



# ACACIA CREEK JOURNAL

WRITTEN BY RESIDENTS, FOR RESIDENTS



In 1959, the rural communities of Alvarado, New Haven and Decoto, fearing the future loss of their identity, determined to fend off the encroachment of neighboring Hayward to the north and Fremont to the south, and decided to unite and incorporate as a new city to be known as Union City. Alvarado was the original county seat of Alameda County and the site of the first county court house. The original inhabitants were the Costanoan Indians. They trapped wild fowl, fished and gathered salt crystals from the marshes.

Today, Union City, eighteen square miles in area, has a population of over 71,000 and ranks as the 9<sup>th</sup> largest incorporated city in Alameda County.

In 1846 a band of 245 members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, led by Sam Brennan arrived in Yerba Buena (now San Francisco) on a ship called the "Brooklyn". Their arrival tripled the population of Yerba Buena to less than 500. Their plan was to meet up with Brigham Young and his people traveling overland in search of the Promised Land, but, they were to learn that Brigham Young had ended his search in Utah. Yerba Buena was a small sea port town with little arable land so many in the party left in search of better lands on which to farm. They crossed over to Martinez and worked their way down the San Ramon corridor to occupy the Mission San Jose barracks, warehouses and half ruined adobes. From there they began farming the fertile East Bay land.

Cattle ranching was the center of life in the early 1800's, along with garden crops, fruits and grain. The city was the largest producer of rhubarb in the US. It also ranked highest in mushrooms and currants. Other important crops were: sweet corn, spinach, cabbage, carrots, potatoes hay, barley, wheat and oats.

Alvarado was specifically known for salt harvesting as well as the first and largest production of sugar from sugar beets.

**John Horner**, along with his brother William, were two of the Mormon farmers from the steamer "Brooklyn". John saw opportunity in the rich lands around Mission San Jose. He traded the Colt pistol that he had brought with him for protection from bandits and hostile Indians for a yoke of oxen, and, with \$5 worth of seed potatoes brought from New Jersey, started farming. Undaunted by crop failures due to a grasshopper plague and a bout with "gold fever", in 1850 they finally shipped crops netting almost \$100,000.00 to San Francisco. They laid out a town eight blocks square in 1851 on the south side of Alameda Creek. They purchased a small Sacramento River steamer named the "Union" to transport their crops and named their settlement **Union City**. Captain Marston made round-trips daily to San Francisco on the "Union" delivering produce and bringing back supplies and mail.

**Alvarado** was named for Juan Bautista Alvarado, the Mexican Governor of California from 1836 to 1842. It was also named for the Alvarado potato a thick-skinned white potato which was grown there.

**Ezra Decoto**, from Montreal, was the first of three brothers to move to California. They purchased 334 acres of land near the right of way of the Western Pacific Railroad. They then purchased another 284 acres as the Decoto Land Company to develop a railroad town for the Western Pacific Railroad which ran through Niles Canyon in 1869. Decoto was originally spelled "de Coteau".

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## UNION CITY

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**John C Whipple**, lured to California in search of gold in 1854, bought 200 acres near the Decoto brothers ranch on what is now Whipple Road. He planted fruit trees, grains, vegetables, and ran cattle. In 1878, he was joined by his brother Edwin and they purchased another 700 acres. Edwin became prominent in Masonic affairs and served as trustee of the Masonic Home when it was built in Decoto.

**Ebenezer H. Dyer** and his brother Ephraim acquired a beet sugar factory in 1870 which was located on property they had purchased. In its first year of operation, it produced 29 tons of sugar. Incorporated as the Standard Sugar Manufacturing Company in 1879, it was the first successful beet sugar mill in the US. The factory operated until 1886 when a boiler blew up and killed a fireman. Subsequently, the factory was operated by several corporations. The Holly Sugar Corporation purchased the factory and restored operations in 1927. The plant operated until 1969 and was demolished in 1977.



The 268 acres upon which the **Masonic Home** is located was purchased in 1893 at a cost of \$33,093. The cornerstone of the original building was laid on October 4, 1896. The Home officially opened on October 12, 1898. At that time, it was the Home for Widows and Orphans. A resolution was made in 1906 to move the children to their own facility, which is now the Masonic Homes of California at Covina. The Union City Home now sits on 306 acres of land east of Mission Blvd.

Sally Ward

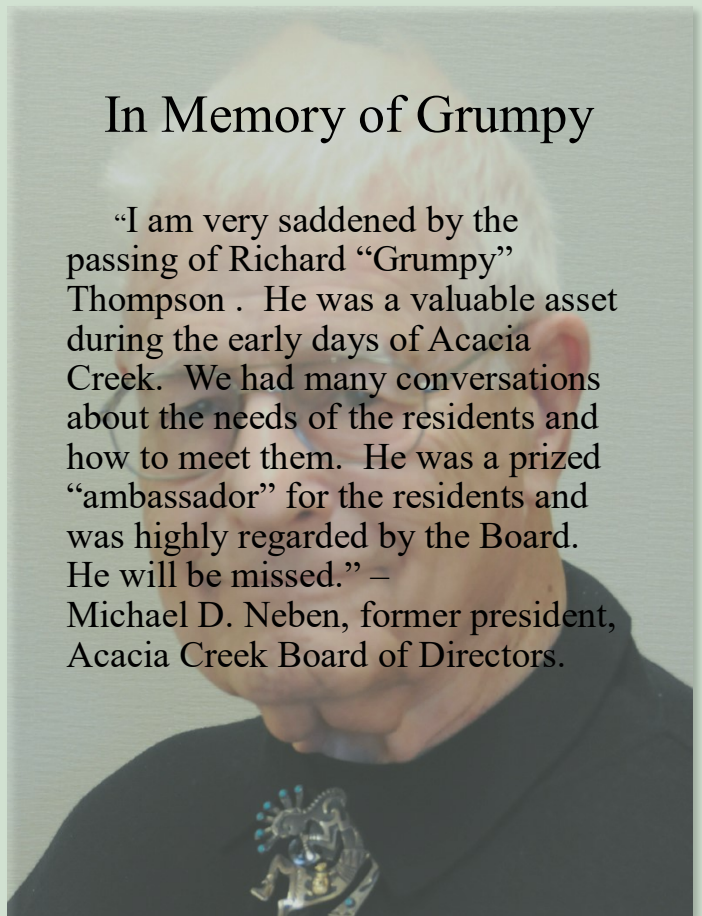


**The Flight 93 Memorial**, at Alvarado-Niles Road and Dyer Street in Sugar Mill Landing Park was dedicated on December 8, 2007. It was built for the 40 passengers and crew of the fourth plane hijacked on Sept. 11, 2001. The flight was homeward bound for San Francisco International Airport and many on board were from the Bay Area.

**Union Landing Shopping Center** is a 100-acre shopping center, adjacent to Interstate 880 in Union City and is one of the largest centers in the city. It has about 50 stores. The mall was completed in 1999 after several years of debate on land use.

## In Memory of Grumpy

“I am very saddened by the passing of Richard “Grumpy” Thompson . He was a valuable asset during the early days of Acacia Creek. We had many conversations about the needs of the residents and how to meet them. He was a prized “ambassador” for the residents and was highly regarded by the Board. He will be missed.” – Michael D. Neben, former president, Acacia Creek Board of Directors.



# VACATION TIME

For some birds, nesting goes on throughout the warm season; doves, for instance. Their approach to survival is to have as many broods as possible, as many as four broods in a season. There is no time for fun. Other birds have a single nesting event for better or worse. For tom turkeys, summer is a working vacation. We can see drab toms in groups silently and resolutely working their way through the day eating, eating, and more eating. It takes a lot of wobble and fat to do what they do when it



comes time for courtin.' Seagulls are another story. The California gull nests inland in swamps and lakes including the Great Salt Lake. They are the state bird of Utah where they are legendary. They assisted the first Mormon settlers who were dealing with a plague of Mormon crickets that threatened them with starvation. This was taken as a sign by the Mormons not to finish their migration to the West Coast. Just stay in Utah and keep working, working, and more working. The gulls, however, go to the West Coast to become the California gull in the summer.

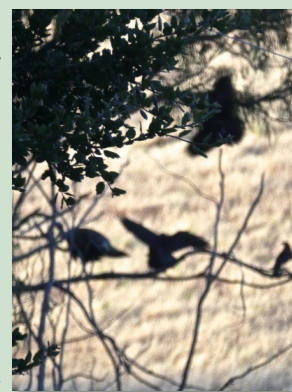


I observe the California gull down by Coyote Hills in vacation time. As a group, they forage for insects, fish, and eggs in the morning. Then they bathe, mewling and calling back and forth as they always do. When the sun approaches noon on an uncloudy day it

is time to ride the thermals. It is like Mavericks out by Half Moon Bay on the coast when the word goes out that the surf is high. The gulls take all afternoon off surfing the rising air combining with the prevailing winds as it bumps over the ridge line of the hills behind Acacia Creek. You can almost hear them cackling with pleasure as they fly back and forth.

Ravens are finished with their nesting duties by July. Unlike doves and pigeons who are finished with their parental duties after the young are fledged and gone, the ravens have a social responsibility for the young generation that includes games in summer. With games come fancy flight patterns to gain the knowledge of who has the upper hand, under what conditions. I have watched a raven game where a bird will fly straight up, do an off-the-top Immelmann roll plummeting to earth, pulling out at the bottom in the nick of time. This is greeted by approbation from the extended family watching from the surrounding trees.

One evening at Acacia, I saw a tom turkey fly up to his roost in the eucalyptus trees on the east end of the building. He landed on a dead branch. He was exposed. Ravens roosting on top of our building observed this. One flew down and struck the big bird a blow on the side while the tom held on with his big strong feet. It was all he could do. Soon other ravens flew down to join the assault. The tom slowly made his way



into the tree where there was more cover. From a raven's point-of-view a good time was had by all. On the following night, no turkeys landed on the exposed branches. It was one trial learning for them. The ravens came down anyway and landed on the branches. This time they were attacked by 6 small kestrel hawks. They were probably nesting in the trees. It was like laying out a delightful picnic of potato salad and sausage with pickle, and then the fire ants show up. The ravens didn't have a chance. They flew off looking for other entertainment. It was all in a summer day's work.

Cj Becker



## Why was our retirement community named “Acacia Creek”?

The land that we are built on is part of an approximately 300-acre parcel that was purchased by the Masonic Home in 1893. Through the years several buildings were built on this land. The old buildings had to be demolished due to current code restrictions.



There were cottages, two apartment buildings called the Acacias, some storage sheds and barns. Early on, the cottages and apartments were used by employees of the Masonic Homes. They were also used to house some of the residents. There was a walkway to connect the apartments to the Masonic Home.

The acacia tree is an important part of Masonic lore. There are over 800 species and sub-species of acacias that grow as trees, shrubs and lianas (look for them in several places on our property). They grow in many countries around the world in a wide range of differing habitats. They are evergreen and are unchanged by their environment. They flower each year and, depending on the variety of acacia, the blossoms vary in color - yellow, blue, white, cream-colored, reddish pink. The wood is a beautiful hardwood with light and dark coloring. The acacia offers a beautiful suggestion of all the mysteries of life and death, of time and eternity, of present and the future.

Because of the multiple properties of the acacia trees, the acacia sprig presents itself to the Master Mason as symbols of “Immortality of the Soul”, of “Innocence”, and of “Initiation”.

So now we know where our name came from. The previous apartments were called the “Acacias.” The acacia tree is an important part of Masonic lore. Those selecting the name wanted to incorporate the terrain in the area in the name and thought the creek that borders the property made sense to add to the name.

Wilma Grice



Dear Residents,

This has been another busy month here at Acacia Creek. As every year, we asked all of our residents to complete a satisfaction survey. Your feedback is helping us to improve our services and the way we do business. We received almost 100% feedback and our outside accounting firm has compiled the results for us. We will share the results with you at the August Resident Forum. We are also doing a similar survey for all of our team members to ensure that we are on the right track as an employer. We strive to be the employer of choice in the East Bay Area.

I would like to thank everyone who came to the luncheon and cocktail party to meet with your Acacia Creek Board of Directors. It is encouraging and exciting to see how committed our Board members are about our residents and community. That afternoon, we gave away the Grand Prize of a \$1,000.00 rent credit to Mary Liss. Congratulations, Mary, and all the other winners that night!

Publisher’s Clearing House Contest is currently advertised on television. Please be aware that several residents have received scam calls stating that they have won lots of money; however, they are required to submit \$17,000 in advance to collect their prize.

**PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY TO ANY ORGANIZATION IN ADVANCE TO COLLECT A PRIZE OR A GIFT!**

We just recently celebrated Administrative Professional Month and I would like to shout out a big “Thank You!” to Katie and her awesome team! Our front desk is really the hub for our community. Most everything runs through the Concierge desk: from computer, phone, housekeeping, or lifestyles issues, the gals are always willing to help or connect folks with the right person. Please give them an encouraging word next time you stop at the desk.

Chuck and I have started our budget work for the 2018 budget on July 21, 2017. It is a two-month process and we will report to and seek feedback from our Resident Council during that period.

Cheers,

Martin Herter

# REMEMBER YOUR FIRST CAR?

## WAS IT A DORT?



In 1957, **HARVEY MCANINCH** was a freshman in high school when his father bought a 1949 Cadillac convertible for him. Harvey had been hitchhiking to get to school. The family lived on a small farm, far from town; near Indianapolis IN. His father sold used cars part-time.

Harvey was newly licensed and thought he was hot stuff to be driving such a car to school. But he soon found that he could not always drive the car; the freeze plug kept dropping out, emptying the radiator.



Dad traded the car for a lawn mower and a motorcycle. Dad got the motorcycle and Harvey got the lawn mower, along with plenty of grass to cut.

Between Harvey's junior and senior years, Mr.

McAninch provided a 1953 Chevy coupe to him together with a strong suggestion that Harvey sell Fuller Brushes. Harvey did well as a Fuller Brush man until 1961. Then he graduated high school and joined the US Air Force.

Upon separation from the service after 9 years, Harvey bought a used US Mail Jeep to become a Fuller Brush man again, for six to eight months. The Jeep was handy for his selling supplies.

**ELAINE MAGEE** was engaged to be married in August 1953, but it was not to be. Her fiancé, Herb had an April appointment in Lansing, MI to pick up a new Oldsmobile 88 at the factory in April. Herb had planned with four other friends that they all go together to pick up the car. The friends dropped out, so his father then joined up and wanted his wife to go along also. Then the fiancé's mother insisted that Elaine be there.

In 1953, it wouldn't do for an unmarried woman to travel with them. The couple had to be married first. So, a full church wedding was performed four months early in Hughson CA, one week before the scheduled automobile trip. So, Elaine has said that she "had" to get married.

Afterwards, the couple honeymooned in Big Sur and a few days later the four flew to Lansing. The group toured the factory, picked up the Oldsmobile 88, and drove back to California.

In 1958, they flew to the factory in Detroit MI to pick up a Chrysler 300. This time they drove to Florida where Herb raced it on the sandy Chrysler Daytona Beach race track. He came in first in the quarter mile at 144mph!

That car is now in Quincy CA, restored by an antique automobile collector.



When **DOTTY RADCLIFF** was a small child, her dad drove a Dort. Not many folks today have ever heard about the brand. It was built by the Dort Motor Car Company in Flint, Michigan from 1915–1924. The Company had been based in Canada. Lycoming-built engines were used to power the vehicles. The cars started reliably in all conditions. Only 26,000 Dorts were ever made.

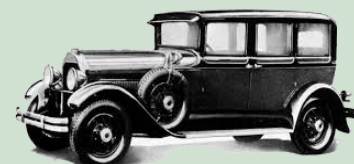
This family auto was a touring model, with four doors, a strong metal body, and a hard top. At that time, the Dort did not have roll-up windows, Dotty remembers. The windows were flexible isinglass, made of mica. They could be folded down for fair weather or pulled up for other Chicago weather. Dotty said that they bundled up when they went for a ride; it was cold!



The next car they had was a Willys Whippet, the model introduced in 1926 by Willys-Overland. That company was best known for its design and production of military Jeeps and later civilian versions. In the Great Depression,

the family had no car.

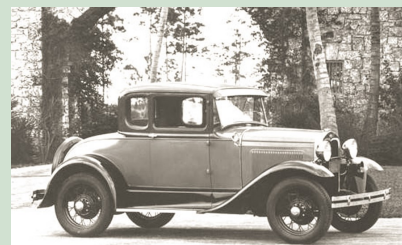
When Dotty married her husband, Conrad, they bought a used Hupmobile, an automobile built from 1909 through 1939 by the Hupp Motor Car Company.



**VANCE HILL** bought his 1928 Model A Ford coupe from a high school friend during WWII for \$25. It did not run, had ignition problems and a very poor tire. Friends helped push the car to a vacant lot near his home in Los Angeles.

He tinkered with the ignition to get it running and selected a better tire at the WWII scrap rubber drive. Almost good to go! Gasoline was on ration, but Popular Mechanics featured how-to convert the car to kerosene which was available at the gas station. The motor needed to be warmed up first with gasoline, made available by a one-gallon side tank under the hood. After the warming, then the kerosene in the original gas tank was used. It ran!

One night he drove up to Mt. Wilson, a 5710 feet peak near Los Angeles. The drive up went well as the motor heated up. On the way down, it did not go fine. The exhaust left a large white smoke screen behind the car, as the motor cooled off.



Vance says it was a fun car. When he enlisted in the Air Force as he became 18, a local mechanic took it on.

Clarice Hill

# Resident Spotlight



## MERV & JACKIE PURDY

A good subtitle for the Spotlight could very well be “Getting to Know You” (also a popular song from the King and I). The fabric of each life at Acacia Creek is unique, but often there is a common thread running through it because so many residents have lived through the same years simultaneously. Learning about your fellow residents is important and will afford a little more information between one another to enhance our relationships. In this vein, let us shine this month’s spotlight on the Purdys.

Jacqueline Monson was born in Savannah, GA to her father, a stone mason, and her school teacher mother. She has one younger brother. While she was in high school, her cousin invited her to a family Christmas party. The cousin’s boyfriend brought along his buddy, a young gentleman named Mervin Purdy. Jackie did not experience “love at first sight” at this initial meeting but after a few more dates, love blossomed, and she and Merv drove to South Carolina and were married. The year was 1952 and Jackie was still a high school student. Merv was assigned to Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois and when the school year ended, Jackie joined him at Castle AFB in California. Thus, began their military life together. Soon they welcomed a son, Tom, who was born in

Santa Rosa. The next stop in Merv’s tour of duty was March AFB in California. Jackie was expecting again at this point and was homesick. They were transferred back to Savannah to Hunter AFB where son Stephen was born. After another move to West Palm Beach, Florida, they moved on to Wheelus AFB in Tripoli, Libya in north Africa. At this time, prior to the reign of Kaddafi, King Idris ruled Libya. It was the time of the Suez crisis and at one exiting point all the French and English dependents had to be evacuated from their living area. When asked why the Americans were not included, the answer was “We’re not mad at the Americans”. While in Tripoli, a third son, David, was born and when he was only 5 weeks old, the family was transferred to England. The next move was to Chennault AFB in Lake Charles, La. Jackie worked at the base nursery and served as president of the NCO wives club for 4 years. She also served as Assistant Coordinator of Family Services for 3 years. Next stop: McClellan AFB in Sacramento, CA. Then, Merv was deployed to Viet Nam. At this time they had purchased their first home in Foothill Farms where Jackie and the boys waited for Merv’s return. The boys attended high school and Jackie took a secretarial job. After Merv’s duty in Viet Nam, off went the family to Torrejon AB in Madrid, Spain. Then, from Spain to Athens, Greece at Athens AB. They lived in a beautiful home in Glyfada near the base and the boys attended the Embassy school. Merv retired in 1971 and the family returned to Foothill Farms. Merv bought an Arco station in Sacramento where he and the sons worked. Jackie went to work at a carpet company. In 1975, Merv sold the gas station and took a civil service job at Sharpe AFB in Lathrop, CA and then to McClellan AFB. Following this was a job at Aerojet where he worked as an inspector until he retired in 1986. The family sold their home and headed back east to visit friends and family. Back in Savannah, they parked their trailer in Jackie’s mother’s yard and decided to drive a truck and tour the East Coast. But, in less than a year, Merv was called back to Aerojet to work for the contractor. Back West they went and bought a home in Placerville, CA.

## RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT

*(Continued from page 6)*

Through all those years, Jackie, a strong little lady, kept the home fires burning and family life going. She became a certified Master Food Preserver, teaching food preservation in El Dorado County. To this day, she enjoys cooking, does all sorts of handicrafts (they are works of art) and she looks forward to her time at the Studio at Acacia Creek where she joins other ladies in sewing for charity, beading and needlework. Jackie is also interested in genealogy and has traced her family (Hollingsworth) and Merv's family (Fitzwater) back to their arrival in America in 1682 on the William Penn ships "Antelope" (Jackie's) and "Welcome" (Merv's). Jackie is a member of the DAR, Daughters of the Confederacy, and Colonial Dames of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. She enjoys her life at Acacia Creek, especially the many friendships she has made.

One last note about this interesting lady: After this interview, I noticed a small, framed newspaper clipping on a table. It was an advertisement for Starland Dairies in Savannah and featured a photo of a darling little child. It was Jackie, a paid model while still a toddler and for which she was paid the tidy sum of \$15 (not to be sneezed at in 1935). The anecdote puts the icing on Jackie's story.

Mervin Lewis Purdy was born in Healdsburg, Ca, near the Russian River. His mother was a homemaker who also spent time working for the Del Monte cannery. His stepfather worked in construction. Merv has one sister and several other siblings as a result of having a combined family. He attended high school in Santa Rosa. Two months after graduation, he joined the Army Air Corps (as it was called then). Now it is known as the United States Air Force. He trained in San Antonio, TX and spent six months at Kessler AFB in Mississippi and in Tucson, AZ learning maintenance of aircraft and aircraft engines. Learn well he did, and soon went on to be an instructor in these skills. He was due for discharge but the President had other plans and his enlistment was extended for two years. That year he attended the aforementioned Christmas party where he met Jackie. After that one meeting he told his buddy, "I'm going to marry that girl!". And so he did. Many moves began for this young couple.

Since Merv's and Jackie's stories are so entwined, Merv's many deployments have been noted in Jackie's story. There were other deployments, but only some have been highlighted due to the space limitations of the Journal.

Merv has served his country for 35 years, both in the military and civil service. He retired from the military with an E-8 rating and title of S.M.Sgt. He was awarded the Bronze Star in Viet Nam. His record is one of fine accomplishment for which he can be justly proud and we all owe him and all our veterans deep gratitude. Merv is a member of the Sons of the American Revolution and Sons of the Union Veterans.

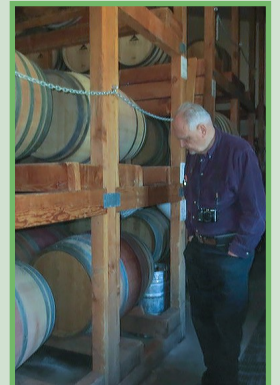
As for Merv's Masonic endeavors: He was unaware of Masonry until Jackie's father took him aside to enlighten him. His first Lodge membership was in Thunderbolt Lodge #696 in Thunderbolt, GA. He then joined Polaris Lodge #730 in Sacramento where he served as Master in 1976. He also served as Secretary until 1986. When living in Placerville, he joined Placerville Lodge (now called El Dorado Lodge). There he served as Officer's Coach. In 1990, he was appointed Inspector for the 240 Masonic District. This included Placerville, Folsom, Lake Tahoe and Hiram Lodges. When joining Hiram Lodge #25, he served as Secretary and Officer's Coach. He is a life member of Hiram Lodge, as are his sons Tom and David. He received the high honor of the Hiram Award from that body. Other memberships include: Ben Ali Shrine, Cibola Motor Corps, Legion of Honor, Scottish and York Rites, Sciots Pyramid #11 and #13 and served as Toparch. Merv is also a member of the Sojourners and Heroes of '76.

These days Merv plays a little golf when he is able, but says he is slowing down and so enjoys the many activities offered at Acacia Creek. He is one of the trio of gentlemen who, under the leadership of resident Ollie Guinn, present the wonderful program "Building the Flag". It is a presentation not to be missed.

The Purdys are a kind and gracious couple and very generous in sharing their stories. Getting to know them is a treat...try it!

Carol Hough

# Living MIDSUMMER FUN



## TAIKO DRUMMING



## COUNTRY WESTERN SOCIAL HOUR

