrity.

Iron Eyes Cody worked for years playing Indians in the movies. He was in "The Quest," the classic "A Man Called Horse," "Hearts of the West," "The Cockeyed Cowboys of Calico County" and "El Condor," to name a few. He was also a celebrity master of ceremonies at various Native American powwows, including the Little Big Horn Indian Association. When he rode in the Frontier Days Parade three decades back, he was given perhaps the most thunderous welcome of any participant in the history of the event.

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John Boston

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But, Iron Eyes Cody's tear in that memorable commercial was actually courtesy of a make-up trick called glycerin. And Iron Eyes Cody wasn't a Native American; he was Italian-American! His real name was Espera DeCorti. His parents called him Oscar.

He was born the second child of immigrants Francesca and Antonio DeCorti on April 3, 1904, in the small town of Kaplan, Louisiana. Francesca and Antonio would have four children together. When Little Oscar was 5, Antonio abandoned his son and family and fled to Texas. Francesca married a man named Alton Abshire, and together they'd have five more kids.

Later, as a teenager, Oscar and two of his brothers would rejoin their father in Texas, who was now going by the name of just Corti. When the patriarch died, Oscar went to work in Hollywood as an extra and changed his name from "Corti" to "Cody." From 1924, he would appear in more than 100 films and dozens of television shows.

Somewhere in his early years, he adopted his screen persona into his real life and created his own mythology of being Cree-Cherokee. He grew his hair shoulder length and braided it and always appeared in public at least in hand-sewn moccasins. He truly adopted a Native American culture, marrying an Indian woman, Bertha Parker. They had two adopted Indian sons, Arthur and Robert.

In 1996, 20 years after his appearance in our Frontier Days celebration, the half sister of Iron Eyes Cody/Espera "Oscar" DeCorti provided his birth certificate, biography and old family documents to back up her claims. Cody denied his Italian roots to his dying day, which was on January 5th, 1999. He had lived to be 94.

Most Native Americans were forgiving, pointing out a life of hard work for their causes.

Author Barbara Mikkelson noted that history has produced many Anglos who have passed as famous Indians, or how a persona was used for a faked message.

- Forrest Carter wrote "The Education of Little Tree," his "autobiography" which included a life being raised by Cherokee grandparents. Forrest was actually Asa Carter, member of the Ku Klux Klan.
- Famed wildlife expert and writer Grey Owl was a legend in Canada. When he died in 1939, he was unmasked not as a half-Apache, but as the Englishman Archibald Belaney.

- In 1928, one of New York's most popular writers was Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance. This was at the end of America's Indian Romantic Period. Like Cody, the writer claimed to be Cherokee/Cree. When Long Lance was unmasked as African/American Sylvester Long, he ended his life with one well-placed bullet to the head.
- Perhaps the most famous Indian fraud still hangs on a few bedroom walls. Remember that touching tome from Chief Seattle, about the sacredness of the Earth and how it needed our stewardship? While Chief Seattle was an actual person (and, an actual Indian) those stirring words weren't his. They were penned by a screenwriter in 1971.

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{John Boston has been named Best Serious and Best Humorous newspaper columnist in California, Los Angeles, and America, several times, to go with 100-plus major writing awards, including The Will Rogers Humanitarian Lifetime Achievement Award. Over at the scvbeacon.com, every week do look for his John Boston Report <http://scvbeacon.com/category.php?catg=5>) and Time Ranger/SCV History column — <http://scvbeacon.com/weekly-column.php?id=1296> And, you can Tweet him at THEJohnBoston.}

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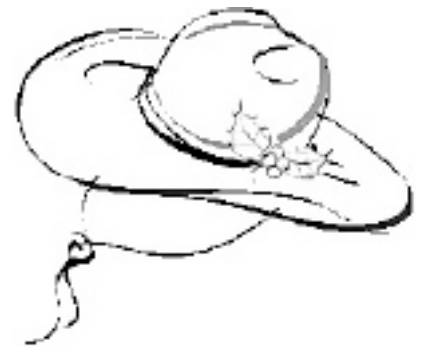
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See pages 1 and 6