

LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S

# LOOKOUT AVE.

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MAY 1981

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I write this Spring message to you, the Space Shuttle has made its first successful launch and safe return from outer space. We use those words so casually, as if they were always in our vocabulary. But I remember my first acquaintance with "space" as a sketch in the encyclopedia showing a train traveling to the moon and stating that it would take 120 years at a speed of 200 miles per hour. The Wright Brothers made their first successful flight of 59 seconds in 1903, but it remained their secret until 1905; and their first long-range flight of two hours and 20 minutes was made in Le Mans, France. That same year the McKinney's built their home in La Mesa. It is also Eastertime and I have it on good authority that Mrs. McKinney served Roast Chicken, with all the fixings from her garden including her special Berry Pie. And Rev. McKinney, the gregarious and popular Pastor Emeritus of the Methodist Church, was always asked to participate in the Easter Morn services.

My term of office is in the final months. I hope you will try to attend our Annual Meeting and Chef's Choice dinner on May 17th so that I may thank you in person for your support and cooperation. Sincerely,

"Woody"

## ANNUAL ELECTION MAY 17, 1981

The LMHS Annual Election and Business Meeting will be at the La Mesa Adult Center, 8450 La Mesa Blvd., at 3:30 p.m. It is very important that members try to attend the annual election of officers. The nominating committee was Nadine Washburn, Donna Regan, Thelma Todd, Earlene Lourenco and Richard, Chairman, who will present the following slate:

President	Teague	Dorothy Griner
1st Vice-President		Eric Sanders
2nd Vice-President		Pat Kettler
3rd Vice-President		Helen Odom
Secretary		Brice Lockwood
Treasurer		Clifford H. Asay, Jr.
Director		Jean Guy
Director		Donna Regan

Other nominations may be made from the floor providing the nominee has given consent.

Directors currently serving whose terms will continue until June 30, 1982, are Vivian Higgins, James Polak and Karna A. Webster.

Certificates will be awarded members who have performed special services throughout the year.

The meeting will be followed by "A La Mesa History", a slide program prepared by LMHS Historic Sites Committee and presented by Pat Kettler.

## HISTORICAL SLIDE PROGRAM

This slide presentation was originally compiled by Barry Worthington, Donna Regan and Pat with a lot of photographic help from Lee Griner and John Rojas. The program was first presented to the La Mesa City Council along with the Society's Historic Sites Committee

presentation of an element and an Ordinance for La Mesa which they had prepared. Since December of 1980 the slide program has, with some changes, been enthusiastically received at La Mesa Junior High, at a La Mesa Methodist Church Women's program, and to the La Mesa Soroptomist Club. This 30-minute program will take you from the time of the Indians to the present. Questions and, hopefully, answers will follow.

Recently acquired photographs of La Mesa, mostly the 1920's, will be on display. "See you there!", says Pat Kettler, Program Chairman.

#### CHEF'S CHOICE DINNER

After the slide program members will enjoy a Chef's Choice Dinner. The chef in each family is asked to bring a salad, a casserole or a dessert of his or her choice. Judging from past May dinners, this method of CHEF'S CHOICE turns out well. Don't miss the opportunity to visit with friends and taste their favorites! A gourmet dinner is promised.

#### MEMBERSHIP

The response was good from the recent membership drive. YOU are needed to make 500. Regular dues notices will go out soon to all members. If YOU haven't renewed this spring, please respond promptly in order to be included in the new La Mesa Historical Society Directory. Vicki Willis, Membership Chairman. 460-0748.



#### CABOOSES THEN AND NOW

Once more La Mesa has its charming small railroad station sitting beside the tracks. Along side it, rests a caboose. Both bring back special memories to one pioneer.

The Maxwell family arrived in La Mesa in June 1906 from San Diego, riding a caboose. Marie Maxwell McKinney of Palm Avenue remembers that trip and their arrival at the little La Mesa depot. At that time cabooses had no cupola but was similar to a freight car with a divider that separated the freight compartment from the passenger section. Seats facing each other beside the windows, provided seating for about twelve people. Morning and evening trains provided seating for more riders, but mid-day passengers rode in the caboose.

Local high school students attended San Diego High School and rode the train back and forth. When they got out of early classes and came out on the noon train, they, too, rode the caboose.

Today Mrs. McKinney lives a few blocks from the station and from her first home at Palm and Lemon Avenues. Trains pass through on the same tracks and although their whistles are different from early days, they touch a nostalgic note.

Now we may find ourselves riding trains to San Diego again as changes in economy and life styles call for reviving passenger trains in East County. However, it is doubtful that many will have the experience of ever riding in a caboose.

Mildred Bryan, Oral History Chairman

#### WORLD WAR I AND JULY 4TH DISPLAY PLANNED FOR ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL

The LMHS will be presenting a display of photographs, mementos and costumes at our 1981 Ice Cream Social on Sunday, June 14 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

This year's display themes will be "World War I" and "July 4th in Early La Mesa." The display will be in the dining room and upstairs in the north bedroom. The Society has several photographs of La Mesa's earlier July 4th celebrations, but is always looking for different photographs to display. Also, July 4th mementos such as flags, programs, etc. would be appreciated to put on display. If you have anything that you would be willing to lend the Society, please let me know.

We are also looking for World War I mementos to display June 14, particularly of La Mesa men in service at that time. We would appreciate the loan of small articles such as medals, buttons, canteen, mess kit, American helmet, photograph of the La Mesan in uniform, a post card or letter from him, newspaper article regarding him or the war, or popular sheet music of the period. There are,



I'm sure, other things that I can't think of that would be appropriate for the display. Perhaps American Red Cross mementos related to our area at the time or mementos related to home-front events or activities in La Mesa. We would like to display a uniform, of one is available, and a small, 48-star American Flag.

The display space isn't large, so items to be shown should be rather on the small side and there isn't a proper place to display guns so we can't ask to show them. We plan to have all items secure behind a roped-off area and smaller articles will be in a glass case. Docents will also be on duty all day to explain display items to visitors.

#### THE QUILTERS

The Quilters have finished the beautiful Dresden Plate quilt. Many people have worked on this project--Bea Acers, Jane Field, Barbara Copeland, and others. But it is the Faithful Four--Julie Bras, Chairman and Designer of the quilt, Margaret Pearson, Mildred Bryan and Nadine Washburn--who have given many, many hours on many, many Wednesdays and have put in countless tiny stitches.

The quilt has become almost a fixture in my home. I shall miss it, but most of all, I shall miss the quilters. It would be impossible to find a nicer, more friendly group of women.

There have been travelogues, jokes, reminiscences or an exchange of recipes at the coffee break, but no gossip. We all hope that the lucky person who wins the quilt will appreciate it. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Thelma Todd.

#### "ICE CREAM SOCIAL"

Our 6th Annual "Ice Cream Social" is going to be held on Flag Day, Sunday, June 14th, from 11:00 to 4:00 p.m. We hope to make it "Bigger and Better" this year, but we need all your help to do so.

Tickets are now on sale for the Drawing of beautiful gifts. If you would like to sell tickets now for the drawing, please call me at 466-7385.

We also need donations for the Bake Sale, Plant Booth, White Elephant Table, Country Kitchen, such as homemade Jams, Jellies or fresh garden vegetables, etc.

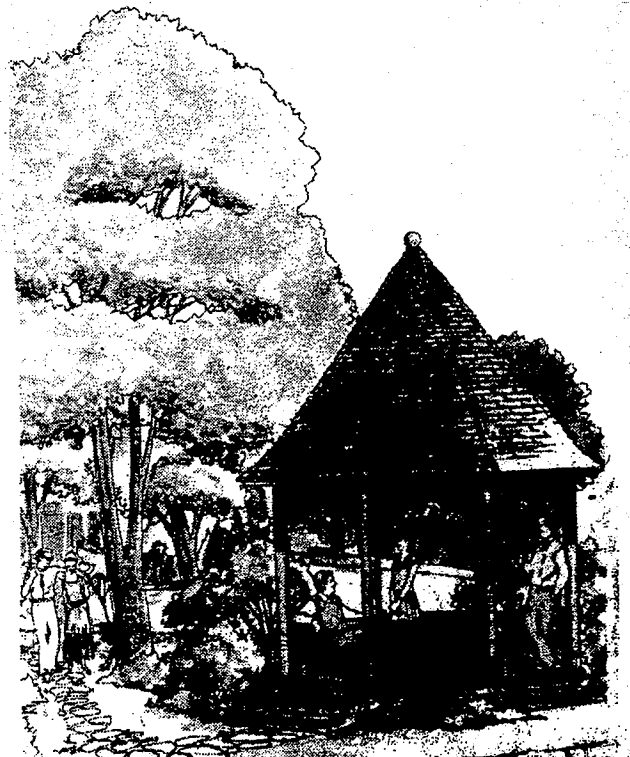
We will have entertainment periodically throughout the day, plus a delicious Bar-b-que Chicken Dinner and as in the past, "31 Flavors" ice cream.

Please plan to attend as I know you will thoroughly enjoy it. Any questions, call:

Jean Guy - 466-7385  
Fund-Raising Chairman

#### EASTER SUNRISE

Picture Prospect Park, La Mesa's first one, as it must have been in 1916. There it was--lovely trees, a view to the west with sea and sky, a few scattered benches, a small pavillion. Next, put some people into the picture. Not the ones who live there now, in close-together houses which block out the view, but a troop of Sunday School youngsters in white robes who, along with their folks, have straggled up Mt. Nebo well before dawn on Easter Sunday. They have been singing hymns as they arrive and they settle together on what probably was wet grass, to sing again and then listen to the prayers and an Easter sermon. In 1916, according to The Scout, Howard F. Worth directed the singing and Ruth Rider accompanied on what Thelma Todd remembers as the family piano, on loan for the day. Easter Sunrise Services had begun.. and the sun came up behind the worshippers, lighting much more than the day, and living still in memory.



By that 1916 day, little Prospect Park was jammed with at least 1,000 people who had climbed Mt. Nebo to participate in the rites, so the site was changed in following years to roomy Mt. Helix. No cross. No amphitheater. Just trees and rocks and the high sky. People brought blankets, sometimes spending the night there to have a good spot to see the sun rise and to share in the beauty of the chill morning light. Early on, they climbed the mountain as best they could. Hester Cole of La Mesa, remembers a trek up the hill with her elderly mother, for example. No matter the cold. The service was all. Then somebody thought of a bus...or two or ten...and people could ride up to a certain point and then walk the last distance uphill.

Let's look at the tradition through the eyes and heart of Merle Donahue, longtime creator and director of Grossmont High School's Red Robe Choir. Every Easter for 18 years she and the Red Robers sang at that dawn service. They met at Grossmont High at 3:00 a.m. By 4:00 a.m. all were robed and warming-up their voices if not the temperature outside the choir room. (Everybody knew if the rains came; the girls' hairdos would fall dismally dripping....) At 5:00 a.m., the buses departed with all the lovely sopranos and altos, the baritones and tenors and basses. Grossmont's organ had already been trucked to the mountain top and by that time in history, the Rotary Club had assumed sponsorship of the Service. In 1947, for instance, Lewis F. Smith was chairman of the occasion, and also shuttle-bus operator, as he picked up stragglers puffing from the bus terminus to the Service area.

One of Merle Donahue's tenors, Walter Ekard, shares a memory of one of those Easter dawns. When he arrived atop Mt. Helix, all was dark as pitch and cold. Rain fell on those waiting as they huddled under umbrellas and blankets and newspapers. You may also remember how Walter sings The Holy City. Well, fog hung low as he began to sing, but by the time he had reached "...the new Jerusalem...", the drizzle had stopped...the fog lifted... the sun burst through a million raindrops on trees and blossoms...and Easter Day had dawned in true splendor.

Although the earlier services in Prospect Park were arranged by ladies of the Methodist, Congregational, and Baptist churches, then in the new and growing La Mesa, other churches, over the years joined in the project. Service clubs and other community organizations have also supported the annual trek up the mountain, and pastors have taken turns in delivering the awaited sermon. As high school choirs were added to the growing population, each year has seen and heard new lovely voices raised with joy into sunny or cloudy skies.

And so, again this year, thousands have climbed Mt. Helix to wait for Planet Earth to spin far enough around to let the Easter sun shine in. Eckoe Ahern.

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