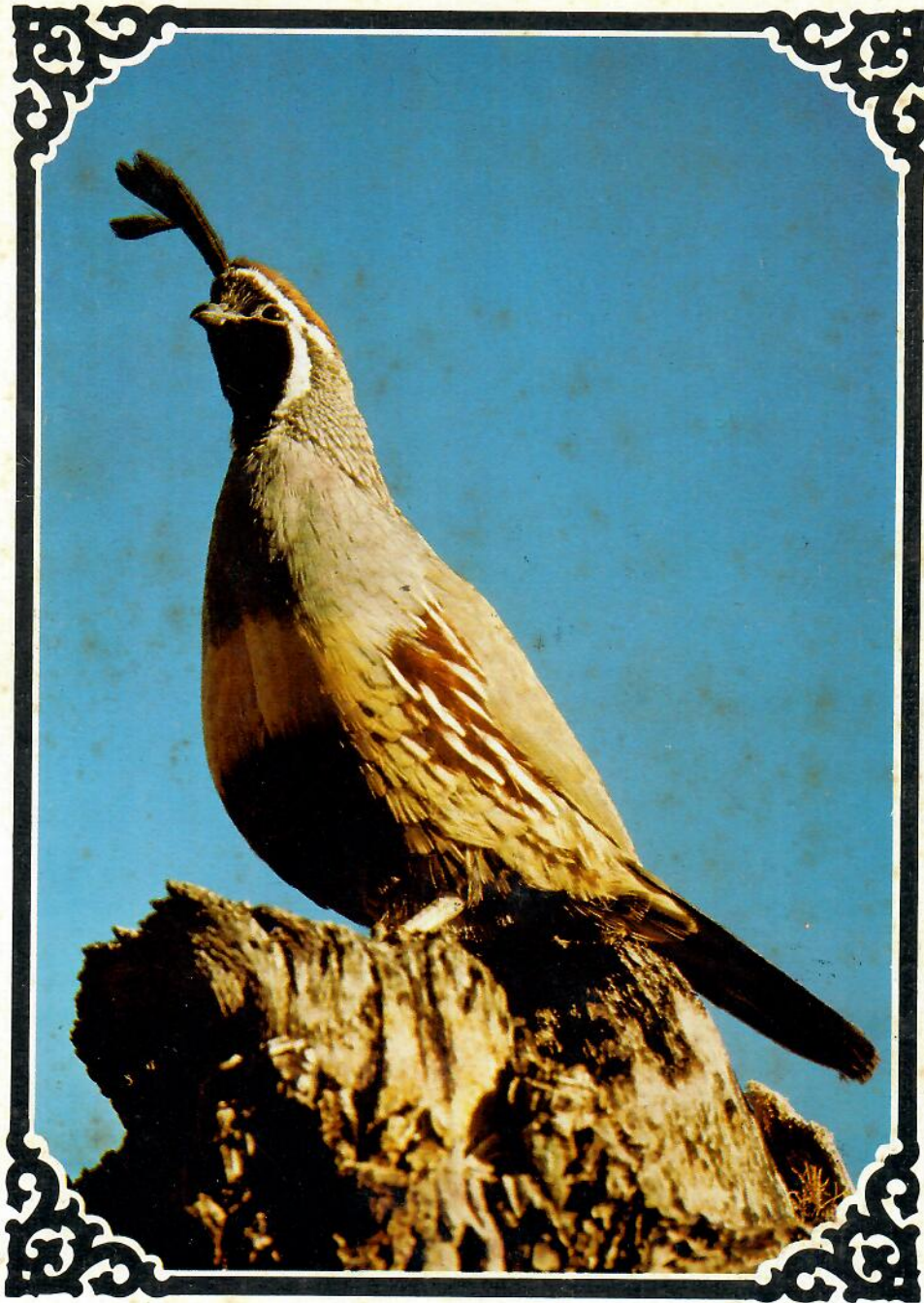


# The Heritage of Yucca Valley

CALIFORNIA

INCLUDING GIANT ROCK



Vol. 1, No. 1

2 of 3

\$20.00



*The population was sparse, but the spirit was high. The roads shown on this early aerial photograph are still being used. Can you locate any of today's buildings or topographical features? The wash in the upper right of this*

*photo, leads to Pioneer Town. The barren area at the upper left is now Blue Skis Golf Club. Can you locate the old school house at Yucca Trail and Wamego Trail?*

*The photo was taken by Willie Boldizar in the summer of 1947.*

Willie Boldizar

## Yucca Valley Calif. - 1947

29 Palms Hwy.

Fox Tr.

Deer Tr.





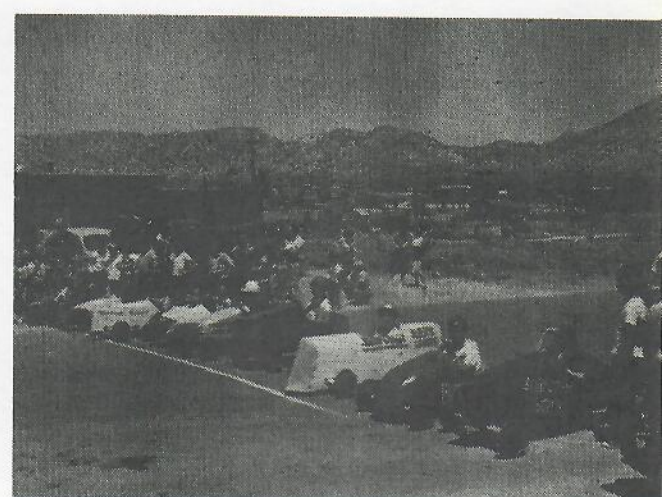


Joan Wilson

THE 1959 Midget Auto Races were a huge success. They were repeated in 1960-61 and '63. The race site was graded by Billy Royal and Dan Pekarovich at no cost to the sponsors.



BILLY ROYAL, a man for all occasions, never failed to offer his help.



1954 AND '55 were two years in which soap box derbies were held on the hill at Acoma Trail. Unfortunately, support for further derbies couldn't be mustered.

Francis Callahan sponsored Vicki Stratton and her "Downey Dolls" Girls Drill Team in the parade. The crack precision drill team, composed of young ladies all under fourteen, proved to be very popular. Following the parade Francis hosted them at luncheon in his restaurant, threw a swim party at Burnt Mountain Dude Ranch for his guests, returned for more food before their journey home. Callahan picked up the tab for all expenses.

An equestrian gymkhana was held on Saturday afternoon, featuring local horse men and women, not to mention the junior division. Sunday afternoon marked the first appearance of an exciting new attraction — the Midget Auto Races. Sometime before the big weekend John W. Fitzgerald, of Lawndale, and the secretary of the California Quarter Midget Race Association; his wife; and then-nine-year-old Danny McAndrews, a consistent winner of the Midget Races, were

THE GRAND PRIZE in 1960 was a Ford truck. It took a great deal of effort and tremendous support, but it was a very successful year.

1959 FOUND the town buying tickets on a new Rambler. It was raffled off courtesy of Price Motors in San Bernardino. Another successful year, thanks to hard-working volunteers.



Joan Wilson

BEVERLY HOFFMAN The Queen of 1959

3rd ANNUAL  
**Yucca Valley GRUBSTAKE DAYS**  
 APRIL 18-19, 1953  
 Souvenir PROGRAM  
 Sponsored by  
 Yucca Valley Chamber of Commerce  
 Yucca Valley, Calif.

Joan Wilson



To Our Hospital Let Us Humbly Give All We Can That Others May Live

5% NET PROFIT from GRUBSTAKE DAYS Will Go to the HIGH DESERT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL FUND

No. 0

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

GRUBSTAKE DAYS QUEEN TICKET!

1960 FORD HALF TON PICKUP

Courtesy BOB FAHY FORD, 220 E. Ramsey, Banning

8 percent Net Profit goes to HIDESEPT HOSPITAL FUND

Drawing, Sunday, May 13, 1960. Donation \$1. You do not have to be present to win. Car on display in YUCCA VALLEY

No. 0





Joan's Collection

*CIRCLE YOUR WAGONS, the Indians are coming! Not quite. The 1952 Grubstake Days presented a rodeo. As usual, in those days the whole town participated. The road angling to left center is 29 Palms Highway. The white building on the upper right is now Usher Tires. What is now Din Ho restaurant is visible next to the white building. Triangle Park is shown top center. The rodeo was held at what is now the Hi-D Center. Yessir! Circle your wagons — something's coming, but it's sure not Indians!!*

visiting at the Yucca Valley home of Helen Key. They inspected and approved of the local race site, north of the Shell Service Station, which had been graded and prepared by Billy Royal and Danny Pekarovich. The visitors then made arrangements for all 35 young contestants to stay overnight at the Townhouse motel, in Pioneertown during Grubstake Days. The races were an extremely popular event and the Association staged additional races in 1960, 1961, and 1963.

Art Miller, riding his champion parade horse, Peavine's Golden Major, made his first trek down the highway as Grand Marshal in 1958. Another year Art Miller headed the parade was in 1967, with Bob Purcell as the master of ceremonies. These two were indulging in a little historical repetition since Bob had often described Art Miller's pass-bys in Tournament of Roses Parades in Pasadena.

Through the years Art and Sheriff Frank Bland have been the Grand Marshal numerous times. Motion picture and television actors who have graced the town as Grand Marshals are Edgar Buchanan, Arthur Hunnicutt, Will Sampson, Jackie Coogan and Montie Montana.

Celebrities who have served as Honorary Mayors are Leo Carrillo, Dick Sinclair, Art Baker and Jimmy Van Heusen.

Other show business personalities who gave memorable performances over various Grubstake Days, include Carolina Cotton, Montie Montana (featuring Dancing Hooves), Joi Lansing and The Firehouse Five Plus Two.

All the net profits from the 1959 Grubstake Days went to the Hi-Desert Memorial Hospital Fund. The following year, 5% of the net profits for the Fast-Draw Contest were pledged to the hospital fund. The contest, held at Burnt Mountain Dude Ranch, featured the use of live bullets, \$2,500 in prizes and established a Perpetual Trophy.

In 1956 a committee was formed to bring Jalopy Races to Yucca Valley as a featured attraction. Those on the committee were Lem Parsons, Dick Pierce, Paul Mercatoris, Dale Weston, David Harmon, Sherry Harmon, Danny and Ann Pekarovich, Gordon Piffer and Joan Wilson. The grading for the event, sponsored by the Southern California Jalopy Association, was donated by Billy Royal and Danny Pekarovich. It, too, was a very popular drawing card.

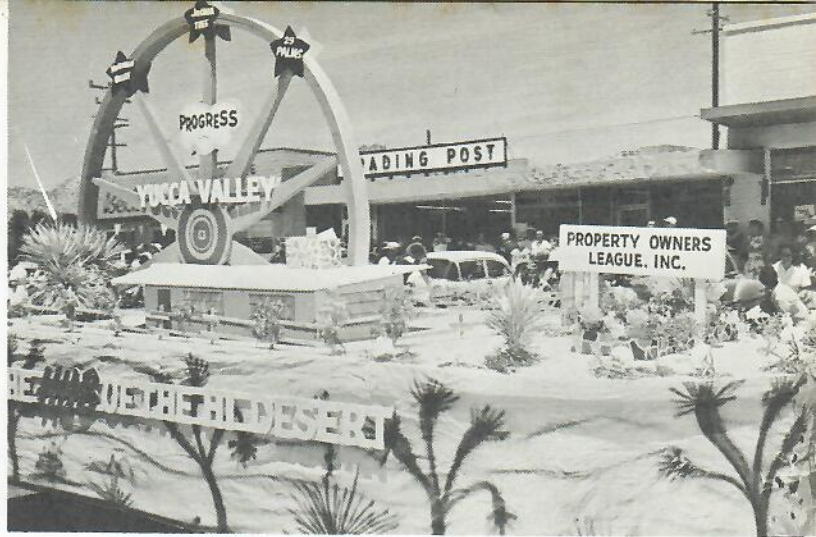
In 1963 the highlight was the Ground-breaking Ceremonies for the Hi-Desert Memorial Hospital. There was also an exhibit of the proposed medical structure. Prizes for the rest of the usual Grubstake activities reflected the special interest with the hospital. A solid gold-headed golf putter was donated by Elsinore Machris and there were also a white fox cape; a color TV set; two all-expenses-paid trips to Las Vegas; a custom-made lounge chair; two western outfit gift certificates to "Nudies" of North Hollywood; and a gift certificate from Homestead Supplies, of Yucca Valley.

The first year the Yucca Valley Jaycees sponsored Grubstake Days, 1966, the group exhibited its youthful energy, zest and

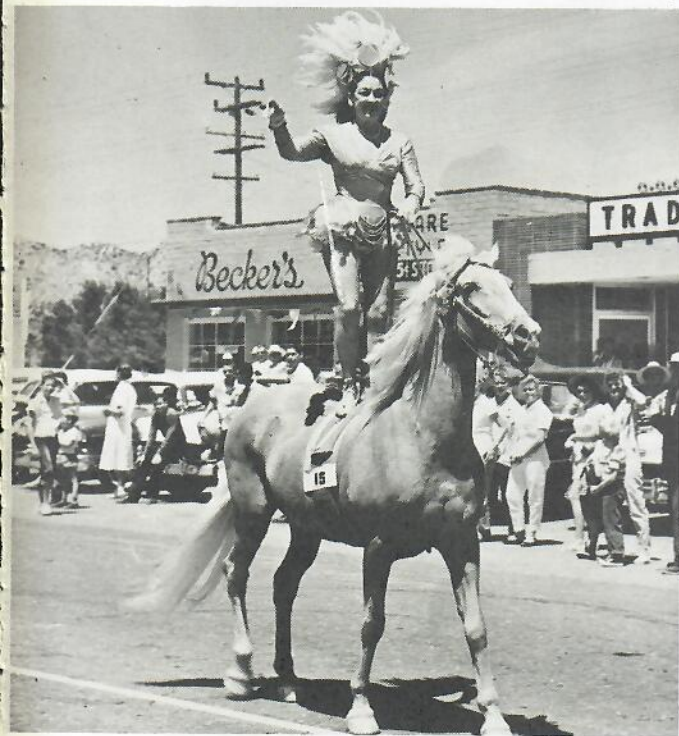




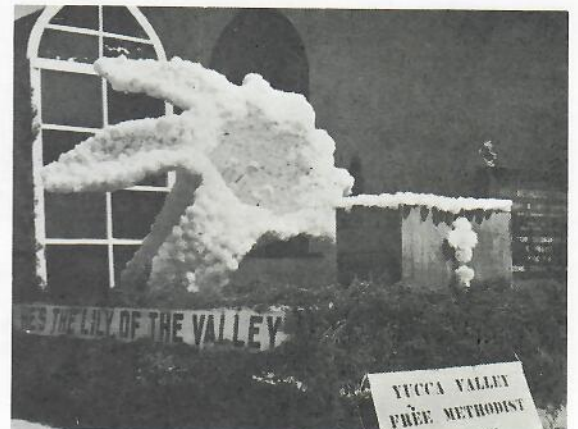
L Humphreyville



Joan Wilson



IN THIS GALLERY of Grubstake Days photographs, we are showing just a few of the early participants, and the variety of things that made up the early Grubstake Days. The two photographs at the top of the page show examples of early prize-winning floats. Upper right, an early '50s float by the property owners league. Upper left, the elementary school entry, about 1955. Left, Sherry Belcher, a 1953 entry. Lower left, the art show at Triangle Park, 1968. Bottom, Monument Realty held their parade within the parade. This entry (or entries) was in the mid-50s. Bottom right, the 1961 prize-winning entry of the Free Methodist Church. Oh, yes! The Ubiquitous Grubstaker — he's at every Grubstake Celebration, searching for the Mother Lode of enjoyment! Most years, He's Found It!



Elsie Boyer





imagination in staging a spectacular parade. The next year they topped this by bringing the very first circus (Graham Brothers Circus and Carnival) to ever appear in the Hi-Desert.

Regularly repeating attractions were the equestrian gymkhanas, cutting horse exhibitions, golf tournaments, art and crafts shows, flower shows, childrens' art shows, Junior Rifle Match Competition, community sing-a-longs, street dances, square dances, barbecues, beard judging contests, breakfast horseback rides, carnivals, concerts, games, barber-shop quartet food and crafts booths sponsored by local clubs and organizations, etc. After "Arbie's Irish Rose" and some other plays, the Yucca Valley Players settled down for an annual run of "Grubstake Gladys In..." She really got around, that gal, showing up in most of the western states and wilder towns.

Through the years considerable prizes have been given away including a Ford, a Rambler, console color TV sets, Hondas, additional trips to Las Vegas, a \$200 saddle, a \$100 and a \$50 U.S. Savings Bond, a .22 calibre Remington Rifle, electric tools, specialty lamps, hand-made costume jewelry, gift certificates for merchandise and services, etc. In 1969 the Yucca Valley Elks Lodge generously gave away a travel trailer to a lucky John Walser, of Long Beach.



*THE Yucca Valley Players presented many Grubstake plays. This one was the 1969 production of "Ten Little Indians." Unfortunately, the Yucca Valley Players no longer exists.*

Again, through the years the Grubstake Days Buttons, one of the Chamber's regular major money-makers, has risen in price from 50¢ to \$2 each. Also, the printed numbers have been dropped, thereby destroying, to many people's beliefs, the incentives of the lucky-number purchasers.



*DICK SINCLAIR of T.V.S. Polka Parade, one of our early Honorary Mayors.*



*MOVIE STAR and early Californian, the late Leo Carillo, was another Honorary Mayor.*



*THE MOST ACTIVE of our Honorary Mayors was Songwriter Jimmy Van Heusen.*





Joan Wilson



**PAGEANTRY and personalities from the past.**

These photographs will convey the idea that Grubstake Days was a big event. Hopefully, it still is, to most.

UPPER LEFT — A 1959 P.T.A. float. Upper right, the Red Dog Saloon. In the same parade — that's diversification. Above the Red Dog photo are three unsavory beard growers: Ed Hardesty, Tom Humphreyville and Jack Phoenix. Left, the Hi-Desert Star entry — note the 1958 automobile.

BELOW — The 1959 Princesses, left to right: Beverly Hoffman, Tina English, Cheryl Hammett and Nancy Garver. Extreme bottom left: Bates Marriott — 1955. Bottom right — Lanny Moffitt, Ace Hardware, installs Mama Calvert as Honorary Mayor — 1970.

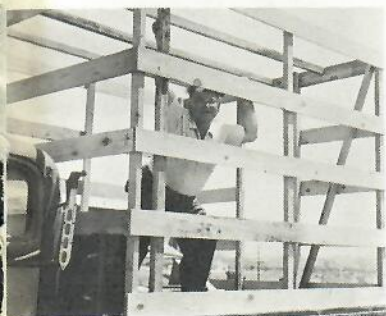


Grubstake Days has traditionally had the habit of getting many people involved in its preparations. Among the earlier-day volunteers, who worked so thoroughly and with such attention to all details large and small on the parades and gymkhanas alone, were such steadfast workers as John L. Kee, Sr., K.T. and Cherie Belcher, Harry Housh, Billy Royal, Danny Pekarovich and Corky Kee.

Others working right along with them on a myriad of assignments and problems were Roy Roush, Odis J. Ray, Everett Taylor, Jule Boldizar, Bates Marriott, Kenn Witting, C.H. Jacobs, Joan Wilson, Vesta Peters, Jack Weaver, Ruth Duarte, Charley Haney, Alfred N. Peters, Jack Coffman, Charlie Watkins, Lou Holland, Art Miller, John Haskell, Luella McGarry Williams, Charlie Gross, Alice "Honey" Fellers and Kirk and Laurel Martin.

Still other consistent hard workers were Hazel Miller, Ed and Hilda Hardesty, Ken Bonser, Betty and Bob Brownell, Florence and Ed Ware, Mary Ottis, George Evanoff, Jane Lace, Art Le Fever, Harvey Odgers, Corene Hammett, Betty and John Ehrismann, Dean Howell, Lucille List, Jerry Moore, Alice Bennett, Rod Jones, the total boards of directors of those years for the Chamber and so many others.

The Grubstake Brochures always ended with an invitation to return and almost all of the permanent residents went out of their way to speak to weekenders and strangers and make them feel welcome. ■





# California Department of Forestry

**D**uring the Depression years of the 1930's a State Emergency Relief (SERC) was built in Big Morongo Canyon for the purpose of providing fire protection for the Morongo Basin. The old building is still standing.

In 1944, Ray Bolster and his family moved to Twentynine Palms and opened up a California Department of Forestry Station. The one truck operation, which shared quarters with the Sheriff's Office, was located on Adobe Road, north of the present Twentynine Palms Fire Station. That building now houses the ambulance service.

Bolster remained in Twentynine Palms until 1961, when the CDF moved in and shared space with the Yucca Valley Fire Protection District while its new (and present) headquarters building on Airway Avenue was planned and under construction. When the Yucca Valley CDF Station opened in 1963, Capt. George Meers was in charge.

The local CDF station officials administrate the volunteer fire-fighting programs of the communities within the Morongo Basin. The station also serves the vast unprotected areas of the eastern desert.

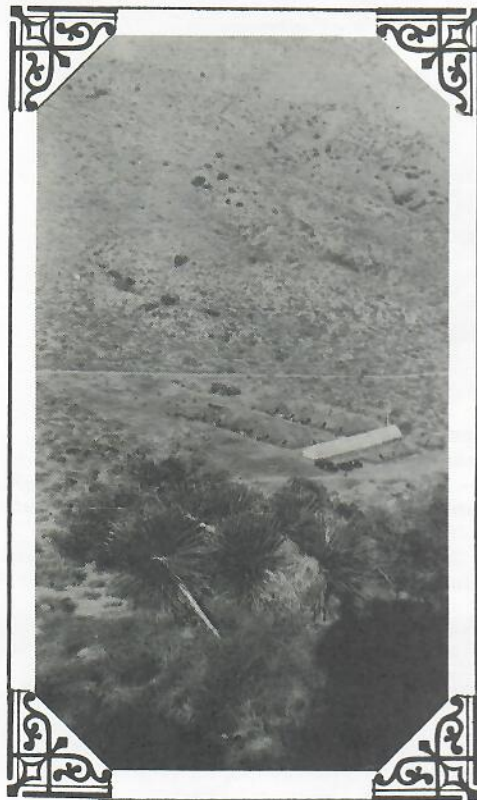
Under CDF guidance, in the Basin there are eight stations, seven fire trucks, three tankers, two rescue squads, nine paid employees and one hundred volunteers.

Station 19, Homestead and Johnson Valleys, has one fire truck and fifteen fire-fighters; Stations 32 and 33, Morongo Valley, has one fire truck, one tanker, one rescue squad, and fifteen fire-fighters; Station 36, Joshua Tree, has three trucks, one tanker, one rescue squad, one sedan and fifteen fire-fighters; and, there are two volunteer stations in Wonder Valley and fifteen volunteers in Pioneertown. Another station is being planned for Copper Mountain.

The current CDF station officials in Yucca Valley, under the command of Battalion Chief, includes Capt. Jerry Glover, Capt. Bob Oechsner, Capt. Tim Ricker and Capt. Bob Becker (stationed in Joshua Tree).

The crew of four fire-fighters includes Jeff Donche, Mike Nelson, Bobby Lake and Tracy Duke. The latter is the first woman assigned to the station. She has been here for three years.

Those who were living in the Hi-Desert in February, 1970, remember with deep sadness the Unigas delivery truck explosion and fire which



*THE FIRST forestry outpost in the Morongo Basin — taken in Morongo Valley in the early '30s.*

claimed the life of Yucca Valley CDF fire-fighter, Paul Waring. Another CDF crewman, Engineer Ron Newport, was very badly burned in the fire. He survived and fought and won a long, painful recovery battle, returned to the job and worked his way up to Fire Captain

The residents of the Morongo Basin are very grateful for the spirit, bravery and skill of the CDF and all fire-fighters. ■



**BE FIRE SAFE!**



# FASCINATING FACTS

ONLY A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COULD LOVE

A number of people have been so inspired by Yucca Valley and its vistas that they have been moved to compose music about the town. As early as 1951, Al "Pee Wee" Weber and Victory Sullivan wrote the music and lyrics to "Yucca Valley Noches" and had the sheet music published. The song was dedicated to Dr. Mabel M. Fetter.

In 1957, Paul Hammett, a stalwart of the Yucca Valley Players, composed a song entitled, naturally enough, "Yucca Valley." A few years later he met Curt Massey, who had a musical program on Channel 4 Television in Los Angeles with "Liltin'" Martha Tilton and Country Washburn. Curt's brother, Albert, lived in Yucca Valley and the two kept in close touch. Ultimately, Curt, who could play just about every musical instrument, made a multiple recording of the song, using a piano, a melodica and two other instruments. Then, in the 1964 Grubstake Days Parade, the recording was played over a p.a. system on a float with a smiling, waving Curt aboard. Paul was understandably proud and happy. He also composed a song for the 1963 Grubstake Pageant program.

Three other local composers were the Linn Twins, Travis and Carroll, and their mother, Bessie, of Landers. Bessie composed the words and music for "Quiet Valley, Yucca Valley" and her sons composed the words and music for "Quest For Gold." The twins recorded the songs in 1962 on the Grubstake label. They, too, composed music for the 1963 Pageant program, and have ridden in Grubstake Days Parades, as did Bessie in the 1984 parade — in a gold colored Cadillac! "Quest For Gold" is a song about the community of Landers.

Most recently the Linn Twins entertained at the combination Birthday Party/Silver Anniversary of long-time friends, Newlin and Vernetta Landers. Starting in 1961 Vernetta opened and operated the Landers Post Office contract station as Clerk-in-charge for 21 years, concluding her contract on December 10, 1982. She and her husband have offered the Federal Government the land but have not heard the U.S. Post Office's final decision as yet. Ruth Long, president of the Morongo Unified School District's Board of Education, was one of the many guests at the party. She presented Vernetta, who was a dedicated educator, with a Certificate of Appreciation For Outstanding Service to Students as a teacher and counselor for 37 years at colleges and public schools in California. The twins performed on a number of musical instruments at Vernetta's party.

During its formative years the town of Yucca Valley was extremely fortunate to have among its active citizens five exceptional people — two poets laureate and three artists. All of them unhesitatingly gave of their genius, talent, brains, brawn and elbow grease for the benefit of the community for both special occasions and projects and on a day-to-day basis. The poets, now deceased, were June LeMert Paxton and O.D. Thomas. The artists were Kirk Martin, Frank Garske and Antone Martin (also deceased). Yucca Valley is still, indeed, fortunate to have Kirk and Frank among the citizenry. Through the years, of course, they have been joined by many, many resident artists.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Lamberty's Drug Store opened in the late '40's, then it became the Country Store. Later it became the Yucca Valley Drug Store and was owned by Bates Marriott and Virginia Kurz. Still later Bates went into partnership with Bob McKay. When Bates retired Bob continued on alone. Then he moved his drug store to the new location in the Hi-D Center. There he became the partner of Stan Zarakov. When Bob died, Stan continued to operate the store he still occupies. The old original store was purchased by Hal and Pat Rubak in 1966 for MDX.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

S and L Lumber Yard opened in the late '50's. Later George Lyall bought his partner out. It is now Pioneer Lumber.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ernie Littlepage, while running Burnt Mt. Dude Ranch, also operated the Skating Rink in 1956.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Roger Melanson, in the early '50's wanted to be a part of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. He was due to get his physical and knew that he was a little over 1/2 inch too short. He went to Dr. Dean Fairbanks, who proceeded to put Roger on the table and stretch him. He was placed on a stiff, long board and his friends Danny and Ann Pekarovich drove him to San Bernardino in a station wagon. The stretching lasted long enough for Roger to pass the physical and be accepted. That is how close the Sheriff's Department came to losing one of the best deputies and one of the very best detectives it has ever recruited.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Lou Holland opened his Builder's Showcase in 1958.



# Hi Desert Enterprise—Desert Star—

**S**ome years back at a Yucca Valley Chamber of Commerce meeting, President Roy Roush said to C.H. Jacobs, "Every time that gal visits another town she spots something and it ends up with our Chamber getting itself involved!"

Not in the least angry or bitter, as he said it everyone was laughing because he was talking about Joan Wilson — one of the chamber's (and the town's) driving forces for community progress in those days. And he was right!

For example: Back in 1957, Joan and her three children, Brenda, Charleen and David, were enjoying an Easter Vacation in Idyllwild. While there she picked up a copy of "The Town Crier," the small mountain community's newspaper — an 8½" X 11" mimeographed sheet full of local news and happenings. The wheels started turning in her head.

Enroute home, she stopped at the inviting "Lemonade — All You Can Drink For A Dime" sign at the old Hadley's Juice Bar in Cabazon. While there she "spotted something." It was Cabazon's small paper. Picking it up, Joan thought, "If towns the size of Idyllwild and Cabazon can have a newspaper, why can't we?" She asked where the paper was put out and drove over to the office of L.D. Tallent, the editor.

Tallent (later to become the Mayor) told her, "I went into this green." He said he had two girls on the paper, one a reporter and one to sell ads. Warning her, he said, "It's not easy." He then explained that he had the paper printed by Walker Larsen at The Desert Sentinel, in Desert Hot Springs. Larsen could "advise and help you over the rough spots," he told Joan.

She drove right over to the Sentinel office where Larsen did, indeed, advise her and fill her in on all the particulars of getting a newspaper started.

Back in Yucca Valley, she contacted C.H. Jacobs and told him what she had learned. The pair went right back to see Larsen who told them he would print a tabloid-sized paper for them for \$20.00 a page.

Meanwhile, back at the chamber, Roy Roush had called a special meeting. Joan walked in with Mr. Jacobs. When she announced — "Gentlemen, I'd like to have a newspaper. Loan me \$300.00!" — she said she thought the board members were all going to faint. Mr. Jacobs gave his report and they discussed it. It was known that many of the townspeople were dissatisfied because no one was too successful in getting items into the Joshua Tree and Twentynine Palms papers. The



C.H. Jacobs

chamber, after further discussion, voted to go ahead and get a paper started.

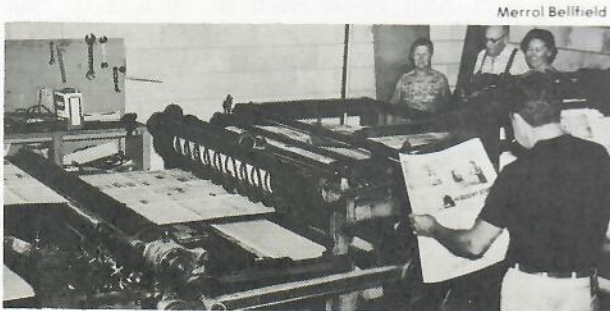
Because of its inexperience in publishing, the chamber appointed a supervising committee to look over the whole procedure. The appointees were Roush, Florence Ware and Jack Coffman with John Sweesy to assist if needed.

The staff, which served without any remuneration of any kind, consisted of Jacobs, manager; Joan, advertising manager; and Ruth Dietman, reporter.

The first name selected for the new paper was The Hi-Desert Enterprise, but that was considered to be too long and was rejected. As they were ready for the first edition they named it The Desert Star. The legal forms were duly submitted and it was subsequently learned that a Needles newspaper already had that name. After learning this, the chamber ran a contest and Jane Lacey won with her suggestion - The Hi-Desert Star.

The first issue, under the name of The Hi-Desert Star, was published on Wednesday, April 3, 1957. That first edition featured news of its own birth; a story on the new Masonic Hall to be built; the additions of the cafeteria/multi-purpose room and administrative offices at Yucca Valley

Hi-Desert Star Press from 1965.



Merrol Bellfield



# Hi Desert Star

Elementary School; news of a special park board meeting to approve the leasing of school property and building of Hi-Desert Park; a story about Resident Deputy Roland H. (Ron) Webb and other local members of the Sheriff's Department; an article by Dr. E.H. Kelley praising the healthful aspects of Yucca Valley; and a full page of cartoons.

The first editorial explained the chamber's position: "It is not our intention to go into the newspaper business, but with the cooperation of our business people, residents and property owners, and after much investigation, we feel confident that we can carry on until such time as a commercial newspaper may see fit to take over."

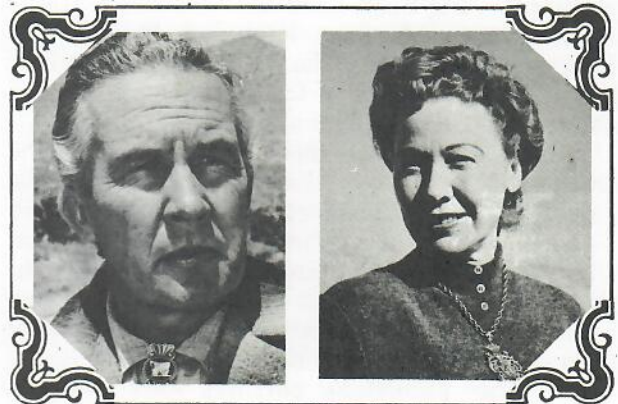
The paper was to serve Yucca Valley, Morongo Valley, Palm Wells, Paradise Valley, Yucca Mesa, Pioneertown and Rimrock. Mr. and Mrs. T.W. McDonald, of Inglewood, were the first subscribers. They later owned a home in Yucca Valley.

Alice (Honey) Fellers wrote a news column for Pioneertown and Irene Fox wrote a news column for Rimrock. Other community news was submitted and published.

The Yucca Valley Community Church, on Apache Trail, provided some much needed space for the newspaper to operate. Later the editorial, sales and office staff moved in with the Yucca Valley Chamber of Commerce in the Plaza storefront office and eventually was sharing that space with the Post Office, the Sheriff's Office and the County Building Inspector.

The first unknowledgeable mistake of any moment came when Joan made out the first advertising bills, charging by the square inch! Soon Walker Larsen was explaining that ads are charged by the column inch — There's a big difference! The local merchants and businessmen were only too happy and eager to sign up for ads and support the already popular paper.

During the weeks to come Joan found herself remembering Editor Tallent's warning as she went to seventeen meetings in one week and then wrote them up for the paper! She wasn't the only one, however, as additional news was ably provided by Charlotte Kincaid, Ruth Duarte, Lillian Jacobs, Eva Asmus, Dorothy McGraw and Mrs. Frank Windle. Cal Crottsenburg covered the news events for Morongo Valley and Palm Wells. Larry Asmus did the same for Yucca Mesa and also wrote a mining news column. Other special interest news columns were covered as follows: Sandy Harmon, teen-age events; Wes Yale, golf at the Hi-Desert Golf and Country Club; Burnt



*IN 1959 the Hi-Desert Star was staffed by Jerry Moore, Editor, left and Betty Brownell, Advertising Manager, right.*

Mountain Dude Ranch and cove events; and Rubye Whitaker equestrian events and trail rides.

Dorothy McGraw, one of Yucca Valley's most consistent boosters, came in every week and addressed the subscription papers by hand and got them ready to mail out. Later some other volunteers joined her. There was no addressograph machine and a fund was set up to raise money for one.

With its "shake-down" period under its belt the Hi-Desert Star was a decided success. Its continuously-growing subscription lists included local residents and weekenders and 5-acre people from all over, even some from overseas. The chamber took extra copies to the motels and other places of public business for free distribution to any visitors. This, too, added to the lengthening list of subscribers.

This success was sweet; however, the paper's staff was beginning to suffer. Volunteers all, they had put in long hours and many miles with no salaries and paying all their own expenses. Worse yet, more than one car was worn out and in need of repair.

Suddenly, relief rose on the horizon (not in the form of the U.S. Cavalry, but someone just as welcome!) A four-way partnership of professional journalists bought the Hi-Desert Star and the chamber was out of the newspaper business! The June 26, 1957, issue ran the jubilant front-page headline, "Experienced Publishers Purchase Desert Star."

The very welcome new owners were Walker J. Larsen, the chamber's friend and mentor, and Harry D. Schultz. Larsen, a graduate of the University of Southern California's School of Journalism, published the Yucaipa News-Mirror as



well as the Desert Hot Springs paper. He had recently entered into a partnership with Schultz and together they purchased the Hi-Desert Star. At the time Schultz was publishing one daily and nine weekly newspapers located in North Hollywood, Big Bear, Lake Arrowhead, Crestline, Palm Springs, Mentone, Highland, Muscoy and East San Bernardino. (The Pulitzer Prize nominee had built up a chain of thirteen newspapers by the age of 33, a phenomenal record!)

What was of even more importance to the chamber was the fact that Schultz was, at the time of purchase, president of the San Bernardino County Newspaper Publishers' Association; the president of the Merchants' Association in San Bernardino; and had been appointed to one county-wide and one state-wide commission by then Assemblyman Jack Beaver.

The other publishing partners were Larsen's wife, Donald, and Schultz's wife, Ollie; both experienced journalists. Larsen and Schultz were ex-servicemen and their wives were both ex-Waves. It was believed to be the only news publishing partnership in the country where both the men and their wives were all veterans.

All four worked hard and constantly on all their papers in every category of the publishing business. With such a full and demanding schedule it was bound to happen to somebody — and Larsen became very ill and could no longer continue. With deep regret the Schultz's bought out the Larsens. Soon, though, they realized that they, too, were feeling the pressures of the extra duties and responsibilities. While the excellent quality of the papers remained intact, the "burning the candle at both ends" routine began to make them pretty weary. Having fallen in love with the area it was a real heart-wrenching decision to make, but, on January 16, 1958, they sold the Hi-Desert Star and the Sentinel to Mark C. and Mabel Green.

Schultz announced that he and his family were going to take a well-deserved rest. A European trip proved to be agreeable and permanent for Harry D. Schultz, then and now headquartered in Switzerland, became the well-known financial adviser and publisher of the award-winning "International Harry Schultz Letter."

Mark Green had seventeen years experience in publishing weeklies and dailies in Illinois, Iowa and Florida. He had also been a U.S. Navy news correspondent in World War II.

Joan Wilson, too, was tired and wanted someone to take over as advertising manager. She was still a volunteer. She contacted Betty Brownell, who was working in Palm Springs. Betty, a practical realist at heart, said, "Joan, I'm not a fool like you. I have to be paid for my time!" Joan agreed and arranged for her to talk to Green and, in January, 1958, Betty started on her local career as one of the most successful advertising managers the paper ever had.

In February, 1958, Rod Jones became the editor. On May 21, 1959, Jerry Moore took over as editor and helped boost the Pioneer Pass Push and create interest in the PPGC.

The construction of a new building for the Hi-Desert Star alone was announced in May, 1960. It was to be constructed by Bill and Edna Adams, of Yucca Valley, as part of their Hi-D Center complex by the old Plaza. The Open House Edition for the paper's new quarters was published on October 27, 1960.

Rolland Jacquart and Darrell Degenhart, publishers of papers throughout Kansas, bought the local weekly in February, 1962. They bought the building in March, 1964. By July 1, 1970, the newspaper enterprise had become the Hi-Desert Publishing Co. Throughout these administrative changeovers the Hi-Desert Star continued to grow and prosper.

The expanding McGiffin Newspaper Corporation, of South Gate, purchased the Hi-Desert Star in 1970, with Hal J. Paradis serving as publisher. In 1973, Jack Harrington became the publisher for McGiffin, followed by Phil Tofani in 1976. Paradis returned as publisher in 1979. (Joan Wilson's Lifetime Subscription was duly dropped.)

Those who held editorial posts included Vonda Carlson, Lina McFarland, Doug Huff, Jim Hardesti and John Jackson. Art Mitz became editor of the Hi-Desert Star in 1975.

The McGiffin Corp. purchased The Desert Trail, Twentynine Palms, in 1976; and The Desert Sentinel, Desert Hot Springs, in October, 1981.



*THE OPENING of the Hi-Desert Star.  
ABOVE, the composing room; below, well-wishers.*



Merrol Bellfield





Bob Stephenson

HAL PARADIS, Publisher of the present-day Hi-Desert Star.

In the Hi-Desert Star's early years Jerry Moore, Glen Nufer and Robert Stephenson served as staff photographers. Stephenson later was promoted to Production Manager and oversees the off-set production work and printing of the Star-Trail/Sentinel papers and advertisers plus nine other publications. They are the Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Base paper, The Observation Post; the Big Bear High Country Life and the High Country Life Guide; the Hesperia Resorter; Yucaipa-Calimesa News-Mirror; Banning-Beaumont Moneysaver; Cherry Valley Sunshine Shopper; and the Victorville Action Ads. The Hi-Desert Star facilities also print the Phi Sigma Kappa, a nationwide quarterly, published in Indianapolis, Ind. ■

# High Desert PICTORIAL

PUBLISHED IN YUCCA VALLEY, CALIF.

KEN WITTING	EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
ERNIE C. PETERS	STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
KIRK MARTIN	STAFF ARTIST

ABOVE, masthead from a 1950 publication. Below, the 1968 Yucca Valley Graphic News.



It doesn't seem possible after all those itinerant miners, cattlemen and ranchers — but, it's recorded that a Mr. and Mrs. Fred Cliffe named the road the Pioneer Pass!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Tommy Bouchey built his famous restaurant in 1945. Because building materials were in such short supply immediately following the war, Tommy personally hauled all of it up himself for his construction project. After he had the foundation forms poured, someone in the road department came along and said the Morongo Basin area surveyor he had used had made a mistake on Tommy's survey and that the highway was going to come through part of his restaurant. He was going to have to dig up the foundation and move it back. Tommy, never one to back away from a problem, said he would not do it. "Move the road over, instead," he suggested testily . . . and they did!

Bouchey's was known throughout Southern California and was always filled. On weekends it overflowed with eager customers. People sat in their cars until their names were called, admitting them to a standing-room-only place at the bar, which was six and seven deep with customers. There were huge, comfortable booths for the diners, but this did not allow for a great many to be served at one time in the dining room. However, everyone thought the wait for the delicious food was more than worth it.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Lusky Brothers, publishers of city directories, came into Yucca Valley in 1960 and made arrangements to put out a directory for the town. Most of the town signed up. The Lusky Brothers got all of the research in hand. But, then, there was a delay. When the directory was ready to go again, they didn't check back to see that everything was all right. So, they printed the directories, only to find out that in the meantime all the phone numbers had graduated from three digits to Forest 5 numbers . . . and all the listings were wrong.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Chamber of Commerce's first "Welcome to Yucca Valley" sign was erected at the west entrance on May 29, 1958. All through those earlier years Paul Hammett painted hundreds of signs for the benefit of Yucca Valley. Another good citizen who donated so much time effort to the community, made decorations and toys for Christmas and helped on so many chamber projects was Ed Ware.



# Early Yucca Valley Publications



O.D. Thomas claimed there was an electric current that came out of the ground at Yucca Valley and cured people of their ills and filled them with vitality. ----- This must have been the reason so many fine people were inspired to start so many local newspapers in the past. Furthermore, they ranged from very good to excellent publications. Most of them were ahead of their time.

In 1946, Homer and Ruth Stuart moved into the Hi-Desert and started a monthly magazine called *The Desert Spotlight*. It was a top-quality publication filled with interesting feature articles. One of its most consistent contributors was June LeMert Paxton. (Mrs. Paxton, O.D. Thomas and Merle Armitage were Yucca Valley's three early-day poets laureate.) Two years later the Stuarts changed over to a weekly newspaper format, called *The Valley Star*. This, too, was an excellent effort. One of *The Valley Star*'s 1949 editions headlined "The Heaviest Snowfall In History Blankets Yucca Valley Area."

That same starting year, 1948, the *Tri-Valley News* was also published in Yucca Valley; unfortunately, its publisher's name is long forgotten. Then, from 1949 to 1950, the *Yucca Valley Graphic News* had a run at it. Also in 1949, the *High Desert Pictorial* got off to a fine start with Kenn Witting as editor-publisher and Ernie Peters as photographer.

The year 1949 had to be a vintage one for local publishing because that year, too, saw the birth of the *Pioneertown Gazette*. It was started by Ray Brown and taken over by Juan Cintron, a Legion chief from Puerto Rico. Cintron, who loved Pioneertown, was a friend of Val Jones, owner of the *Red Dog*. Kenn Witting bought the *Pioneertown Gazette*, a monthly paper filled with stories and features, in 1950, and published it for a year. With Kenn's pithy commentary and Ernie's beautiful pictures, the papers were appreciated by the townspeople.

Then came the Yucca Valley publishing gap that was finally plugged by the *Hi-Desert Star* in 1957. Inbued with the same spirit as the earlier journalists, those first chamber amateurs and, later, Larsen and Schultz gave a certain snap and sparkle to each issue of the paper that carried its readers and the town along with each development.

Bob Wilton, a former Western Air Lines publicist, had moved to Yucca Valley and, in January, 1964, he started the *News Pictorial*. It,

too, was a quality publication and was known as "the cool paper with all the pictures." It had a good reception from its readers and a happy group of advertisers. All of Wilton's problems came from out-of-town printers. He wanted to print his paper in Yucca Valley and collect additional printing customers. He attempted to get financing for such a plant. Wilton even had his first printing customer—the Twentynine Palms Marine Base's Observation Post. When the financing failed to materialize, he joined the ranks of the others ahead of their time.

In the late 1960's Pioneertown was definitely heard from again with the publishing of the magnificent *Jackass Mail*. The talented team of Mark Amos and his wife, Marie, were the editors-publishers. Mark had something to say but he did so in such hilarious fashion the medicine was easy to swallow and, in fact, gained in influence because of the fun of reading the weekly paper. It was with deep regret that its many faithful readers-supporters received the news that it, too, was closing down.

By the latter half of 1967, Joan Wilson could stand it no longer. She wanted to publish a monthly newspaper of strong editorial stand and with many interesting features. So, in October, she started one and the banner of the *Yucca Valley Graphic News* flew once more throughout the town. Ill health plagued her and she had to give up her beloved paper in preparation to moving "permanently" to Florida to live with her daughter, Charleen. (There, she became even more sick and found she could not tolerate the humid climate. Her many friends were sorry she was so ill, but happy that she returned to her dry desert—permanently.)

It was in August, 1968, that she sold her paper to Dee Davis for \$100. Dee changed it to a weekly paper and renamed it the *Yucca Valley News*. It became a scrappy fighter that earned an Inland Counties Press Club Award before Dee sold it, in 1970, to the *Hi-Desert Publishing Co.* for \$8,000.

One of the superior special editions of the *Hi-Desert Star* was published on October 30, 1960, for the Open House when it moved into its new building on Apache Trail. The paper's new headquarters were constructed by Bill and Edna Adams as part of the *Hi-D Center*. The Open House Edition was devoted to stories and pictures of the new building's features, biographical sketches of its staff and descriptions of how each newspaper department functioned.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Corinne Crawford opened *Hi-Desert Fashions* in 1957.



# Angel of the Press—Elsinore Machris

**A** great part of Southern California, especially the community of Yucca Valley, lost one of its best friends and its foremost benefactor when Elsinore Machris died in Los Angeles on January 12, 1967.

As co-founder, along with her nephew, Norman Essig, of Sky Harbor Estates and Ranchos, she became a subdivider and developer of one of the largest subdivisions in Yucca Valley.

Never one to sit idly by and wait for things to happen, Mrs. Machris helped to establish the Hi-Desert Memorial Hospital; its district; and its original fund-raising arm, Hi-Desert Memorial Hospital, Inc. She also founded the HDMC Guild and was its honorary president.

Also, in this early stage of Yucca Valley's growth, she donated Machris Park, complete with acreage, clubhouse and equipment, to the Yucca Valley Park and Recreation District; and she bought and operated the Copper Room Restaurant at the Yucca Valley Airport.

The 84 year old philanthropist was born in Watertown, Wisc. In her early career she was a newspaper woman in Milwaukee and Chicago, establishing a life-long interest in the press.

In a biographical sketch prepared by Mrs. Elmarie Essig, she states: "In 1905 Elsinore went to California and was employed by an insurance company as an adjustor. Her big opportunity came (in 1906) when her company sent her to San Francisco as an appraiser after the earthquake.

"In 1907 she married George Machris and for the next 44 years worked hand in hand with her husband in his business enterprises, mainly in the founding of the Wilshire Oil Company."

Following her husband's death in 1952, Mrs. Machris financed a memorial to him by establishing the George and Elsinore Machris Cardiac Hospital at the City of Hope, in Duarte. Altogether she donated \$1 million to this hospital.

Through the years she donated to four more hospitals. They were; Desert Hospital, Palm Springs, where she purchased and gave all of the original X-ray equipment and additional sizable monetary gifts; Hi-Desert Memorial Hospital, where she contributed \$60,000 before it opened and purchased and gave all of the X-ray equipment as it opened; and other generous sums to Cedars of Lebanon Hospital and Childrens' Hospital, both in Los Angeles.



*Elsinore Machris*

She was gratefully given the title of "Angel of the Press" by the Greater Los Angeles Press Club when she established a scholarship program for UCLA journalism students as part of the LAPC's 8-Ball Welfare Foundation. She was made an honorary life member. Altogether, she donated \$60,000 to the scholarship fund.

In Palm Springs she donated \$25,000 to the cause and was considered to be the founder of the Desert Press Club and was an honorary life member.

While she was living she also contributed to the Spastic Childrens' Foundation, the Jewish Home For The Aged, St. Theresa's Catholic Church and to a number of youth centers.

Following her death, her will set up a living trust for six organizations with income derived from her estate, estimated to be in excess of \$15 million. The six were the Salvation Army; Braille Institute; Midnight Mission; American Heart Association; Damon Runyon Cancer Fund; and HDMH, Inc., the latter to administer the funds for the Yucca Valley hospital and the National Arthritis Foundation.

In her will she also left an additional \$10,000 to the Yucca Valley Park and Recreation District.

She lived by her creed to do good deeds and help others because she "will not pass this way but once." But, as the L.A. Press Club pointed out: "The Angel' is gone, but the good she did lives on." ■



# Hi-Desert Nature Museum



Do you people realize what you have here?" queried the visitor from back east. "For a town this size it's remarkable," he continued, "to come up with two such unique attractions as Desert Christ Park and your Hi-Desert Nature Museum. The two make quite impressive feathers in your cap!"

The impressed gentleman was visiting friends in Yucca Valley and, as part of the local tour, had already been to see Desert Christ Park. He was just leaving the Hi-Desert Nature Museum. "This is something special," he said as he walked away.

While it may seem that we local citizens are not paying much attention to them, the people of Yucca Valley are justly proud of their two star attractions. Unlike the native New Yorker who has never been to the top of the Empire State Building, we have been many times to our two "must see" places and have escorted numerous friends, relatives and "visiting firemen" on their first trips through these "two such unique attractions."

Literally thousands of people from all over California, from every one of the fifty states and from at least a dozen foreign countries have visited the two locations which both happen to be operated under the auspices of the Yucca Valley Park and Recreation District.

Indeed, following its Grand Opening on October 21, 1964, the Hi-Desert Nature Museum went on to welcome just short of 1,000 visitors during its first month of existence.

It started small, being housed in an 800 square foot building in Hi-Desert Park. At that time Jerry Moore was the district director. The park board, despite the district's then small size and budget, was far-sighted enough to approve of the building of the museum and of the employing of Miss Evelyn G. Conklin as its curator-naturalist. The district board consisted, at that time, of Chairman Al Fisher, Art Chase, Roy Roush, Milton Murry and Mrs. Hazel Miller.

It was soon apparent that the small but mighty museum could easily use lots more room. In fact, the park district was experiencing growing pains in all directions. Therefore, after months and months of planning and many meetings, the park district entered into a Joint Powers Authority Agreement with San Bernardino County and the Yucca Valley Community Center was constructed. The Hi-Desert Nature Museum was a part of the complex.



*THE OLD Nature Museum on Onaga Trail had a lot of rustic charm. Above, Camilla Hudson (at left) and Evelyn Conklin (second from left) watch as one of the displays are discussed. Camilla Hudson, left, and Evelyn Conklin watch as Virginia Nahhas, Park District Board Chairman, explains exhibit to Ranger Supernaugh, Superintendent of Joshua Tree National Monument — 1965.*

It opened the doors of its new home in November, 1973. The official Grand Opening for the 3,200 square foot museum building was held December 1, 1973. Since it has been in operation, the museum has attracted nearly two million visitors including school and youth groups, hobby organizations and just plain people interested in desert lore.

The museum building is in the shape of an L. One wing features Arts and Crafts and the other houses Natural History exhibits. Outside, space has been provided for a Nature Garden.

Since it first opened, local and visiting artists have been able to display their works at the museum. Each month a different artist is selected as the guest exhibitor. Displayed for a full month, the show is usually hung the first Thursday. On the second Saturday a public reception and tea honoring the artist is held.

Both sides of a 4'x16' wall are provided for the artist of the month. The wall space is decorated with special art by Kirk Martin, including his famous series of Western Song Classics.

Another very special feature is the Fluorescent Display Room. The outstanding diorama backgrounds were painted by artists Kirk Martin, Nick Yelenti and Katholeen Perry.





*Kirk Martin-designed logo.*

Among the other arts and crafts to be seen are the impressive works of such groups as the local Morongo Basin Gem and Mineral Societies, the China Painters' Clubs, special interest groups, youth organizations, etc. and, of course, those works of individual hobbyists such as metal works, wood carvings, doll collections and accompanying wardrobes, etc.

Each month one of the display cases is changed, while other cases are changed every two to six months.

The family and childrens' favorites, however, have to be the exhibits in the Natural History section. In the beginning the majority of these collections belonged to Evelyn Conklin. On rotating exhibit are sea shells, gem and mineral specimens, pine cones, wood displays, insects, bird's eggs and bird's nests. Mounted specimens include the three types of squirrels which live in the Morongo Basin, a pack rat, kangaroo rat, pocket mouse, deer mouse, pocket gopher, cotton tail rabbits, quail, etc.

A most successful exhibit is that of the Mini Zoo where live animals and reptiles are on display. Evelyn's handling of these small "beasties" drew the attention of a number of larger museums and zoos and of government entities of all kinds. One of these latter organizations was the California State Water Resources Board. In 1979, it was producing a film on the state aqueduct project and needed a Mojave Green Rattlesnake. The state authorities had heard that Evelyn had a female snake that fit the bill. And, so, without even having to sit up at a drug store soda fountain, "Greenella" was discovered. Evelyn served as her technical director and agent. She said that the way "Greenella" took directions and acted her part she was well on her way and her star was obviously rising. Then "Greenella," like so many award-winning actors before her, found that waiting for "just the right part" could be nerve-racking — and, unfortunately, before another starring role offer came along, she died. But other of her museum companions live on to entertain the visitors.

There are also outstanding wildflower collections accompanied by a very special display of twelve of Henry R. Mockel's Seriographs of



*EVERLYN CONKLIN, second from left, is shown receiving a display from members of the Gem and Mineral Society at the old museum.*

desert wildflower prints. These prints cover two of the walls in the Natural History section. All the Mockel Seriographs have given or purchased with memorial funds through the Hi-Desert Nature Museum Association. Luckily, there are additional funds waiting for the purchase of more.

"Only the most prestigious museums and galleries have the Mockel Seriographs, thus we are proud to have our few," said Evelyn.

She is also extremely pleased at a \$500 donation from the Chevron Oil Co. which will enhance her popular slide show. The gift will be used to purchase the proper tape recorder accessory equipment which will make possible a synchronized audio/visual system for a more complete slide presentation.

It was not by chance that Evelyn and her father, Slim Conklin, chose Yucca Valley as a place to settle in. As first class nature lovers they had been exploring and studying the desert areas for years and had purchased property in Pipes Canyon. Evelyn, born in San Diego, received her education in Pasadena and La Verne, majoring in Botany.

Slim was formerly Park Superintendent/Director and Naturalist with the Los Angeles County Park and Recreation Department for 26 years. Before that he spent eight years with the Los Angeles Forestry Department.

Evelyn, following in Slim's footsteps, also worked for the L.A. County Park and Recreation Department where she initiated and pioneered the nature museum concept. It was she who planned and created the first of its kind on the west coast — the Trailside Nature Museum at



San Dimas Canyon Park — in 1948. With that she set a standard that is now in use all over Southern California. In the 1950's she was asked to plan and create nature museums for San Bernardino County and the California State/Los Angeles County Arboretum in Arcadia. She declined, but her San Dimas museum did inspire the Arboretum, the Santa Barbara Nature Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum all to expand their nature exhibits.

Before Evelyn officially set up shop here, Slim built all the display cases and did the interior finish work for both the smaller cases and did the interior finish work for both the smaller and present museums.

In addition to extensive professional recognition, Evelyn was awarded a plaque of appreciation by the Yucca Valley Chamber of Commerce in 1966-67; was made the first Honorary Life Member of the Yucca Valley Art Association in 1974; and was named Woman of the Year by Soroptimist International of Yucca Valley, in 1976.

*SLIM AND EVELYN Conklin. Evelyn conceived the Hi-Desert Nature Museum. Her father, Slim, worked hard to bring her creation to life.*



*ART EXHIBIT and display case at the new Nature Museum. Art exhibits are changed monthly.*

As soon as the Hi-Desert Nature Museum opened in 1964, Park Director Jerry Moore sagely chose the indomitable Camilla Hudson to serve as chairman of a museum auxiliary. It, too, started small, but it had big ideas. To begin with it had Camilla, the Conklins and some of their close friends. Today its members include approximately 600 most enthusiastic supporters.

With the help of Gerald A. Smith, the San Bernardino County Museum Director, the Auxiliary got promoted, wrote by-laws and became an Association on June 10, 1969.

Mrs. Hudson was the president for a number of years and has been followed in that office by Mable Mellette, Rachel Quilter, Beulah Quietie, Jean Burns and, currently, Walter Jahnke.

Since its formation the Association has assisted in the loaning-for-exhibition program; has purchased outright some of the exhibits; arranged for the donations of some private collections; has purchased the display cases; and has, generally, provided funds for emergencies and other contingencies.

The association members also mounted compelling protest-letter-writing campaigns and attended public meetings in Yucca Valley and in San Bernardino when the exhibits were threatened with transfers to other museums; and, most especially, when the very life of the Hi-Desert Nature Museum has been in jeopardy.

Artist Kirk Martin has designed a fitting "native-grown" emblem which has become the Logo for both the Museum and its scrappy, protective Association.



# Park and Recreation District

**T**he initial physical entity of the local park district (meaning its first park) was born almost simultaneously with *The Desert Star*. The first issue of the first newspaper, dated Wednesday, April 3, 1957, featured as a front-page story, the announcement of a public meeting to be held the following night to decide the pros and cons of acquiring the town's first park.

At that meeting, held in the Community Service Clubhouse, a good showing of townspeople and the board officers approved of the proposal which culminated in the development of Hi-Desert Park. Hans Thompson, a State Park and Recreation Specialist, had been invited to use his expertise and to speak on the feasibility of leasing unused school property for park purposes. In this case the unused southern portion of Yucca Valley Elementary School. This type of cooperative leasing had been growing throughout the state.

"It results in a definite economy of tax money by eliminating much unnecessary duplication of equipment," said a park spokesman.

Mr. Thompson approved of the plans for the first park, which were developed by C.H. Jacobs. He especially liked the informal separation of children and adults by interest groups. Most of the equipment was to be purchased by the park district. It was explained that the district's budget of \$3,400 would be available to develop the park that year. "It will give us a good start," said Mr. Jacobs. That night it was approved that the park and school districts enter into a ten-year lease, at \$1.00 per year, with the park district having an option to renew the lease or purchase the property.

The year before, in correspondence dated February 20, 1956, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors set up the first Board of Advisors of the Yucca Valley Park, Recreation and Parkway District. Those who served on that formation board were John Sweesy, Roy Roush, C. H. Jacobs, Mrs. J. Stanley and Mrs. Jane Lace, board secretary.

Miss Joan Jackson was the first Recreation Director to be hired. She was much loved by the children for her Craft Classes, game programs, her guitar playing and Sing Along programs. She was replaced by Jerry Moore as District Director. It was under his direction that the district had its greatest growth, acquiring park property, the Nature Museum, planning the early-day swimming programs and conferences, the establishing of the Museum Auxiliary, the Recreation



Joan's Collection

*THE CONSTRUCTION of Triangle, or Sabre Tooth Tiger Park at 29 Palms Highway, Acoma and Yucca Trail. This was the site of some of the Grubstake Days Art Shows. This was one of our first parks. The only park on the Roadrunner Route, now Highway 62.*

Auxiliary, the beginnings of the Yucca Valley Coaches Association, Hi-Desert Photo Fans and other specialized clubs, etc. Jerry was also instrumental in the starting of the Pioneer Push and in keeping it going as it evolved into the Pioneer Pass Golf Challenge.

In November, 1959, the district was reorganized as the Yucca Valley Park and Recreation District with the board assuming self-governing powers by approval of the Secretary of State in correspondence dated February 17, 1960.

Hi-Desert Park proudly contained a complete children's playground with swings, slides, merry-go-rounds, crawl-throughs, exercise bars, a tetherball installation, etc. There were also tennis, basketball, handball and shuffleboard courts and croquet and horse-shoe throwing areas. There were picnic and barbecue facilities in the Arbor. The district offices were headquartered there. The park was also the original home for the first complete branch library and the Hi-Desert Nature Museum.

Primary plans for the park included a large community swimming pool, designed to be covered or enclosed at a later date. Many townspeople supported this location and were opposed to the building of the pool at the Yucca Valley Intermediate School campus (now Yucca Valley High School). Glenn Hardy, local teacher and later MUSD Superintendent, was a member



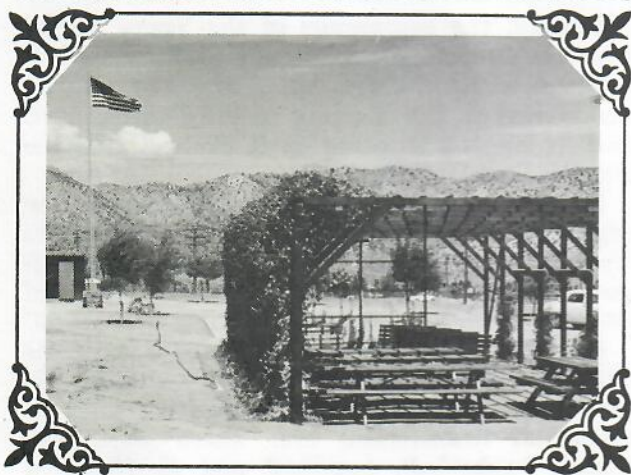
of the park advisory board at the time and was anxious to have the two districts work together on building the pool at the Intermediate School.

The protesters were over-ruled and the park and school districts entered into a joint contract and the modern, Olympic-sized pool was constructed. When now considering its apparently eternal maintenance problems and its divided-usage hang-ups, a number of these same people sadly shake their heads.

However, despite the troubles, the swimming pool is a very popular place in the summertime. It serves as the scene of Desert Swim Conference Meets wherein Yucca Valley's two Swim Teams — The Sea Horses and the Trojans — take on all comers. For the rest of the community there is recreational swimming and lessons for all ages and all stages of accomplishment.

In the mid-60's Mrs. Elsinore Machris donated the land for Machris Park, located in the Sky Harbor Estates section. In those first years, Machris Park was the only home for the Tri-Valley Little League and Yucca Valley Coaches Association baseball games. It has a playground and picnic area and clubhouse was the site of various meetings, get-togethers and art lessons.

The land for Paradise Valley Park was donated by Marvin Krantz, Yucca Valley developer. Modeled as a perfect example of a neighborhood park, it featured a children's playground and picnic facilities.



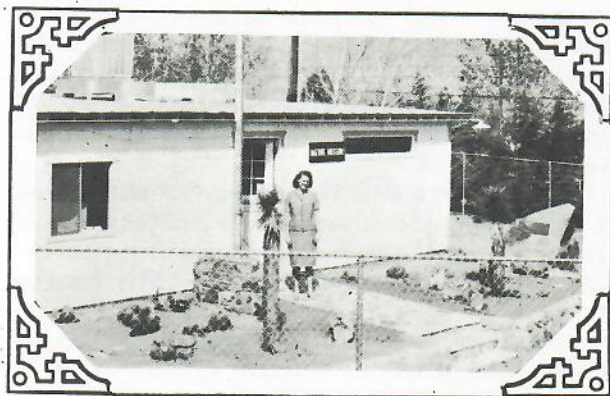
*MARVIN KRANTZ, Yucca Valley developer, donated the land for Paradise Park, above. It features children's playground and picnic facilities.*

In 1965, a newly-formed Recreation Auxiliary was headed by Mrs. Albert Gilbert, as General Chairman. It served as a sounding board for resident's needs and wishes. Many chairmen of sub-committees came forward and expressed desires pertaining to their special interests such as photography, amateur radio, travel, swimming, tennis, etc.

South Park, near Black Rock Canyon Park in the Joshua Tree National Monument, was planned for the development of an archery range and nature trails. North Park was set aside as a wildlife reserve and hiking trails. Yucca Park, beside the Twentynine Palms Highway on the Morongo Grade, has a Rifle Range, built by the Yucca Valley Rotary Club, and a picnic area.

Desert Christ Park, which strikingly displays the famous Biblical statues of Antone Martin, also has a picnic area. Triangle Park has another Martin statue—the Sabre-tooth Tiger—a rose garden and numerous outdoor art shows.

Others who have served as board members through those early and middle years are Al Fisher, Bob Schoenleber, Gil Buck, Art Chase, Mrs. Hazel Miller, Milt Murry, Harold Sipe, Dr. C. J. Mersch, Mrs. Phyllis O. Grubaugh, Mrs. Virginia Nahhas, Stephen Heard, Lowell Like, Miss Mary Young, Jim Goodman, Art Jerchow and Bob Nordyke.



*HI-DESERT Park's Nature Museum, taken in 1964 — Evelyn Conklin is shown standing in front of the museum.*

It was the same old story by the early '70's. The town was growing fast and more space was desperately needed by the park district, the Nature Museum and the branch library. A Community Center was the answer.

Four major land offers were made for the center. Mrs. Alma Katje offered a 20-acre parcel adjacent to the then Yucca Valley Golf Club (now Blue Skies Country Club) for \$60,000, with four acres donated free. She and her late husband, Art, had previously donated acreage to the school district for an elementary school in Yucca Mesa.

Norm Essig and Bob Schoenleber offered a ten-acre parcel between the high school campus and the Thrifty Shopping Center. The acreage offer specified that four acres would be free, one acre would be sold for \$2,750 and the remaining five acres available for purchase later at fair market value. Norm and his philanthropic aunt, Elsinore Machris, had previously donated the land for Machris Park.



Dr. and Mrs. Richard S. Nahhas, both very active in all levels of community activities, offered a fifteen acre parcel west of the Mormon Church and across the street from the high school, with 660 feet of frontage on Onaga Trail. The asking price was \$49,000 for fifteen acres, with an additional fifteen acres available for \$20,000.

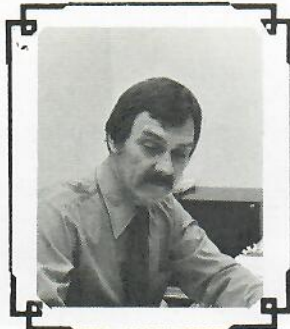
Fred Storey offered a 21.8 acre parcel with 300 to 330 feet of highway frontage for \$86,000. Also, there was an option to buy an additional fifteen acres north of the Flood Control Channel at \$2,500 per acre. Mr. Storey also had made his donations in the past, having offered the land for Hi-Desert Memorial Hospital at a considerably reduced price.

It was this last offer that was accepted by all the park and county officials and is the site of the Yucca Valley Community Center.

Therefore, after much planning and re-planning the center was erected in 1973. Construction was accomplished by use of a Joint Powers Authority Agreement between the County Board of Supervisors and the local park district. Serving on the Yucca Valley Community Center Authority were Leo Bitterman, president; David G. Cubitt; Wayne B. Gaw; and Keith J. Lee.

The center houses the Yucca Valley Branch Library, the Hi-Desert Nature Museum and the County Department of Public Social Services.

The center is also the headquarters for the park district. A large meeting room is available to the public for meetings and social affairs. Recreation offered in the center building includes ping-pong, pool, arts and crafts. Outside there are lighted basketball and volleyball courts, a softball field, children's playground and picnic area.



*Laurenz A. Harris, present Director of Parks and Recreation.*

Under Park Director Larry Harris, a staff of fourteen employees put on winter and summer recreation programs and seven employees keep the parks in good condition. The recreational staff includes Barbara Shiflett, Jim Schooler, Susan Schroeder, Phyllis Clerihew,

Connie Connaughton, Darryl Whitley, Dawn Boldt, Pam Eubanks, Jeri Smith, Jim Nosek, Jan Lamaire, Barbara Jones, Alynne Wheeler and Joni Barkhuff. The maintenance crew is Tom Warner, Chuck Morris, Lionel Toney, Robert Osborn, Chris Pelletier, Larry Kelley and Rick Gomez.

Outdoor recreation for winter and summer programs include youth flag football, adult basketball, youth basketball leagues, adult singles and doubles tennis tournaments, T-Ball leagues for boys and girls, men's and women's Slo-Pitch softball leagues, adult volleyball leagues, youth soccer, adult softball leagues, a full swimming program, aqua-trim classes, day camps at Machris Park and dog obedience classes. Special events center around the Ski Club, the Teenage Youth Club (which goes on camping trips) and the Bicycle Club. During the latter's Wheel-O-Rama spectacular the club presents Bicycle Fun Day and a Skate Fun Day. There are also Flora in the Field sessions of nature studies and a specialized program for Handicapped Recreation and Civic Activities.

Indoor activities feature classes in Aamodt Oils, Cartooning For Fun, Children's Art Classes, Creative Crafts, Needlepoint on Plastic, Stained Glass Making, Ballet, Community Band, Guitar, Jazzercise, Tap and Jazz, Tumbling and Jazz, Baton Twirling, Kung Fu, Tai Chi, Yoga, Prepared Child-birth and Pre-school Classes.

Senior Citizens participate in bowling, hiking, ballroom dancing, swimming, health care programs and, in the winter, twice-a-month trips to Desert Hot Springs for hot spa baths and swimming. The seniors are now happily in their own quarters, the \$582,000 Senior Center Building, which was constructed on the west side of the Community Center property. In addition, to a full recreation program they now have their own place to see Social Security and other Senior representatives. This also gives them a lot more space for the Nutrition for Seniors Program.

Still other special activities for all ages are the park-sponsored bus trips to Disneyland, Magic Mountain, the Indio Date Festival, Universal Studios Tour, Roller Skating Day at Big Bear, tours of Lake Gregory and Corona Del Mar, theatre plays and shows in Los Angeles and to Swing Auditorium, in San Bernardino, for a special presentation by the world-famous Royal Lippizzaner Stallions from Austria.

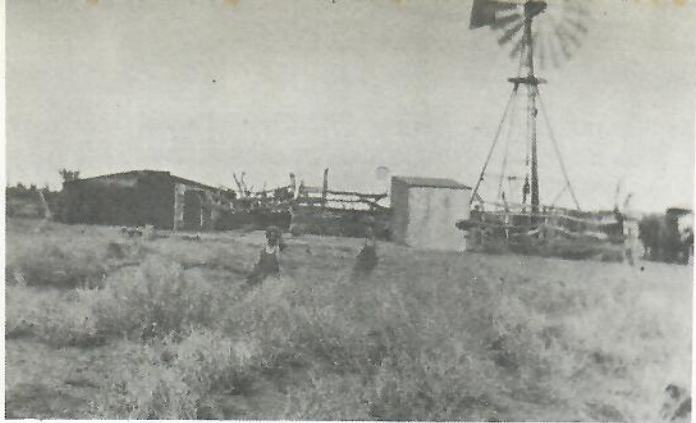
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The Yucca Valley Community Center Dedication Ceremony was held on November 31, 1973.

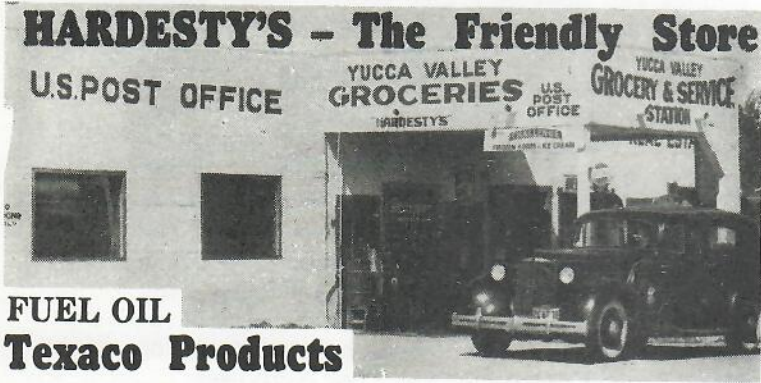
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The Senior Citizen Center opened on September 8, and the Dedication Ceremony was held on September 22, 1982.

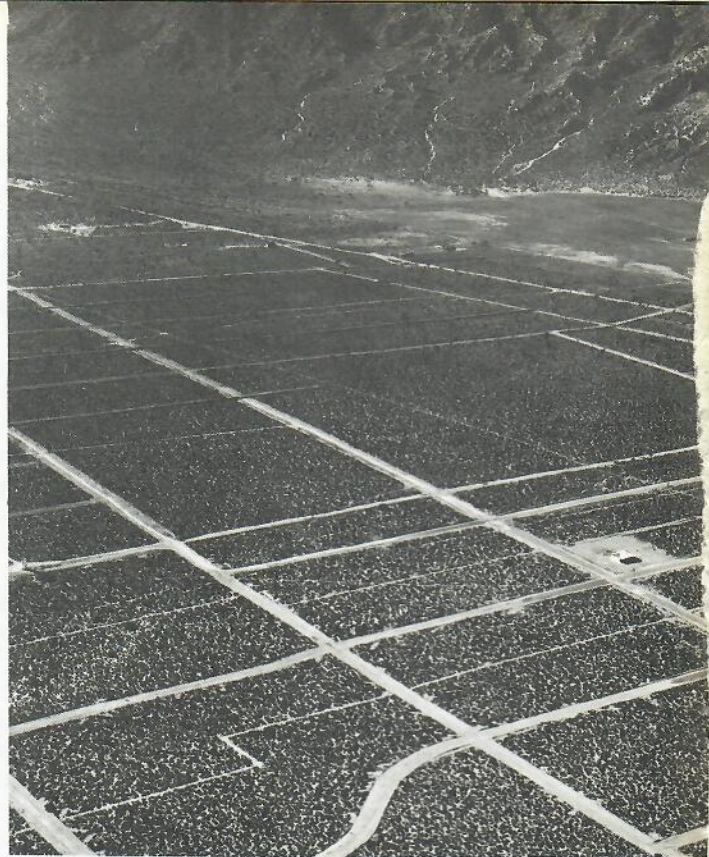




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# Yucca Valley . . .

(1) Warren's Well, 1914. (2) You've read much about Hardesty's Market, Post Office and Gas Station. Here is an ad from a 1950 publication. (3) Shoveling snow along the road to the Hudson Homestead in 1926. (4) Frances Sargeant at her homestead in 1913. (5) John Redden, left, at home — the Redden Homestead, 1923. (6) Check the 1950 price of real estate in Pioneertown — 1 1/4 acres, \$800. (7) A 1947 aerial view of Yucca Valley by Willie Boldizar. The



4

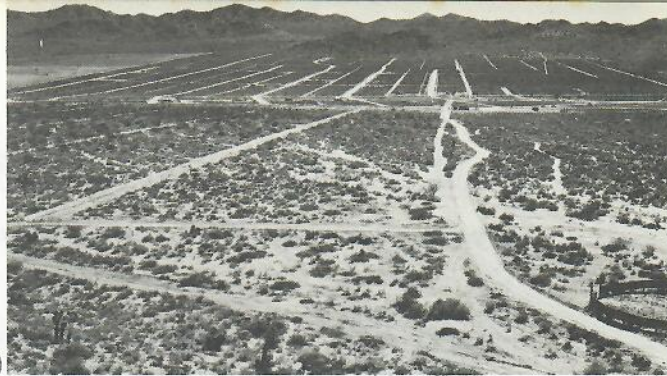






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Boldizsar



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Frances Ellis Collection

## The Way We Were

curving street at the lower left corner is Deer Trail at Navajo.  
 (8) The entrance to 29 Palms Highway in the 1940's — Highway 99 is now Interstate 10 — 29 Palms Highway is now Highway 62. (9) Warren's Well in 1949. (10) A 1946 shot of Yucca Valley. (11) A 1950 sign — \$3,950 homes . . . Wow! (12) Edna Redden with Duke — 1923. (13) Picnicking at Black Rock Spring in 1915. Black Rock is now part of the Joshua Tree National Monument. (14) Before Post Office was added.



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# Johnnie Hastie and Old Betsy



Most of the more current crops of newcomers are apt to think that Johnnie Hastie started his bus service when the U.S. Marine Corps took over the base at Twentynine Palms. No, he was here much longer ago than that. It was in the depths of the Depression and the mid-thirties when Johnnie first drove into Twentynine Palms. His vehicle was the soon-to-become familiar, 1928 twelve passenger bus complete with wood-burning stove — lovingly called Old Betsy. In those first days it was said that he lived in the bus.

Right away he began hauling freight and passengers between Twentynine Palms and Banning and the Desert Stage Lines business was born. At that time there were only 150 people in the entire Morongo Basin. The population was composed of miners, ranchers, World War I veterans, homesteaders and a scattering of children. There was the small town of Twentynine Palms and mostly wide-apart homesteads west of that. While he never really lacked for business he realized that he wasn't going to make it financially. Hailing from the State of Washington, he liked the sunny desert climate and wanted to stay.

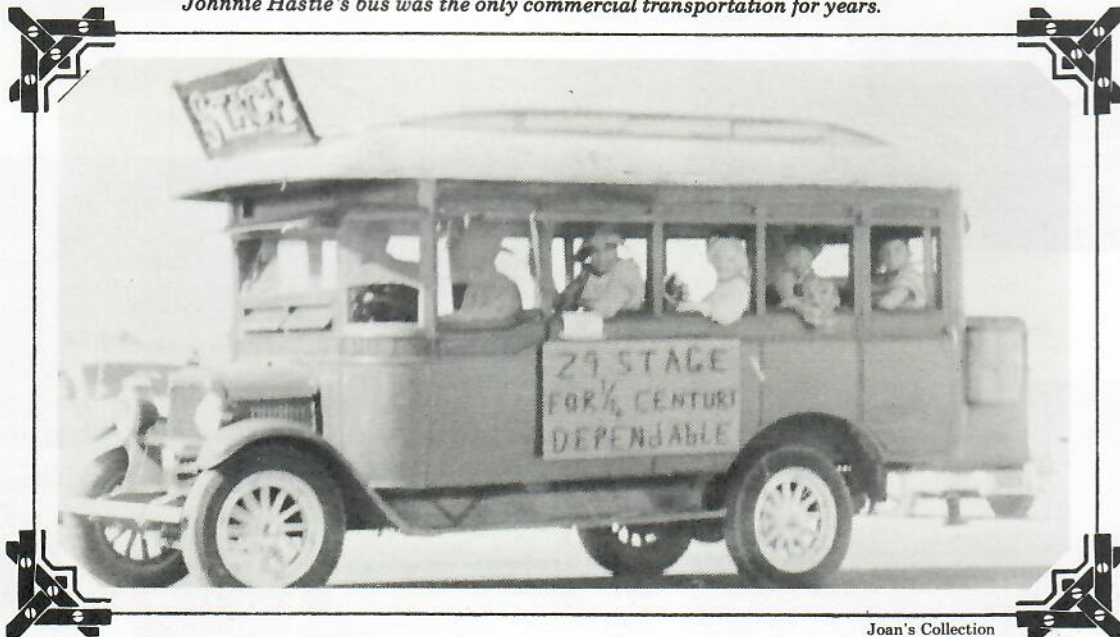
He decided what he would do and called a public meeting of all his customers. He told them he was going to donate his bus to the Chamber of Commerce and that he was going to start a specialized, personal pick up and delivery service

with Old Betsy. He explained that he operated under the State Railroad Commission regulations and, stating calmly, "I will not overcharge you," he said he would deliver anything under ten pounds for ten cents. A bale of hay would be fifty cents over the price of the hay.

The chamber officials said they did not think they could accept and take over the bus' ownership, but everyone certainly took to the delivery idea. He made \$450.00 the first month. Then a benefit dance was held and at this affair the people bought advance tickets good for one year for transportation to Banning; there were even connections to Los Angeles available if desired. This netted another \$450.00 and enabled Johnnie to stick it out. It also enabled the soft-spoken, polite and unassuming man to become one of the desert's most colorful characters.

His very popular service expanded in volume and scope. He had a saddle horse that he rode around Twentynine Palms, picking up orders from the townspeople. In later years these were left at a pickup point at Four Corners. In Joshua Tree the orders were tied on to an old iron ring that had been hammered into a Joshua tree. In Yucca Valley the orders were left at Hardesty's Market and Post Office. For years and years he drove down to Banning and back, seven days a week. One round trip per day and he was loaded with passengers, orders, the money to pay for them, shopping lists, explicit instructions and measurements. In those first years there were no

*THE ORIGINAL 29 Palms Stage, "Old Betsy," a 12-passenger, 1928 bus. Johnnie Hastie's bus was the only commercial transportation for years.*



Joan's Collection



doctors, no drug stores, no banks, not many stores of any kind in the Morongo Basin.

Through the years Johnnie did the banking in Banning for many of his customers, picked up the Basin mail at the Post Office (later from Whitewater's Post Office), matched swatches of drapery material with paint samples and picked out numerous formals and dress suits from the rental shop for many festive occasions.

He made a number of stops in the small town in San Gorgonio Pass, purchasing such items as special supplies and machinery parts for the miners, tires, automobile parts, car batteries, paint, medicine, hay, grain and feed, fresh vegetables, fruit, books, thread, yardage, patterns, loads of Christmas presents and many wedding dresses and fresh flower bridal bouquets.

For a memorable occasion for the Heard family in Yucca Valley, he bought and delivered a graduation dress for Mary Oakvid's daughter, Carol Heard. Another time a nanny goat was purchased and brought back so a sickly child could have goat's milk to drink.

In the category of unforgettable trips there were the times the flash floods washed out the road through the canyon and the bus had to wait till the water ran off. Then Johnnie and the passengers would shovel dirt over the worst potholes, ruts and ridges and lurch on their merry way. In the winters, if the passengers complained of the cold (the windows had long since been broken out) Johnnie stopped Old Betsy, passed out hatchets and axes and they would go to work. The resultant firewood made a really nice, warm fire in the bus' stove.

Many times Indians would board the bus for Banning at Mission Creek Road, clambering up on the roof where they, nature lovers all, could enjoy the full blast of fresh air in their faces. After the windows were all broken out, Johnnie did not haul hay on windy days because of the blowing bits of hay and straw which really did bother his passengers, hay fever or not.

He also tells of the time he was delivering a crateful of ducklings from a feed store to one of his lady customers. He loaded the open-air crate on the roof between a stack of boxes and other bundles. The wind blew hard on the way back. Even so, Johnnie was shocked to find that the wind had blown every bit of down off of every duckling. The lady refused them. He recouped his losses by selling them for 25¢ a bald head on a Twentynine Palms street corner; and, he reports, even though every one was absolutely naked, they all grew back their down and feathers and were healthy and in good shape tonsorially speaking.

Another amusing trip involved an afterthought order shouted through the door of Dean's Coffee Shop in Twentynine Palms. "Oh, get me some Kitchen Bouquet," the cook yelled to the departing Johnnie. Hours later he returned



*Johnnie Hastie*

with a huge bouquet of long-stemmed fresh flowers. The cook blinked, laughed out loud, gladly told Johnnie he'd pay the \$3.50 for the flowers and the ten cents for hauling, gleefully told his counter customers he really wanted the bottled sauce and the joke was on Johnnie for many years.

His passengers got used to Johnnie's stopping the bus at odd points to make personal deliveries of some items, perform chores, have a cold drink at a refreshment stand, etc. One time he agreed to care for the animals that belonged to his friends at the Hicks Ranch in Morongo Valley while they were away on a trip. The passengers waited while he fed the dogs, cats and chickens, milked the cow and put the milk in the old ice box. The animals were soon waiting at the fence for Johnnie's arrival — and even after their owners returned they waited at the fence for the familiar bus.

When the Marine Base got active following World War II, Johnnie took on an employee and added an afternoon round trip to Banning. Later he added a local taxi service for which he charged five cents, often allowing his customers to take the taxi themselves, and returning it the next day. He still has the '27 Dodge taxi and it still goes, he said. At one time he operated a big, black, deluxe 7-passenger DeSoto limousine, but he had to give it up and buy another bus in order to carry more customers.

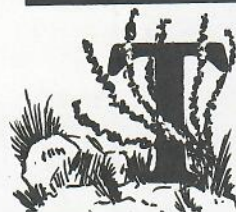
The last three years he was in business he changed the destination point to Palm Springs because so many of his Marine passengers flew into that airport, then had to take a bus to Banning and transfer to his line.

At the time he sold Desert Stage Line, in 1973, to Mrs. Ardella Cook, he had seven modern buses and two taxis in operation. He is now retired but continues to quietly, happily observe the scene. Old Betsy is retired, too, except for an occasional jaunt down the highway in a parade.

Mrs. Cook gave up the taxi service but now has a fleet of ten buses on schedule and employs fourteen people; something Johnnie couldn't have imagined when he chugged into town all those years ago. ■



# Yucca Valley Branch Library



The first San Bernardino County Branch Library in the west end of the Morongo Basin was established on July 14, 1934. It was considered one branch but it had two locations—the Morongo Valley Grocery Store and the Yucca Valley Inn. Those in charge of those two locations were R. A. Mattinson, Mrs. Belle Lilley and Mrs. Shirley Lawrence. The branch was discontinued in 1944, not because of a lack of interest but because of gas-rationing and other war-time problems.

Happily, in October, 1945, Mrs. Mabel Becker agreed to become the community librarian and reopen the branch—this time in Becker's Variety Store, in Joshua Tree. In 1948, the variety store, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Becker and the branch library moved to and set up shop in Yucca Valley, two doors west of the present MDX Pharmacy.

"We had two shelves of books in the store," said Mrs. Becker. "I was just a custodian, really." However, she was more than that. She kept track and when all the books had been read by all her steady customers and other interested townspeople, she would notify the County Librarian in San Bernardino and soon two-shelves-worth of new books would be brought up and the old ones taken away.

Mrs. Becker truly served all of the community, but her especially avid readers were Jane Lace and son, Thelma Barth and sons, Mrs. Barnhardt, Geraldine Wells, Maude Landgraf and son, Mrs. Swink, Belva Green and daughter, Mary Ford, Howard and Lee Cole and children, the Hardesty family, the Woody Wilson family, Mabel Mellette and Camilla Hudson.

Mrs. Becker continued as the town librarian until 1958, when the branch was moved into a small building in Hi-Desert Park, just south of the Yucca Valley Elementary School.

Librarians who served in the then new facility were Mrs. Helen Key, Mrs. Jessie Seward and Mrs. Sherrill Warren. The latter was still in charge in 1962, when the library was moved into a much-needed larger building in the park. The branch received status for a trained librarian in 1967. When Mrs. Warren moved away, Miss Mary Hugentugler became the branch librarian.

Before and after Miss Hugentugler's retirement as librarian, she worked tirelessly with local and county people on the plans for the newest branch library, which, as part of the Yucca Valley Community Center, was constructed in 1973. She was also one of the founders of the Yucca Valley Chapter of The Friends of the Library. The chapter immediately formed a

Library Planning Commission under Miss Mary Young. Miss Hugentugler was succeeded by two interim librarians, Fred Barnes and Mrs. Alice Clark.

Mrs. Mary Crenshaw was the librarian from 1972 to 1975, when she transferred to the Victorville branch. It was during her tenure that the new branch in the center was opened.

Another one who worked very hard on the plans and operations for the center library was Miss Dorothy Traver, County Librarian. More functions and more space had been planned for, originally, but county officials, over the objections of many, made changes and cut down the size of the library. Miss Traver fought for every inch of its existing space.

In 1975, Miss Ardys Asper became the new branch librarian. She retired when she married. In 1979, Miss Barbara Paulson transferred from Victorville and took over as librarian. She resigned to accept a similar position with the Santa Rosa Library.

Then, on February 11, 1980, Rick Erickson, the present librarian, took up the post. He has a paid staff of four: Catherine Chelette, the Joshua Tree Librarian, works at the Yucca Valley branch two days a week; Florence Rayl; Aletha Cox; and Mary Ann Wall. There are also five to eight volunteers ready to help out.

The Yucca Valley Library, which now circulates 2,000 books a month, is part of the Inland Library System. The County Librarian is Miss Barbara Anderson, who replaced Miss Traver when she retired after more than thirty years with the county system.

When the Dedication Ceremonies for the Yucca Valley Community Center, and the new library, were held on December 1, 1973, The Friends of the Library hosted a formal tea as their part in the celebration. Prior to that they were very active in their support of Miss Traver and her campaign on behalf of the new structure.

The local chapter was founded in 1968. They hold an annual Book Sale, proceeds of which (along with all donations received) go into various projects. By these supportive methods the Yucca Valley chapter has supplied the patio furniture, the speaker system, a file cabinet, 500 periodicals, file cases, curtain rod and drapery at the west entrance, two rolodex files, one library hand truck, two library step stools, two periodicals subscriptions, materials for the children's programs, "Books in Print," and additional magazine subscriptions.

Also, via the Friends, cash and materials have been received from the Yucca Valley High School "S" Club; Mr. and Mrs. Art Miller, Sr.' the Yucca Valley Kiwanis Club; and Mr. Bob Marinello. ■



# Yucca Valley Schools

**T**he very first school in the entire Morongo Basin opened in 1913 when Miss Lena A. Sturdy began teaching nine pupils in a tent pitched under an apricot tree on the Pollard homestead in Morongo Valley. Those children were Gus, Hazel and Charlie Schlichter; Arthur and Raymond Pollard; and Theil, Arol, Glen and Eldon McKinney. The following term a small schoolhouse was built on the Charles Fischbeck homestead. Some of the students rode burros to school and Miss Sturdy, driving a horse and buggy, picked up the others along the way.

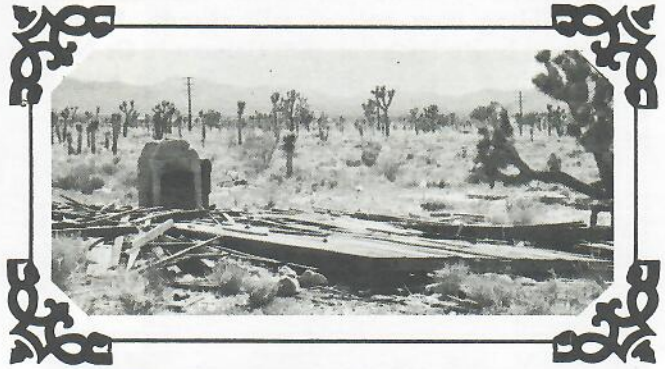


Theil Duncan Collection

*THE FIRST school in the Morongo Basin — 1913.*

By the fall of 1915, there were enough students in Yucca Valley to start the first school here. Miss Christine Snelling was engaged as the teacher and class was held at the home of John Cariker, near the present-day high school. The fifteen children attending included the three Dutton children, the Robertson's two daughters, the two Snelling boys, the Evans' daughter, the Pearce children, the Cariker children and the Heard children.

In the 1920's classes were conducted in three locations in Pipes Canyon, the last at the Hudson homestead. Once Camilla Hudson, herself, taught the children. The new teacher (obviously a city girl) arrived to start the new school year. She looked around at the remote countryside and went right back to the bright lights. Mrs. Hudson said that she taught until a new teacher could be sent out to take over but that the class time didn't count because she was not certificated.



*ALL THE REMAINS of the Cariker Homestead, where Yucca Valley's first school was held.*



*FOUR OF THE school children in Yucca Valley's first school in 1915. They are, left to right, Henry and Dorothy Dutton, Esther Robertson, and Paul Dutton. A pre-school Dutton daughter is in front.*

What did count was what the children did learn from this highly educated woman with a tremendous amount of pioneer spirit.

In 1931, once more there were enough children in Yucca Valley to open another school. It was conducted in a little rock building facing what is now Yucca Trail. Wallace Stacey, a homesteader who came to the Hi-Desert in 1923, wanted a larger building than the rock edifice. "During that year I was able to bargain with the County School District to give them two acres of land and furnish one half of the material and all the labor (to be donated by the people of the valley) with the understanding that the new building could be used for community meetings and entertainment," said Mrs. Stacey. "This was agreed upon and work started on the building. Walter Kerr was in charge of the construction.



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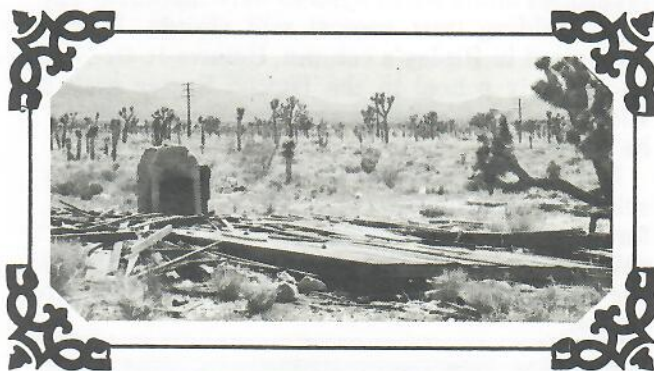


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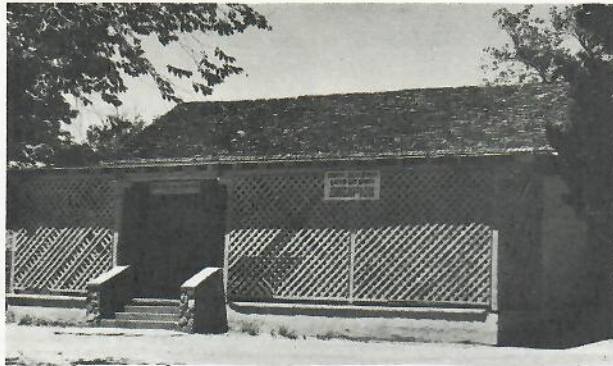
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"The school was furnished with desks and equipment from a school at Yucaipa which had been closed," said Mr. Stacey.

"Later, with the help of a WPA project, lavatories and a water system were installed. The rock building (rest rooms) still stands. It was publicized in Ripley's column, Believe It Or Not, as the only school in the United States with a \$300.00 school building and \$3,000 rest rooms," he continued.

In 1936, the pride of the community, the new school burned down! "It was a sad day, indeed, for those who had worked so hard to build it," said Mr. Stacey. A still newer school was built by the County at the same site—Yucca and Wamego Trails.



*THE OLD school house. Still standing at Wamego and Yucca Trails.*

Four eighth grade students at the Yucca Valley school were graduated in May, 1938. They were Robert Redden, Robert Stacey, James Baumer and Richard Pearce. Mrs. Addie Garrison was the teacher. Mr. W.E. Ketcham, a school board member, gave out diplomas.

In the July 21, 1948, issue of the Yucca Valley Star the banner headline read, "7 Room School Building For Yucca Village." The lead story reported that Fred A. Storey, a subdivider of Yucca Village, had donated a fifteen acre tract for the new school. He had been in conference with County school officials in San Bernardino and had been told that "plans and specifications are ready and \$112,685 has been allocated for a seven-room school building . . ."

The good news continued that, "... Mr. Storey was informed by Building Superintendent Daniels that the money had been allocated June 30 and that work on the first unit of three rooms and the Administration building would be started soon."

Work did get started, but the schedule was slower than many had hoped. In the interim period before the new school was opened, classes were also held in Rev. Eddie Garver's Community Church to ease the over-crowded condition. The teachers for the two schools were Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rich.

During construction the only major change in the plans was the elimination of the Administration Building from the first increment. Since the school was to draw its students from a larger area of the west end of the Basin, it was given the name Joshua Monument School.

It opened for its first classes on January 2, 1951, with an enrollment of 120. There were four regular classrooms and a kindergarten. It was the town's first building constructed solely as a school. Howard C. Harmon was the District Superintendent and he was told by the townspeople how very proud they were of the new school and that they felt it had been worth the wait.

The first teaching staff consisted of Mrs. E. Reed, 1st and 2nd grades; Mrs. Pearl Jones, 3rd and 4th grades; Mr. Paul Meckna, 5th and 6th grades; and Mrs. Ruth Collins, teaching principal and 7th and 8th grades.

In 1951, the new school's first graduating class included Mary Hardesty (Huff), Opal Stephenson and Ross LeFever.

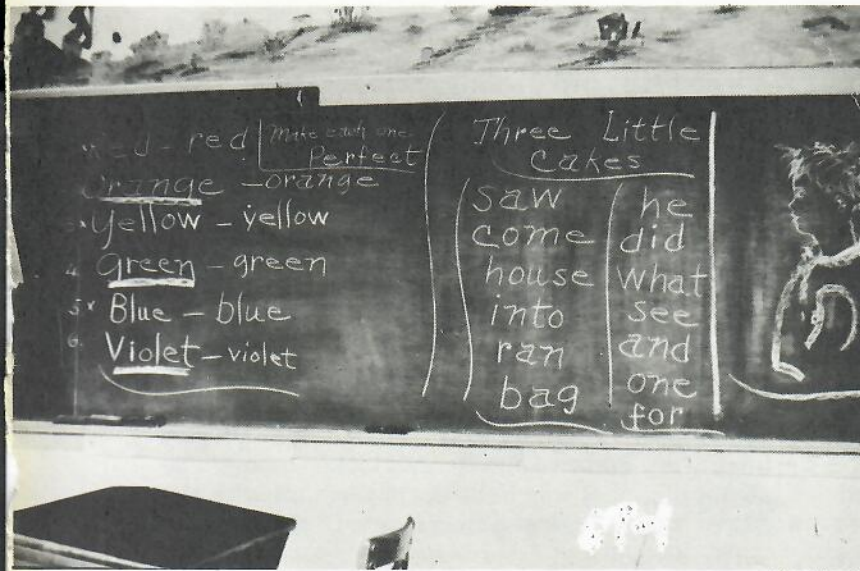
By September, 1953, the new school was not just bulging, it was overflowing. The 7th and 8th grade classes were moved to the Community Church, the 6th grade met in the old school and the 1st and 2nd grades were on half-day sessions. Construction of four more classrooms and the administration unit were quickly started. The multi-purpose room/cafeteria was added in 1957. By 1958 a school was built and opened in Joshua Tree—and named after the town. To avoid confusion, the name of the Joshua Monument School was changed to Yucca Valley Elementary School. Two more classrooms were added in 1963, built simultaneously with the new Morongo Valley Elementary School.

Following Mrs. Collins, the principals at Yucca Valley Elementary School were, in order: Glenn Hardy, Myrl Ruple, William Greene, Albert Gilbert, Harry Wallman, Louis Millican, Ed Keeley and Ron Sutton. Betty Bilyeu is the current principal.

*THE YUCCA VALLEY School in 1938. Beatrice Hicks was the teacher.*

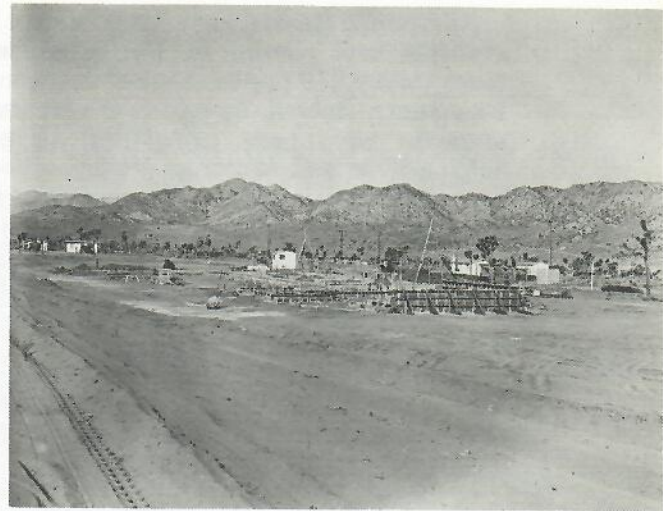






Mary Heard

**ABOVE** — Beyond education this blackboard makes fun of Steve Heard's haircut.

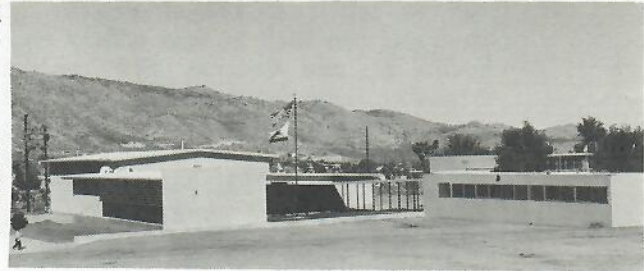


**YUCCA VALLEY** Elementary School under construction.

**BELOW** — The completed school, with later additions.



**LEFT** — Looking across 29 Palms Highway and the old Safeway to the new Yucca Valley High School. The light area, left center. Circa 1960.



**OPAL STEPHENSON**, Cheryl, Frances, Mary Hardesty, Patricia Scott, Charlotte McCracken, Ruth McCracken, Phil Scott, Johnny Kee, Charles Kee, Roy Kee, Terry, David McCracken. Grades 1 thru 12. Teacher — Amy Beth Warburton.

**PICTURE** taken where now stands the old Security Bank. Opal Stephenson, David McCracken, Eddie Hardesty, Carol Deland, Zora Stevenson, Pansy Deland, Patricia Scott, Stevenson, Mary Hardesty, Morgan Reche, Donna Reche, Cheryl.



**THE YUCCA VALLEY** School Class in 1949.

Patricia Edge



**THE YUCCA VALLEY** School Class in 1950.

Patricia Edge





Additional classes have been added, but the students kept pouring in. By September, 1981, there were 1,059 pupils enrolled at Yucca Valley Elementary School. To relieve the pressure some students have been transferred to both the Joshua Tree and Morongo Valley schools. The best news of all is that, as this book goes to press, ground-breaking ceremonies have been held for the long-awaited Yucca Mesa School. Hopefully, it will be open for classes September, 1985. Also, a separate Intermediate School will be built in Yucca Valley in the near future.

As of the end of January, 1984, at the Yucca Valley Elementary School, there are 33 teachers, two administrative staff members, 45 classified employees and 860 students enrolled.

In the early 1960's Mrs. Joan Wilson contacted the San Bernardino County Health Department to see what could be done to get Salk polio vaccine inoculations for the MUSD students. She was told it could be handled through the local druggist provided he was willing to forego any profit on the vaccine. She contacted Bates Marriott, owner of the Yucca Valley Drug Store, and he willingly agreed to the arrangements.

The county was also to provide a public health nurse and the necessary equipment. The shots were to be \$1.00 a piece and the Yucca Valley Women's Club handled the cash transactions.

On the date set for the inoculations none of the local doctors were going to be available to give the shots. Dr. Ann Zachry, a physician with the Riverside County Health Department, lived in Yucca Valley with her retired father, Abner; her son, Michael, one of the local students; and her sister, Mae Baird, owner-operator of the Hi-Desert News Agency. When she heard of the problem, she arranged to take a day off from her job as immunization physician with the Riverside County Schools, and volunteered to give the two series of shots in Yucca Valley.

"Target Day" arrived and everything was going smoothly. Not only students from the west end, but busloads and busloads of Twentynine Palms school children lined up for shots of the highly-prized vaccine. "We had hundreds of them," said Dr. Zachry. With many more students to take care of, Dr. Zachry saw that the supply was rapidly dwindling and informed Mrs. Wilson of the predicament.

Mrs. Wilson called her good and faithful friend, Sheriff Frank Bland. He quickly assigned a deputy sheriff in San Bernardino to pick up additional vaccine at the County Health offices. The precious cargo had to be kept cool, so it was important that it be transported as fast as possible to Yucca Valley. Therefore, with sirens blaring, the deputy sped off to a pre-arranged rendezvous at Whitewater where he met a deputy from the Morongo Basin. He, also turned on the sirens and made a hasty climb into the Hi-Desert.

When the vaccine (still cool) arrived, Dr. Zachry continued to inoculate the children of the basin.

(Later the good doctor worked for twelve years in the Student Health Service at Cal State Long Beach. She then returned to Yucca Valley and she and her sister still live here. Her son is grown, married and in real estate in the community of Alta Loma.)

During the 1961-62 school year the Morongo Unified School District's Board of Education completed plans and construction began on the Yucca Valley Intermediate School. Initial construction costs were \$328,000 for a plant which included an administration building, four classrooms, one activity room, one science laboratory and two shower and locker rooms. The swimming pool was built in cooperation with the Yucca Valley Park and Recreation District.

The school had been master planned, at that time, to eventually house 750 students, but it was expected that it would open with approximately 170 seventh, eighth and ninth graders.

Ray Garrett was the first principal and James Linehan was the second principal for the school.

Up to this time all upperclassmen had attended Twentynine Palms High School. It was very evident that a second high school was needed, and so, in 1968, the Intermediate School was converted into Yucca Valley High School. More classrooms, a gymnasium, multi-purpose room and other facilities were added. The school colors were gold and black, the athletic teams, which began winning championships and building a good reputation for themselves, were named the Trojans. Naturally, its arch rival is Twentynine Palms High School.

Keith Lee was the first principal at YVHS, followed by Charles L. Van Blair, Ron Prescott, Richard Hollister, and, currently, Ron Sutton.

There are 55 teachers, three administrative staff members, three counselors, seventeen classified employees and, as of the end of the first quarter of 1984, there are 667 high school students and 483 intermediate school students for a total enrollment of 1,150.

Sky High School, with its excellent and successful specialized programs, opened in Yucca Valley in September, 1977. Its teacher principal from the very start has been Tony Della Zoppa. There are four more teachers, two classified employees and one hundred students.

All in all, that's a long way from a tent under an apricot tree! ■

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Grant Allen Kee, father of John G. Kee, Sr., and grandfather of Corky Kee, homesteaded in what is now Pioneertown in 1934. He had homesteaded in Twentynine Palms in 1928.



# The Gentle Forces of The P.T.A.



The first west-end P.T.A. chapter was organized in 1947, while the school was still located on the Stacey property on Yucca Trail.

On October 14, a group of concerned ladies from Yucca Valley and Morongo Valley met at the home of Mary Heard for the purpose of starting a local P.T.A. chapter. Those present were Muriel Van Camp (chairwoman), Florence Harmon, Mary Heard, Alta Thomas, Hilda Hardesty, Irene Rich, Frances Hunter, Mrs. Fred Sanders, Mrs. L. Holman and Mrs. Moats. They set a date for the organization meeting and nominated officers. The Hi-Desert newcomers added their impetus to that of the earlier settlers in trying to get more understanding, recognition and assistance from the county.

The organization meeting, under the direction of Mrs. Esther King, president of the Arrowhead 5th District P.T.A., was held on October 29, in the American Legion Hall. By laws were submitted, discussed and adopted.

Starting with 29 parents who were totally dedicated to the education, health and social welfare of their children, the group became an immediate force which created an incidental by-product with its efforts — the improvement of the whole community.

The charter members were Messrs. and Mesdames Don Van Camp, William W. Thomas, William Harmon, Jim Hunter, Melvin Rich, Paul Mercatoris, Ed Hardesty, Cecil Smith, Howard Heard, Floyd Peters, Kenneth Scheurn, Frank Richardson, Preston Holman, Carl DeLand and Mrs. Amy Warburton.

The charter officers elected were: Muriel Van Camp, president; Alta Thomas, vice president; Frances Hunter, secretary; Hilda Hardesty, treasurer; and Marie Smith, auditor. The first appointed chairwomen, who got all the projects underway that primary year, were: Florence Harmon, hospitality; Irene Rich, membership; Marie Smith, program; and Zita Scheurn, finance and budget.

First item on the agenda of the firmly determined group was the campaign to get a full-time, permanent school in Yucca Valley.

According to the historians' records, "Committees were appointed to attend school board meetings and to see the proper officials and demand recognition for a seemingly forgotten community."

The P.T.A. stayed in the lead all during the hard-fought "permanent school" campaign. However, realists all, the chapter voluntarily put in some improvements for the existing school. The next step was to pay for them and other projects the chapter wanted to launch. Fred Storey donated a lot in his subdivision which was sold with proceeds going into the fund. Bill Underhill, owner of the Twentynine Palms Theatre, donated one evening's proceeds to the west-end P.T.A. Fund-raising box socials, potluck dinners, bake sales and a Fall Carnival were held.

By its second year the membership had grown to 38. The officers were Florence Harmon, president; Alta Thomas, vice president; Muriel Van Camp, secretary; Hilda Hardesty, treasurer; and Edith Peters, auditor. Chairwomen were Jo Richardson, hospitality; Margaret LeFever, membership; Dorothy Tunstall, program; Mary Heard, finance and budget; and Eleanor Bayes, publicity.

The energetic mothers also prepared and served hot lunches to the children. The Clothes Closet was established, whereby outgrown items of children's clothing were exchanged. A Halloween Party and other special and holiday parties were given for them. Mary Heard said, "At first there wasn't much to work with, but we did work hard and got quite a bit done for the kids going to the school at the time."

A film projector was the first piece of additional equipment purchased and presented by the P.T.A. to the school. It also sponsored a pre-school clinic where mothers brought their babies and young children for shots and physical examinations. Members assisting the county physician and nurse were Doxie Pifer, Beverly Peters, Esther Mercatoris, Eleanor Bayes and the always-on-hand-when-needed Mary Heard and Muriel Van Camp.

At one of the P.T.A.-sponsored programs Dr. E. Dingle, of Mentalphysics, gave a very interesting lecture on his personal travel experiences, "Through China On Foot." The money raised bought playground equipment for the school.

In another program, Mrs. Wasserburger, of Twentynine Palms, gave a talk on "The Habit of Saving." The P.T.A. adopted and sponsored a children's savings project for the year. Each week the children would bring their savings to school where it was collected by a member of the Joshua



Monument National Bank. Every child kept his own savings book and it was reported that much interest (both kinds) was generated toward learning good savings habits.

The Christmas Bazaar, featuring lots of holiday decorated booths, festive greenery, games and much food, especially piping hot chili and hamburgers, produced the largest amount of money earned that year.

The following month Lillian Rich proposed a hot soup program. It was adopted and the P.T.A. mothers, rotating turns, cooked homemade soups and served them to the school children for lunch during the chilly winter.

It was a happy occasion and nobody celebrated more than the P.T.A. when it was announced in mid-July, 1948, that a new school was going to be built in Yucca Valley and serve that community, Joshua Tree, Morongo Valley, Pioneertown and Sun Valley. Since this consolidation not only gathered in the children but also joined the Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree P.T.A.'s, both the new school and the expanded chapter became the Joshua Monument School and P.T.A. This also changed some of the by-laws.

As the new school opened in 1951, the P.T.A., now 187 strong, continued with fund-raising ideas, gifts and services to the school and the children. The chapter's project for the year was a free milk program for needy children. A P.T.A. Spring Carnival was quite successful and added \$116 to the chapter treasury.

The next biggest event of 1951, however, was the special P.T.A. Float entered in the very first Grubstake Days Parade. On board as the featured attraction was almost the entire student body plus a big sign declaring, P.T.A. — Families Are Our Business." It won a blue ribbon.

*THE 1951 prizewinning P.T.A. Float in the first Grubstake Days Parade.*

LO-RENA HUMPHREVILLE



Among the entertainment highlights at the regular P.T.A. meetings was the Magic Show put on for Halloween, 1952, by Twentynine Palms High School student, Peter Young, assisted by Kenn Witting, a professional magician now retired and living in Yucca Valley.

The children's Glee Club and the P.T.A. Mothersingers entertained often; in later years so did the P.T.A. Fathersingers. While the meetings were always very interesting, informative and entertaining, there were three outstanding presentations over the years and one "more than memorable" get-together.

The first of the three was "The Tom Thumb Wedding," presented in June, 1950, and starring all the younger children. Nancy Garver was the bride; Teddy Miller, the groom; Allen Barth, the preacher; Frankie Heard, best man; Carol Heard, maid of honor; Margaret Tunstall, bride's mother; Ronald Ash, bride's father; Tyna English, groom's mother; Alex Jonsson, groom's father; Susie Garver, Sandra Harmon and Jane Miller, bridesmaids; Johnnie Ash, ring bearer; Sally and Donna Jeffcott, flower girls; and Jackie Stephenson and Ted Phoenix, ushers. It was the first major school stage production and it garnered a tremendous ovation and kept tongues wagging for months.



KEN WITTING

*THE TOM THUMB Wedding presented in 1950.*

The second was the Arrowhead 5th District Meeting, hosted for the first time by the Joshua Monument P.T.A., on November 21, 1952. The meeting was held at Mentalphysics with Mrs. C.W. Henry, district president, presiding. Other district speakers were Mesdames W.J. Stanton, Howard Burkhart, Harry Fabun and Russell Scott. A special guest was Col. Burton Thrall, County Superintendent of Schools.





*THE GALLERY* of photographs from P.T.A. activities are pictures of the "Fashion Through the Years" show, as well as pictures of the children's activities (left to right).

1. Diane Urmstom and Kathy Bendall modeling Marie Odgers' wedding gown of 1934.
2. Shotgun Wedding Playet: Frankie Heard, Sandi Harmon, Tyna English.
3. Gown modeled by Laurel Martin belonging to her mother in which she eloped back in 1895.
4. Opal Horton modeling wedding gown belonging to Mrs. Glenn Harper 1947.
5. Sherry Griswold modeling wedding gown of Sophie Duval, 1936 style.
6. Mary Heard and Joni Haworth modeling negligee and nighties—1916 style, belonging to Mrs. Oley Hanson.





The luncheon was served at the Community Clubhouse on Yucca Trail. Here the local ladies outdid themselves in producing delicious culinary delicacies from start to finish for 135 guests. Programs were mounted on pieces of Joshua tree wood donated by Mr. Meyers. The cover was a picture of a Joshua tree drawn by Jennie V. Em-long. There were matching name tags. Place cards were tiny cacti in sand, with a pick and a rock and the slogan: "I came to the desert to dig for precious stones and found health."

The "memorable" get-together took place in March, 1953. It was a "Come As You Are" Breakfast Party, hosted by Dorothy Tunstall. There were 24 surprised members rounded up and chauffeured by Mesdames Papendick, Hammett, English and Odgers. Some were barefoot, most were in robes and some were caught still in bed. Since everyone "had her hair down" the members relaxed and consumed lots of waffles, sausages and hot coffee. Vi Ray and Mrs. Nieberger won prizes (for being fully dressed?).

The third special presentation was the "Fashions Through The Years" program for Founders' Day, in February, 1961. Under the co-chairmanship of Pat Cummins, for Yucca Valley; and Gloria Amrine, for Joshua Tree; a spectacular wedding dress fashion show was held. It featured many beautiful wedding gowns which had been packed away in trunks, in some cases for several generations. The showing was greatly appreciated and well worth all the effort.

As the years went along the busy chapter continued to serve the school and children by holding all the holiday and special parties, carnivals, book-fairs and open houses. It also held welcoming teas for the teachers; prepared and served refreshments at each meeting; put on skits of its own and encouraged the children to put on skits and musical programs; sponsored a Blue Bird Girl Scout Troop, a Camp Fire Girls Troop and a Brownie Girl Scout Troop; sponsored a popular series of teen-age dances at the American Legion Hall; arranged a summer recreation program for the children to be held at the Yucca Valley Community Church and obtained twice-a-week school bus transportation to the Twentynine Palms swimming pool at Luckie Park; annually distributed Christmas Baskets for needy families; and each year entered a beautifully designed and decorated float for the Grubstake Days Parade.

One September Mrs. Ed Katorke, hospitality chairwoman, in a welcoming gesture placed a beautiful flowering plant on the desk of the principal and each teacher. The members were also very active in making and distributing 700 copies of a brochure and 40 posters for a school bond election. And, of course, they were also deeply involved in each of the Founders' Day observances.

Through their diligence in raising money they were able to purchase band instruments, bicycle racks, drinking fountains, outdoor benches and get a small school library started.

The money was loyally donated at such fund-raisers as the regular potluck dinners, bake sales, monthly hot dog sales, Spring and Fall/Halloween Carnivals, bunco game parties, Hobo Hop parties, Pick-Up Brunches and a variety of specialized programs.

They instituted a circulating food basket/piggy bank project where a member received a basket with a home-baked pie, cake or cookies — and the piggy bank. She took the pie, paid her money, added her own baked items and gave the basket to another member. Also, the P.T.A. always had food booths at the Yucca Valley Grubstake Days and the Joshua Tree Turtle Races where the members cooked and served hamburgers, hot dogs, baked goods and beverages. In 1948, the Junior Class at Twentynine Palms High School staged its play and dance and split the proceeds with the fledgling P.T.A. chapter which had sold coffee, doughnuts and pop at the dual events.

Those first two presidents, ably assisted by their fellow officers and the general membership, were ground-breakers and movers and shakers that set the pattern for those who followed. Taking up the president's gavel with the same spirit were the Mesdames Clay Tunstall, 1949-'51; William Downing, 1950; John Weaver, 1950-'51; Harvey Odgers, '51-'53; Glenn Hammett, '53-'54; Robert Jernberg, '54-'55; Edna Burns, '55-'56; Herbert Reed, '56-'57; William Amrine, '57-'58; Robert Schoenleber, '58-'60; John Arch, '60-'61; Albert Gilbert, '61-'62; Nan Marble, '62-'63; and Martin Bohla, '63-'64.



*THE P.T.A. Fatherswingers of 1962. They are Gary LaVoie, Wayne Maiefski, Welling Clark, Jr. Jim Ishmael, George Osborn, Randy Smith, Bob Nordyke and Jim Riggs.*



Other ladies who served as president were Mesdames Elsie Howell, Edward Commentz, Mary Gerpheide, Jerry Ducey, Charles Buckles, Dolly Nordyke, Mary Presley, Charlene Etherton, Nadine Laird, Barbara Childs, Peggy Buresh, H. Welling Clark, Jr., James Ishmael, Ray Atherton and Richard Cleland.

Obviously, all recipient of the Honorary Life Membership in the California Congress of Parent-Teacher Associations are deserving of the award, but it was a very emotional and extremely gratifying experience for the entire group when Ruth English, in 1955, and Florence Harmon, in 1956, became the Joshua Monument P.T.A.'s first two honorees.

Their faithful and outstanding service, their tireless efforts and total dedication were acknowledged in this, the highest honor the P.T.A. can bestow. They were also presented with HLM pins and cards indicating their awards at the two Founders' Day programs. Mrs. M. Brooks Buxton was chairwoman of the latter Founders' Day program and presented a play "Order In The Court" which starred Mesdames Agnes Rhead, Maryle Buckles, Eva Katzorke, Wayne Peters, Buxton and Mr. Glenn Hardy.

Succeeding worthy recipients of Honorary Life Memberships for the Elementary School P.T.A. were: Mesdames Marie Odgers, 1957; Charlsie Peters, '58; Beatrice Hicks, '59; Nan Marble, '60; Leona King, '61; Mr. Roy Roush, '62; Mesdames Pearl Jones, '64; Margaret Gilbert, '65; Margaret Schoenleber and Virginia Dickson, '66; Lillian Clark, '67; Betty Gastineau, '68; LoMae Ducey, '69; Mary Gerpheide, '70; Twila Couzens, '71; Charlene Etherton, '72; Marian Lee, '73; Mary Presley and Mr. Louis Millican, '74; Mesdames Brenda Cubitt, '75; Charlene Etherton and Mr. Al Gilbert, '76; Ann Zimmerman and Mr. Earl Pealstrom, '77; and Mesdames Jackie Pulliam, '78; and Joy Stoops, '79.

Those receiving the coveted award for the Yucca Valley Intermediate School and Yucca Valley High School P.T.A. were: Mary Ishmael, '67; Dolly Nordyke, '68; Hazel Miller, '69; Mr. Robert Miner, '70; Mr. James Ishmael, '72; Mr. Wayne Gaw and Mr. Douglas Moyer, '73; Dorothy Hill, '74; Mr. H. Welling Clark, '75; Elva Richman, '76; Mr. Jerry Ducey, '77; Mr. Dave Cubitt, '78; and Mr. Gordon Etherton, '79. Mr. Harry Wallman was given Special Recognition in 1967; and, in 1975, Mrs. Roberta Stiles was named for both the Elementary and the High School.

A most special mention should be made commending the P.T.A. Historians who, from the very beginning, kept such excellent, meticulous records and copies of pictures and programs and made such concise comments. They were: Frances Hunter, Florence Harmon, Eleanor Bayes, Jean Arch, Nan Marble, Mrs. Alex Jonsson, Jennie Emlong, Josephine Smith, Leona Gholson,



LEFT TO RIGHT: Nan Marble, Roy Roush, Mrs. Robt. Howell and Al Gilbert. Roy Roush receiving lifetime award — 1962.

Maryle Buckles, Ruth Duarte, Esther Wallman, Beatrice Gastineau, Betty McFarlane, Joy Williams, Vera Potter, Margaret Gilbert, Mary Ishmael, Coletta Kirvan, Gloria McCollum, Dorothy Denbow, Lynda Carpenter, Mary Gerpheide, Maxine Muff, Pat Welte and Mesdames Joe Wilson, Arlie Prater, Jack Granfield, William Lee, Bernard Wilson and Herbert Reed.

In 1958 Jean Arch, in a repeat performance as Historian, summed up the entire year in fluent and witty verse.

In more recent years the local chapters fell on troubled times. Like so many other school chapters all over California, the Yucca Valley Elementary School P.T.A. was more than willing to share its "kitty" but was deeply resentful of the ever-increasing amount of money it was forced to send to the State Congress. None of it was ever returned for the benefit of the local children or the school. In one instance, it had to send off 95% to the state.

The chapter was unable to do what it wanted to do with only five per cent left out of all the hard-earned money it had raised. So, in 1982 it withdrew from the P.T.A. and organized a Family Faculty Association chapter. Mrs. Dora Poland is its president. It has continued with most of the same fund-raising projects, as before, especially the Halloween Carnival, but now all the money stays with the school to help the local children. The new chapter has already raised \$12,000 for the school library.

The Yucca Valley High School's Parent-Teacher-Student Association is no more, according to Mrs. Poland, who has children in both schools and is active on both campus'. As this book goes to press the former membership is planning to form a Family Faculty Association chapter. Since most of the extracurricular school activities have their own fund-raising support systems, the new FFA chapter is expected to be more of an advocate group. It will be attending school board meetings and acting as a watchdog . . . ! Yes, you're right — after almost 40 years, the same kind of worried parents have come full circle and will be repeating the actions of that very first chapter!! ■



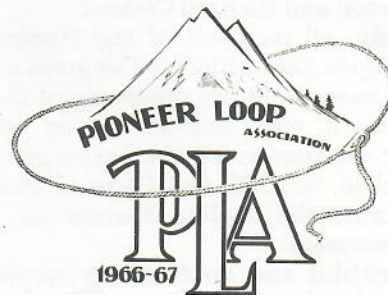
# Pioneer Pass Golf Challenge

**T**he route through Pioneer Pass was well-known and much used by the early-day miners and cattle ranchers right up into the 1940's. By the 1920's there were other people who saw that improved passage through the high desert mountain pass would be a good and mighty convenient thing. Thus a dream was first conceived and they called it the Camino D'Oro Highway.

It was to be a paved two-lane State Highway connecting Highway 99 (now Interstate 10) and Phoenix, Arizona, by way of Twentynine Palms. Starting at Redlands, it was to go up into the mountains by Forest Home and Bartlett Flats, then down the other side into the High Desert to the Twentynine Palms Road by one of three alternate routes. One route was through Big Morongo Canyon down into Morongo Valley; a second was through Pipes Canyon and into Yucca Valley; and the third was through Pioneer Pass down through what became Rimrock and Pioneertown and on into Yucca Valley. After connecting with the Twentynine Palms Road at that point, the Camino d'Oro Highway was to continue eastward through present-day Joshua Tree and Twentynine Palms to the Colorado River where it was to connect, near Parker, with its Arizona counterpart into Phoenix. A short branch was to go from Twentynine Palms to Amboy. The enthusiastic supporters formed the Three-Mile Road Association, the first civic group to try to influence San Bernardino County and Sacramento into carrying out the Camino D'Oro plans.

In 1935, the State did surface the Twentynine Palms Road from the old turnoff near Whitewater to the San Bernardino County line in Dry Morongo Canyon—a distance of approximately twelve miles. This was accomplished through the lobbying efforts of the Southern California Automobile Club and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce working right along with Ed Malone and the High Desert groups; especially the Yucca Valley and Twentynine Palms Boy Scouts Troops which camped out and conducted the car counting over a period of days and nights.

However, in the last half of the 1930's the Camino D'Oro project, as a State Highway, was halted when Sacramento selected instead a section of road in the Tehachapi area for paving and adopting into the State Highway System. Naturally, there was bitter disappointment but, even though the project was set aside, the enthusiasm and determination was preserved for a later time.



*PIONEER LOOP Association Logo created by Kirk Martin in the mid '60s.*

From 1947 until its demise, the Pioneertown Corporation worked on the Camino d'Oro project, promoting the Burns Canyon route. The corporation hired road crews to cut a passable road for cars and trucks through Burns Canyon from Rimrock to the Rose Mine, connecting there with an existing dirt road to Baldwin Dry Lake. This was the beginning of the present Pioneer Pass Road to Big Bear. The road was open to traffic in 1948. However, every bad rainstorm did some damage to the unpaved road.

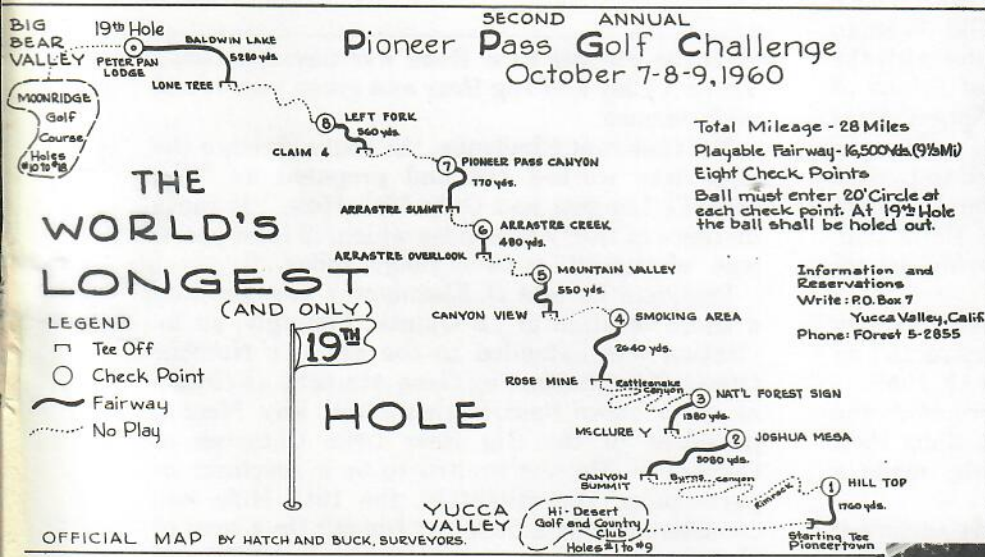
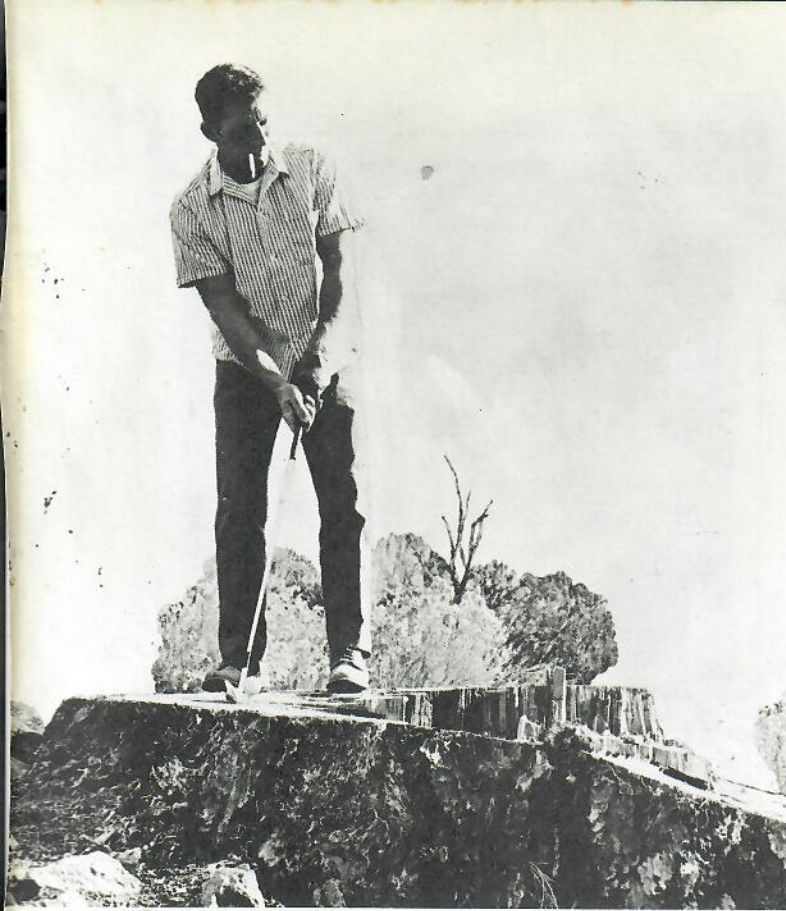
The new Burns Canyon road bypassed the hairpin curves up the cliff of Rattlesnake Canyon at Devil's Gate, which for years had been used by miners to reach their mines in the Mound Springs and Antelope Valley areas. The Devil's Gate road was so steep that most drivers were forced to back up the cliff as their cars just wouldn't make it to the top when going forward. The ride down the cliff was a real thrill!

The Villa de Vista organization, in Twentynine Palms, also backed the highway project throughout the 1940's; and, in 1951, it also did

*THE PIONEER PASS Golf Challenge offers new risks and hazards each year. Who would expect a loose bull to effect the hazard on the hole.*







UPPER LEFT — Gene Hardesty tees off from an unusual tee, typical of Pioneer Pass. UPPER RIGHT, the Big Bear Golf Clubhouse. Start of the Pioneer Pass Golf challenge. ABOVE, one of the check points of the world's longest and playable 19th hole. LEFT, map of the second Pioneer Pass Golf Challenge. BELOW, left and right shows some of the terrain and conditions that confront the golfer on the Pioneer Pass Golf Challenge.





more than just write letters. The members themselves hacked out 1,300 feet of road construction for the cause. Also, at about this time, a group of local citizens, hoping to have Pioneer Pass paved for tourist travel, arranged with the always cooperative Marine Base at Twentynine Palms to have Marine road crews work on the road. They widened and straightened it in spots and cut a new section which bypassed the Cottonwoods.

By the late 1950's the Pioneer Pass Push had been organized in Yucca Valley. On March 21, 1959, the Push's engineers—Pat Sullivan, from the Public Works Office at the Marine Base, and Victor De Kalb, representing the San Bernardino National Forest—held a field meeting with their crew chiefs at the Rose Mine. The crew chiefs—Push volunteers all—were Don Boatman, C. H. Valentine, Ted Morton, Rex Hamilton, Randolph Smith, Corky Kee, Lou Holland and Bill Cone, of Yucca Valley; Gene Albrecht, Sunfair; Hugh Thompson, Morongo Valley; Ben Mitchell and Whitey Barker, Pioneertown; Larry Bunch, Van Nuys; Armen Gamperling, Joshua Tree; and the 4-H Club of Sunfair.

Special crewmen were John Kee, Sr., of Pioneertown; and Jack Lucas, of Big Bear, who served as powder men. A special guest at the Rose Mine meeting was Hardy Lord, whose father once owned the ranch at Old Woman Springs. The younger Lord was familiar with the terrain and route having participated in one of the spring cattle drives through Pioneer Pass when he was sixteen.

These engineers, also, wisely decided to bypass Rattlesnake Canyon and, instead, chose to chop out a mountainside route on Three Hells Hill. This new detour would also provide better drainage for the road.

Each of the crew chiefs was assigned a section of the new portion of road to be constructed on Pioneer Pass Push Weekend, April 18-19, 1959.

On that weekend volunteer workers from the High Desert and mountains brought along their own food and, using their own tools, made a mighty improvement in the road.

Equipment used in the good effort included: Graders—Bil Schmidt, Pioneertown; and Burton Ready Mix, Big Bear. Tractors—Vern Backs, W. H. Smithson and Moonridge Estates, Big Bear; and Hi-Desert Concrete, Yucca Valley and Twentynine Palms. Skip Loaders—Big Bear Disposal and Daugherty Excavations, Big Bear.

With the blush of success still on their cheeks, the Pioneer Pushers planned an event that was (and also grew into) one of the most unique athletic contests in the history of golfdom. They planned and staged what became The First Annual Pioneer Pass Golf Challenge. It was held on October 2-3-4, 1959. The purpose was not just to play golf—it was to focus attention on the many benefits and conveniences to be derived by



*NORM GRANGER, First chairman of the Pioneer Pass Pushers is erecting directional signs for players. He is being assisted by his wife Dorothy and his Mother.*

all if the Pioneer Pass Road was paved between Yucca Valley and Big Bear and given year-round maintenance.

For that first Challenge, the route through the Pass was worked out and prepared as "The World's Longest and Only 19th Hole." It ran a distance of thirty-five miles which, in later years, was "shortened" to twenty-eight miles.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower was spending a short vacation at La Quinta. Fittingly, an invitation was extended to the nation's Number One Golf Enthusiast by Gene Albrecht, chairman of the Pioneer Pass Pushers, and Ray Merrill, president of the Big Bear Lake Chamber of Commerce. He was invited to be a spectator or participant. Unfortunately, the 19th Hole was considered to be a little too rugged for a man of Ike's age, but he was interested in the PPGC and its parent road project and was with the golfers in spirit.

Actually, those first intrepid golfers—thirteen men and two women—really did brave the unknown. The Pushers knew, but with the golfers no one knew what was ahead for them or what might be over the next hill (or half a mountain peak)!

Those fifteen courageous souls were Evelyn Betterley, Warren and Delores Smithson and Dave Goldsmith, from Big Bear Lake; Paul Compan and John Kierstead, Big Bear City; Alvin McDaniels, Coronado; Jimmie Hancock, San Bernardino; Victor Santa Maria and Howard



Done, Twentynine Palms; M/Sgt. W. E. Jones and Sgt. E. R. Van Hook, Twentynine Palms Marine Base; Steve Quezada and S/Sgt. Willis S. Bowman, Jr., of Barstow. A very disappointed Seymour Black, of Monterey Park, was unable to finish the tournament which "had the tee in Yucca Valley and the cup in Big Bear."

Part-way up the mountain the ladies of the Yucca Valley Community Service Club, under the direction of Jessie Crawford, Helen Harper and Myrtle Tripodo, provided delicious sandwiches, cake, coffee and soft drinks to the hungry and appreciative 19th Hole players and entourage. Rex Hamilton, of Morongo Valley, furnished free transportation.

Roving field judges were Bob Schoenleber, Ben Mitchell and Cap Hite. Gene Albrecht, Jerry Moore and Dick Miller, of the Pushers, were up, down, in and around the course throughout the tournament.

Sheriff's Reserve Deputies Ernie Peters and Hap Rigby were on hand. So was Ranger Al George, of the San Bernardino National Forest. Walkie-talkies were used all along the mountain course.

The week before the Challenge Paul Greswit and Dick Miller spray-painted well over five hundred golf balls. They painted them red in case it started to snow in the mountains (a number of years it did!)

When they holed out at the Peter Pan Club it was discovered that Sgt. Van Hook and Quezada had tied for first place with a score of 80. A sudden-death play-off gave it to Van Hook who received his trophy at the Victory Dinner at Snow Summit Lodge, Big Bear Lake. In addition to winning second place, Quezada was also lucky

*ELEANOR FOSTER with her Marine caddy and her spotters Norm Granger and his son come on to the green at the 19th hole.*



*1960 — A Pot Luck Dinner supporting Pioneer Pass. L to R: Irene Fox, Mr. and Mrs. Wiles, next couple unknown, Norm Granger, Magna Lawson, county supervisor.*

enough to find a \$20.00 bill lying in the sand along the route. From the look of it, it had been in the desert sun for a least eight to ten months—but it was still legal tender.

All of those first participants were eager to plan the 1960 Challenge and that's the way it has gone throughout the years. Later the Yucca Valley Park and Recreation District was a co-sponsor of the zany event and much cooperation and assistance was given by Mr. and Mrs. Al Fisher, Roy Roush and Art Chase. The guiding light was Jerry Moore, then Park District Director.

In those earlier years the tournament started with nine holes of conventional golf at the Yucca Valley Golf Club on a Friday. Early Saturday morning the golfers tee'd off in front of The Golden Stallion Restaurant in Pioneertown, played down Mane Street and on up the Pass till it was too dark to see the ball—red or any other color. Early Sunday morning they started where they left off. Altogether, there were eight check points (or holes) to be played through the Pass. Then another nine holes of conventional golf at Peter Pan.

In later years the course was reversed and 19th Hole play started early Saturday morning with the tee in front of the Big Bear City Hall and the golfers playing down the mountainside. Either way it's a tough, rugged course up and down mountains and steep hills and all participants treat each other forever more like veterans of big military battles and, while overlooking the blisters and aching muscles, have crazy stories to relate to one another.

The PPGC winners, who have to be some of the best, most dedicated golfers in the world are: Eugene Van Hook, 1959; Dave Taylor, 1960; Dick Runkle, 1961-62; Ed Hardesty, 1963; Les Mer-



catoris, 1964; Hardesty, 1965-66-67; Allan Ward, 1968-69; Hardesty, 1970; Harvey Huff, 1971; George Doherty, 1972; Dick Steinbaugh, 1973; Huff, 1974; Joe Le Maire, 1975; Jack Harrington, 1976; John Goehring, 1977; Pat Toy, 1978; Winston Bullock, 1979; Hardesty, 1980; and Bill Toy, 1981.

Dr. Richard Nahhas was the PPGC chairman for many years during the 1960's. Past chairmen, starting back in 1971, have been Ralph Mick, Midge Potter, Ed Hobbs, Darrell Oveson, Jerry Paulsen, Larry Fine, Larry Davis, Bjarne Jonsson, Joe LeMaire and, again, Mick.

In the mid-1960's the San Bernardino County Regional Parks Department included the Pioneer Pass in its Master Plan. This was the biggest step and the most encouragement yet! Early in 1966, the Pioneer Loop Association was formed with member groups from the towns included in the Loop and adjacent to it. The PLA's territorial spread was within the circle of valley, mountain and desert areas of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Local Artist Kirk Martin created a very fitting insignia for the PLA. The organization sparked interest in all of the effected towns and it was considerably more active then than in more recent years.

The PLA was formed for the explicit purpose of promoting tourism and informing the general public of Southern California that within this loop lies some of the finest territory anywhere for all types of recreation such as hiking, rock-climbing, horse back riding, fishing, hunting, rock hunting, bird watching and nature study, painting, photography, model plane flying, kite flying, skiing, ice skating, sledding, tobogganing, swimming, boating, camping, picnicking and, of course, playing golf on the famous 19th Hole!

*NORM GRANGER and Bud Stewart of the Chamber of Commerce are shown putting in the first Pioneer Pass Road sign in 1959.*

Norman Granger, one-time president of the Yucca Valley Chamber of Commerce, wrote an impassioned plea in the 1961 Grubstakes Days brochure. In it he pointed out the shorter distance in miles that Big Bear and all the mountain areas would be to the lower desert and Morongo Basin communities if the Pioneer Pass Road were paved and open all year. He also noted the shorter travel time and how this would appeal to so many people throughout all of Southern California. (Nowadays the saving in gasoline and money is another big factor.)

Some of the regular PPGC golfers have said they no longer want the road paved or improved because then the tournament would be ended and they would miss all the fun. Someone else suggested the game could then be played annually to commemorate the time the Federal, State and County Governments got together and cooperated on a single project rather than pass the traditional buck! ■

*OBVIOUSLY! Even the rugged terrain of the 19th hole attracted a crowd in 1959. Below is one of the check points.*





# Blue Skies Country Club

**I**n early 1956, three property-owning men from Orange County-Yucca Valley started the ball rolling (pun intended) on a venture that was to provide numerous hours of leisure-time enjoyment to many, many people living in and out of the Morongo Basin.

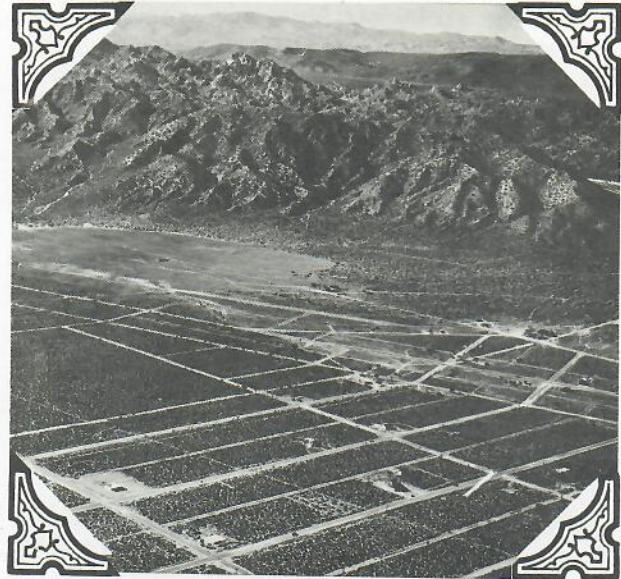
The three partners, all of whom had succumbed to the beautiful-climate-wide-open-spaces siren song of Yucca Valley, were J.W. "Wes" Yale, Sr., a Yorba Linda contractor; Art Roux, the then golf pro at the Irvine Coast Country Club, Corona del Mar; and John Martell, Santa Ana attorney. The partnership embarked upon the creation of the fledgling Hi-Desert Golf & Country Club.

The property and the future course (located in the northwest corner of the valley floor) were surveyed and designed in the latter part of 1955, by William P. Bell & Sons, a Pasadena golf course architectural firm nationally recognized in its field. Up to that point in time it had designed the Santa Ana Country Club and Irvine Coast Country Club among the many other top-notch Southern California clubs and courses.

According to Mrs. Thelma Martell, widow of one of the partners, the actual construction of the original nine-hole course began in February, 1956. "We rented heavy road-building equipment to come up to Yucca Valley and dig the lake. This was the first thing done on the course," she said.

Very shortly after the start of the project Col. Andrew W. Smith, a medical doctor and former City Councilman of Corona del Mar, wrote of his first impressions in his column, "Col. Andy says..." a feature of "The Ensign," the local newspaper. He wrote about, "...my surprising sight which met me as I topped the last rise and started the gentle descent into Yucca Valley. I saw a battery of 'rain birds' — big rotating sprinklers — and a water hazard on a golf course under construction."

Col. Smith continued his praise of the area. "Here in this 3,400-foot elevation is a plateau, a valley surrounded on all sides by mountains, and its climatic conditions are out of this world, for certain. Afflictions that beset us old folks, especially arthritis, aren't for the folks up here. These natives now doing a days work will tell you they came up here on crutches or even on a stretcher. It sounds somewhat plausible to me, a medical man. The rainfall is practically nil, the humidity zero." (EDITOR'S NOTE: In those days the humidity average was between 5-8% and it was considered to be a New York City-type of dripping heat wave if the humidity rose to 15-20% on any summer day.)



*IN this 1946 Aerial photograph, the location of the Golf Course can be seen at left center although the golf course wouldn't be started for 10 years.*

"Vegetation consists of yucca, joshua trees, a species of sage, juniper in the foothills," said Col. Smith. "...There are no allergy irritants, unless it is the juniper berry, although it seems to me that during the days of bath-tub gin, I knew a feller who claimed it wasn't the alcohol that gave him rubber legs, but the juniper in it. Guess that would be an allergy all right."

Still another very important aspect of the course's development was a water supply. In the June 24, 1956, edition of "The Santa Ana Register," it was reported, "Evidence that the source of water supply is virtually unlimited is

*10 YEARS LATER. The golf course under construction.*



*Thelma Martell*



given in the fact that the developers have dug and filled a lake on the site of the club and have installed 35,000 feet of pipe to carry water to irrigate the fairways and greens of the golf course.

"...While geologists have not yet solved the mystery of the source of the water which supplies the Hi-Desert club," the news story continued, "it is believed that a subterranean pool has been tapped which is supplied from water condensed underground. Martell pointed out that, were the supply fed from mountain streams and melting snows, the water would contain a high proportion of minerals and salts. Tests... show, however, that the water is almost entirely free from minerals, much as distilled water is mineral free, indicating that the source is not from infiltration through mountainous areas.

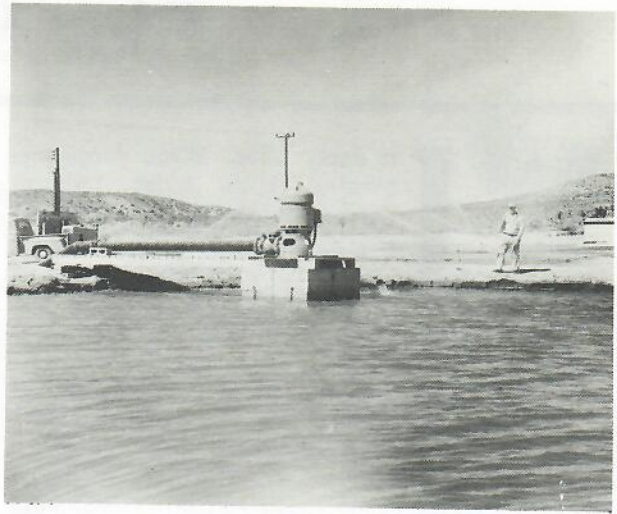


ABOVE, Note the lack of trees on the new Yucca Valley Golf Course, about 1958. BELOW, an aerial view of the golf course taken about the same time.



"Whatever; the source, it is apparant from the fact that the club has facilities for pumping 1,500,000 gallons of water daily which makes no appreciable down-draft in the wells, that a vast supply of water is available." (EDITOR'S NOTE: It was reported by Ray Hapsburg, a local resident and officer and member of the club since its inception, that the well, which was installed in the beginning phase, has not gone down in water level even three feet.)

Mrs. Martell said that, in those early days of developing the course, she and her husband,



THE FIRST PUMP, in place — 1956. Since it was installed the well has not dropped in level more than a few feet.

Johnnie, and Mrs. Hazel Yale would go wading in the lake at sundown. Sharing the cooling waters and tranquillity with the homing and transient water-fowl, they soon noticed that the aches and pains in their tired feet and legs had vanished. (Suggesting a whole new industry for Yucca Valley!)

The course opened for play on October 6, 1956. Brig. Gen. A.G. McFarland, of the Twentynine Palms Marine Base, was low scorer on opening day with a 78. He birdeyed the first hole after coming out of a trap, it was reported. Another first-day golfer was J.A. McDonald, of Baldwin Park, who eagled the 320-yard second hole. The Twentynine Palms MCB's Welfare and Recreation Department made good use of the Morongo Basin's first golf course for all those aboard the base who were interested in the sport.

Also in those first years, a small pro-shop and snack bar was built at the very east end of the fairway.

Then, in 1964, Carder and Ron Livingston bought the property, added the second nine holes to the course and built the clubhouse on the western edge of the fairway. Roger Lenhardt was the golf pro. The clubhouse quickly became the leading social center for the Hi-Desert.

One of the regular happenings (if they were both free) was the daily afternoon round of golf between Johnnie Martell and Father Edward Creighton, then pastor of St. Mary's of the Valley Catholic Church. Father Creighton received a lot of goodnatured kidding about his golf game from all the other players and observers.

The popular priest was much appreciated by the local citizenry and, in August, 1966, when he was transferred to St. Mary's Catholic Church, in El Centro, he was given a huge Farewell Party at the club. The informal and laughter-filled



program was emcee'd by Ray Hapsburg. The affair was one of the best-attended events in the club's history. The golfing enthusiast is now Monsignor Creighton at St. Agnes' Catholic Church in San Diego.

In the latter part of the '60's Ralph Mick, Yucca Valley real estate developer and long-time champion of the club, got some friends together and bought it. The principals, besides Mick, were George Gauck and Boyd Glazier. Other members of the management team were Warren Larson, club manager; Jack Rathjen; and "Doc" Sears. The name was changed to Blue Skies Country Club.

More and more people from all over Southern California were enjoying the benefits of the club. In addition to the regular and continuous membership activities of the Men's and Womens' Golf Clubs, there were the Annual Blue Skies Invitational Tournaments, the Hollywood Hackers' Charity Tournaments, "Midge" and Luz Potter's Invitationals, the McDonald-Douglas Invitationals and, of course, the Pioneer Pass Golf Challenge. (EDITOR'S NOTE: The Hollywood Hackers are a group of television actors and production crew members who contribute all tournament proceeds to various charities. Members hailed from comedy series including "Beverly Hillbillies," "Petticoat Junction," "Green Acres," "Chico and the Man," "Andy Griffith Show," "Gomer Pyle" and "F Troop" and the "The Ben Hunter Show." "Midge" Potter is fondly remembered as "Johnny," in the Phillip Morris commercials.)

Then there was the famous St. Patrick's Day Grudge Match between Mick and fellow real

estate developer, Bob Roberts. Local fans followed the pair around the course enjoying both the golfing technique and the running commentary. The match ended, unbelievably, in a tie, and, predictably, with a lot of laughs.

On the social side, there are the Annual Yucca Valley Hearts Balls; other dances; luaus, barbecues and outdoor steak cook-outs in the summer. The Pelican Club and many of the service clubs held their meetings and get-togethers there. For the younger set there were Fishing Derbies and Junior Golf Programs.

The National Arthritis Foundation and the San Bernardino Regional Parks Department have both held prestigious luncheon meetings at the club. The Hi-Desert Memorial Hospital Guild held some of its officer installation dinners there.

When a move out of the desert area necessitate a break-up of the Blue Skies original partnership, the club was sold to Tony Escalera and Rudy Bukich. Jes LeVan took over the club for the two partners.

In 1981, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Root became the new and current owners. Root has had a considerable amount of improvements put in on the greens and fairway and in the ground maintenance program.

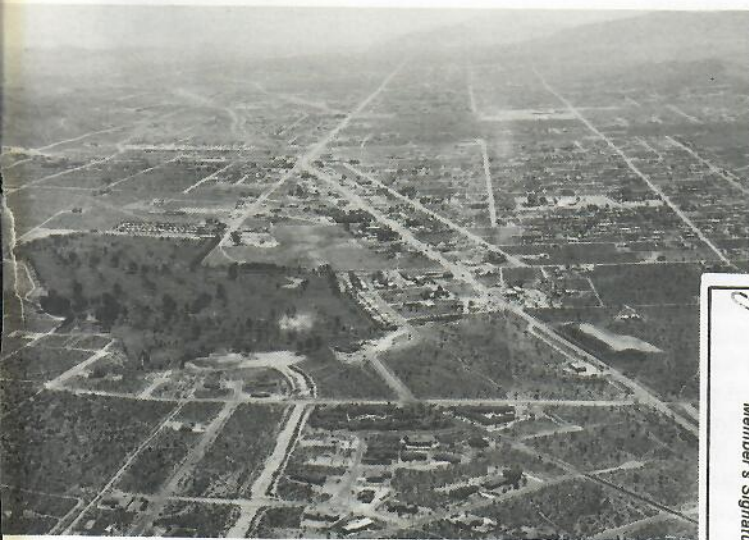
The current officers of the Blue Skies Mens' Golf Club are Ed Conlon, president; Ray Hoorebeke, vice president; Buzz Brown, treasurer; and Norm Salveson, secretary.

The Womens' Golf Club officers are Ina Perkins, president; June Czach, vice president; Winnie Bagley, treasurer; Ann Hack, secretary; and Susie Livingston, corresponding secretary. ■

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In 1959 there was a very small building on Onaga and a cross street which was used for the first Catholic Church. When Father Creighton saw that the street was named Diablo Trail he was mightily upset, so the name was changed to Church St. Diablo means "devil."

*MEMBERSHIP CARD for a charter member. There were several memberships available, resident, out of town and social.*



LOOKING east toward 29 Palms, the golf course, now developing. The year is 1967.

<i>Joe Hammett</i> Member's Signature	Resident Member
	<b>Member</b>
	<b>Hi-Desert Country Club</b> Yucca Valley, California
	Joe Hammett <hr/> <i>W. Yale</i> Secretary



# Bo, The Happy Clown

One of the best, most consistent "Good Will Ambassador" to ever represent Yucca Valley was Martin Bolha, better known to thousands of parade-loving Southern Californians as "Bo, the Happy Clown."

He and his two sons, Tom and Jeff, dressed in various styles of clown regalia, rode and ran away from their specially-made scooter-float and brought broad grins and much laughter to all the crowds lining each parade route. They also generated happy shouts as they threw handfuls of candy to all the children they saw.

While Martin Bolha still lives and works in Yucca Valley, "Bo" and his battered old top hat are retired. But for fifteen fun-filled years, spanning the 60's and 70's, he and his sons voluntarily engaged in a specially dedicated labor of love. They entertained the spectators gathered to watch the Yucca Valley Grubstakes Days Parades, the Joshua Tree Turtle Races Parades, the Landers/Homestead Valley Fun Festival Parades, the Twentynine Palms Pioneer Days Parades, Old Miners' Days Parades in Big Bear, Palm Springs' Sheriffs' Rodeo Parades, Indio Date Festival Parades, San Bernardino National Orange Show Parades, Hesperia Days Parades, Yucaipa Valley Days Parades, and the Banning Stagecoach Days Parades.

The trio of crazy cut-ups have also appeared in the San Fernando Jaycees' Fiesta Parades, the Lynwood Candy Cane Lane Parades, the Woodland Hills' 4th of July Parades and still more parades in Palm Desert, Fontana, Blythe, Kernville, Bakersfield, Turlock, El Sereno and Huntington Park.

Most of these communities were treated to return engagements by "Bo and Co." each year. In 1967, at Woodland Hills' 4th of July "Freedom Season" Parade, "Bo" was joined by some other Hi-Desert Participants — Equestrians Brian Pomainville and Jonna Sue and Peggy Kee.

"Bo" made many appearances in the world-famous Santa Claus Lane Parades down Hollywood Boulevard. For his faithfulness and mirthful shenanigans he was appointed a member of the Santa Claus Council of Advisors.

Through the years "Bo" and the boys were awarded 75 beautiful trophies which they immediately gave away to some nearby, appreciative child.

"Bo" also holds a membership in the North American Association of Ventriloquists and has been one of the most popular entertainers locally



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Jeff, Tom and Martin Bolha. For years this trio delighted parade and festival audiences. Martin Bolha as "Bo the Happy" is especially remembered in Yucca Valley.



in the Elks Club Annual Kids' Party, the Yucca Valley Elementary School's PTA Halloween Festival and the Elks Club Party at Angel View Crippled Children's Hospital, in Desert Hot Springs.

From time to time Bolha was joined by Ben McWaters in the clown act of "Benny and Bo." In those parades the gags and laughs were even wilder. The pair also enlivened the pre-tournament ballyhoo activities of earlier-day Pioneer Pass Golf Challenges and "posed" for light-hearted publicity pictures with a highly amused Miss Pioneer Pass, Debbie Mitchell.

Martin Bolha has two gaily covered scrapbooks filled to the brim with parade pictures from all over, snapshots of Tom and Jeff getting ready to perform and in full costume, "Benny and Bo" in their comic routines, certificates of award and appreciation, letters of thanks and countless poignant memories. But, the fondest memories of all are those of the miles and years of spectators he cheered. Thank you, "Bo," for a long laugh and a lengthy job well done! ■