



HERITAGE

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www.elcajonhistory.org

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Our Mission Statement:

To gather, preserve, and protect historical records and personal publications about those living in and around the El Cajon Valley. As part of our stewardship we will promote the gathering, display and appreciation of the region's history

President's Message

I am looking forward to serving a term as president of the El Cajon Historical Society. There is a bit of history that reveals it is my turn to do so. Way back in the 60s and 70s (that's a long time ago to me) my father, Albert Van Zanten, served on the El Cajon city council. As a member of the council he was part of the reason the Knox Hotel was purchased and saved by the city. The historical society was created in 1973 and my father served as the second president of the historical society during the years 1974-1977.

Fast forward to the 1980s when my mother, June Van Zanten, served a term as president in 1986. She was very active and I learned, just recently, that it was her idea to have ice cream socials. That was when we celebrated the July meetings in Judson Park with the San Diego City Guard Band performing in the gazebo. I helped serve ice cream.

For 10 years, I served as Membership Chairman. After that as I recall, the newsletter was being typed on a typewriter. I was learning computer skills through my secretarial job so I volunteered to be the editor and did so for 10 years. Then, I took a break.

Two years ago when I retired from my job, literally the following day, I was asked to serve on the board of directors, which I accepted.

This past year I was Vice President and responsible for planning the quarterly meetings. We had some successful meetings in local restaurants and some great speakers: author Leland Fetzer, Seth Mallios, SDSU professor of Anthropology,

Allan Riker of the Commemorative Air Force, and a representative of the Historic Highway 80 corp.

This year I will be docent on the first Saturday of the month at the Knox House Museum, co-lead the new Knox Readers Book Club, open quarterly meetings, preside at monthly board meetings, and a myriad other activities. But, I cannot do it alone. I will be depending on members to keep our local history alive and vibrant.

Please join me in supporting our activities: give gift memberships to family and friends, invite non-members to come to meetings and become members (only \$10 – what a deal!), read and discuss historical fiction with us, listen to special speakers throughout the year, and support fundraising to enable us to preserve and archive photographs, newspapers, and artifacts, sponsor the annual Third Grade Essay Contest, in addition to providing maintenance of our 1876 museum. Keep history alive!

Jonna Waite

Dates to Remember:

January 10 and March 13 – Knox Readers Book Club

January 21 – Quarterly Meeting and Luncheon

February 18 – Victorian Tea

April – Readers read 3rd Grade Essays

June 3 – Third Grade Essay Ceremony

We are continuing to publish some of the Third Grade Essays for your enjoyment and information.

Donald Riley aka "The Toy Maker"
By Sheila Herron, Fuerte Elementary
Honorable Mention

Long ago, the children in El Cajon had little wooden cars and airplanes for toys. Now, we have big remote controlled metal cars and airplanes for toys. This person makes those kinds of toys now. He also makes music boxes. These music boxes take about 1 ½ years to make. This person is...Donald Riley, aka, "The Toy Maker". He was born in 1954 in National City, CA. His favorite color is blue. He does not have any brothers or sisters. He grew up in Chula Vista. He has been living in El Cajon for 28 years. Now in 2009 he is 55 years old. He started making toys in 1990. What interested him in making toys was a toy train, a wooden one, in a small toy store. In 1990 his son was 1 year old. He made a train similar to the one that he made for his son. It was wooden too. That was the first toy that he made. Then, he got hooked on making wooden toys and he started to make and give out little wooden toys.

I know all of these facts because I called Mr. Don Riley and arranged an interview. My friend, my mom and I went to his house. I was so cool. He gave my friend and me toys; a car, a camera and a helicopter. He does not use any metal in these give out toys. He is not only a wood worker and a toy maker; he is a high voltage electrician, scary!

When his son was three in 1993, he entered the designer wood show. He made a music box. It was a carousel that turned 360 degrees, but the animals didn't move. Believe it or not, he is the only person in the country who is making these 50 pound moving music boxes. He has made eight of them and he is working on his ninth box. These boxes go on a rotating display at area libraries and hospitals. Even with hundreds of children pressing the button for the music to start, not one has ever broken down! He has been written about in the newspapers. I hope he goes down in history as one of the greatest toy makers ever!!!

Photo R: Some of the elaborate music boxes made by Mr. Riley. They may be seen at libraries in Rancho San Diego, S. Chula Vista, Civic Center Chula Vista, and El Cajon. Also, Children's Hospital Emergency Ward. Photo used with permission of the artist.

Victorian Tea

You've heard of tea for two? Now, it's Tea for Twelve! Last year we had a very successful and well-received tea party in the Knox House – we invited some folks to acquaint them with our museum.

It was so much fun we would like to have an encore – it will be on a **first come, first served** reservation basis. Ideally, we would like members to invite a non-member to this activity so that we might show off our museum. A visitor's comment: I would like to live here!

Thursday, February 18, 2010

3 – 4:30 p.m. \$15/person

Menu:

Special Teas and Scones

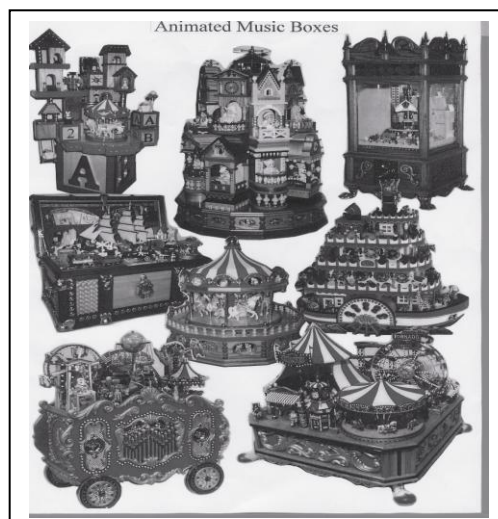
Jam and/or Lemon Curd

Tea Sandwiches & Baked Treats

A sweet something

Call Jonna Waite at 619-440-6250 first for reservations – however, payment must be received in advance to hold your reservation. If needed, we'll create a waiting list for cancellations or have another tea later in the year. No refunds.

Mail checks to ECHS, PO Box 1973, El Cajon CA 92022-1



Before Food Network



Photo Property of El Cajon Historical Society.

Students at Meridian School Cooking Class 1915. Notice, it's co-ed. Love those outfits!

How My Street Was Named

**By Johnny Tucker, W.D. Hall Elementary
Winner of the Fred and Nettie Kersten Award**

Hello, my name is Johnny Tucker. I would like to tell you about the greatest city in San Diego County, El Cajon. In this story, you will come to know an interesting man and how an olive became Evilo.

First of all, let me tell you about the person who told me this story. His name is Mr. Jackson and he is an 83 year old neighbor of mine. Mr. Jackson has lived in El Cajon since 1951. As a matter of fact he is the original owner of his house which is three doors down from mine. He first bought his house in 1957 when the houses were brand new. He paid only nineteen thousand dollars for his house at that time. One day shortly after I first moved in I was riding my bike out in front of our house like I always do and I saw Mr. Jackson planting some flowers in his garden. I stopped to say hi to him as I usually did and he began to tell me a story about how our street Evilo got its name. When he first moved into the neighborhood, the surrounding area was nothing but olive groves. He said that where my house is now was still part of the olive grove when he first moved in and that my house was one of the last houses to

Recipe from Wehman's Cook Book
Wehman Bros, New York, NY 1890

"Tough Beef"

"Carbonate of soda will remedy tough beef. Cut the steaks, the day before using, into slices about two inches thick; rub over them a small quantity of soda; wash off next morning, cut it into suitable thickness, and cook. The same process will answer for fowls, legs of mutton, etc."

be built, and it was the only one with a swimming pool. He told me he has seen so many changes over the years. He went on to tell me so many interesting things about our city and about the neighborhood where we live and about all the people that have come and gone. How our city has grown from a small town farming community to the city we know it as today. At the end of our conversation, I told him that I still didn't understand how the name of our street, Evilo, had anything to do with his story about olive groves. That was when he asked me to look up at our street sign and to spell it backwards. As I did, it all came to me at once. Evilo is olive backwards. I thought to myself, how neat this was. To this day I still tell the story to everyone I meet that comes into the neighborhood.

To conclude, there are so many interesting things to learn about our fine city if you just ask or do a little research. There are great stories to be heard from wonderful people like Mr. Jackson. I never thought that a simple ride on my bike that summer day would turn out to be so interesting and that I would have such a wonderful story to share with others in the years following. I hope you have enjoyed learning about my neighborhood and Mr. Jackson and about how an Olive became Evilo.



KNOX READERS – HISTORICAL BOOK CLUB

Avid readers have had two lively discussion meetings at the Knox House Museum. The biggest challenge will be in deciding what to read next! In November, the Knox Readers gathered to discuss Sweet Thursday by John Steinbeck and other novels that members shared and recommended. The book club will be meeting every other month on 2nd Wednesdays at 2 p.m. in the Knox House Museum. On January 13, the book to be discussed is Ramona by Helen Hunt Jackson.

On March 10, the self-published book to be discussed is Coming of Age in Wartime San Diego by Virginia Welsh.

There is still space for a couple more readers of history. Call the Museum at 444.3800 if you would like to join the book club.



A Big Thank You to:

Carmel Business Systems

for converting our vast Newspaper Collection to digital. We had copies of the Daily California and El Cajon Valley News from 1880 to 1980. The older papers were in danger of deteriorating. These will be available on our website in the future.



These milk bottles along with the wire carrier were found in an old house in El Cajon and donated to the El Cajon Historical Society by [John and Melaine Marone](#). If anyone knows anything about the **Clover Leaf Dairy**, we'd be interested in speaking with you. Please call the Knox Museum at 444-3800.

Can you guess what this is? Find the answer on page 5.
Picture owned by Title Insurance and Trust



Another big Thank You to:

The County of San Diego Community Enhancement Program

for the grant of \$4,524.

This grant will be used to upgrade our computer system for better cataloguing of our photos and documents.

El Cajon Historical Society Board

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COME JOIN US!

MEMBERSHIP:

\$10- INDIVIDUAL

\$15 FAMILY

\$25 ORGANIZATION

\$35 BUSINESS

\$500 LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Your membership is very much appreciated and helps to preserve our Knox House and the artifacts within, pictures, and documents for future generations to enjoy and learn from.

Ans. For picture: El Cajon Fire Alarm

Essay Contest Just Around the Corner

Plans are already underway for the 2010 Third Grade Essay Contest. Our Award Ceremony will be held on Thursday, June 3, 7 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan Community Center. All members are invited to attend and assist – in checking in students, serving refreshments, or serving as essay readers.

Packets are posted on the website for public and private schools: www.elcajonhistory.org
Schools will be notified this month and we really gear up in April when we will need readers to read those very interesting and sometimes comical essays.

Essays are great fun to read; it is amazing what kinds of facts third graders discover! If you would like to be an essay reader, contact Chairperson Alice Rodriguez at alicerod@san.rr.com

A volunteer opportunity...

**Do You Enjoy History and Learning More About It?
Become a Docent!**

It requires only 3 hours a month and we'll train you. This is a great opportunity to learn more about The Knox House and El Cajon History - meet new people and have fun while helping us to extend museum hours.

Help us to keep our museum open longer hours and keep history alive.



Photo owned by ECHS

Main St. El Cajon circa 1890

More Essays:

Bob Berry (Excerpt)

By Hannah White, Vista Grande School
Winner of the "Neatness" Award



Photo used with permission copyright Bob Berry

History is the making right down my street! Artist Bob Berry has been working on Runabout Place in El Cajon for 25 years. I got to interview him and his studio where he lives and does his artwork. Mr. Berry started his art career 45 years ago doing taxidermy. Later on, he carved decoys out of wood for hunters and began enjoying carving and painting wood. In his own words, "I like carving projects out of wood, especially fish, because you don't have to kill the animal." He told me that he likes to pick the size of the project and the color too.

In El Cajon, he is best known for his metal statues. At Hillsdale, Mr. Berry has made a one-of-a-kind statue of a Husky, the school mascot. Another one of his statues is the bust of a Norseman, the mascot of Valhalla High School. You can see his gorilla statues at the San Diego Zoo and the Wild Animal Park. My favorite place to see Bob Berry's creations is the Viejas Outlet Center, where you can see many animals including bighorn sheep, a rattlesnake and a bobcat. Mr. Berry's work has changed over the years by getting bigger and better. His work is better today because it is more lifelike and it scores higher in the shows that he competes in. As Bob Berry's work got better, he was able to win three world fish Carving Championships. He tries to work at least fifty hours a week. During this time, he spends about ten hours researching his work and forty hours in "production time".

While researching, I found out that Mr. Berry made a fish carving for Vice President George H.W. Bush in 1987 (before he became president).

(The editor apologizes for misplacing the last page of Hannah's very informative essay.)

Crest Elementary

By Carson Baker, Vista Grande Elementary
Honorable Mention

I would like to dedicate this paper to my grandfather, Ray Baker. He was the second principal at Crest Elementary in 1957.

During the 1950's, El Cajon Valley started growing faster and faster. There were so many children in El Cajon City that the schools were very crowded. Many students were on double session. Before Crest was built, the children of Crest were bused to Meridian School.

Crest, a mountain top community east of Downtown El Cajon, had enough children to build another school. On May 12th 1954 they started to build a school in Crest. Parents and officials worked together to get the school built. In September 1956, the school opened. The first principal was Rex Dahms. Mr. Dahms also taught sixth grade. Mrs. Miriam Smith was the first school secretary.

In 1957, my grandfather, Ray Baker, became principal. He was the best principal ever. He stayed at Crest for two years until he was asked to open a new school, Rios Canyon School. During his time at Crest, two new classrooms were built because more children moved to Crest and the classes were full.

In 1977 more classrooms were built as well as a library. In 1987 and 2004 the school received the Distinguished School Award of Excellence. This was a great honor.

The biggest addition to the school was a Multipurpose Room built in 1997. Like all schools, the MPR is very important to both the students and the people living in the area. It was used as a relief center in the Cedar Fires, and it is where town meetings are held. The MPR makes the school the center of the community.

I had two uncles that went to Crest. My Uncle David was the first student body president. If they were alive today I'm sure they would have great stories to tell.

Mrs. Sharon Keffer has been a teacher at Crest for over 30 years. Mrs. Keffer helped me collect information about Crest Elementary. She was a student at Madison Elementary when my grandfather was the principal.

As you can see, my grandfather was principal at many schools, but he will never forget his principal job at Crest Elementary.

Watch for more informative essays by the third graders of El Cajon Schools. We know next year's contest will reap some more great stories about El Cajon's past and present.

October Annual Meeting Held at Jamacha Bar & Grill on October 22 2009 with speaker Allan Riker from Air Group One Wing Commemorative Air Force at Gillespie Field



Eugene Vacher – our local centenarian and esteemed musician and band leader



Allan Riker – Speaker at our Annual Meeting

Welcome New Members:

Charles and Charlene Day

Congratulations to Joan Borelli, ECHS 50/50 drawing winner. Joan has graciously donated \$100.00 to the Society from her winnings.

Historical Photos are available for purchase from the museum. Any photo owned by the San Diego Historical Society or Ticor Title must be purchase from the San Diego Historical Society. Those funds go to preserve, catalogue and protect the photos.

Photo copy	\$20.00
Scan Fee	\$25.00
Research	\$38.00 per hour

Be sure to attend:

Quarterly Meeting: *Mangia Bene Restaurant,*
221 E. Main Street (next to Prescott Park), El Cajon, CA
11:30 check in – people with reservations will be seated first
Thursday, January 21, 2010
\$15 a person

Please see the enclosed flyer. Be sure and mail your reservations before Friday, January 15, 2010 to guarantee a seat at this most interesting meeting. We hope to see you there!

Membership due dates are on your address label.
We appreciate your membership support, helping to preserve our El Cajon History.
Kindly mail your payment to ECHS, P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022

Knox House Museum
280 N. Magnolia
P.O. Box 1973
El Cajon, CA 92022

Museum Hours:
Currently Open
1st Sat. 12:30 – 3:15
3rd Sat. 11am – 1:15pm

El Cajon Historical Society
P.O. Box 1973
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