

ARTI-FACTS

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Preserving the History of Idyllwild and the surrounding communities in the San Jacinto Mountains

Summer 2009

A TALE OF TWO FAMILIES

By Ben Killingsworth

Keeping in mind that there were only about 450 full time residents living here at the end of WWII, Idyllwild has always been a very small place, but to those who have lived here at one time or another, that's never been a problem; quite the contrary, because, along with the trees and the beauty, it's exactly why we choose to live here. And most of us hope it will never change.

One of the more fascinating things about such a small place is the number of people who have called it home for decades. They might have left for a short period, but somehow found a way to come back, and not necessarily for retirement, either. These are the people who have made our little slice of paradise what it is and what we love about it - the people, as well as the beautiful forest and mountains. And truth be known, most of us never had so many good friends.

They may not have done anything you could point to as changing the course of history, but they set the tone, like; we have no McDonalds or Kentucky Colonels, no 7-11's, no Motel 6's, no Supercuts, no ski slopes—not even a Walmart. Have you been to Big Bear lately?

In order to better bring the story of Idyllwild to life in terms of its people we're going to follow the real life story of two families, both with names you will probably recognize. They are certainly not the only two families who fit the mold, but do serve as an example of what others like them have contributed to the Idyllwild we are privileged to call home today. Although, as you will see at the end of this story, they are somewhat unique in a warm and fuzzy way. Continued on page 2, in side-by-side columns, one for each family

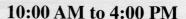
IAHS 9th ANNUAL HOME TOUR IS ALMOST HERE **SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 12th**



We think this year's event will be one of the best ever. Each of the five homes on display is a unique example of the wide variety of both summer cabins and full time homes found right here in paradise - some old, some not so old.



so it might be a good idea to buy your tickets early. You can do that by dropping by Faux Ever After or The Spruce Moose during business hours, or the Historical Society Museum on any weekend between 11:00 AM and 4:00 We are expecting a record crowd, PM. You can also get your ticket by





calling Nanci Killingsworth, co-chair of the event at (951) 990 3909.

If you intend to buy your official admission booklet on the day of the tour you must do so at the ticket booth located next to the Idyllwild Inn between 9:30 AM and 2:00 PM.

ANOTHER ANNUAL MEETING ROLLS AROUND

Food and entertainment, that's what it takes to lure a bunch of Historical Society members to leave home long enough to attend an annual meeting. Maybe the promise of enjoying good company had something to do with it, too. That and looking forward of an interesting talk by a foremost expert on the Hemet Dam, Dr. Mary Whitney.

But before that got started, our brand new IAHS president, Carolyn Levinski, took charge for a few minutes, primar-

ily to present the new slate of officers and to ask for a vote to by those in attendance. The slate was: president—Carolyn Levinski, vice president - Joe Hart, and two new directors- Nancy Borchers and Linda Turner. The slate was approved unanimously. The new directors are replacing Nancy Fletcher, who moved off the Hill, and Sue Miller, who is on medical leave.

Carolyn thanked several members in attendance for their outstanding contributions and support during the past year, and the Garden Club, for the work they did to spruce up our front yard. Carolyn gave special thanks to John Drake and Rebecca Frazier for their tireless efforts to upgrade many of our photos and for the tremendous amount of work they do, helping with the many tasks undertaken to promote and deliver our Home Tour.

After Bob Smith introduced Dr. Mary, she told us everything we ever wanted to know about the Hemet Lake Dam, including



Everyone gets comfortable as the show is about to begin

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Featured speaker, Dr. Mary Whitney, explains the reason the Hemet Dam was built.

the Hemet Lake Dam, including facts about the builders, the actual construction, and the purpose of forming the lake by building the dam. Among many other things, she also told us that the dam was built in 1895 and took four years to complete. Just getting the right type of cement to use in the dam is a story in itself. The closest source was in Belgium, which meant that it had to be shipped by sailing vessel across the Atlantic to the southern tip of South America, around the Horn into the Pacific and then up to San Francisco, where it was put on a train and taken to the foot of the San Jacintos. From there it was all horse and wagon. As luck would have it, the lake went completely dry just after the dam was completed. Every effort was made to keep this a secret, but the news got out anyway.

In the very early days a water wheel was installed where the dam emptied into a creek, which was used to generate electricity for Hemet residents and businesses, Dr. Mary said.

She also said the Hemet Lake campground didn't open until 1933, but that campers could not swim in the lake even though the water was only for agricultural use.

Continued from page 1

ADVENTURES OF THE OATES FAMILY

William Oates was the first on the scene. He loved driving up here from Glendale in his spiffy new Model T Ford, bouncing along over the steep dirt roads, stopping now and then to let the radiator cool down, and maybe changing a tire or two on occasion, but none of that stopped him from building a cabin here in 1926.

He had a son named Robert who made his first trip to Idyllwild in 1927 and, along with his brother, Walt, attended Idyllwild School off and on. At that time the school consisted of just one room.

In 1941 Robert and several of his pals, out on the town at the Idyllwild Inn, happened to seat themselves at a table served by Janice Hanson, one of a group of high school girls from Elsinore who spent their summers living in a

Continued on page 3 See Oates

Continued from page 1

ADVENTURES OF THE KRETSINGER FAMILY

George's parents, Charlie and Evelyn Kretsinger were married in Kansas City Missouri in 1933. Just three years later they packed up and moved to Idyllwild where, in 1936, Charlie built the first of two homes on South Circle Drive. At the same time, Charlie started his own plumbing business, a trade he had learned as a 14 year old in Kansas City.

About nine years later Evelyn gave birth to a son, whom they named George.

Little George was about 2 months old when he first settled down in Idyllwild. His first three years were largely uneventful, but not long after his fourth birthday the Idyllwild School was in the process of starting the kindergarten class for that year, but because of the

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OATES Continued from page 2

group home and working at the Inn. On his second attempt to get a date with her she agreed, and they were married the following year.

In 1944 Robert joined the US Navy and was assigned to an amphibious unit which took part in several assault landings on Japanese held Islands in the South Pacific. He was discharged in 1946 and not long after began a career as a singer and actor in western films.

In 1950, the year the Korean War started, Jan Oates gave birth to the second of three sons, in Glendale, California. They named him Robin. Then, nine years later, when Robin was just starting the 5th grade, the family moved to Idyllwild from Glendale, fulfilling a dream made possible by Robin's dad, Robert, realizing he could continue his business as a conservation consultant while



Jan Oates and the boys, Tim, Ron and Robin, circa 1958

living in Idyllwild, just as well as he could living in Glendale.

Lucky for him, Robin's family had no sooner moved back to Idyllwild than Elvis Presley showed up to make a movie called *The Gallahad Kid.* As it turned out, the movie script called for all kinds of

extras, especially kids, which meant that dozens of them, including Robin, could brag for the rest of their lives that they were indeed actors in a movie starring Elvis.

After graduating from Idyllwild School, which at that time looked about like it does today, Robin went on to Hemet High School, which meant, of course, taking the bus to and from Hemet every day.

Soon after graduation Robin was drafted into the US Army where he served for two years, spending most of that time in Germany.

Sarah Fisher was born in 1953 to O.J. and Emily Fisher in San Diego. The family moved to Idyllwild in 1964 when Sarah was eleven years old. It was quite a shock to the family when they found themselves wading through three feet of snow on the ground after just leaving their former home near the beach.

Sarah enrolled in Idyllwild School as a sixth grader, then, as most Idyllwild kids must, rode the school bus down the Hill every morning to Hemet High, then back up in the afternoon to the bus stop in front of what was then the Alpine Market and Alpine Bakery (now the Creekstone Inn). It just happened that Robin's parents owned the building and his mother, Jan, ran the bakery. Imagine the kids, after the long ride up the Hill, getting off the bus within easy smelling distance of fresh bakery goods.

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KRETSINGER Continued from page 2

shortage of five year olds, they couldn't justify hiring a kindergarten teacher unless they could find a few more students. But they had a solution. Maybe George was one year too young to be officially eligible for kindergarten, but up here in the mountains, rules were made to be bent a little, and so little George began his education one year early.

But that didn't last long because a short time afterward the family packed up and went back to Nebraska where George's father worked in a plant manufacturing war materials during the Korean War. Ten years later, when George was 14 years old, the family returned to Idyllwild and the plumbing business.

Soon after arriving, George began attending Hemet High School and graduated in 1963. During his high school days George had a great time, as did most teenagers in Idyllwild. To begin with, he had a part time job as a short order cook at the Idyllhoff Restaurant, which was part of a recreation complex called "Sportland." Located in the center of town, it included a five lane bowling alley, a swimming pool, a skating rink, a trampoline, an outdoor snack bar, outdoor jukebox, four pool tables, and some pinball machines. That gave George a chance to make some extra money by working as a bowling alley pin setter, which paid 25 cents a line. It also meant he could use all of the facilities without having to pay. No wonder he had a swell time.

Along with George's 1963 high school graduation came the Senior Prom and George asked a young lady and fellow senior, Jackie Bassett, to be his date. Jackie said yes and during that same year said yes again, this time to a proposal of marriage.

And so it was that in 1963, the same year they graduated from high school, George and Jackie were married.

Jackie was born in San Diego where her dad, Hugh, had his own refrigerator repair business. When Jackie was



New daddy George and little Brian, 1965

a child, her father and mother, MaryAnn, moved to Hemet, where Jackie attended school. One year after the wedding and setting up housekeeping in Idyllwild, Brian was born, and two years after that Jackie gave birth to their daughter, Becky,

who is now a school teacher in Temecula.

George soon joined his father, Charlie, and brother, Chuck, in their Idyllwild plumbing business, which is still *Continued on page 4* See Kretsinger

BEHIND THE SCENES AND RECENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

By Adele Smith

Memories from childhood, be it the location of a summer camp attended, the identity of a favorite swimming pool, or the whereabouts of an old family cabin, regularly spark an inquiry to IAHS.

Sometimes it's from an interested buyer, wondering about the background of an appealing property. Or it may be from a professional historian or archaeologist doing research. Our archive is rich enough to let us answer questions small and large. Of the 16 inquiries fielded so far this year, these were especially significant:

- Gurk Ilbay, an Idyllwild Arts student from Turkey, came to IAHS for information on the history of movie-making in Idyllwild for a documentary film he produced, "Hollywood and Pine." We consulted with him over a period of 18 months, made archive material available for filming, and hosted on-camera interviews in the museum.
- IAHS member and Mt. San Jacinto State Park
 naturalist Sharen Metz was looking for photos of
 the Civilian Conservation Corps projects in the
 Great Depression, to use in celebrating the 75th
 anniversary of the CCC this past June. Sharen and
 Bob Smith searched both the state park and IAHS
 archives, finding numerous photos to enrich each
 other's collections. Adele Smith discovered on
 eBay several local CCC photos for the celebration. In return MSJSP granted IAHS a booksigning booth.
 - Tanya Rathbun Sorrell and Bill Bell of LSA Associates, contractors to Riverside County for evaluation of the potential for establishing an Idyllwild Historic District, approached IAHS for old maps, photos, and other information about early commercial structures. We opened our archive to them and provided consultation during the project.

IDYLLWILD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President: Carolyn

Levitski

Vice Pres: Joe Hart Secretary: Adele Voell Treasurer: Bob Smith Assist Curator: Shirl Reid Office Volunteer: Susi Questad

Media Consultants: John Drake & Rebecca Frazier

Directors

Corrinne Brown Nancy Borchers Linda Turner George Groty Joe Hart

Nanci Killingsworth

Special Advisors

Harry Bubb Craig Coopersmith Kent Steele Kay Ceniceros Walter Parks Lynn Voorheis

KRETSINGER (Continued from page 3)



George's father, Charlie, and his mother Evelyn. Charlie first came to Idyllwild in 1936

serving Idyllwild to this day. In 1963, the same year George graduated from high school and got married, he also joined the Idyllwild Fire Department as a Paid Call Firefighter, and he continued in that capacity until 1998 – a total of 34 years!

Seven years later, in 1970, George ran for a seat on the board of directors of the Idyllwild Water Company,

and, at 24, became the youngest board member to be elected to that position. He served until 1984, took a short break, then resumed as a board member between 1988 and 1990. In that same year, 1970, George also joined the local Lions Club and served as a member of that organization for 30 years.

And one more thing: George was a member of the IFPD Fire Commission from 2000 to 2006.

Meanwhile, Jackie, in addition to being a mom, be-

came a real estate agent in 1977 and started working for Grace Curnow Realty. Then, in 1988, she started her own

real estate company, Village Properties. But that didn't stop Jackie from becoming active in the PTA and helping with her kids softball teams. George's brother Chuck retired from the family business about eight years ago and George retired



The Kretsinger family, George, Jackie, Becky and Brian, circa 1979.

two years ago, turning, the company over to son, Brian, who is now the third generation owner of the Kretsinger Plumbing company. Brian lives in Idyllwild with his wife, Stacy, and their ten month old son, Griffin.

Continued on page 7 See One Big Happy Family

BOOK SALES GOING WELL

Sales of Bob Smith's masterpiece, *Idyllwild* and the High San Jacintos, are going very well. Starting with the Book Signing Program at the Rustic Theatre on May 1, featuring the silent film,

HOW TO ORDER BOOKS

If you are unable to make your purchase at the Museum, you are invited to cut out this form and use it to order one or more copies of *Idyllwild and the High San Jacintos* by mailing it to the address below.

First book: \$26.95, which includes tax and shipping. Additional books: \$24.75 each.

Please send me ____ books.

Enclosed is my check or money order for \$____ Name:

Mailing address: __ City/State:

Zip_

E-mail address (optional)

Please mail your check, payable to IAHS, along with this form to IAHS P. O . Box 3320, Idyllwild CA 92549.

To see our ONLINE INDEX for this book, go to the publications page on our website, Idyllwildareahistoricalsociety.org, and click on the blue link.

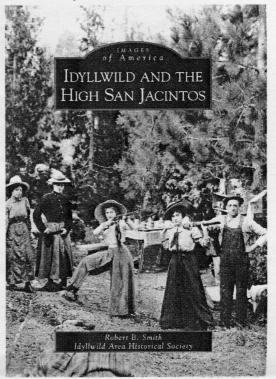
If you have questions, please call (951) 659-8725

Blind Husbands, which was filmed in Idyllwild, a slide program on the big screen by Bob Smith, giving an overview of his book, and another slide program by John Drake and Rebecca Frazier covering our Avery Field collection of 1920's photos of Idyllwild and its surroundings.

During the event we sold over 93 autographed copies and since then have sold another 274 copies, bring the total to 367 out of the first order of 400 books.

We're now in the process of ordering another 200 books, which will require a second printing.

If you decide to buy more books, please keep in mind that our profit margin



is much greater when sold at the museum or when ordered from the Historical Society. Also, the book will be autographed by the author.

OATES (Continued from page 3

Sarah said that growing up in Idyllwild was like living in Mayberry, the small town featured in the Andy Griffith show. Everybody knew everybody, and the Sheriff's deputy, Hollis C. Hollis, a wonderful man, was a pretty close match to Barney Fife.

She said one of the most exciting things the kids did in the winter was to ride their sleds from Humber Park all the way down Fern Valley Road to South Circle Drive – right in the middle of the road, at night! Another favorite nighttime activity was throwing pinecones at bats. She and her girlfriends also spent a lot of time riding horses bareback in bare feet. She didn't mention Opie, but he was probably around somewhere.

Although Sarah and Robin had known each other for some time it wasn't until 1971, after Sarah's graduation from High School and Robin's completion of his stint in the Army, that they began to notice each other with more than causal interest.

Robin had began working as a waiter at the Chart House Restaurant at about the same time and continued working there until 1977, when he went to work for Sarah's dad, O.J. Fisher, as a real estate agent. Landing that job was relatively easy since he and Sarah had run

off to Las Vegas to get married in 1974.

Daughter Stacy was born in 1975, then Ethan in 1978. Ethan now lives in Santa Cruz where he works for a company that makes video games.

Robin continued selling real estate and in 1998 established his own company, Robin Oates Reality.

"Sarah Fisher, do you take Robin Oates to be your lawfully wedded husband?..... I do."

After Stacy and Ethan grew up and moved out, Sarah needed something to do, so she took up the art of creating stained glass and today is a well known artist in that field.

Today, Stacy works for her dad selling real estate, and lives in Idyllwild with her husband, Brian Kretsinger, and their 10 month old son, Griffin.

Continued on page 7 See One Big Happy Family

THE COMPANY WE KEEP

NEW MEMBERS		Earlie May Brosterhous	Hemet
Contributor		Charlene Chindlund	Idyllwild
Monica Smith & Curt Fukuda	Mountain View	Wayne Donaldson	Sacramento Idyllwild
Family		Dolores Ellison	
John & Susie Cook	Idyllwild	Janet & Richard Goldberg	Idyllwild Riverside
Donald & Louise Giger	Idyllwild	David & Kim Leonard	
Bob and Peggy Ferguson	Claremont	Dan Osgood & Robin Levitski	San Diego
Donald Sherman	Idyllwild	Joyce Miller	Santa Ana
Donald Sherman	Tayirwina	Leona McGaugh	Mountain Center
<u>Individual</u>		Sue Miller	Hemet
Alexandra Clark	Osterville, MA	Harry Quinn	Mountain Center
Sherry Martinez	Idyllwild	David Raposa	Los Angeles
Betsy Mellor	Corona	Family	
Andrea Smith	Goleta	Karl & Joy Allgeier	Idyllwild
Joanne Tenney	La Palma	Charlotte Anthony &	Tay ii wii ta
John Thomford	San Diego	William Sperling	Idyllwild
Gary Wall	San Diego	Kathy & Ron Beaufort	Laguna Niguel
Elaine Weiler	Idyllwild	Heath & Penny Bottomly	Idyllwild
Robert Wellington	Orange	Irene & Lew Brahm	El Cajon
Mike Wimbrow	Trabuco Canyon	Mary & Sandy Chase	Los Angeles
			Idyllwild
Business/Organization		David & Mary Carroll	Idyllwild
LCA Associates		Annette & Bill Cooper	Idyllwild
(Tanya Sorrell)	Riverside	Lorel Cornman & Will Johnson	San Diego
RENEWING MEMBERS		Hodge Crabtree & Katie Boskoff	Laguna Hills
		Jim & Dawn Deshefy	
Founders Circle Charlette & Coorge Greaty	Moreno Valley	Brent & Jean Dunn	Long Beach
Charlotte & George Groty	Idyllwild	Cal Gogerty & Jean Waggoner	Idyllwild
Shirl Reid	luyiiwiiu	Ellis & Shirley Greenwall	Rancho Mirage
Sponsor		Carolyn & George Hall	Idyllwild
Bill & Pat Altman	West Covina	Richard & Susie Hampson	Idyllwild
Doug Austin	Idyllwild	Dick & Sherry Hibbard	Prescott, AZ
Carolyn & Jack Batzler	Del Mar	Paula & Steve Hibbard	Phoenix, AZ
Byron & Robyn Beck	Santa Barbara	Elisabeth & Jan Jaspers-Fayer	Idyllwild
Barbara Burgess	Idyllwild	Stella & Wes Johnson	Montecito
Dore Capitani	Idyllwild	Lee & Robert Marshall	Idyllwild
Pete & Suzy Capparelli	Idyllwild	Catherine & Richard Miller	Palm Desert
Helen Drummond	Santa Rosa	Dawn & Thomas Miller	Idyllwild
Penelope Anne Frey	Idyllwild	Robin & Sarah Oates	Idyllwild
Ed Hansen & Joy Woodman	Idyllwild	Diane Olsen	Idyllwild
Bobbie & Gary Glasheen	Idyllwild	Bob & Pat Parish	Idyllwild
Karen & Thomas Higgins	Idyllwild	Susi Questad	Idyllwild
Ben & Nanci Killingsworth	Idyllwild	Brad & Karen Radis	Torrance
Bill & Carolyn Lowman	Idyllwild	Barbara & Terry Richmond	Idyllwild
Allen & Lenore Miller	Idyllwild	Melinda & Ron St. Pierre	Idyllwild
Betty & Walt Parks	Riverside	Lynn Underwood	La Mesa
Linda & Manny Rider	Palm Desert	Kay Wanner & Charles Wix	Idyllwild
Roy & Wendy Stephens	Anaheim Hills	Individual	
Harold & Lynn Voorheis	Idyllwild	Don Anderson	Berkeley
Anne & Doug Walker	Palm Desert	Antje Banks	Idyllwild
	- um 2 00011	Bob Blankman	Idyllwild
Contributor		Nancy Borchers	Idyllwild
Mary Arnaiz	Idyllwild	할 것이 없는 사람들이 살아보고 있다면 하는 것이 없는 것이 없다면 없다면 없다면 없다면 사람들이 없다면	Reston, VA
Ann & Bill Bashford	Idyllwild	Charles Carey Jim Carlson	Idyllwild
Suzanne Bowman	Idyllwild	Dan & Sharla Carpenter	Idyllwild
Barney & Jorgine Brause	Idyllwild	Continued on no	
		Commuea on ne	in page

Continued from last page

Individual (Continued)

Charlotte Cowan Idyllwild Connie Cowan Indio **Bob Cox** Idyllwild Dan Dukesherer Los Angeles Harriet Glass Hemet Susan Gonzalez Mountain Center Fred Guenther Vista Leslie Jacobson Bellingham, WA Johnnie Johnson Idyllwild Bronwyn Jones Idvllwild Gary Lunn Mountain Center Mary Ann Miller Idyllwild Linda Otterbeck Palm Springs Alma McGaugh Peters Mountain Center John Robinson Fullerton Joyce McGaugh Silberstein Anaheim Geraldine Sperling Idyllwild Carlisle Volk Phoenix, AZ

Individual (Continued)

Jim Walters & Jeanette JonesPalm DesertCelesta WassellKingman, AZPatrick WassellKingman, AZNicola WattsCovina

Idvllwild

Idyllwild

Business/Organization

Idyllwild Garden Club Idyllwild Realty

Business/Organization (Continued)

Red Kettle, Inc. Idyllwild Wilder Cabins Idyllwild

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Idyllwild
Idyllwild,
San Diego
Idyllwild
Mendocino
Lakewood
Otter Rock, OR
Idyllwild
Idyllwild
Cardiff-by-the-Sea

Columbia Falls, MT

Prescott, AZ

One Big Happy Family

(Continued from pages 4 and 5)

Finally, we come to the end of the story. Readers who were paying attention, especially at the end of pages 4 and 5, may have thought for a moment that they were seeing double, but no, it's true - The Kretsingers and the Oates have joined forces, and they have little Griffin to prove it. You might recognize some of them in Stacy and Brian's wedding picture to the right.

If we live long enough, we may see the picture become even more crowded with new clan members.





This is Griffin Kretsinger, 10 months old and the possible heir to Robin Oates Realty <u>and</u> Kretsinger Plumbing.

Who will be the lucky Idyllwild girl who may one day be added to the picture at left?



WHEN: Saturday, September 5th 11:00 AM-2:00 P M

WHERE: Historical Society Museum Grounds
WHO'S INVITED: Everyone, including the public
AND IT'S ABSOLUTELY FREE!!





Be sure to visit our wonderful museum! 54470 North Circle Drive

SUMMER DAYS & HOURS

June 26 - September 7 - Friday thru Sunday, 11 am - 4 pm September 8 - June 25 - Saturday, Sunday, and Holidays, 11 am - 4 pm For special tours and other business, call (951) 659-2717 Our e-mail address is Info@Idyllwildhistory.org Visit our new website at www.Idyllwildhistory.org

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**** DATES TO REMEMBER ****

September 5, 2009 - The 5th annual Ice Cream Social September 12, 2009 - Our 9th Annual Home Tour - Don't miss it! November 28, 2009 - Carved Eagle Raffle Drawing at Town Hall