



The Rexford L. Hall award is given each year to the student whose essay is judged best overall. Above Rick Hall presented the perpetual trophy to Kate Valstar of Crest Elementary.

Contest rewards kids for essays

The 35th Annual Third Grade Historical Essay Contest Awards Ceremony was held June 13 at the Greenfield Middle School Theater. There were 72 finalists from eight schools competing for top prize in each of five essay topics. Top prize included a trophy and \$50. In addition, five Honorable Mention winners received a trophy.

ECHS would like to thank the Cajon Valley Union School District for their support and chairperson Rebecca Taylor for coordinating the contest.

The top essays appear in this newsletter on pages 7-9.

July meeting offers unique look at Gillespie Field history

The next ECHS meeting will take flight with a special presentation, museum tour, and delicious brunch. The meeting will be held at 10 a.m. Wednesday, July 27, at Gillespie Field. At press time, details for this exciting event were still being worked out, but it promises to be one you won't want to miss.

The meeting will start with brunch at the Gillespie Field Café, 2015 N. Marshall Ave., El Cajon, and will include a special presentation on Gillespie Field that is being developed for us and a tour of the Gillespie Field Annex.

Leslie Day of the Gillespie Pilots Association will provide a vintage plane for static display for this event.

Gillespie is the home of the restoration facility Gillespie Field Annex for the San Diego Air and Space Museum (formerly San Diego Aerospace Museum) in Balboa Park. From a small one-hangar beginning,

the Annex at Gillespie Field has grown to become an integral part of the Museum's aircraft restoration and replica reproduction program. Staffed mainly by volunteers, the facility has produced some of the museum's finest work.

Of local significance, a Convair F-102A Delta Dagger recently completed restoration at the Annex. This aircraft was built in San Diego at Convair's Lindbergh Field plant in the mid-1950s. Many of the volunteers who participated in preservation efforts actually worked on the F-102 while employed by Convair/General Dynamics.

The Annex has many vintage and modern aircraft on display, including an Atlas ICBM rocket as its gate guard and an authentic Bleriot.

See page 10 for menu selections and the meeting reservation form. More information about Gillespie Field is included on page 3.



Our July meeting at Gillespie Field will feature vintage and modern aircraft such as the F14 shown above.

President's Message

HEARTFELT THANKS TO ALL

by Carla Nowak

WELL DONE BECKY TAYLOR AND HER STALWART BAND!

This quarter has been a busy one for ECHS. More third graders from the Cajon Valley Union School District toured the Knox House Museum. Those tours culminated June 13 when the winners of the Essay Contest for third graders were acknowledged at the Awards Ceremony. Kudos to Becky Taylor and the docents who lead the tours, to the volunteers who read the essays and picked the finalists, and to the winners themselves.



THANKS TO OUR DONORS — PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE...

Also during this time, happy moments have been spent talking with a number of people who have donated historic items from their family treasures. Hopefully you will be able to see some of them soon at the Knox. If you or another member of your family has items pertinent to El Cajon history, please think of the Historical Society as an eventual recipient. Of course, family members come first, but sometimes family members don't appreciate things of an historic nature, and your family history can live on in the Knox House Museum.



FUN AT AMERICA ON MAIN STREET...

On May 21st, most of the members of your governing board manned the ECHS booth at America on Main Street. My thanks to Fran Hill for attending all of the America on Main St. meetings for us and for donating the cost of our two tents. Thanks to Rick and Sharon Hall for the amazing enlarged photo of the Tent City at the Hotel del Coronado (early 1900s). Most adults could understand the concept of a tent city and had heard of such a thing from parents or grandparents, but the children who visited had difficulty realizing that there was actually a time when automobiles were not available and you couldn't just drive to the beach for the day! Thanks also to Rick and Sharon, Dick Lay and Mike Kaszuba for helping to set up and tear down our display. Thanks to booth workers who covered the 8-hour time span of America on Main St. - Dick and Eldonna Lay, Colleen White, Anita Tinsley, Becky Taylor, and Mike Kaszuba. It's always enjoyable to talk to the people who visit our display. Often they tell us things we didn't know about El Cajon history, and a new relationship is formed.

I look forward to seeing you at our next Quarterly Meeting. See the information and reservation form on the back page of this newsletter.



Carla



See how guitars are crafted at a special ECHS event October 19.

Save the Date

The El Cajon Historical Society is planning a special outing at 10 a.m. Wednesday, October 19, to tour the Taylor Guitar facility.

Headquartered here in El Cajon, Taylor Guitars was founded in 1974 by Bob Taylor and Kurt Listug, and has grown into the leading global builder of premium acoustic guitars. Taylor employs more than 900 people and currently produces hundreds of guitars per day in its state-of-the-art factory complexes in both El Cajon and Tecate, Mexico.



Renowned for blending modern, innovative manufacturing techniques with a master craftsman's attention to detail, Taylor guitars are widely considered among the best-sounding and easiest to play in the world. The company uses computer mills, lasers, other high-tech tools, and proprietary machinery.

In addition to its forward-thinking approach to guitar design and manufacturing, Taylor has applied that same approach to its wood sourcing and environmental sustainability initiatives. Taylor is dedicated to the pursuit of best practices in forest management, new models of reforestation, and bringing ethically harvested tone woods to market.

This will be an event you won't want to miss! More information will be included in the next issue of the Heritage.

NEW AT THE KNOX

by Mike Kaszuba

The Knox Museum had a single donation this quarter, but it is quite a rare item with a great story to go with it.

CIRCA 1890s WEDDING DRESS

Donated by: Gertrude H. Hoffman

Description: This hand-fashioned wedding dress was donated by one of our members, and she related that it was prepared for her grandmother, Gertrude Shepard-Hunter, of Flushing, New York, for her wedding day. The dress was modified in the early 1960s with the addition of a zipper to close the top. There is also no high neckline that was so common to turn-of-the-century dresses, so likely that was removed in the 1960s as well.



BACK OF DRESS

Grandmother Gertrude was married in 1891, two years before the birth of Gertrude's father, William Malcolm Hunter. It is a heavy dress, constructed with "opaline fabric" and with satin lining. The top is full of fancy lace frills and beadwork. Gertrude tells us that the dress was made originally for a 16" waist! Grandmother Gertrude would probably have fit nicely into the ever-so-dainty black leather lace-up boots we featured in the October 2013 Heritage.

Well over 100 years of storage have allowed the dress fabric to become extremely fragile, so Museum staff will need to consult with an expert textile conservator before the dress can be safely put out on display. Regardless, it would be a fascinating study piece for someone researching Victorian clothing.

Now for the rest of the story. Our donor, Gertrude H., was born in 1929 in New York. Her father, William Hunter, had been employed for many years as an insurance stock trader. The devastating Wall Street crash of 1929 had occurred just four weeks before Gertrude's birth, and her father found himself with a beautiful, but hungry, baby girl and no job. Now at this point in time, a man who lost his job didn't automatically seek out some government assistance program to carry him through the rest of his life. Instead, he learned a new



FRONT OF DRESS

profession quickly, or talked his way into a line of work he thought he might succeed at, or even took a big chance on some type of employment he knew nothing about. In other words, whatever it took to put food on the table honestly. Thus did William, his wife Doris and baby Gertrude head out for California to try their hand at farming in the San Joaquin Valley. Despite three years of giving it their best effort, this venture was not successful, being complicated by William's persistent bouts with pneumonia. Doris had become employed as a nurse to help support the family, but it wasn't enough.

After flirting with moving back to New York, and several attempts at steady, successful employment in other states, William caught word of much work becoming available in San Diego. They were the early years of World War II, and there was a boom in all industry feeding the war effort. Aircraft workers were flooding into San Diego, and they all needed somewhere to live. The government had financed a massive construction program in Linda Vista during 1940-41, with over 3,000 new homes constructed in less than a year. William was one of those down here building them. After construction

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NEW AT THE KNOX

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slowed, he found steady, permanent work with Consolidated Aircraft Corp., and then (after the 1943 merger with Vultee Aircraft) with Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corp., later to be known as Convair. He worked on projects ranging from B-24 and B-36 bombers, to Convair jet airliners, and even the Atlas rocket variants.

It was during the fall of 1941 that William decided to move the family to El Cajon, where he purchased a half-acre lot for \$250. He had given notice to his Linda Vista landlord to be out by January 2nd and began building a house on the lot at 1259 E. Washington Place.

Gertrude recalled that her father had no sooner begun when Pearl Harbor was bombed, and building supplies, especially 2 x 4 studs, all but disappeared. William had to resort to very innovative building techniques to have the house completed by the January 2nd deadline, and for many years thereafter the new home, which yet stands today, was known by neighbors as the “horizontal house.” Gertrude still can picture her mother Doris holding the hurricane lantern late at night while William nailed the floorboards in place. During the war, Gertrude also remembers her mother treating our boys at the army camp on Chase Avenue to fresh, home-grown tomatoes.

Despite the terrible global conflicts, life went on for young Gertrude, and she attended the Cajon Valley Elementary School on Ballantyne, then on to Grossmont High School. Gertrude had grown to love the school and teaching environment, and upon graduating she went on to San Diego State College (now San Diego State University) to acquire a degree in education and became a teacher. Between her junior and senior years, she had signed up with a Marine Corps recruiter, and spent six weeks training at MCB Quantico, in Virginia, followed by twelve additional weeks after graduation. After two years in the Marine Corps, Gertrude married, had a baby boy, and was discharged from the Marines, who disallowed serving with family at that time.

Gertrude’s first husband unfortunately deserted her shortly after the marriage, and she remarried in 1962. At this point Gertrude fell back on her teaching credentials, and has been at it ever since. She has taught kindergarten at Chase Avenue School and Cuyamaca Elementary, then moved to teaching first and second graders at Flying Hills School. Some of you may remember her as your instructor under the name of Mrs. Fairbanks (1960-62) or Mrs. Hoffman (1963-92). If so, we would love to have you drop us a line and tell us about it. Gertrude was awarded Teacher of the Year in 1990 at Flying Hills!



The beautiful bride in 1962, wearing the dress her namesake grandmother first wore in 1891!

Today, at the ripe young age of 87 years, Gertrude continues to assist first graders with reading as a tutor with the OASIS program at Lemon Avenue School in La Mesa. Some people just never stop giving of themselves to the community ... Congratulations, Gertrude, and thank you for the wonderful dress!

The closer: Look at what Gertrude wore to St. Alban’s Episcopal Church in El Cajon for her wedding in 1962!

We’d like to hear from you!

Gertrude’s family story is just one of thousands that exemplify the continuation of that resilient pioneer spirit that made El Cajon the great city that it is today. If you have a story that you would like to share with our community of history-lovers, please contact the ECHS archives department and let us know about it.

Website offers guidelines for creating family history

The website momitforward.com now has a Life History Questions printable.

The printable list of questions was created to help family members interview other family members, such as grandparents or parents, to get them started on their personal history. It suggests that you ask these questions using a digital recorder to preserve the answers.

The printable was designed to help uncover information about the person being interviewed. It lists questions that might otherwise be overlooked such as “what was on your bucket list when you were younger?” and “what are your memories about the birth of your first child?”

The Life History Questions printable can be downloaded at <http://momitforward.com/life-history-questionsprintable/>.



Dressed in character, Gary Andrews talked with visitors at ECHS's booth at El Cajon's America on Main Street event held in May. This year's theme was "The Beach Comes East" and our booth featured beach scenes from the early 1900's to contrast what El Cajon and the beach looked like during that same time period.

THE RON PENNOCK COLLECTION

In this 1937 photograph from aside Mt. Helix, the F.J. Hansen residence appears a verdant oasis. The El Cajon valley spreading out below provides stark contrast, seemingly barren and completely denuded of its native vegetation to support agriculture, the region's primary industry. It is difficult to imagine that a mere 80 years ago, one could look out over the entire valley and count the houses at a glance.



VIRGINIA STEAD AWARD

RED DIAMONDBACK, FASCINATING BUT FRIGHTENING

by Kate Valstar, Crest Elementary School

Would you rather be bit by a dog or a cat?
Would you rather be bit by a snake or a rat?
They all must hurt, but for heaven's sake,
I hope it's not a... RATTLESNAKE!

There are three types of rattlesnakes that are native to El Cajon Valley. My favorite is the red diamondback rattlesnake.

The red diamondback is a beautiful snake. It's called a red diamondback because of its diamond-shaped scales, and the scales have a reddish-brown color. There are black and white stripes on the tail right before the rattle neck. The eyes are football-shaped, but the pupils turn to thin slits when it's too bright. The tongue is split or forked, and looks black and has little bit of blue. They are called pit vipers because of the heat-sensing pits between their eyes and nose holes.

I heard a rattle in person once. I always thought it was hollow like a baby rattle. But it's not. It has segments that knock against each other. When the rattlesnake shakes its tail it is a warning not to come any closer. The rattle is made out of keratin just like your nails. My mom thought the rattle sounded more like a wind-up toy. There is no other animal with a rattle except for the rattlesnake. That is how it got its name.

Rattlesnakes' diet is disgusting. They eat rats, rabbits, gophers, birds, lizards and other small animals. They catch their prey by vibrations and their heat-sensing pits. When they catch their prey they paralyze it. Then they swallow it whole. Rattlesnakes' predators are roadrunners, hawks, owls, coyotes, king snakes and people. Roadrunners make the snake strike until it gets too tired and kills the snake with its sharp beak.

What if you get bit by a rattlesnake? If you get bit by a rattlesnake stay calm and don't panic. Keep your bite below your heart; do not run around screaming. Instead stay calm so your heart rate doesn't go up and your blood doesn't move faster. If you think it's a rattlesnake bite then head for the hospital. At the hospital they will watch for swelling and test your blood. If needed, they will give you anti-venom. The California Poison Control says there are over 800 rattlesnake bites a year, around 100 in California. The El Cajon Fire Department told me that so far this year it has not been too bad for rattlesnake removal calls.

Here are some fun facts that are possibly things you never knew. The longest diamondback was 8 feet long. Their speed



Dr. Kari Hull, left, from the Cajon Valley Union School District presents the award to Kate Valstar.

limit is three miles per hour. They are also good swimmers. They can live up to 10 to 25 years. The eggs are inside the mother until they hatch. A group of rattlesnakes is called a "rhumba." If you cut a rattlesnake's head off it could still bite you up to an hour or more. The pits still sense the heat and they can strike. About 25% are dry bites. Do you know how to make anti-venom? I do! First you milk the venom out of the snake. Then you inject a horse with the diluted venom. The horse makes something special in its blood that fights the venom. Parts of the blood are taken from the horse and made into anti-venom.

After all the research I did, now I know rattlesnakes don't want to hurt you, they are just protecting themselves. Rattlesnakes help our environment because they eat rodents and other small animals so there are not too many. If we killed too many rattlesnakes the ecosystem would be messed up. There is more good and beauty in them than most people see. I hope you learned that rattlesnakes are an important part of nature and we need to keep them around.

HERITAGE AWARD

MY FAMILY'S ADVENTURE TO EL CAJON

by Trim Rama, Flying Hills School



Suzanne Mullins, left, from the Cajon Valley Union School District congratulates Trim Rama.

My family's journey started back in 1998. It was a long journey to El Cajon. My family is originally from Kosovo, a small country in Southeastern Europe.

They came to El Cajon in 1999, 2000, and 2004. My grandparents came in 1999, my father came in 2000, and my mother came in 2004. They all came here searching for a better life.

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My grandparents came to El Cajon in the summer of 1999 to have a better life. They left Kosovo because there was a war. They lived in a refugee camp in Macedonia for three months before they came to El Cajon. They had to get to three different places on three different planes to get to El Cajon. They were welcomed and helped by local American people.

My father came to El Cajon in the summer of 2000. He left his home in Kosovo to escape from the war in 1998. He lived in Germany for two years before coming to El Cajon. My father was 20 years old when he came to El Cajon. He had to learn English for the first two years of him living in El Cajon. He found a job at the Wal-Mart store in El Cajon in 2001. My father graduated from San Diego State University and bought his house before he met my mother.

My mother moved to El Cajon in 2004. She is originally from Kosovo, too. She came to Oregon in 1999 for the same reason as my grandparents and father, to escape from the war and find a better, safe, and peaceful place to live. My mother met my father in 2004 in a family wedding in Portland, Oregon. My parents got married in the summer of 2005.

For the end this is a very short essay about my family's journey to El Cajon. From the story above I learned how hard it would be to move to a new place thousands of miles away from your original home.

I also learned that my family will always be thankful to the American people for the help in finding a safe, better, and peaceful place to live.

KUMEYAAY CULTURE AWARD

A KUMEYAAY'S LIFE

by Jacob Holman, Flying Hills School

Hi, my name is Cool Cougar. I'm a Kumeyaay Indian. I want to tell you about my life.

I just turned 9 years old, and now I am able to help my dad hunt. My family lives near the San Diego River. We live



Essay Contest Chair Becky Taylor, left, gives Jacob Holman his trophy and check.

in a small round house called an "E'waa".

My family made the house out of willow branches, reeds and leaves. I sleep on a bed made of bearskin.

Every Monday we go to the river and grab our kayak and go fishing. I am a very good fisherman and can catch lots of fish such as trout. The



Monica Zech, left, representing the City of El Cajon, presented special proclamations to all five winners, including Jacob Holman pictured above.

river is where we got the reeds for our house. The river helps us a lot because we drink it, cook with it, and swim in it!

My mom spends a lot of time gathering food. My mom gathers nuts, berries, seeds, and acorns from the plants by our house. When I wake up in the morning, I help my mom collect acorns. My tribe prefers one type of acorn; that is the black oak acorn. When we get the acorns we find a hole in a rock and grind them. After we grind them, we get a cooking pot called an "Olla" to cook the acorn mush. We put acorns in the "Olla" and start a fire to cook breakfast. The breakfast we make is called "Shawii". It is kind of like oatmeal. It is so good! Everyone in the tribe loves our family!

I also help my family make baskets and pottery to store our food. We dig for clay on the hillside by the river. We make the pots by putting the clay in a bowl and adding water. We let it sit for a couple of weeks. We take it out and form coils that we shape into a pot. Then we put it somewhere warm so it can dry and become a pot.

Now that I am 9 years old, I can hunt with my dad and the other men. It is my favorite thing to do. I got my name, "Cool Cougar," because I catch the most deer. I hunt with a bow and arrow called an "AaTim" and "KoPall". When I am hunting and I can't find a deer I will hunt rabbits and squirrels.

Being a Kumeyaay is fun because I get to spend a lot of time outside with nature. Now you know a little bit more about a Kumeyaay Indian's life!

Winning essays from the Third Grade Essay Contest are posted on the El Cajon Historical Society's website at www.elcajonhistory.org (under Education) and are included in this newsletter as space permits. Since the third-graders conduct their own research, ECHS cannot guarantee that all of the information is historically correct.

OLAF WIEGHORST AWARD

WIEGHORST OF THE WILD WEST

by Gauge Modica, W. D. Hall School

I chose to do my essay on Olaf Wieghorst. He was the first western artist to sell his paintings for a lot of money. My dad is an artist, and when I came home from my field trip to the Olaf Wieghorst Museum my dad knew exactly who he was. I thought that was really cool.

Olaf lived back in the olden days and was born in a different country. He was born on April 30, 1899, in a place called Viborg, Denmark. When he was younger and still lived in Denmark he was a stunt rider in the circus.

When "O" (that was his nickname) was 19 years old he worked as a cabin boy on a steamboat and came to New York City in the USA. "O" was in the military as a US Cavalry man. He also worked as a policeman on horseback. He loved being a mounted policeman in New York and saved many people. "O" taught himself to paint on his time off. He never took any classes for it. He became a very good artist.

"O" got married in 1924 to a girl named Mabel. They had a baby boy together. He had met Mabel years before when he first came to the USA. She taught him to speak English. He didn't know any English when he came to the USA from Denmark.

Olaf's paintings became very well known, and a friend of O's helped him to sell his paintings because the police department did not allow him to have two jobs. In 1944, "O" retired from the New York City Police Department. Olaf, Mae and their son, Roy, moved to the West. Olaf always loved the Wild West. They settled in El Cajon. He



Deputies Shorty (Jim Daniels), left, and Slim (Bob Callen) of the Olaf Wieghorst Museum presented Gauge Modica the Olaf Wieghorst award.

spent most of his time painting the Western culture, which he loved most. He always made every detail perfect. His most famous paintings were the ones done here in El Cajon.

"O" died on April 27, 1988. He was 88 years old. One of his famous sayings was, "When the time comes to put away my palette and unsaddle my pony for the last time, I hope my canvases will in some small measure add to the historical recording of an era, the cowboy and the American West."

I think he did a good job at that!

KERSTEN AWARD

A SHOPPING CENTER

by Lara Gardy, W.D. Hall School

What do you think El Cajon looked like about 100 years ago? Well, El Cajon was very plain and not developed. It also did not have electricity, water, and shopping centers. I



ECCHS's Eldonna Lay, left, hands Lara Gardy her award.

I chose the Castle Rock Ranch because it was the site of one of the first shopping centers in El Cajon.

Mr. & Mrs. Josephus Marion Asher bought about 40,000 acres of land from Mr. R. G. Clark in 1879. The Asher family decided to build their home on this land, and when they built their house, they called it The Castle Rock Ranch because it had big, beautiful granite boulders that were seen from close to their home. It was a pretty big house, which had a two-story structure and a basement underneath, also four fireplaces and a swimming pool for the family and a playground for the kids to play in. The house was very big so it took 4 years to build it. They started building it in 1879 and finished building it in 1883.

Because they had a lot of land, they had a vineyard and orchard. So they could at least use the land and have fruits and vegetables to eat, also to sell them and get money. It took a lot of hard work and it took a lot of time to make The Castle Rock Ranch, but the hardest part was the planning. Inside the orchard it had all kinds of fruits, like peaches, pears, apricots, plums, apples, pomegranates, and persimmons. The vineyard had the best grapes in San Diego. Also in the garden section they had berries, vegetables, and watermelon. They also packed and shipped all their fruits and vegetables. Mr. Asher died in 1912, and in 1914, Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Busch purchased The Castle Rock Ranch.

In May 1968, construction workers built Sears and a shopping center at Johnson Avenue and Fletcher Parkway. The Castle Rock Ranch then became one of the first shopping centers in El Cajon.

From: El Cajon Historical Society
P. O. Box 1973
El Cajon, CA 92022

Welcome New Members

Erin Bass
Lara Gardy
Jacob Holman
Keith & Anna Holmes
Gauge Modica
Jeanie Sheridan
Kate Valstar

To:

July meeting offers delicious brunch

ECHS' next quarterly meeting will be held at 10 a.m. Wednesday, July 27, at Gillespie Field. The meeting will begin with brunch at the Gillespie Field Café, 2015 N. Marshall Ave., El Cajon.

Three delicious brunch options are available:

- Stuffed Tomato with Tuna – Nestled in a bed of mixed greens, onion, olives, shredded cheese, sliced hard boiled egg with your choice of dressing.
- Vegetable Scrambler – Bell peppers, onions tomatoes, mushrooms and spinach in scrambled eggs, lightly sprinkled with shredded cheese and served with special home style potatoes and sourdough toast.
- California Grilled Chicken Sandwich – Grilled chicken breast with bacon, avocado, lettuce and tomato on a sesame seed bun and served with your choice of potato salad, coleslaw or fries.

The cost for the brunch meeting is \$15. Reservations are required and must be received by Monday, July 25.

July 27 Meeting Reservation Form

Number Attending _____ (\$15 each)

Amount Enclosed _____

*Reservations not kept
become a donation*

Name _____

Address _____

City, Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

BRUNCH CHOICE

(if more than one person, indicate number of each)

Stuffed Tomato with Tuna _____

Vegetable Scrambler _____

Chicken Sandwich _____

RESERVATION DEADLINE – MONDAY, JULY 25

Mail reservations and checks to:
ECHS, P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022-1973