



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 46, ISSUE 2

March-April 2020

Calendar

Saturday, March 14

St Francis Dam lecture and tour
11:00 AM Saugus Station
Tickets by Eventbrite, \$45/person;
see page 4

Monday, March 23

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Wednesday, April 1

Deadline for the May-June *Dispatch*

Monday, April 27

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Check www.scvhistory.org for
other upcoming events.

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



Continuing from the January-February issue's report about country music legend Cliffie Stone,

Honors For Cliffie Stone

To recognize his illustrious career, Stone was honored with the prestigious Pioneer Award from the Academy of Country and Western Music in 1973, and was inducted into the Country Disc Jockey Hall of Fame by the Federation of International Country Air Personalities in Nashville in 1979.

Cliffie Stone was a revered personality in Santa Clarita. He was named Grand Marshall of the Frontier Days Parade in October, 1980. In 1981, after a successful campaign

by the local Elks Club, Stone became an honorary mayor of Santa Clarita. Over 200 guests, including many local dignitaries like Supervisor Mike Antonovich, showed up for a celebratory evening at the Elks Lodge to honor Stone.

He received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on March 1, 1989. It was the 1887th star given out by the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and is located on the corner of Sunset Blvd. and Vine Street. Stone was honored for his contributions to the music industry as a performer, songwriter, producer, and publisher. Sadly, the ceremony took place on his birthday, just eight days after his first wife Dorothy passed away from kidney disease. Stone felt that the location of the star was appropriate for him, stating: "I worked on Vine Street for 30 years at

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

To arrange for filming at Heritage Junction, contact Cathy Martin at
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President's Message

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Capitol Records and at ATV Music and along those places on Hollywood Blvd. I used to walk down Hollywood Blvd. and look down and think 'wow that's wonderful'. I was almost embarrassed when they told me". In an interview shortly after a ceremony attended by Gene Autry, Pat Buttram, and many others, Stone said: "I stood on that podium and looked out over the crowd and I guess I saw 300 people that I have had a relationship personally with. They were all happy and smiling. It made me feel wonderful. I'm on a high and I haven't had a drink in ten years." He further observed: "As I looked out over that crowd, I saw all the people in the TV shows, movies, radio shows, and records that I worked with. It was a rerun of my whole life."

The Country Music Hall of Fame

On October 9, 1989, Cliffie Stone became the newest member of the Country Music Hall of Fame. He received his award at the Country Music Association Awards show in Nashville. Present with him were his three music industry sons, Warner Brothers Music vice president Steve Stone, pop publisher Jonathan Stone, and musician Curtis Stone. That same night, Curtis received the award for Best Vocal Group of the Year for his band Highway 101. Cliffie credited his father with getting him into show business: "My dad was just Cliff Snyder, and he became Herman the Hermit because John Wayne was starring in this movie called *The Big Trail*. It was directed by Raoul Walsh, the famous one-eyed director. Dad had a dog kennel. Walsh wanted sixty 'atmosphere' dogs, to lay under wagons and up on porches. It was, of course, the perennial story of the prairie schooner coming across, OK? So they went up to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to shoot it for three months."

Turns out 1930's *The Big Trail* was one of the earliest talkie movies, and John Wayne's first starring role. To get the right look for the movie, Walsh instructed his actors to grow out their hair and beards. As there was no entertainment available in Jackson Hole in those days, Snyder would play his banjo at night, while Wayne and the other crew members played poker. Due to his banjo talents, Snyder was hired to score the movie. After watching the movie, singing cowboy Stuart Hamblen had Snyder come in for an audition. He was still sporting his hair and beard from the movie. According to Cliffie: "Stuart saw him and says, 'Oh gosh! Don't get a shave; don't get a haircut. We'll call you Herman the Hermit and make up a story that I discovered you in the hills of Burbank living in a cave.' About a year later my dad called me and said

the bass player was very ill and maybe if I could come down there I could play on the show, too. They didn't want anyone to know Herman the Hermit had a son, so they called me Cliffie Stonehead. I weighed about 300 pounds, the big, fat comedian you see in every group. I was pretty cute." Both Cliffie and his dad became stars on the most popular country radio show in Los Angeles.

Stone's plaque in the Country Music Hall of Fame reads: "Elected in Country Music Hall of Fame in 1989, Cliffie Stone produced over 14,000 TV and radio shows including 'Hometown Jamboree', 'Gene Autry's Melody Ranch', was Tennessee Ernie Ford's manager and executive producer of Ernie's network show for five years, executive producer for Capitol Records, President of Central Songs, executive producer for ATV Music, currently consultant and director of Gene Autry Music Group. Additionally, this California native also worked as a musician, singer, comedian, songwriter, band leader and disc jockey. Special honors include Country Music Disc Jockey Hall of Fame, and star in Hollywood Walk of Fame."

In Service to His Community

Along with all his musical activities, Stone found time to serve his local community as a Board member of the Sulphur Springs School District, and on the Board of Trustees of Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital. He served as emcee for the ceremony honoring Gene Autry, William S. Hart, and Tom Mix as the first western stars to receive plaques on the Newhall Walk of Fame in Downtown Newhall in 1981. For twenty years Stone produced and performed in the free Labor Day "Country Jamboree" program at William S. Hart Park in Newhall. Two years after moving to Santa Clarita in 1956, He authored a column for the Signal Newspaper called "The Rolling Stone". For all his accomplishments, Stone received his own bronze star in 1990 on the Newhall Western Walk of Stars.

The End of the Journey

After the death of his first wife Dorothy in 1989, Stone married his second wife, singer and songwriter Joan Carol in July, 1989. He and Joan co-wrote two books, "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Songwriting..." (1991); and a talent show book entitled, "You Gotta Be Bad Before You Can Be Good" (2000). Stone sadly passed away from a heart attack at age 80 in his Canyon Country home on January 16, 1998. He was survived by Joan and his four children. Said his

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President's Message

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daughter Linda Stone Hyde following his death: "He just loved working with new talent. Every single person he ever met said they liked him. Every single person said he was just great."

Cliffie Stone received a posthumous honor from the Academy of Country Music in 1999, when they renamed their Pioneer Award as "The Cliffie Pioneer Award". The first "Cliffie" was presented at the Academy of Country Music Awards show that year by Charlie Pride to Glen Campbell. In 2007, the award was renamed "The Cliffie Stone Pioneer Award". Of the honor, Joan Carol Stone said: "It's in living memory to him. He has been the most important influence on country music that the West Coast has ever had, which has now become an integral part of country music's history with worldwide effects". Responding to Joan's statement, an editorial in the Signal concluded: "Indeed. We know Cliffie is proud too, and likewise proud to be an integral part of the Santa Clarita Valley's western heritage."

Sources used for this article:

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The Tennessean, Nashville, November 26, 1989

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The Santa Clarita Signal, January 18, 1998

Los Angeles Times, January 21, 1998

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The Santa Clarita Signal, May 7, 1999

Spring is just around the Corner by Cathy Martin

Punxsutawney Phil didn't see his shadow this year, so we're to expect an early spring. Right? Spring has already sprung at Heritage Junction and the beautiful green carpet of weeds - I mean native grasses - is blooming away. Sorry Phil, we beat you to it!

Why, you say is Cathy so excited about all the sunshine? The Museum Gift Shop is stocked with new nature field guides. Now is the perfect time to get out into nature and explore. I like to beat our famous rattlesnake season that's sure to follow soon. The titles include field guides to birds, flowers, animals, plants, and even edible flowers. The guides are plastic-coated for durability and fold flat for easy storage.

Cowboy Festival is just around the corner. For all of you Cowgirls out there, we have some new books you might like to read up on, before the festival starts.

You can master some "Cowgirl" meals or read up on the famous Cowgirls of the west. Top it off with a new hat and flower print tin mug, and you'll be set. The Museum Gift Shop is open on the weekends from 1:00-4:00 PM. If you're a member of SCVHS, please bring in your newsletter with your name and address printed on it, and you will receive a 10% discount on your purchase. Just remember to tell the docent when they ring you up.



Join Us for a Spectacular Dam Presentation and Tour

by Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel

The Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society is again offering the annual St. Francis Dam Presentation and Tour on March 14, at 11:00 AM at Heritage Junction. We will only have one bus this year, so reserve your space early.

The St. Francis Dam, which was located in San Francisquito Canyon, ruptured five days after being filled to capacity, on March 12, 1928. A 205-foot wall of water left the dam, traveling down the path of San Francisquito Creek at 2 ½ minutes before midnight, wiping out Los Angeles DWP's Powerhouse #2 and the village next to the powerhouse, leaving only 3 survivors and one spotted dog behind. The raging water continued down the canyon, turning approximately at Magic Mountain Parkway as it entered the Santa Clara riverbed, where it continued to cause mayhem all the way to Ventura, where it entered the Pacific Ocean 5 ½ hours later. Over 400 lives were lost that night, all along the flood plain.

The St. Francis Dam was the last dam built by DWP's William Mulholland, and the only one to fail, even though the Hollywood Dam is nearly an exact replica of the St. Francis. Come to the presentation to learn how and why it failed, why so many people died, and who the heroes of the St. Francis flood were. Come hear some of the tragic stories of people who died, and the miraculous stories of those who survived.

Last year, the story of the St. Francis was brought to the attention of Congress, and on March 12, 2019, a law was signed by the President making the site a National Memorial and a National Monument.

Following the presentation at Heritage Junction, we will take a bus to the dam site. You will see the exterior of Powerhouse #2, which is a recreation of the original powerhouse that was destroyed in the floodwaters. After a brief stop at the powerhouse, we will continue on the bus to the dam's ruins where we'll hike to the tombstone (the only portion of the dam that was left standing but was subsequently blown up), to the wing dike, and to other major chunks of the dam downstream.

It is recommended that you wear hiking boots or shoes with tread, and wear long sleeves and long pants, since we may be going through some brush. If you have hiking poles, they will be advantageous, but not required.

When you board the bus, you will be given a bag with a small bottle of water and a few snacks to enjoy on the bus. If you'd like to bring a lunch, you are welcome to do so.

Please check in at Heritage Junction between 10:30-10:45 AM and secure your seat in the train station at Heritage Junction. The historical presentation by Dr. Alan Pollack will begin promptly at 11:00 AM and will be followed by personal stories of many of the victims and the survivors by Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel.

For more information or to make reservations:
call 661 254-1275

Heritage Junction address:
24101 Newhall Ave., Newhall, CA 91321

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Still Relevant at 110!

by Maria Christopher

When the northbound Southern Pacific train pulled into the Piru train station one evening in late March, 1910, Director D.W. Griffith disembarked along with his Biograph Company's entourage of actors and technicians. They checked into the nearby Mountain View Hotel and prepared for their next days' work. They had come to Los Angeles from New York to spend the winter in California shooting in the mild Mediterranean climate, and they already had wrapped up one film, the first ever movie filmed on location, *Old California*, in Hollywood. They would spend the next few days at the Camulos Ranch, home of the del Valle family and acknowledged as one of the settings for Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel, *Ramona*. Their mission was to shoot a movie based on that best-selling novel.

Concerned about ongoing litigation regarding the production of *Ben Hur*, Griffith had paid the princely sum of \$100 to the book's publisher, Little, Brown, & Company, for filming rights. There is no record of what the owners of Camulos might have been paid to have their 1854 Spanish Colonial adobe home, Catholic chapel built in the 1860s, and picturesque grounds invaded and captured forever on film.

Griffith was very familiar with the *Ramona* story, having played the romantic lead, Alessandro, in a touring stage production in California about five years earlier. This time, he would be the Director, and the role of Alessandro would be assumed by seasoned actor Henry Waltham. The cast also included Kate Bruce as fearsome Señora Moreno, Mack Sennet as the swaggering Americano villain, and 17-year-old ingénue Mary Pickford, as the heroine, Ramona. The innovative Billy Bitzer was the cinematographer.

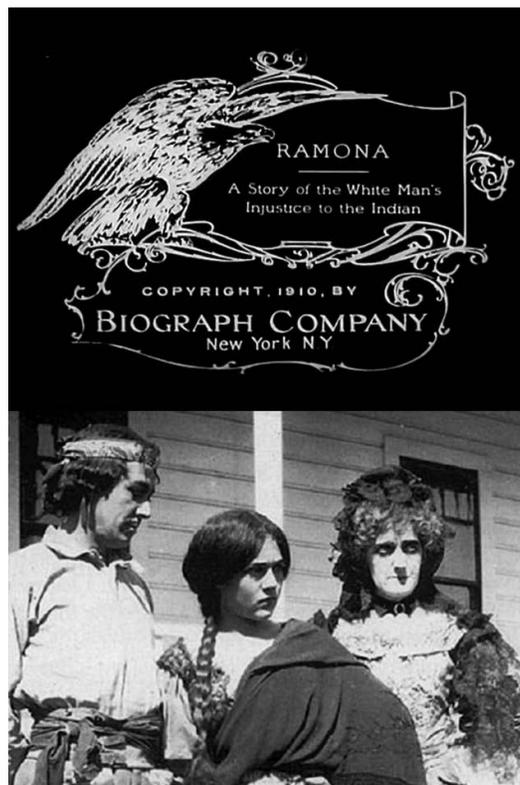
There is little documentation of what transpired on set. For three days, they captured the story at the rancho and in the surrounding hills from all

directions and numerous camera angles. They wrapped up the outdoor location shoot on April 2, and then, returned to the city to film the single indoor scene. The edited 17-minute one-reeler was released on May 23, 1910.

Audiences flocked to see *Ramona - a Story of the White Man's Injustice to the Indian*. People fell in love with the romantic story of the beautiful señorita, who fell in love with the handsome but ill-fated Indian. It was Romeo and Juliet, as if they had lived in the beautiful hills of California in the 1860s. However, there was another side of the story that was disturbing to some — they were seeing Indians mistreated and taken advantage of, rather than hearing their traditionally-accepted portrayal as bad guys and savages. The film showed the unsettling mixing of race and economic class. In the long run, like the original book, the film did little to help the cause for Native Americans, but it did result in the increased flow of tourism to California.

Visitors still come to Rancho Camulos today to see the "Home of Ramona." The Museum's docent-led tours end with a screening of the 1910 *Ramona*. It is a unique experience, because much of Camulos has not changed in 110 years. One can visualize the star-crossed lovers' first meeting at the chapel; Señora Moreno in front of the 1854 adobe thwarting their growing interest; Ramona imprisoned behind the bars of her bedroom window; and the lovers escaping. Also, there are areas on the grounds of the rancho that proxied for other settings, such as San Diego, Temecula, and Mount San Jacinto, later in the story.

This year, 2020, is the 110th anniversary of the filming of D.W. Griffith's *Ramona*, starring America's sweetheart, Mary Pickford. Come see for yourself! Details at Ranchocamulos.org.



A Short History of Bad SCV Haircuts

by John Boston

Not counting previous lives where I was scalped or served as a monk in 7th century Transylvania, I've had more than a few bad haircuts. But, I'm a glass half-full kind of person. At least this time around, I haven't sported a Mohawk or a Bakersfield lesbian softball third basewoman mullet.

Yet.

I did have a butch in 1968. I was attempting to play high school basketball at Hart High. My coach — let's just assign the pseudonym of Fran "One-Eyed Indian" to protect his identity — had this wacky idea. He felt that shaving the heads of his squadron of inept white young cagers would somehow add deadly accuracy to our jump shots or a wolverine-esque tenacity to the defense.

It didn't. It made us look like a bunch of 3000 B.C. skinny Egyptian priests in high top Converse, only without the eye shadow. This was the late 1960s. You know. Sexual Revolution? Make Love, Not War? Wanton, lusty hippie chicks who normally slept with toothless hoboes would take one look at our baldness and ask: "Hey. Where's the clown paint and rubber nose, Bozo?"

When I was 9, I took 75 cents my dad gave me for a haircut at Bud Hesseliu's Barbershop in Downtown Newhall and invested it in something wiser. Twinkies and chocolate milk, if memory serves. Surely Pops would notice my hair was not clipped. Panic visited. Using sheep shears and scissors, I gave myself a haircut. A really bad haircut. I ended up looking like the young Swedish greenscald Greta Thunberg, or a 9-Year-Old Lunatic.

I know. Good band name.

In my college years and into my 30s, I'd sometimes grow my hair shoulder length. It was a vainglorious thick mop, with waves and curls resting on my shoulders. Had this been a thousand years earlier, Vikings would have sheepishly sashayed up to me to ask: "Um der, whatya use fer conditioner?"

Odd how life is circular. My hair has taken a temporary vacation and about the only haircut that looks decent is the same one from 1968: Mental Patient #34877 Morosely Waiting for a Lobotomy. You know. A butch? In a fair world, it should only take a trained professional 18 seconds and

39 cents to cut my hair. Add another nickel to trim the eyebrows so I don't get sued by the estate of Lon Chaney.

(For you information-bankrupt millennials and Gen-Xers, Lon played The Wolfman in a series of 1940s classic monster movies.)

But it's not a fair world. Today, in Santa Clarita, even 18-second haircuts cost a minimum of \$20.

A couple of weeks back, I'm stumbling through a wretched day. I mistakenly think just the thing to cheer me up would be a haircut. I happened to be in Canyon Country and Googled the nearest barbershop. It looked safe enough, hidden in an ancient post-cowboy strip mall.

You ever step into a room and every warning system in your body starts screaming for you to do a quick about face and get the hell out? There were actual barbers. Two had the obligatory pharmacist/mad scientist white lab coats. Another, shirtless, wore a Hell's Angel vest and sported a machete. Another salon professional had size-24 black leather jeans and overused the word, "fabulous."

My barber? Other side of 90. With the shakes.

Like breakfast, it's hard to screw up a butch haircut. My stylist spent most of the time being genuinely sorry, preceded of course, with many "whoops..." She'd make a pass with the clippers, which looked like they were liberated from a 1950's toy barbershop set. She'd cut. Gouge. Apologize. Grab the chair or my shoulder to regain her balance. Flustered, about a minute into the partial haircut, she started to remove my plastic cape. I cleared my throat and pointed out that she missed a few spots.

For nearly a minute, she moved in and out, trying to find some field of vision. Then, she said...

"Whoops..."

About 40 minutes later, my trained stylist somehow managed to create a butch with more layers than shag carpeting. As I winced at the reflection in the big mirror, minus tattoos and hair color, I looked like Dennis Rodman.

She was a sweet woman, someone who had been snipping hair from, I'm guessing, the Pleistocene Epoch. Four more times during the trim, she started to whisk off the barber's

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John Boston Column

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cape. Four more times I pointed out, kindly, with compassion, that she missed territory larger than a putting green.

It was an interesting experience, being trimmed by someone flirting with dementia and, I'm guessing, partial blindness. Outside of one my wedding nights, it was one of the first time someone ever actually said to me:

"Hold down your ears."

On the bright side, I didn't order the hot towel/straight razor shave.

"There!" she said, holding up a large mirror so I could see how my skull looked in the back. I winced like Moe of the Three Stooges. I looked like I had a scalp disease.

"Just 20 dollars should cover it," she said. She smiled broadly. "And that includes the tip!"

My very next errand? Immediately get a second haircut to repair the first.

I'll never forget what that sweet little great grandmother said to me as she smiled and waved good-bye. "Don't forget to tell your friends!!"

Yeah. Sure. Don't you worry...

Having penned more than 11,000 essays, blogs and columns alone, John Boston is the most prolific humorist in world history. Make sure to buy his novels, "The Melancholy Samurai" and "Naked Came the Sasquatch" on Amazon.com. Read his Mr. SCV columns in Friday's Signal and his Time Ranger SCV history column in The Sunday Signal.

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Other Gift Shop Items



See page 3

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

Weekend Docents

Cassie Croasmun	Annette Moulay
Debra Haynes	David Murillo
Andrew Hall	RuthAnne Murthy
Anna Kroll	Alan Pollack
Barbara Martinelli	Anna Schindler
Benn Miranda	Gordon Uppman

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

Those who open and close for the docents

Cathy Martin	RuthAnne Murthy
Barbara Martinelli	Alan Pollack



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Dated Material: Please Do Not Delay



Konrad Summers photo from the Internet

*Remains of the St Francis Dam "Tombstone",
showing evidence of the dam's staircase profile.
For information on the upcoming tour, see page 4.*