

# Temecula Valley Historical Society

## Newsletter



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*Eve Craig, Bill Harker, Leslie Karp*

[www.temeculavalleyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.temeculavalleyhistoricalsociety.org)

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## President's Corner

This month has been one of concentrated non-stop efforts. With the many activities the historical society encompasses and deadlines that have to be met, it's been excruciating work for several of us. Bill Harker, Pam Grender and I succeeded in compiling an impressive application for a grant with some help from Leslie Karp and were greatly relieved to submit it a week before it was due. Hopefully we will be able to complete the landscaping, fence painting and bronze plaque for Wolf's Monument and continue distributing brochures and attach plaques to qualified sites in this incredible city that is so rich with history.

Through arrangements by Dr. Dick Glock, Assistant Superintendent of the Temecula Unified School District, Paul Price and I met with the third grade teachers of Helen Hunt Jackson Elementary School. Paul had presented the Board of TVHS with a survey of the possibilities to be considered to present to the many elementary schools, middle and high schools and came up with some interesting ideas.

H.H. Jackson School, first of all, wants information about the Luisenos which Paul is very qualified to present to them, having worked with Luisenos for many years. These teachers will be able to mentor others with their knowledge and therefore become a leading authority for other schools. They are particularly anxious for historical truth rather than some of the fabricated rumors that exist. It was suggested that the most propitious method of presenting this education might be by Videos or DVDs with site pictures and voice/over for the students. Due to other pressing matters, we hope to continue planning and start the first of next year.

During this month, our Historical Society's committees continued to work on their outstanding projects and we will discuss them in the next issue along with the continuation of the history of the Vail Ranch Restoration Association, written by Rebecca Farnbach. What an amazing and admirable group. See you next month with a talk by Jerry Tessier who is deeply involved. and Pres. Of Arteco Partners. Don't miss the good news at our next meeting, October 6<sup>th</sup> at the Temecula Library at 12:00 noon.

*Eve Craig*

## The Historic Vail Ranch: A Site Worth Saving

By Rebecca Marshall Farnbach

*Sight preservation* has been my career, in ophthalmology and opticianry, but when my husband Darell and I met in 1988, we became interested in *site preservation*, specifically with the historic Vail Ranch Headquarters Site. When we visited the ranch back then, Mary Jo Costilow rented the foreman's house and her huge, unshorn sheep would bound over to our car, greeting us like a friendly dog. A corral stood proudly against the open countryside where wily weeds erupted from the packed soil. It was like a movie set, but it was the real thing, complete with a cookhouse, bunkhouse and the wonderful adobe Wolf Store that had once served as a stage stop. We loved the place and would visit it often, our imaginations alive with scenes from yesteryears.

In 1997 a letter to the editor printed in *The Californian* stopped us in our tracks. Someone suggested demolishing the buildings on the historic ranch to prevent danger and disease. We immediately responded with the little bit of information we knew at the time about the site. We appealed to the public to invest interest in saving the site for its historic value as the former ranch headquarters, for the Wolf store with the brass plaque commemorating an Indian Treaty, as a stage stop and as a focal point for the nearby Indian cemetery.

Shortly after *The Californian* ran our letter, Rick Busenkell, a former resident of Temecula, contacted us to invite us to meet a group interested in preserving the site. When we met at the original Pechanga Café on a Saturday afternoon, Rita Gentry, an archeologist and historic preservationist was in charge. Others included Bill and Evelyn Harker, Tony Tobin, photographer Glen Travis, LeVerne Parker, Rhine and Sandy Helzer and Dick Diamond. We agreed the site should be renovated as a historical site, and viewed design renderings, but we did not own the property and did not have any treasury to support our plan.

The group named itself The Vail Ranch Restoration Association (VaARRA.) We continued meeting on the third Saturday of each month at the café, where Pechanga people of long ago, some who worked on the Vail Ranch, oversaw our meetings from their photos on the wall. In 1998, MDC Vail, the corporate property owner started renovation, but VaARRA was not pleased. The plan included demolition of the adobe portion of the foreman's house, which MDC Vail claimed was built in 1957 and was of no historical value. VaARRA representatives appealed to the Riverside Board of Supervisors to prevent the destruction, citing the testimony of James Vail "Sandy" Wilkinson that the building was constructed in 1926. VaARRA's voice was unheeded and the adobe was plowed under, lost forever, on the day following the hearing.

Spurred to action, VaARRA decided to file a suit against the county and against MDC Vail to prevent further demolition. We decided to file under the names of Dick Diamond and Darell Farnbach. With this, we secured the attention from the parties in violation. For six months, Gentry, Diamond and we two Farnbachs worked on the case. We put up the filing fees, researched documents and photographs to present the story of the property and represented ourselves in the legal proceedings. Initially, we wanted the entire 40-acre parcel for parkland, but eventually settled for 4.2 acres and the preservation of five historical buildings.

The historical buildings and VaARRA stood in the owner's way to construct profit producing retail buildings on the site. MDC Vail sold to Price Legacy, the company that developed the surrounding properties. Price Legacy sold to Kimco, a huge commercial development firm with headquarters in New York.

While the terms of the settlement of the lawsuit passed from owner to owner, VaARRA rose to the challenge of educating each successive owner to the historical and community value of the property and the specific details of their responsibilities regarding the suit. VaARRA's directors attended meetings with developers, okaying and nixing design plans. Price Legacy arranged the placement of the "Magnificent 7" cowboy photo on the Kohls store to fulfill part of the requirements.

All interest in the property slowed to an impasse until about two months ago, when the mechanisms that drive change shifted gears. We'll tell you more in the next edition of the newsletter.

# Get To Know Your Board Members

Paul J. Price

## TETE-A-TETE



A Biography? No, I'm not going to tell all, for some of it exhibits the lack of tools for tolerance of my fellow man. Oh I could tone it down or dress it up, but that—dear reader—would be a falsification. This narrative bio heightens in exuberance only when I think of how my art has shaped my life's direction, often-times coercing me into action.

I could fill the pages with generalities, lost dreams, popular successes, and misunderstandings, which would all be significant to me but to you—dear reader—suspect. We all have these idiosyncratic milestones, none intrinsically meaningful to anyone but ourselves.

This piece shall serve as my prelude to a turning point in my life, when new tragedies and an old mistress conspired to make me the artist I am today.

Tradition calls for me to begin in the following manner, my birth at Chattanooga, Tennessee. On May 22, 1942, as one of three boys, my brothers grew to be healthy, robust, and more significant to my father. I was none of the above. Toddler years were spent recuperating from numerous childhood illnesses. These illnesses taught me that other children's lack of fidelity was due to time factors; furthermore, they had no obligation to pity.

It's a cruel disappointment not to be able to play ball, to belong, to have a group identity. Yet I displayed no self-pity (my dad, a World War II vet, did not believe in the word—sounded too much like surrender). Slowly, with hands folded behind my back, I was pushed into the glorious realm of nature. Rocks, bugs, plants, Indians, and books became my teammates. Soon nature became more than just a playmate; she became my passion—my first love.

The family followed Dad to California where he was shipped out to the Pacific theatre with thousands of other American troops. Upon his return, and with the G.I. bill in hand, we settled in Southern California, eventually into Riverside County where Dad and Mom had found land cheap. Dry farmers is all that should be said about their occupation, rancher to those of you who want a romantic spin.

We boys quickly adapted to the rough life of living on the edge, depending on what God gave to our land and our abilities to nurture it and be good stewards.

Soon I realized that my art came from the impact of strong forces found in nature. Wait, that sounds like I found my art, that's not correct. It began with my physical limitations, which caused me to observe my surroundings more thoroughly than others. I was forced to see more clearly and develop a highly sensitive eye.

Anyway, after high school, I and my sensitive eyes went to Chouiard's Art Institute, Los Angeles, where I studied Classic Art. With time, I learned to express life through my sensibilities as an artist.

To create, that's all I craved. But then an instructor put my feet back on the ground. I now quote his sage advice: "Sure, I love the smell of turpentine, but I like the smell of beans better." I got married and found it necessary—on reaching this level of manhood—to leave Riverside County and seek better opportunities in San Francisco.

As an artist I aspired to capture something of nature's subtle drama and then stir the hearts of men and women one person at a time.

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## SPEAKERS

Our September speaker was Cindy Lynn Beaudet who was most informative about several of our Local cemeteries and may of the early settlers here.

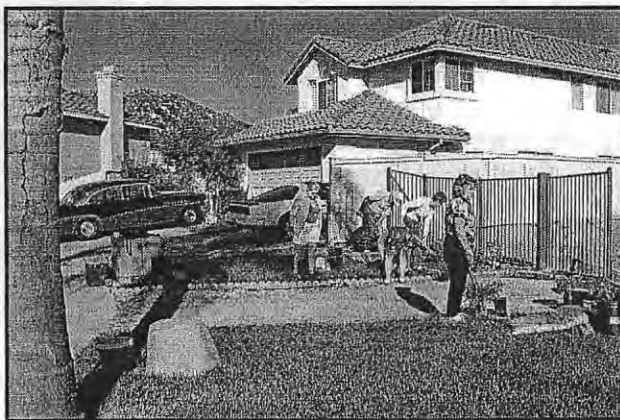
In October Mr. Jerry Tessier will speak about the planned restoration of the Vail Rand headquarters located along Highway 79S and Margarita Road. The Farnbach's and VaARRA have been working to make the project become a reality for many years.

The relatively recent involvement of Artco Partners, of which Mr. Tessier is the president, has been a step in a very positive direction. He will join us at our October 6th meeting at the Temecula Library at noon.

## HAPPENINGS...

August was a month of decision making and future plans. A big step in the completion of Wolf's Monument has happened with the tilling of soil and planting by The Garden Club of Temecula Valley. It was fun watching Susan and Dr. Sam Puma at work with the tiller and the new President, Barbara Miller and her husband, digging away with Kathy Turgeon and others. They planted areas in front of the street fence.

These are lovely red shrub rose bushes called "Showbiz", Agapanthus, Nandina, which will have little white flowers and red berries later and in the fall, Myoporum, which is a green shrub with white flowers. Daffodils will be planted in the fall and wild flowers will also be scattered which will re-seed again and again. All the plants have qualities of hardiness, drought resistance, beauty and low-maintenance. It will brighten the neighborhood and be pleasant for the neighbors. We are grateful to The Garden Club for their hard work and generosity.



The Garden Club of Temecula at Wolf's Monument

Success came by learning what to do with the fish after it was caught. Slowly I became a professional. With each new commission I accomplished another career goal. However the public's thirst for something new never abated, so I had to meet their demands continually. Years of struggling were followed by more years of struggling, during which I continued to reach for the zenith of my art, taking any commission or engaging any medium to obtain it.

San Francisco was beautiful, but her power and passion originally remained hidden from me and my skills and talent. Slowly did she surrender to me her generosity.

Meanwhile my marriage could not keep pace with my artistic endeavors. Reluctantly divorce was agreed upon.

Once a major account bankrupted against my firm as well as over three hundred other creditors. The debt owed by that firm was in the millions. In response I unburdened my business of as much overhead as possible, which resulted in me rejoining my working staff of artisans. During this period an eyehook pulled from its ceiling mount, sending a 200 pound sculptured head crashing to the floor. Unfortunately I stood between the head and the floor. Several broken vertebra in my back were the result. During my convalescence I realized that we all were but temporary intruders on God's green planet.

Then another blow; my dad died.

This dismantling of my world left me a droning skeleton of my former self. All this in four months. I first considered all this anguish as nothing more than a series of unfortunate events. Then, after a restless night I came to the realization that not only was God trying to get my attention, he was pointing me towards a new direction.

Dad's funeral tamed my arrogance and brought me back to the remote and idyllic setting of my youth. His estate needed an executor and mom needed a retirement home. Could I find sanctuary here in the dry hills, lick my wounds and re-group? Discreetly I felt I could rekindle my old romance with nature, reacquaint myself with my first love. Now as an adult, nature also became my mistress. Not in the adulterous sense, but more along the lines of a compassionate and sometimes a demanding companion.

Mistress is the correct term. Not words such as manipulator, carpetbagger, or exploiter.

The fields, the communal rhythm of Western Riverside County, the summer fragrance of sage, and infrequent winter rains all became the alluring calls of my newly rediscovered mistress, who now demanded submission and thus declared war on my retreat! The old ranch house became a storm center, my retreat a false rest. I became a run-away pilgrim.

No, I was not overwhelmed by a testosterone attack. Nor by mere artistic rhapsody. I was pushed from behind. Wandering among the fields surrounding the ranch house, I would openly ask, "What is it you want from me?" That hypnotic question kept drumming in my head. Like a sophisticated San Francisco woman in conflict with a primitive man, it was intellect vs. instinct.

Finally, nature shot back, "Why is it?" Then like a slap in the face by a branch let go by a hiker in front of you; it came to me.

Art, it slips like silver mercury through your fingers. You only think you're in control, but when you realize you're not, it's too late. I had taken my imagination from the soil of this terrain and shared its blossom with my art.

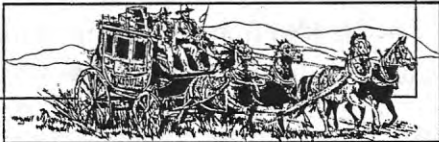
On the ranch we knew that a certain amount of stubble had to be plowed back into the soil for the land to remain fertile. This was the answer to nature's query to me, "Why is it." Her answer was, "Feed the soil, feed yourself."

I did and, with certain tolerances, I now call the surrounding countryside home and my art the produce of me and my mistress, nature.

To be continued.....

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