

History Of Palm Desert

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Special Thanks To
Palm Desert Historical Society
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Duchess Emerson
Lincoln Powers
Carla Breer Howard

"The desert has gone a-begging for a word of praise these many years. It never had a sacred poet; it has in me only a lover ... This is a land of illusions and thin air. The vision is so cleared at times that the truth itself is deceptive."

John Charles Van Dyke
The Desert (1901)

"The other Desert - the real Desert - is not for the eyes of the superficial observer, or the fearful soul or the cynic. It is a land, the character of which is hidden except to those who come with friendliness and understanding. To these the Desert offers rare gifts ... health-giving sunshine—a sky that is studded with diamonds—a breeze that bears no poison—a landscape of pastel colors such as no artist can duplicate—thorn-covered plants which during countless ages have clung tenaciously to life through heat and drought and wind and the depredations of thirsty animals, and yet each season send forth blossoms of exquisite coloring as a symbol of courage that has triumphed over terrifying obstacles. To those who come to the Desert with friendliness, it gives friendship; to those who come with courage, it gives new strength of character. Those seeking relaxation find release from the world of man-made troubles. For those seeking beauty, the Desert offers nature's rarest artistry. This is the Desert that men and women learn to love."t

Randall Henderson
Desert Magazine
1937

"There is a romance about mining and the longer one stays in the game, the more romantic it becomes."

Shady Myrick
Desert Prospector

"Oh, barren land! Here a soul may grow in stature, reaching to the very stars. And a heart forget the prison of convention's rigid bars. These are things that meke me love it. God-forsaken though it may be. Oh, barren land, in your domain a man is free - is free!"

Claude C. Walton
Evanston, Wyoming

"An hour's more sun, lots more fun."

Advertising slogan for Palm Desert
(Distinguishing it from Palm Springs)

"There is a need for sanctuaries not only for the flora and fauna of this desert land, but also for the human species - wilderness areas preserved as places of retreat where the thoughtful, and the confused, may go in quest of the spiritual strength to be found in close communion with the natural world, just as did the Great Teacher of Nazareth in preparation for his mission of hope for all mankind."

Randall Henderson
Sun, Sand and Solitude

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Outline

"In the ancient days when the shore of the Pacific was young, when the white sierras had only recently been heaved upward and the desert itself was in a formative stage, the ocean reached much farther inland than at the present time. It pushed through many a pass and flooded many a depression in the sands, as its wave-marks upon granite bases and its numerous beaches still bear witness. In those days that portion of the Colorado Desert known as the Salton Basin did not exist. The Gulf of California extended as far north as the San Bernardino Range and as far west as the Pass of San Gorgonio. Its waters stood deep where now lies the road-bed of the Southern Pacific railway, and all the country from Indio almost to the Colorado River was a blue sea. The Bowl was full. No one knew if it had a bottom or imagined that it would ever be emptied of water and given over to the drifting sands."

John Van Dyke
The Desert (1901)

Cenozoic Period

In the early Cenozoic development of the Pacific plate, the earth's surface cooled and buckled, mountains elevated and valleys formed. The Coachella Valley is just a continuation of the Gulf of California.

The northwestern Coachella Valley is the alluviated lowland that extends southeastward from the San Gorgonio Pass region to the north end of the Salton Sea. The lowland is traversed by multiple strands of the San Andreas Fault, and is punctuated by localized compressional squeeze-ups that form dome-shaped hills of uplifted sand and gravel. Current geologic understanding suggests that the lowland is a contractional region that has developed over the last 1 million years or so in response to left steps among various strands of the San Andreas Fault.

For three million years, at least through all the years of the Pleistocene glacial age, the Colorado River worked to

build its delta. By then, the delta had reached the western shore of the Gulf of California (the Sea of Cortez) creating a massive dam that excluded the sea from the northern reaches of the Gulf. Meandering at random across the ever-growing fan-shaped mass, the river changed its course constantly. For a while, the course would shift to the north, and the stream flowed into the isolated Salton basin, filling it with a large freshwater lake. Eventually, a river shift to the south to the Gulf of California would abandon the inland lake to evaporation and extinction.

As a result, the Salton basin has had a long history of alternately being occupied by a fresh water lake and being a dry, empty desert basin, all according to the random river flow, and the balance between inflow and evaporative loss. A lake would exist only when the river replenished it, a cycle that repeated itself countless times over hundreds of thousands of years.

There is abundant evidence that multiple lakes occupied the basin during this period. Wave-cut shorelines at various elevations are still preserved on the hillsides of the east and west margins of the present lake, the Salton Sea, showing that the basin was occupied intermittently as recently as a few hundred years ago. The last of the Pleistocene lakes to occupy the basin was Lake Cahuilla, identified on older maps as Lake Leconte.

Pre AD 1000 (Archaic Period)

The Archaic Period is defined as occurring before AD1000, prior to the introduction of pottery to the region. Important cultural developments during this period include the change from burial practices to cremations around 500 BC and the introduction of the bow and arrow also around 500 AD. It is also believed that a migration of the Taki-speaking peoples, from the great Basin region of Nevada, Utah and eastern California into southern California, occurred sometime between 1000 BC and AD 500.

1000 to Late 1700s (Late Prehistoric Period)

Introduction of pottery into the Coachella Valley region by the Colorado River cultures is believed to have occurred around AD 1000 and marks the transition between the Archaic and Late Prehistoric Periods. Pottery was an innovation of

peoples of the Colorado River and its distribution across the upper Colorado and Mojave Deserts indicates that there was contact and trade between local tribes and those of the Colorado River.

A large number of settlements and Rancherias were established in the Coachella Valley region during this period. Such sites included villages, milling sites used on a seasonal basis to process food materials, lithic workshops for making stone tools and weapons, and rock art sites used for artistic and/or religious purposes.

The most recent identifiable native culture to evolve in the Coachella Valley region is that of the Cahuilla, a Takic-speaking people of hunters and gathers who are generally divided into three groups by anthropologists according to their geographic setting: the Pass Cahuilla of the San Gorgonio Pass/Palm Springs area; the Mountain Cahuilla of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains and the Desert Cahuilla of the eastern Coachella Valley as far south as today's Salton Sea.

The Cahuilla were not identified by a single name that referred to an all-inclusive tribal affiliation. Instead, membership was in terms of lineages or clans. Each lineage had its own food harvesting areas, ceremonial house and chief. However, a number of lineages are known to have cooperated with one another for trade, intermarriage and ceremonies.

Early population data is nearly impossible to obtain but the Cahuilla population is estimated to have ranged between 3,600 and 10,000 persons prior to European contact.

1774

The first Cahuilla contact with Europeans is believed to have occurred in the 1770s when Spaniards crossed through Cahuilla territory in search of new land routes between Mexico and northern California.

Juan Baptista de Anza made his way through the desert paralleling the Mexican border and avoiding the unknown space to the north. He moved west through the Imperial Valley and climbed out through Borrego Springs and Oak Grove on his way to colonize San Francisco.

1769

Junipero Serra found his way along the coast as he began to build his mission chain to Sonoma.

1820

The padres of the San Gabriel Mission established a rancho in the San Geronimo Pass. But still, no one was venturing into the lowlands (or the present Coachella Valley).

1823-1825

In 1822, Mexico secured its independence from Spain under the Treaty of Cordova and Spanish forces were driven out of Mexico and California. In 1822-1825, Jose Romero, Jose Maria Estudillo and Romualdo Pacheco led an expedition in search of a route to Yuma, Arizona and became the first noted European explorers to travel through the Coachella Valley. They reported a good well at Indian Wells.

Over time, relations between the Cahuilla and Europeans became strained due to conflicts over land ownership and exploitation and religious and cultural practices.

1830s - 1840s

The philosophical movement of Transcendentalism develops in the 1830s and 1840s in the Eastern region of the United States as a protest to the general state of culture and society, and in particular, the state of intellectualism at Harvard University and the doctrine of the Unitarian church taught at the Harvard Divinity School. Among the transcendentalists' core beliefs was the inherent goodness of both man and nature. Transcendentalists believed that society and its institutions—particularly organized religion and political parties—ultimately corrupted the purity of the individual. They had faith that man is at his best when truly "self-reliant" and independent. It is only from such real individuals that true community could be formed.

The major figures in the movement were Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Margaret Fuller and Amos

Bronson Alcott. Other prominent transcendentalists included Louisa May Alcott, Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Emily Dickenson.

1847

On January 9, 1847, the well-known Mormon Battalion reached the Colorado River. They had trudged from Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe to the river. Upon encountering the Algodones Dunes west of Yuma, they dipped south, emerging at Plaster City. The Battalion moved again through the San Diego Mountains and Warner's Ranch, then to San Luis Rey Mission near Oceanside. Again, no one was testing the unknown desert. It was too risky, availability of water was questionable and temperatures unlivable.

1848

United States defeated Mexico in the Mexican-American War and gained control of California.

At the same time, the discovery of gold and the appeal of cattle ranching led to an influx of new settlers to the state.

1850

California admitted to the Union.

1853

The U.S. Government set up a railroad expedition to explore the pass to Yuma. Lt. R.S. Williamson and William Blake, a geologist from the Smithsonian Institute, combed a roadbed for a rail and water route in order to complete the transcontinental railroad to Yuma. The push for railroad extension caused serious water needs as the giant steam engines required vast supplies of water at regular intervals on railroad sidings.

The survey party mapped Palm Springs and its natural hot springs mineral pool - now the site of the Spa Resort Casino -and established the first wagon route through the San Gorgonio Pass.

1856

John Van Dyke, author of *The Desert* born in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

1855-1866

The first official land survey of the Coachella Valley was conducted by Deputy U.S. Surveyors Henry Washington, James McDonald and John LaCroze. The surveyors noted a number of man-made features in the planning area including ruins of an Indian village near today's Thousand Palms Oasis.

They also identified several trails, one of which crossed the middle portion of the planning area along the Whitewater River, close to the city center of present-day Palm Desert. The trail was part of the Cocomaricopa Trail, later "discovered" by Euro-Americans as the Bradshaw Trail.

The Cocomaricopa Trail passed through the Coachella Valley along the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains connecting the coastal region of California to the Colorado River. Trail was originally an Indian trade route and revealed by the Maricopa Indians to the Europeans in 1821.

During the 1855-1856 surveys, no active native or non-native settlements were found in the planning area. The nearest settlement to the planning area was the Palma Seca well, a famed Indian Rancheria that served as an important stop on the Bradshaw Trail during the 1860s and 1870s and is located in present-day Indian Wells.

1860s

In the early 1860s, a smallpox epidemic to which the Cahuilla had no immunity, decimated the population to about 2,500.

1862

In 1862, William Bradshaw of the California Fremont Expedition decided to capitalize on the traffic for gold across the desert to Ehrenberg, Arizona. There were stations at Whitewater, Agua Caliente, Indian Wells (Indio at the time), Torres and Martinez. Chief Cabazon was reportedly most helpful in receiving new routes through

Palm Springs and the desert to complete the gold route. Each location required adequate quantities of water for weary hopefuls as they prayed for gold at the end of the rainbow.

The discovery by Bradshaw in 1862 found the shortest route between the California Coast and the gold mines of the Colorado River. It serves as the primary thoroughfare for stagecoaches traveling between coastal California and the gold fields of present-day Ehrenberg, Arizona. It also became part of the U.S. Mail route between Los Angeles and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

1863

The original Cahuilla Indian culture of Coachella Valley is hard hit with the 1863 smallpox epidemic that kills thousands.

1870s

Reservations were established beginning in the 1870s and allowed the Cahuilla to preserve their cultural traditions in relative isolation from Anglo-Americans. Today, Native Americans of the Pass and Desert Cahuilla heritage are mostly affiliated with one or more of the Indian reservations in the Coachella Valley, including the Torres Martinez, Augustine, Agua Caliente, Cabazon and Morongo, most of which are in close proximity to Palm Desert.

1876-77

The Southern Pacific Railroad operates its first train from Indio on May 29, 1876. Indio was an important station because it was mid-way between Los Angeles and Yuma, Arizona. By 1876, Indio (then known as Indian Wells) was connected by rail to San Bernardino and Los Angeles. A year later, the line was completed to Yuma.

William Blake was the 27-year-old member co-leader of the expedition (Williamson-Blake Expedition of 1853) was a geology, mineralogy and archeology expert who studied the physical aspects of the Coachella Valley and the Colorado Desert. He prophesized that artesian wells would be discovered all over Mecca, Thermal, Coachella and Indio.

There was some marked success by the Southern Pacific Railroad in digging wells at that time.

In the years following Blake's statement about artesian wells, a growing number of farmers homesteading the area, found volumes of water just below the surface. Greater numbers realized the need for collective water development as land acquisitions slowed due to too many users sucking liquid from the southeastern desert floor.

Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad and the depletion of the La Paz gold mines brought an end to the heyday of the historic wagon road called the Bradshaw Trail. Traffic declined to nearly nothing by 1880 but ranchers and miners continued to use it for local transportation. Today, Highway 111 closely follows the course of the old Bradshaw Trail.

In 1877 as an incentive to complete a railroad to the Pacific, the U.S. government gave Southern Pacific Railroad title to the odd-numbered parcels of land for ten miles on either side of the tracks running through the Southern California desert around Palm Springs. The Agua Caliente Indians were given the even-numbered parcels of land.

1884

The even-numbered parcels of land were given to the Agua Caliente Indians yet federal law prohibited them from leasing or selling the land to derive income from it. In 1884, Judge John Guthrie McCallum of San Francisco arrived in Palm Springs with his family, seeking health for his tubercular son. The first permanent non-Indian settler, McCallum purchased land from Southern Pacific and built an elaborate aqueduct. His work to bring water to the Coachella Valley foreshadowed the area's current importance as a rich agricultural region.

1886

Dr. Welwood Murray built the first hotel in Palm Springs, The Palm Springs Hotel.

1888

Randall Henderson born.

Harry Oliver born.

1895

Cliff Henderson born July 11 in the Quaker town of Lenox, Iowa. His father was a druggist and he was the youngest of four boys.

William Boyd born in Cambridge, Ohio.

1898

John Van Dyke, a professor of Art History at Rutgers University, ventures into the desert for nearly three years to address the esthetic qualities of what he saw. The author of several well-received books on art theory, and one accustomed to spending vast lengths of time in the great galleries of Europe, he was the friend of many of the great artists of his time.

The asthmatic forty-two-year-old, who was in rather poor health, headed out into one of the most inhospitable regions of the country accompanied only by his fox terrier and the pony upon which he rode. He brought along less than 50 pounds of supplies that included a rifle, pistol, hatchet, shovel, blankets, tin pans and cups, dried food and one gallon of water.

When Van Dyke entered the desert for the first time he beheld one of the grandest displays of art he had ever imagined. Like many other who have experienced the wonder of this extraordinary land, he struggled to convey in words the grandeur of the desert.

1900

Tommy Tomson, the designer of Palm Desert (and brother-in-law of Clifford Henderson) born in Zanesville, Ohio. He was to marry Clifford Henderson's sister Dorris Henderson. The son of a druggist. His father was a minister. He spent much of his after school time in the early years playing Tarzan and Huck Finn in the woods and on the nearby river where he found an abandoned boat.

Francis Marion "Shady" Myrick, at the age of fifty, drifted west, into the Mojave Desert of Southern California. There he would stay until his death in 1925, making the whole Mojave his home.

For two and one half decades, he ranged across his beloved but bleak stomping grounds, a hundred miles back and forth between Death Valley on the east and the Johannesburg/Randsburg area over by the western edge of the Mojave. He had a shack in Johannesburg, or "Joburg" as it is still called. He collected his mail at the local post office, but for much of the time, he stayed in the various camps he established, scattered across his vast fields of exploration. He lived in tents and makeshift shelters. In one case, he set up a comfortable home, with a bed and stove, in a mine tunnel—a wise choice for the splendid insulation of the earth in a region where winters could be harsh and the summers could scorch the very soul.

1901

First appearance of John Van Dyke's *The Desert*.

"I have seen at sunset, looking north from Sonora some twenty miles, the whole tower-like shaft of Baboquivari change from blue to topaz and from topaz to glowing red in the course of half an hour. I do not mean edgings or rims or spots of these colors upon the peak, but the whole upper half of the mountain completely changed by them. The red color gave the peak the appearance of hot iron, and when it finally died out in dark dull hue that came after was like that of a clouded garnet."

As Peter Wild writes in the Introduction to the book, "Van Dyke's message was clear: Not only are deserts the most beautiful places in the world, they are lands of freedom and adventure to America's bored and city-pent. For that, in his book Van Dyke saddled up again and, waiving a generous hand, hailed his readers, stirring them from their lethargy and inviting them to ride off with him 'far beyond the wire fence of civilization' into those trackless spaces of adventure, exhilaration, and spiritual renewal."

Wild continues noting that "Van Dyke's *The Desert* appeared at precisely the right time, when the public was ripe for its message. The book lifted the nation by its ears, and

almost overnight, a utilitarian country all by unanimously grousing at deserts as God's mistakes, as noxious obstacles to civilization, turned about and saw those places with new eyes, in the lovely terms Van Dyke uses to describe them."

"In our age, so badly lacking in heroes, here is a man to meet our longings, an excellent blending – as we are not – of the two-fisted frontiersman and the fine-tuned male far ahead of his times in his sensitive feelings for the environment."

"Van Dyke came at just the right time. No sooner had Americans conquered the wilderness, cut down the forests and slaughtered the buffalo than the romantic nation began sentimentalizing the past, longing for what it had just destroyed. Now as cities grew and the surrounding countryside was reduced to fields of stumps, people yearned for what they perceived as the freer and more harmonious life of their ancestors, lived closer to nature. That is, the bored, industrialized nation of offices and smokestacks and streets lined with brick row homes was longing for the exotic. A vigorous corollary resulted from the widespread fear that, cut off from our pioneer heritage, the nation was going soft."

"Coming precisely at the right time, hyperactive, hyperenthusiastic Van Dyke told worried Americans about a romantic and exotic place where they might renew themselves. With a grand, dramatic gesture, he pointed to a land where the wolves still howled as a globose moon tore through the silver clouds, to an uninhabited region of endless enchantments awaiting them, out there in the long-ignored deserts of the Southwest."

But later, in the Epilogue to his book Marshall South of Yaquitepec, Wild offers a later reassessment of Van Dyke as he also does for Marshall South. As he writes, "it became obvious that, whatever his talents as a weaver of a fantasy desert, the man behind the writer was a fraud. I discovered that in fact he was a sickly professor who at times hardly could mount the lecture platform, let alone the horse he claimed to have ridden boldly into the desert ... Far more painful than my toppling of my own hero was the reaction. In short it consisted of anger over a fantasy shown to be false."

Teddy Roosevelt was exhorting the nation to regain its muscles by living what he labeled The Strenuous Life.

The birth of the Boy Scouts (1910) and other national organizations around this time that desired to plunge youth back into the outdoors.

* * *

Some quotes from Van Dyke's masterpiece *The Desert*.

"This is a land of illusions and thin air. The vision is so cleared at times that the truth itself is deceptive."

"The waste places of the earth, the barren deserts, the tracts forsaken of men and given over to loneliness, have a peculiar attraction of their own. The weird solitude, the great silence, the grim desolation, are the very things with which every desert wanderer eventually falls in love."

"It is stern, harsh, and at first repellent. But what tongue shall tell the majesty of it, the eternal strength of it, the poetry of its wide-spread chaos, the sublimity of its lonely desolation! And who shall paint the splendor of its light; and from the rising up of the sun to the going down of the moon over the iron mountains, the glory of its wondrous coloring! It is a gaunt land of splintered peaks, torn valleys, and hot skies."

"The desert mountains gathered in clusters along the waste, how old and wrinkled, how set and determined they look! Somehow they remind you of a clinched hand with the knuckles turned skyward. They have strength and bulk, the suggestion of quiescent force. Barren rock and nothing more; but what could better epitomize power! The heave of the enormous ridge, the loom of the domes top, the bulk and body of the whole are colossal."

"And there you have the most decorative landscape in the world, a landscape all color, a dream landscape. Painters for years have been trying to put it upon canvas - this landscape of color, light, and air, with form almost obliterated, merely suggested, given only as a hint of the mysterious. Men like Corot and Monet have told us, again and again, that in painting, clearly delineated forms of mountains, valleys, trees, and rivers, kill the fine color-

sentiment of the picture. The great struggle of the modern landscapist is to get on with the least possible form and to suggest everything by tones of color, shades of light, drifts of air. Why? Because these are the most sensuous qualities in nature and in art. The landscape that is the simplest in form and the finest in color is by all odds the most beautiful."

"Are they beautiful these plants and shrubs of the desert? Now just what do you mean by that word 'beautiful'? Do you mean something of regular form, something smooth and pretty? Are you dragging into nature some remembrances of classic art; and are you looking for the Dionysius face, the Doryphorus form, among these trees and bushes? If so the desert will not furnish you too much of beauty. But if you mean something that has a distinct character, something appropriate to its setting, something admirably fitted to a designed end (as in art the peasants of Millet or burghers of Rembrandt and Rodin), then the desert will show forth much that people nowadays are beginning to think beautiful. Mind you, perfect form and perfect color are not to be despised; neither shall you despise perfect fitness and perfect character."

"Nature never designed more fascinating country to ride over than these plains and mesas lying up and back from the desert basin. You may be alone without necessarily being lonesome. And everyone rides here with the feeling that he is the first one that ever broke into this unknown land, that he is the original discover; and that this new world belongs to him by right of original exploration and conquest. Life becomes simplified by necessity. It begins all over again, starting at the primitive stage. There is a reversion to the savage. Civilization, the race, history, philosophy, art - how very far away and how very useless, even contemptible, they seem. What have they to do with the air and the sunlight and the vastness of the plateau! Nature and her gift of buoyant life are overpowering. The joy of mere animal existence, the feeling that it is good to be alive and face to face with Nature's self, drives everything else into the background."

"The Canyon country is well named, for it has plenty of wash outs and gorges. Almost anywhere among the mountain ranges you can find them - not Grand Canyons, to be sure, but ones of size sufficient to be impressive without being

stupendous. Walls of upright rock several hundred feet in height have enough bulk and body about them to impress anyone. The mass is really overpowering. It is but the crust of the earth exposed to view; but the gorge at Niagara and the looming shaft of the Matterhorn are not more. The imagination strains at such magnitude. And all the accessories of the gorge and canyon have a might to them that adds to the general effect. The sheer precipices, the leaning towers, the pinnacles and shafts, the recesses and caves, the huge basins rounded out of rock by the waterfalls are all touched by the majesty of the sublime."

"In sublimity - the superlative degree of beauty - what land can equal the desert with its wide plains, its grim mountains, and its expanding canopy of sky! You shall never see elsewhere as here the dome, the pinnacle, the minaret fretted with golden fire at sunrise and sunset; you shall never see elsewhere as here the sunset valleys swimming in a pink and lilac haze, the great mesas and plateaus fading into blue distance, the gorges and canyons banked full of purple shadow. Never again shall you see such light and air and color; never such opaline mirage, such rosy dawn, such fiery twilight. And wherever you go, by land or by sea, you shall not forget that which you saw not but rather felt - the desolation and the silence of the desert."

"Look out from the mountain's edge once more. A dusk is gathering on the desert's face, and over the eastern horizon the purple shadow of the world is reaching up to the sky. The light is fading out. Plain and mesa are blurring into unknown distances, and mountain ranges are looming dimly into unknown heights. Warm drifts of lilac-blue are drawn like mists across the valleys; the yellow sands have shifted into a pallid gray. The glory of the wilderness has gone down with the sun. Mystery - that haunting sense of the unknown - is all that remains. It is time that we should say good-night - perhaps a long good-night - to the desert."

1903

Edgar Bergen born

Arthur Thomas and Susan Thomas with their aunt and uncle Charles and Susan McDonald were the first to receive a land patent north of Highway 111. It was one mile square between Portola and Monterey. In the following years, settlers like the McDonalds joined county and federal governments and the Southern Pacific Railroad as the first area land owners in what was to eventually become Palm Village and the Palm Desert.

* * *

It might be speculated that Van Dyke paved the way for a new revival of the American Transcendentalism, popular in the 1830s and 1840s in eastern America. This revisioning of the original Transcendental movement might be termed Desert Transcendentalism. It could be argued that writers like Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, Harry Oliver, Marshal South and Randall Henderson were all part of this new Desert Transcendentalism.

* * *

In the general store in his hometown of Lenox, Iowa, eight-year-old Clifford Henderson wants a red wagon that costs \$2.75 more than anything he has ever wanted in his short life. But his father told him that he would have to earn it. The family had a cow and Clifford and some friends constructed a rough but workable cart that the cow pulled. In the cart, they hauled fertilizer and sold it for one cent per load and it wasn't long before the red wagon was his.

1905

Salton Sea was created around this time by a flood in which the waters of Colorado River flowed into the area.

"But there came a time when there was a disturbance of the existing conditions in the Upper Gulf. Century after century the Colorado River had been carrying down to the sea its burden of sedimental sand and silt. It had been entering the Gulf far down on the eastern side at an acute angle. Gradually its deposits had been building up, banking up: and gradually the river had been pushing them out and across the Gulf in a southwesterly direction. Finally there was formed a delta dam stretching from shore to shore. The tides no longer brought water up and around the bases of

the big mountains. Communication with the sea was cut off and what was once the top of the Gulf changed into an inland lake." John Van Dyke, The Desert (1901).

* * *

In the summer of 1905, John Muir arrives in Palm Springs hoping that his young daughter Helen might benefit by the hot air of the desert. After a few days, his host – Dr. Welwood Murray – suggested they go out to a picnic in the Indian Canyons which they did. Muir was amazed by the desert plants in the Indian Canyons of Palm Springs. (For interested readers the story of the visit of John Muir to the desert in 1905 with his two daughters is told in great detail and drama within one of the articles from selected desert authors in the book by Peter Wild called The Grumbling Gods: A Palm Springs Reader.)

1907

Leonard Firestone born in Akron, Ohio.

Efforts by the Southern Pacific Railroad and Imperial County Irrigation District restore Colorado River to its banks.

In April 1907, not yet 19 years old, Randall Henderson appropriated the cheapest transportation then available to get to California – in a well-used but empty cattle car. Through the slatted sides of his moving cell he peered out at the railroad settlements of the West. He liked his first views of the vast desert lands rimmed by distant purple mountains. He arrived in San Francisco on the first anniversary of the great earthquake and fire. Through the summer he held a job with the Buckingham & Hecht Shoe Company. In September, he travelled to Los Angeles to enter the University of Southern California.

With various jobs he worked his way through USC. Waiting tables. Washing dishes. Painting houses. He held the school welterweight wrestling championship for two years, captained the varsity basketball squad and served as student body president in his senior year at USC.

Randall would remember later that perhaps that most significant act of his student life was to take a part-time

job as a sports reporter for *The Los Angeles Times*. The ace reporter and columnist Harry Carr had an adjoining desk at the paper. He advised Randall to become a country newspaperman.

* * *

John Muir's daughter Helen becomes sick again and Muir takes her down to his friend Theodore Van Dyke's ranch, a mile from the town of Daggett, California near Barstow.

1909

Clifford Henderson moves to California as part of the first transcontinental trip by motor truck, riding as mascot from Colorado to San Francisco.

From an early age he showed an inclination for promotion and organization, producing circuses and shows for his friends.

When an air meet was held near Los Angeles in 1910, it inspired young Henderson to organize a model plane-building contest.

He later worked his way through high school and college with his own small dance band, graduating from the University of Southern California in 1918.

1910

For 36 square miles of Indian Wells and Palm Desert, records show that Walter Schmid in the Palm Village area did well drilling. Was one of the first real pioneers of Palm Desert.

1911

With a bachelor's degree (packed at the bottom of the trunk) from USC, Randall Henderson heads east into the desert. He heads for Parker, a village on the Arizona bank of the Colorado River. He works for a brief time as a surveyor's helper at the U.S. Land Office surveying boundaries and staking out ten-acre allotments for each of the Indians on the Colorado Indian Reservation.

As Henderson later recalls in his book Sun, Sand and Solitude, "It was during those winter months with the surveying party that I got my first impressions of the desert – of this fascinating little-known land of strange plant life and hardy creatures which had adapted themselves to the rigors of extreme heat and little rainfall long before the human species arrived on the scene. It was during those days spent in hewing section lines through the mesquite and arrowhead jungles of a fertile river valley that I gained my first knowledge of a science now widely known as ecology – the relationship, interdependence and balance which nature, undisturbed by the trespass or tools of man, maintains in the complex world of the planet earth."

The allotment idea proved to be a bureaucratic mistake and was soon abandoned. But during his months working as a surveyor Henderson walked the mesquite-covered lands of the Indian reservation and became deeply interested in the life of the Indians and came to know many of them personally. This interest was to later show up through articles in *Desert Magazine* he established in 1937.

He took a job at 25 cents an hour as a printer's apprentice at the weekly *Parker Post*. He wrote news, solicited advertising, learned to operate the Linograph type-setting machine, and helped with presswork.

Within the year, he returned to Los Angeles to marry Vera Riopel, the daughter of the painting contractor who had employed him during his college years.

They set up housekeeping in a small house in Parker.

The *Post* contained news of Palo Verde Valley and copies of the paper were dispatched weekly by horseback to be delivered in Blythe. His employer sent Randall to Blythe to handle the news and advertising sales. Within months, Henderson found a partner, Myron Watson, and they set up their own print shop to publish the Blythe *Herald*.

1913

Grace Bradley born. She would later become Mrs. William Boyd, wife of the famous early television cowboy star

Hopalong Cassidy.

Violet Ethelred Krauth born on the island of Trinidad. She moved to California during WWI with her mother and three siblings and followed her sister Jeanne Morgan into show business. She would follow her sister into show business and eventually become the film star Marian Marsh and later the wife of Clifford Henderson.

1914 (WWI)

Henderson enlisted as an ambulance driver in World War I serving in the 35th Ambulance Unit in France. He transferred to the 101 Aero Squadron in the Air Corps before the Armistice. He learned to fly in the 101.

* * *

"A bitter wind was blowing over the Mohave," when an aging John Muir arrived at the desert ranch of his friend Theodore Van Dyke in the winter of the year to visit his daughter Helen for the last time. (Linnie Marsh Wolfe in his book on John Muir Son of the Widerness.) Muir died on December 24th of 1914.

Since Muir brought his daughter Helen to Palm Springs in 1905 for her health, Helen has decided to live in the desert and gotten married to a rancher near the town of Daggett, California, ten miles east of Barstow.

"Most people know that Muir took sick with his final illness near an obscure desert town called Daggett. However, beyond that, little is known about his relationship to Daggett, to the Mojave desert, and to the friends he made there during the last seven years of his life. Yet the period is rich with Muir's personal involvement, with ironies, and his influence on others, and it is a period awaiting further exploration by students of Muir."

"A mountain and ice man, Muir didn't go willingly to the California desert. Rather, it was the health of daughter Helen that forced him out there in his final years. He had spent much of 1905-1906 worrying over Helen's condition and trying to find a healing climate for her respiratory

problems, first in the mountains of eastern Arizona, later at the Petrified Forest in the northern part of the state. The cure seemed to work. Then, back in Martinez, in 1907 Helen suddenly took a turn for the worse, and Muir rushed her south to the Van Dyke Ranch, a mile east of Daggett."

"The details of why Muir chose this ranch are not entirely clear. In fact, Daggett had a particularly evil reputation. On Saturday nights the boom town could wax riotous with miners pouring down from the rich silver claims in the nearby mountains--not at all the place either for gentlemaned Muir or his young daughter. However, as it happened, the ranch was owned by Theodore Strong Van Dyke, a well-known outdoor writer of the day who shared Muir's sympathy for nature. Furthermore, Theodore had not only solved his own health problems by moving to the desert ranch some six years before, he often celebrated the healthful climate of the region in his books and articles. Given the small community of California's writers at the time, it is likely that Muir knew of Van Dyke and perhaps had met him prior to 1907. On top of that, since Theodore was Daggett's no-nonsense justice of the peace, a powerful position in a desert where the law was stretched thin, Helen likely would suffer no rowdyism from the locals. In any case, Muir got Helen settled at the ranch and returned to Martinez. Word came from Helen that she enjoyed the outdoor life and the company of Theodore and his son, Dix, so much so that Muir sent her both Stickeen and her horse Sniffpony. Helen was in Daggett to stay. In a few years she married Buel Funk, the son of a nearby rancher. Thus Muir, alone and aging, had every reason to be a frequent visitor in Daggett."

"In one of those rare strokes that can put flesh on the bare bones of history, fortunately for us Dix wrote a substantial memoir about life at the Van Dyke Ranch. He records not only some of Muir's visits but follows Buel's 'sparking' of Helen and their subsequent marriage. According to Dix, Theodore and Muir, two authors of about the same age, found each other 'congenial souls,' and both looked forward to times spent together at the ranch."

"At this point, however, the story becomes at once more complex and intriguing. Theodore, though a graduate of Princeton, an attorney, and a student of Greek and Latin of

some accomplishment, had 'gone native,' shedding the pretenses of urban civilization. A mountain rover and naturalist of precise observation, he had earned the right, as had Muir, to speak with authority about California's vast and varied natural heritage. Not so Theodore's younger brother John C. Van Dyke. And here the ironies begin to turn on themselves."

"In 1901, John published a landmark book, *The Desert*, the first volume to counter the common wisdom of the day condemning deserts as ugly wastelands. Instead, with a poetry and power not since surpassed, *The Desert* praised the arid lands for their beauty, for their lava peaks that glow like hot iron after sunsets, and for their storms that whirl up in showers of gold. The hitch is that John was no outdoorsman but a refined professor of art history at Rutgers University, a familiar of the East Coast's toniest salons. Though because of his own health problems he started visiting Theodore in Southern California sometime in the late 1890s, the likelihood is very strong that the adventures in John's famous book, still in print, were more the stuff of his fantasy than experience. Whether or not John knew Muir through Theodore at the time John wrote *The Desert* is not known. In any case, some of the passages in the most famous book ever written about the Southwest not only echo Muir's writing, at times John uses Muir's very words and imagery."

"A lively personal element comes into play here, and sparks begin to fly. At one point, the paths of John and Muir crossed at the ranch, and things did not go well. Dix says " ... the two wrangled incessantly ... " with Muir stomping off in some heat. In contrast, John's version of the meeting in his *Autobiography* all but lowers the mantle of sainthood around Muir's shoulders."

"These and other aspects of John Muir's days on the Mojave desert may never be resolved. Yet references to them keep cropping up in unpublished sources, and, again fortunately, the little town of Daggett remains much as it was when Muir knew it. The old general store he likely visited still stands in the center of town, as does the house out at the Van Dyke Ranch where Helen lived. A few hundred yards away is "Desertaire," the mansion Buel and Helen built after Muir's death, today in an excellent state of preservation.

All await further investigation."

"John Muir and the Desert Connection" by Peter Wild from the *John Muir Newsletter*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Spring 1995)

1916

Harry Oliver (founder of *Desert Rat Scrapbook* in the 40s) visits Borrego Valley and begins adopting his Desert Rat persona. There is the informal formation of the Pegleg Smith Liar's Club made up of Los Angeles desert enthusiasts and Anza-Borrego area homesteaders. In the following decades, Hollywood and Los Angeles artists and literati established a small vacation colony at Borrego Springs, more remote and modest than the Hollywood colony in Palm Springs.

1917

A proposal in 1917 to channel water from Baldwin Lake and the Whitewater River to the Imperial Valley hit Coachella Valley settlers like a brick. How could anyone bypass the Coachella Valley to supply the water wants of others in the northeast Imperial Valley?

1918 (after WWI)

Clifford Henderson leaves USC in early 1918 during his senior year. He was captain of the basketball team and student body president. He goes to France for overseas duty in World War I as an ambulance driver in the 35th Medical Unit and later transferred to the Aviation Section, Signal Corps.

The production of dates, vegetables and citrus were attracting great interest among farmers now, since an active railroad available for shipping. Because of the mushrooming needs for water, the time was ripe to enter this collective water effort. Settlers must protect their rights and so the Coachella Valley County Water District was formed in May 1918.

Tommy Tomson yearns to head west and leave the snow the cold behind. Quits school after junior year and says goodbye to his family and finds work in the newly

developing Gross Point Farms in Michigan where he learns to be a surveyor. From here he went south working for a time in Albuquerque where he slept in an old barn with a tin roof. He ventured further south to Socorro in Southwest Texas where at age 18 he led a surveying team laying out train routes.

1919

After the war Clifford Henderson bought an old "Jenny" plane from the government, flying solo after only four hours of instruction. Henderson also purchased a Nash auto in Santa Monica and was commissioned by the 476th Pursuit Squadron Reserve at Clover Field there. He joins other reserve officers and forms an annual National Air Race Project which in 1928 developed into the National Air Races.

William Boyd goes to Hollywood to get into the movies.

In the summer, a young J. Wilson McKenney travelled with his father in a Model T Ford from his home in Blythe, California to Riverside. A carpenter friend of his father sat in the front seat of the car. As McKenney recalls in his book *Desert Editor*, "I bounced around on the back seat as Dad struggled all night with the sandy, rutted road across the Chuckawalla Desert. We had breakfast in Mecca and it was still early morning when we passed the sandhills near Indian Wells. I can remember how Dad's friend laughed as he read a crude sign beside the road that said "For sale. This 40 acres. Sakrifise \$60." His father's friend asked "What darned fool would spend a dollar and a half an acre on this worthless sand?"

Eighteen wells drilled in the Palm Village area. The Palm Desert Community Services District was established to handle the growth.

1920

William Boyd has first role in Hollywood as an extra in Cecil B. DeMille's *Why Change Your Wife?*

Randall Henderson served in World War I as an Army pilot in

the air service. He trained in the Curtiss JN-4 Jenny. After leaving the service, Henderson talked local real estate agent Ralph Seely into purchasing a surplus wood-and-fabric construction WWI Curtis Jenny JN-4H two-seat pilot trainer still in its packing crate for \$5,000. Henderson assembled the plane and taught Seely to fly in exchange for use of the plane. Henderson liked to be the first pilot to land in desert towns.

On May 7, 1920 Randall Henderson, a WWI pilot and barnstormer, took his place as the first person to fly into Las Vegas, which at the time was a small watering stop with a population of 2,300 on the Union Pacific rail line. Flying out of Blythe, California, they refueled twice, the last time in Needles, California after which they flew along the Colorado River to Searchlight, Nevada. From Searchlight, they followed the Arrowhead trail to Las Vegas, crossing a dry lake bed where they encountered numerous whirlwinds that boosted them 500 feet and dropped them 800. They refueled two times while en route and made the first bombing run on Las Vegas when Henderson flew over the home of the brother of his passenger, Jake Beckley, a businessman from Blythe, and dropped a doll for Beckley's niece at 120 S. Fourth Street in Las Vegas.

Henderson landed his craft at a desert roadhouse (which later became Downtown Las Vegas) near the Los Angeles Highway (now known as the Las Vegas Strip). He quickly set up his barnstorming sideshow in a nearby field, where for three days he offered rides for paying customers, charging \$10.00 each. One taker was a Paiute Indian chief who fainted in surprise from the dizzying heights and nearly crashed the plane. The Chief collapsed on his control stick and brought the plane diving toward earth. But the Curtis Jenny was a trainer plane with control sticks in both front and rear cockpits, so Henderson was able to accomplish some intricate maneuvering, free up the controls, and make a safe landing.

The films The Orphan and The Leopard Woman are shot in the Coachella Valley. By 2013, there will have been more than 175 films shot in the Coachella Valley.

1921

Tommy Tomson moves to Hollywood where he rents an apartment on Morningside Court and goes to work for the Southern

California Department of Subdivisions. He takes lessons in etiquette, dancing, dressing while also teaching himself the tools of the career he wants, advanced math and drafting.

Tomson is chosen for a screen test by director Robert McIntyre of the Goldwin Studios because of his distinctive type. He was a tall, strong, handsome guy with a quiet voice and a somewhat shy demeanor alla Gary Cooper. According to the Zanesville, Ohio Bee Newspaper at the time, "Tomson has been a resident of Hollywood for the past year. And according to Tomson, he is in the movie business to stay." He only stayed about a minute, though, and never looked back.

Clifford Henderson is commissioned into the Army at Clover Field, California and serves with the Army of Occupation in the 35th Ambulance Unit in France.

1924

Cliff Henderson managed his first air show, arranging the departure from and return to Santa Monica of the U.S. Army's round-the-world tour. He then went on to manage local air races in Santa Monica and Los Angeles until he was hired to promote the 1928 National Air Races at Los Angeles.

Tommy Tomson joins a professional fraternity in LA and meets friends. He begins to have a social life. One evening, he is included in a USC sorority/fraternity party. He asks to be introduced to the young lady in the pink gown. There were two ladies in pink gowns and the one he wanted to meet was not the one to whom he was introduced. The girl he met was Dorris Henderson and he soon forgot about the other pink-gowned girl as Dorris captured his heart in short order. He asked her to drop her other beaux but she nixed this saying she was having too good of a time playing the field.

Discouraged by this, Tommy who had then changed his birth name to Charles, left town and headed back to Texas. But serendipity came into play. The train ahead of his derailed and he read this as an omen and headed back to LA.

Upon arriving in LA, he called Dorris and said, "We are getting married. I'll be by to pick you up tomorrow!" She was overwhelmed and said "Yes" to his proposal.

They drove then to Calexico where Dorris' brother Randall had a home. They quickly made arrangements for a justice of the peace to marry them. Their trip to Calexico was not exactly an uninterrupted trip. At the time, hoof and mouth disease was rampant in Southern California and every time they drove across a county line they had to drive the car through a sheep dip and then get out and walk through the stuff. Not the most romantic elopement.

They married in Calexico with Dorris' mother and brother as witnesses and had their wedding dinner in Mexacali. Their song become "Mexicali Rose." The date was April 26, 1924. Tommy Tomson had joined the Henderson clan.

1925

A twelve-year-old schoolgirl Grace Bradley becomes smitten by the handsome silent screen star William Boyd. Since his earlier success, the handsome actor's career had plummeted, and then risen again in 1935 after he began playing Hopalong Cassidy.

Bradley represents the state of New York in an annual competition for young pianists at Carnegie Hall. Although she won the contest, she begins modeling full time and attending dance school at night.

1928

Henderson becomes Director of Aviation at the Los Angeles Airport and serves as the first manager of the Los Angeles airport system.

He begins to manage the National Air Races that he manages until 1939.

Henderson continues to organize other air races and expositions along with the National Air Races, including the Western Aircraft Show of 1929.

During their golden era (1928-1939) the National Air Races attracted the participation of such noted aviators as

Charles Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart, Jimmie Doolittle, and Roscoe Turner in events such as the races for the Thompson, Bendix, and Greve trophies. The program regularly included cross-country races, short races, army and navy maneuvers, stunt flying, parachute jumping, gliders, dirigibles, balloons, and model planes.

The National Air Races were considered a "working laboratory" for the aviation industry, where new planes, equipment, engines, and fuels were tested before coming into general use. A few refinements tested in this way included controllable pitch propellers, streamlined landing wheel pants, retractable landing gear, landing flaps, high-octane fuels, and engine supercharging. Additionally, the races were also used to further public acceptance of and confidence in commercial air transportation, emphasizing the development of "safety, speed, economy and comfort."

1929

King Gillette and his son King Jr. began to assemble land holdings from owners of the old Palm Village area north of Highway 111. After they acquired various parcels, they cleared desert growth and drilled wells and built a large reservoir and began to farm grapefruit and dates.

An article from *Date Palm* on February 15, 1929 was captioned "Big Development by K.C. Gillette." The article noted, "It is announced by Thomas H. Rosenberger, who is closely associated with King C. Gillette, that the property known as the 'Old McDonald Ranch' on the Palm Springs Highway and west of Cook Date Gardens is to be highly improved by Mr. Gillette who is now the owner. It is stated that five new wells and six houses are to be constructed at once. The wells are to be supplemented by seven and one-half miles of twelve and sixteen inch irrigation pipeline. The property has a frontage of one and a half miles on the highway and is a mile deep containing 480 acres. It is also announced that 4,500 grapefruit trees have been ordered for planting on the Gillette-Rosenberger tract near Indio. It is expected that these improvements cost \$500,000."

Harry Oliver begins homesteading in Borrego. By this time, he has worked on ten films in Hollywood as set designer. He

gains media attention by carving and weathering dozens of wooden peglegs he scattered around area hillsides and gullies so that rockhounds and tourists might think themselves on the track of the fabulous Lost Pegleg Mine. The Riverside Enterprise newspaper writes defending himself Oliver says "The government stocks trout streams for fisherman. Why shouldn't I stock the desert with peglegs?"

1930

Henderson manages the New York Aircraft Salon of 1930.

The Old MacDonald Ranch became known as Palm Village north.

The beginning of date cultivation in the desert.

J. Wilson McKenney comes to work at Randall Henderson's Chronicle in Calexico on February 22. He is a young graduate just out of journalism school and Randall at 42 years old at the time is almost twice the age of his new employee. The Great Depression was beginning to spread and McKenney was happy to accept an offer of \$18 a week. That spring and summer, McKenney began taking short weekend trips into the desert and mountain country surrounding Imperial Valley. He began writing a weekly column for the paper called "Little Journeys on the Desert."

Randall Henderson shows an interest in his employee's trips and became a companion with McKenney on his weekend trips. Much of Randall Henderson's ideas for creating *Desert Magazine* were hatched on these desert trips. McKenney had an old 1925 Chevy jalopy called Ol' Breezy.

Henderson later recalled (in the November 1948 issue of *Desert Magazine*) the importance of this old car and his trips into the desert with McKenney writing, "The story of Desert Magazine begins with Ol' Breezy. A relic of the big-wheeled touring model era, Ol' Breezy had a natural gift for hopping over rocks and plowing through the sand of unexplored desert terrain. Ol' Breezy's metallic bones have long since gone to the junkyard where aged jalopies eventually find sanctuary, but in the days of her wheezing career she played a very important part in the launching of *Desert Magazine*."

When Ol' Breezy was finally gone, Randall brought a balloon-tired Model A Ford coupe and the two men continued their trips into Baja California, Arizona and north along the Colorado.

Henderson expands on the opening of his 1948 article, "For each Monday edition of the newspaper, McKenney wrote a column about his camping and climbing adventures in out-of-the way places. His column brought more favorable comment than any other feature of the newspaper. Often I accompanied him on his camping trips and we sat around the evening blaze and discussed his desert subjects and reader reaction to them, the thought occurred that we might give readers a whole magazine of it. We envisioned a monthly periodical devoted to the desert, its people, wildlife, arts and crafts, minerals, history, lost mine legends, ghost towns, Indian life and lore, and its travel and recreational opportunities, with photographs and maps, and as much human interest we could pack into it. It was just a dream at first, but gradually, as we camped together in remote canyons where the silence was broken only by our voices and the occasional call of a coyote, we began to discuss seriously the feasibility of such a publication and the details of its production."

Later, McKenney was to recall in his book *Desert Editor* "At our desert campfires Randall and I had permitted ourselves to become poetic, even prophetic. We would change the prevailing concept that the desert is a desolate and hostile wasteland. We would take our readers behind the grim mask of the arid landscape to the land we had come to know, a land having character and charm only for those who come with understanding. We seemed to know that the health-giving sunshine, night skies studded with diamonds, breezes that bore no poisons, and landscapes of radiant pastels were fragile things that could be destroyed. We wanted our words and pictures to reflect a land of beauty that others might come to know and conserve."

* * *

In addition to hikes with McKenney, Henderson also went on hikes with his teenage son Rand during the 30s. As he writes in the Preface of his book *Sun, Sand and Solitude* "During the 1930s my teenage son and I were frequent companions on camping and mountain-climbing adventures. We

left records of our ascent in the cairns at the tops of San Jacinto and San Gorgonio peaks in Southern California, Mt. Lassen in the northern part of the state, and we slept one night in the summit cabin of Mt. Whitney, highest peak in the California Sierras."

* * *

Marshal South and his wife drive their Model T Ford into Blair Valley, which was maintained by the Bureau of Land Management in the years before it became the Anza Borrego Desert State Park. Both Marshal and his wife Tanya were writers and artists and during the early days of the Great Depression had reached the end of their financial resources and go into the desert wilderness to establish a new home.

As Randall Henderson later wrote about their relocation to the desert (in the December 1945 issue of *Desert Magazine*) "They loaded their few belongings in their old car and turned their backs on the coast city (Oceanside) where they had lived. They followed a faint trail that led to the base of one of the mountains along the western rim of the Colorado desert of Southern California. If the Indians could live off the desert, so could they. And so they established a camp among the Juniper and Agave on the top of a mountain. At first they had only canvas for shelter, and it was necessary to carry their water up the steep rocky slopes from a spring at the base of this mountain."

They name the mountain Ghost Mountain and over the next year, establish a primitive home on Ghost Mountain. The mountain was named by Tanya and Marshal South when they began their "great experiment" in primitive living, which was later (famously) chronicled in the pages of *Desert Magazine*. Nowhere in the pages of the magazine can a reader find background on the Souths. Their life, as far as the magazine was concerned, began when they commenced building their home, called Yaquitepec, on the waterless ridge of Ghost Mountain in Blair Valley.

For 17 years (from 1930 to 1947) poet, artist, and author Marshal South and his family lived on Ghost Mountain, a remote, waterless mountaintop that is today within California's Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Over a period of nine of those years, South chronicled his family's

controversial primitive lifestyle through popular monthly articles written for *Desert Magazine*.

"But the Book of Nature - the same one that the Indian studied so successfully - still is available free to all. And the Desert Edition of it, whose pages we on Ghost Mountain ruffle through every day by the aid of the wind and sunshine, always provides interesting items and food for thought." Marshal South

Mariane Marsh (future wife of Cliff Henderson) appears in a small role in her first "outstanding" motion picture called "Hell's Angels" directed by Howard Hughes. Shortly after the filming of the picture, Howard Hughes came to Palm Springs. As Marsh later recalls in a 1997 interview, "He loved the desert. He had a white Cord at the time. It was beautiful. Open, no top, large and very fancy. One night we got dressed up and took a drive from Palm Springs heading towards Cathedral City. There was nothing but white sand for as far as the eyes could see. There was really no road. We ended up at this restaurant on Date Palm Drive. It was so elegant, one would practically have to dress up in an evening gown to go. It looked innocent enough, but there was a back room area that one had to be 'invited' to."

1931

Henderson convinces businessman Vincent Bendix to sponsor the Bendix Trophy Race, a transcontinental speed dash open to men and women.

Tommy Tomson gets the job of laying out the hundreds of acres of the Santa Anita Racetrack. (Tommy would be kept on a retainer at Santa Anita until 1975). This job opened up the world for Tommy. Clients hired him from far and wide: Henry Fonda, David Selznick, Charles Boyer, Basil Rathbone, Frank Sinatra, Donald Douglas, Red Skelton and Ronald Coleman to mention a few. And too, there was Paulette Goddard who insisted she interview perspective "employees" such as Tommy in her black bedroom.

1932

Highway 74 opens, built on former Palms To Pines trail, providing access to San Jacinto and Santa Rosa mountains

and San Diego.

1933

Grace Bradley is dancing in the floorshow at the Paradise nightclub in Manhattan in 1933 when she was spotted by a Paramount Pictures director and placed under contract.

J. Wilson McKenney joins Randall Henderson as business partner when McKenney becomes editor and publisher of the Blythe *Herald*.

1934

Henderson manages the Pan-American International Air Races of 1934.

1935

Henderson and his brother Phil (business manager of the National Air Races) built the Pan Pacific Civic Auditorium in Los Angeles.

Cliff Henderson was becomes known for his showmanship and promotional talent. He was called a "master of ballyhoo" and a "roman candle promoter." A 1936 National Air Races press release gives Henderson's "genius for organization ... full credit for the development of this great international aviation sports classic" including the original conceptions of the Bendix, Thompson, Shell, and Aerol trophies. National air races were suspended in 1939 due to the outbreak of WWII.

After resigning from the Air Races in 1939, Henderson and his brother Phil managed and promoted sporting and cultural events, expositions, and conventions at the Pan Pacific Civic Auditorium.

In Hollywood, William Boyd was offered the role of Hop-Along Cassidy, named because of a limp caused by an earlier bullet wound. He changed the character to make sure that Hoppy didn't smoke, drink, chew tobacco or swear. He rarely

kissed a girl and always let the "bad-guy" draw first. In his movies, the good guy wore black. The first film was titled *Hopalong Cassidy Enters*.

William Johnson, the President of American Pipe and Construction Company, began to subdivide 440 acres of farmland in the old Palm Village area that he acquired from King Gillette as repayment for a loan. He built about six homes. Johnson might really be called the first developer of Palm Desert.

Johnson hired landscape architect Charles Adams to design the village area. The plan followed Adams earlier design for the city of Beverly Hills with curving streets.

1936

In June, Randall Henderson and McKenney take a weekend trip to the Santa Rosa Mountains. McKenney recalls that it was "one of the most memorable of the many exploring trips we took together. "We left the highway at Pinyon Flats and drove through a rough, narrow, and steep road to the top of the Santa Rosas, stopping at Steve Ragsdale's cabin. We camped the night there. I've never seen the stars more brilliant nor felt the air more bracing. The next morning we walked eastward along the forested ridge, pausing often to marvel at the magnificent panorama of desert and mountains which stretched to the far horizons, north, east and south ... We talked again about starting a magazine, with growing enthusiasm. Our talk ranged from coldly realistic to flights of idealism, from problems of selling advertising space to the values of a poetry page."

Randall tells McKenney, "Let's sell the *Herald* (which the two were co-owners of) and I'll dispose of the *Chronicle*, which will give us limited capital to get started." McKenney agreed.

From where the two men sat at the peak of the mountain, McKenney notes in *Desert Editor* "it seemed possible for us to toss pebbles into the barren desert cove which ten years later became known as Palm Desert. The area below had no special significance to Henderson at the time but in the August 1948 issue of *Desert Magazine* Henderson wrote that the spot that *Desert Magazine* came to be located had a

sentimental interest to him. Henderson wrote in 1948 "It was during a trip on the ridge overlooking the Palm Desert cove that Wilson McKenney and I reached the final decision to launch *Desert Magazine*."

But the Palm Desert location would have to wait. In November of 1937 at El Centro California, they began *Desert Magazine*, what some have called an icon of American Journalism. Although their pride and joy never received any major awards, it was priceless to generations of people who shared the same passion. This jewel was called *Desert Magazine*, and until 1958 (the magazine actually ran to 1985 under different ownerships) they shared their love of the desert with anyone who was willing to listen.

1937

Randall Henderson starts *Desert Magazine*. He gives the mission of the magazine in his first editorial titled "There Are Two Deserts" writing:

"ONE IS A GRIM desolate wasteland. It is the home of venomous reptiles and stinging insects, of vicious thorn-covered plants and trees, and of unbearable heat. This is the desert seen by the stranger speeding along the highway, impatient to be out of 'this damnable country.' It is the desert visualized by those children of luxury to whom any environment is unbearable which does not provide all of the comforts and services of a pampering civilization. It is a concept fostered by fiction writers who dramatize the tragedies of the desert for the profit it will bring them. But the stranger and the uninitiated see only the mask. The other Desert—the *real Desert*—is not for the eyes of the superficial observer, or the fearful soul or the cynic. It is a land, the character of which is hidden except to those who come with friendliness and understanding. To these the Desert offers rare gifts: health-giving sunshine—a sky that is studded with diamonds—a breeze that bears no poison—a landscape of pastel colors such as no artist can duplicate—thorn-covered plants which during countless ages have clung tenaciously to life through heat and drought and wind and the depredations of thirsty animals, and yet each season send forth blossoms of exquisite coloring as a symbol of courage that has triumphed over terrifying obstacles. To those who come to the Desert with friendliness, it gives friendship; to those who come with courage, it gives new

strength of character. Those seeking relaxation find release from the world of man-made troubles. For those seeking beauty, the Desert offers nature's rarest artistry. This is the Desert that men and women learn to love."

* * *

Grace Bradley was now a 23-year-old Hollywood actress meets what she describes as "the man of my dreams." The man is William Boyd. Boyd proposes to her three days after they meet and were married three weeks later on his 42nd birthday.

When the actor phoned Bradley and said, "This is William Boyd," she recalled in a 1976 interview with the Costa Mesa-based *Daily Pilot*, she thought someone who knew about her "mad crush" on Boyd was pulling her leg.

"You mean *the* William Boyd?" she asked.

He laughed – the same distinctively hearty laugh she had heard in his movies – and she was speechless.

"You couldn't miss that laugh," she recalled. "There was no other like it."

The actor invited her to a small party at his beach house in Malibu. And when he arrived at her Beverly Hills townhouse to pick her up, her mother greeted him at the door.

William Boyd was standing at the foot of the stairs when Grace walked down to meet him. He instinctively held out his arms for her, she recalled, "and I walked right into them."

A few months later, Boyd finds a horse for the Hoppy TV series. The horse was pure white, part Arabian and part Morgan. Boyd asks his new wife to name the horse. She dubbed the horse "Topper" after the character in her favorite novel *Topper*.

As Republic Studios director William Witney once put it "She met a Prince Charming on a big white horse."

Tommy and Dorris decide to move to Pacific Palisades to a canyon just up from the ocean. Tommy names the new home Rancho Mesa Potrero. They had a pony, dogs, cats, horses, sheep, goats, pigeons, chickens, peacocks, and rabbits at the place, not all at once but staggered over the years.

Randall Henderson and J. Wilson McKenney found *Desert Magazine* in El Centro. The first issue had 618 subscribers paid in advance and 7,000 copies were printed. As J. Wilson McKenney notes in his book *Desert Editor*, the founding of the magazine was an indirect result of the struggles Henderson and McKenney had publishing newspapers in Calexico *Chronicle* and the Calipatria *Herald*. Henderson often had problems meeting his payrolls and was usually in debt to bankers.

1939

Saturday Evening Post readers are introduced to Marshal South through his article "Desert Refuge." First article by Marshal South in *Desert Magazine* titled "The Campbells of Vallecitos." As Randall Henderson writes in the December 1939 issue of *Desert Magazine* in the "Writers of the Desert" section of the magazine, "Marshal has promised there will be more stories from Yaquitepec for *Desert Magazine* readers in the future. Material from a writer who lives as close to the real desert as Marshal South will be welcomed by our readers." Over the next seven years (until 1947) South would become the most famous writer for the *Desert Magazine* with over 100 articles for the magazine.

South introduced hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people to the desert through his monthly columns. He had a very loyal following, deservedly so. South wrote with a lyric quality, painting word pictures as only a poet or artist could. He wrote with passion about the desert – its silence, beauty and natural history; its healthful qualities; its early inhabitants and their lifestyle.

Marian Marsh marries businessman Albert P. Scott and leaves the movie business in the early 40s. The couple would divorce in the late 50s.

* * *

The Small Tract Land Act of 1938 brings a number of homesteaders out to the desert high to an area east of Twentynine Palms called Wonder Valley. One of the many land acts designed to dispose of "useless" federal lands from the public domain, the Small Tract Act authorized the lease of up to five acres of public land for recreational purpose or use as a home, cabin, camp, health, convalescent, or business site to able-bodied U.S. citizens. If the applicant made the necessary improvements to his or her claim by constructing a small dwelling within three years of the lease, the applicant could file for a patent—the federal government's form of a deed—after purchasing the parcel for the appraised price (on average \$10 to \$20 an acre) at the regional land office. This highly popular mid-century homestead movement reflects the quintessential American desire to claim territory and own a piece of the land even if the property in question is virtually "worthless" from an economic perspective. The homesteads would be later known as "Jackrabbit Homesteads" and today these (mostly abandoned) shacks are scattered throughout Wonder Valley.

1940

Marshall South writes his first column for *Desert Magazine* titled "January at Yaquitepec."

"Desert mystery — and a new year in the dawning. 'It will be a good year,' Tanya says confidently, as she proudly takes a huge tray of golden-brown whole-wheat biscuits out of the great oven. 'Rudyard is two years old, and Rider is six. The garden is ready for spring and the cisterns are full. It will be a good, happy year for work and for writing.' And she sets aside her pan of biscuits to cool while she snatches up a pencil to scribble the first verse of a new poem. Fleeting inspirations must be promptly captured — and she is a conscientious poet as well as a desert housewife. But she is a good prophet also. Yes, it will be a good year." Over the next eight years Marshall South would become the greatest contributor to *Desert Magazine*, authoring a total of 102 articles by 1948.

Early 1940s

During World War II, Henderson again volunteered for service in the Air Corps, rising to the rank of colonel and eventually becoming military commissioner at Dakar in North Africa. He received the Ordre de l'Etoile Noire du Benin from the government of French West Africa for his wartime service. He played an instrumental role in planning the Burma Hump air route.

One day, Henderson's sister Dorris received a notice in the mail that there was something for her to pick up at the post office. Her brother Cliff Henderson (who was stationed in North Africa at the time) sent her a few monkeys in cages. When they let them out, they leaped around screeching through the family trees. And, when the doorbell rang and they had visitors, the monkeys learned it was show-off time and flipped, looped-d-looped and flew through a pepper tree out the back window of the house. The monkeys lasted through two winters but sadly met their demise after a big winter storm.

Clifford and Randall Henderson have a (as Clifford later describes it in a 1974 letter to J. Wilson McKenney) "One in a million" meeting at Accra on the African Gold Coast. As Clifford Henderson says, "Randall told me of his plans to move his desert press from El Centro to Tucson where he had been promised a building lot and possibly some help in securing a construction loan.

1941

Harry Oliver moves to Thousand Palms, California three weeks after Pearl Harbor Day. He passes the duration of World War II growing rubber at Bell Ranch and working with the US Army at Palm Springs Airport. Immediately after the war, he starts producing the *Desert Rat Scrap Book*.

A few days after the December 7 invasion of Pearl harbor, Randall Henderson's son Rand enlists in the Marines, planning to become a writer when out of the Marines.

1942

In February of 1942, General George Patton was given orders to establish the Desert Training Center. There were 11 camps located in the Colorado and Mojave Deserts and 27

separate divisions were trained, both infantry and armored. Two months later, his headquarters at Camp Young was operational. In July of 1942, Patton left Camp Young to plan and command "Operation Torch" the North African campaign.

An important part of the Desert Training Center was the Palm Village Vehicle Pool to repair vehicles involved in the Desert Training Center operation. It was located on both sides of Portola, south of Highway 111 and extended into the mountains in the area of Deep Canyon. The vehicle repair was established shortly after the initial use of Deep Canyon as a practice area for the deployment under attack area where bombs were dropped. A total of 6,000 vehicles and wheeled weapons arrived from the railroad distribution point in Indio and other areas in southern California, Arizona and Nevada. Field guns and tanks, trucks and all vehicles required by the Desert Training Center were maintained here. The weapons and vehicles were ultimately disbursed to training units and divisions overseas.

The administrative offices of the Vehicle Pool consisted of two large tents directly across Portola from the present day Washington Charter School. Most of the personnel stayed in Cathedral City.

The vehicle repair station was extremely important to the total war effort. Officers and soldiers who needed testing and training with equipment in a desert environment were assigned here. Battlefield commanders acquired knowledge of actual use of vehicles and quick repair methods here.

William Johnson sold his interest in the area north of Highway 111 he had originally acquired from King Gillette to Mollin Company and they named the area Palm Village.

1943

General Patton trains troops for desert warfare at Camp Young, east of Indio, and sets up maintenance camp in Palm Village. First residential development begins, in a subdivision called "Palm Village." Site later developed into El Paseo.

After the war, Henderson was suffering from illness and

injuries sustained in Africa, and so went to recuperate in California.

William Boyd, or Hopalong Cassidy, had made 54 films or "Hoppies" as they were called. The original producer Harry Sherman drops the series. But Hoppy produces and stars in 12 more Hoppy films.

Randall Henderson returns to active duty and joins the Air Transport Command and reaches his overseas station at the Accra Air Transport Base on the African Gold Coast (later to become the Republic of Ghana.)

At Accra, he was assigned as Special Services Officer and his duties included arranging for transportation of enlisted men into "the bush" for recreation and exploration. Like his first surveying work on the Indian reservation in the early part of the century, his military work allowed him to study the natives of the Sahara Desert and learned much about the topography and flora of the arid lands. His interest in African desert life were to be reflected in the pages of *Desert Magazine*.

Randall Henderson was in an isolated outpost at Accra and this provided long periods of inactivity that he used to plan the future of *Desert Magazine*. As J. Wilson McKenney notes in his book *Desert Editor*, "His letters during this period indicate that he believed the publishing business should be moved away from city streets (of Calexico where it was currently located) into an area that would more directly symbolize the basic philosophy of the magazine."

From Africa, he wrote to McKenney on November 23, 1943, "I have been mulling over selecting a blank site on one of the most traveled of the southern California desert highways, and there founding our own small desert community, built around the magazine and printing establishment. My thoughts in this case always turn to that link in the desert highway between Coachella and Banning."

1944

In April of 1944, the Army ordered the Desert Training Center closed and the operation was dismantled. Some 6 huge concrete emplacements for tank repair were left standing west of Portola and south of Shadow Mountain Drive after

the Army withdrew its operations.

On July 7, Randall Henderson's Marine son, Randall Jr. (Rand), is killed in Battle of Saipan. His father had long hoped that his son would succeed him in the magazine business and his son's death brought great loneliness to his father. As Henderson writes in the Preface of his book Sun, Sand and Solitude, his son had planned on becoming a writer after his time in the service "because he wanted to crusade for the code of integrity in which he believed." As his father notes, "Rand left a challenging legacy. His bequest was some very pertinent questions for which his father has been seeking the answers for many years. Reduced to their simplest form, he asked: Where did we humans come from? How did we get where we are? What are we here for? And finally, what is our destiny?.0"

On August 29, he writes to McKenney "Naturally, I am formulating a lot of plans for Desert Magazine after I am civilian again, including a possible move to Coachella Valley a little later. I rather doubt if Lucile will be able to sell me the Tucson idea now, despite the fact that I have had that in the back of my mind for many years. The advantages of being close to the heart of this great southern California population loom very large in my thinking just now."

On October 20, Randall Henderson receives an honorable discharge from the services. He returns to southern California and explores prospects for where to relocate *Desert Magazine*. He explored a location near Cabazon in San Gorgonio Pass but considered it not adequate. He explored an area near the present Thunderbird Cove but felt that expensive terracing would be needed to improve building and parking space.

He wrote a long letter to the Mollin Investment Company of Los Angeles which was selling homesites in the subdivision called Palm Village. But he never mailed the letter and ended up driving into the Pan Pacific Auditorium in Los Angeles to talk to his brothers Cliff and Phil. He recalled his brother and his brief conversation about his search for a site for Desert Magazine when they met in Africa in the service. McKenney writes in his book *Desert Editor* that "At this time he had no indication of Cliff's potential interest in investment or development of the desert area."

He shows his brothers the un-mailed letter to Mollin and his brother Cliff's response (according to McKenney's files from Randall Henderson) was "Would you make the same proposal to Phil and me?"

According to McKenney, Cliff and Phil Henderson asked to see detailed maps of the various areas under consideration by their brother Randall. The interest of the brothers grew and the three brothers travelled out to the desert in November and met on the proposed land. The brothers asked Randall to obtain 1,620 acres for possible subdivision.

In November, Henderson and McKenney move their publishing operation of Desert magazine from El Centro to Palm Desert.

1945

On February 1, Clifford Henderson writes Randall, "I will be very anxious to hear any further concerning the 80 acres to the east and the quarter-section adjoining our present 160 acres towards the mountains. These two parcels would complete the picture as far as we are concerned."

According to McKenney in his *Desert Editor*, the three brothers kept in close touch over the next few months and met occasionally at the site to discuss details of their mutual interests. At one of these meetings, reports McKenney, they talked about a name for a new town in the area. Randall wanted the word "Desert" to be included in the name and Phil said, "Why not call it Palm Desert?"

Associated with Cliff and Phil Henderson in the Pan Pacific Auditorium in Los Angeles were Edgar Bergen, Leonard Firestone, Harold Lloyd, Oscar Trippet, William Stewart and other well-known men in the financial and amusement community in Los Angeles. Cliff told his associates about investment opportunities in Coachella Valley and invited them to become members of a syndicate for the promotion of these opportunities. They agreed to assist in the venture. As McKenney notes, Clifford proudly stated later that in one evening at Leonard Firestone's home a quarter-million dollars was subscribed for their new desert venture.

Clifford Henderson comes out to the Palm Village ranch as the guest of radio performer and ventriloquist Edgar

Bergen. The Bergen ranch and house was a working ranch with grapes and alfalfa and also served as the vacation home of the Bergen family. The home was built in 1937 and the ranch was located along the southern edge of the Whitewater drainage. The California ranch house had a low-pitched gable roof with wide overhangs. A porch supported 5 posts extended nearly the entire length of the 3,000 square foot wood frame and stucco structure. There were formal gardens with date and orchid trees and roses located around the home and nearby pool.

When Cliff Henderson visits the Bergen Ranch, he almost immediately began to dream about his fated city with the illustrious (El Paseo) avenue. Bergen, who had a ranch east of Thunderbird, talked Cliff and his brother Randall into developing the 1,600 acres used by General Patton's tank repair facility during the war.

Cliff formed Palm Desert Corporation, with Bergen and Leonard Firestone listed among the directors. Other directors were Justin Dart, E.L. Cord, Harold Lloyd, Frank Biveley, Earl Coffman, Emmett Jones, Henry Kink, Dr. John Lordan, Alden Roach, Stephen Royce, Donald Russ, Carl Spuier, William Stewart Jr. and Oscar Trippett. Fire Cliff Lodge and the Shadow Mountain Club, several office buildings, and a few homes were built. Thirty years later this area would become the city of Palm Desert.

As McKenney notes in *Desert Editor*, Randall never became a direct participant in the Palm Desert Corporation having neither uncommitted financial resources or interest in land promotion. He confined himself to his editorial work and planning for the *Desert Magazine* plant and adjacent housing for his staff.

Clifford Henderson later recalls (in a 1974 letter to J. Wilson McKenney) "After some ten healthful days at the Bergin ranch, I became imbued with the protected beauty of the cove south of Highway 111 and extending to the base of the Santa Rosas. With that interest, I made the trek to the County Courthouse at Riverside and made notes from the existing tax bills as to the owners of the several parcels of land south of State Highway 111 in this area."

Cliff and his investor friends paid an average of \$26 per acre for 17 parcels. Water was still their largest

challenge. They dug their first well at 612 feet and eventually six others were added to supply growing demands. Cliff had lofty plans for Palm Desert. Twenty miles of streets and water mains were built before a lot was sold. He was brash enough to cover all this property with a property owner's association with contract covenants and restrictions. He wanted a class development. All of the four Henderson brothers became involved with the project: Phil administered, Carl sold, Randall preserved and Cliff promoted and developed.

Henderson remembered his brother Randall's desire to move his magazine to Tucson and calls him and urges him to come to the Bergin ranch before he went back to El Centro where the magazine was being published at the time. Randall comes to the Bergin ranch meeting and Clifford promises to provide him land in Palm Desert for a Desert Magazine Building and publishing plant if he alters his plans and moves to Palm Desert. Randall agreed.

* * *

The *Desert Rat Scrap Book* started by former Oscar-winning Hollywood set designer Harry Oliver. The *DRSB* was a (roughly) quarterly of southwestern desert humor based in Thousand Palms, California adjacent to Palm Desert. *DRSB* was published in editions of 10,000 to 20,000 copies, whenever Oliver had sufficient material, and money enough to pay the printer. Forty-six issues were printed and distributed via Southern California bookstores and newsstands, and by mail worldwide. *DRSB* was devoted to lore, legends, lies and laughs of the American Southwest region, especially featuring prospectors and other desert rats. The publication was launched in late 1945 and ran through early 1967.

Harry Oliver was an eccentric desert philosopher who product was a unique five-page folder, printed on heavy paper and sprinkled with droll illustrations out of the ephemora of the past. He founded the Liar's Club and promoted legends about the lost gold of Peg-Leg Smith.

Harry Oliver observed a few years later in 1948, "When you've been here in the Desert a few years you find yourself talking to yourself. After a few more years you find yourself talking to the lizards. Then in another

couple of years you find the lizards talking to you. When you find yourself stealing their amazing tales you are about ready to start a Desert paper."

* * *

In the July issue of *Desert Magazine*, appears the article "Desert Refuge" by Marshal South that is perhaps one of the most lyrically beautiful articles to ever appear in *Desert Magazine*. It is about a day trip where the South family followed the beckoning of the wind to find an Indian ruins among the rocks that were once home to Indians. Marshall called it the House Forgotten.

"The sun sparkled upon the mountains," begins the article. "Against the gleam of the desert sky, flecked by a few lacy veils of white that had been flung aside by the waking dawn, the first blooms of the ocotillos swung in splashes of scarlet. Through the swaying junipers the desert wind walked, talking to itself and crooning snatches of forgotten songs as it plucked at the harp strings of the wire grass. 'Come with me,' whispered the wind. 'Come with me and I will show you something. Come.' "

The article talks about how the family "took a canteen of water and a little package of food and shut the door of Yaquitepec behind us and set out on the heels of the wind." After awhile, they came upon the ruins in the boulders they came upon what Marshall called "House Forgotten."

"It wasn't much of a house," he writes in the article. "Even when it had been occupied, it could never have been anything more than a crude shelter. But to someone, or some family, it had been home. And to any home, however crude, there always is an aura of sentiment."

The article talks about how they spent the day exploring House Forgotten and then headed back home – to their own House Forgotten – in the evening.

"The desert was waking to the cool of the evening. Under the buttes and out from the deep gorges the shadow dancers were already shaking their sable mantles. A long way off an investigative coyote lifted his quavering note. The ravens were flopping homeward, flying heavily and commenting upon our progress with sardonic 'wauks.' A stubby tailed rock

python, his glassy blue metallic length half out from the protection of a mesquite clump, watched us as we passed and flickered a speculative tongue. Down a tiny, well worn chipmunk trail, an old brown tarantula moved, while from beneath a gnarled juniper a soft-eyed little antelope squirrel sat up from its meal of berries and squatted erect upon its haunches, watching like a friendly elf in a fur coat, the procession of queer two-legged beings that tramped past."

Then, as Marshal South writes in his article, "Our friend the wind overtook us" from "coming back to spend the night wandering on the ridges and playing his harp among the rocks and junipers."

"Well," said the wind as South writes, "didn't I promise to show you something?" And the wind then laughed. "You know, someday someone is going to discover the ruins of your house. And find bits of pottery and speculate learnedly upon it and decide that you were creatures of a very primitive order."

Back at their crude home that night on top of Ghost Mountain, Marshal South remembers what the wind has said to him. "As I barred the shutters and tied down the covers of the water barrels, I knew that the wind was right. Someday, someone will come and speculate and search amidst the ruins of Yaquitepec. And will exclaim over the pottery chips and the few thin relics of another House Forgotten."

It was a premonition of what was soon to come. In a year, the family would exit their primitive House Forgotten and file for divorce. And, a few years later, Marshal South would be dead.

1946

By end of World War II, there were six houses along Highway 111, including that of Edgar Bergen (and Charlie McCarthy).

Duchess Emerson, daughter of Dorris Henderson Tomson recalls, "On a June day in 1946 I well recall standing in the middle of nothing but sand with my family, when Cliff said in a loud, clear voice that this would one day be the 'smartest address on the American desert.' I thought he'd gone crazy, but at age nine little did I know my uncle's

enthusiasm and energy for anything to which he set his mind."

Duchess Emerson continues, "Because there was no place to stay in what was named Palm Desert, my dad realized that he'd be needing somewhere to hang our hats, often. He'd heard about some homesteading acreage not far away in the Cahuilla Hills area west of Highway 74." On a hot June day, Tommy put on his boots, shorts and a straw hat and started walking east from Highway 74 up into the hills hoping to find the perfect five-acre plot that he could claim. The government wanted only \$5 an acre but those claiming a stake needed to make a \$500 improvement on the property within five years.

Tommy Tomson found a good area by a large pile of rocks that were hot enough to fry eggs on and decided that this was the spot. He completed the government paperwork and began planning what he wanted to build. He mustered a lot of help and up went a house made of railroad ties.

As Duchess Emerson recalls, "Before we knew it, we had a roof over our heads and some old Navy bunks painted the color of the local lichen – chartreuse – a couple of built in divans, a huge rock fireplace, and down two steps to a tiny kitchen with a bar where we could sit to eat. Behind the bar was a counter for the Coleman stove, dishes and next to this was an honest to goodness icebox." Tommy put a WWII surplus airplane gas tank on top of the roof to provide water for the plants. The water they drank had to be hauled in via gallon bottles. At night, the family had Coleman lanterns and the fire in the fireplace.

The family, still living in Pacific Palisades, went down to what had become to be known as Hot Rocks every weekend except summer. When they went down to their desert home, they stopped in Cathedral City to get a big block of ice and fuel for the lanterns and stove as well as a supply of food as there were not much of anything in Palm Desert except sand.

Tommy Tomson's Hot Rocks provide what his daughter Duchess remembers as a "gorgeous view of the whole desert." It became quite a popular place to be over the next few months and years. As Duchess recalls, "People couldn't believe such a place existed, but when they got there they marveled at Tommy's ingenuity in building such a cabin in the

rocks." In those years, often visitors had to sleep in on the Mexican tile floors in sleeping bags or up on top of the Hot Rocks rock pile.

In 1946 the National Air races were resumed. The postwar races, however, were much different without Henderson's management. They were also affected by changing times and technology, including jet, rocket, and supersonic aircraft. Ever-faster speeds began to make closed-course races dangerous and, eventually, obsolete. This fact was underscored by a tragic crash in 1949 in Cleveland that caused public concern, thereby leading to changes in the format and location of the races. In 1950 the Bendix transcontinental dash from Los Angeles to Cleveland and the Thompson free-for-all pylon race were discontinued, marking the end of a colorful era in aviation history.

The October 8, 1946 the *LA Times* reported that Randall Henderson acquired 40 acres on which he planned to locate two colonies: the first was for 40 employees of his publishing and printing business and the second for artists, writers and photographers.

The first market in Palm Village, Palm Village Market, opens in March of 1946. It was located near the Gillette Ranch irrigation reservoir that used a gravity flow northward toward the grape, date and grapefruit orchards. Bob Keedy was the manager of the store and always had fresh produce. Meat for the store was packaged in Huntington Park or at a Santa Anita Oaks store. Keedy always had bacon and butter in the store when the other stores in the valley were out of these products.

Phil Henderson dies from a heart attack on the Labor Day weekend. It was a huge blow to Clifford Henderson as the two had been partners in the development of the Pan Pacific property in Los Angeles. As Clifford Henderson later recalls (in his 7/11/74 letter to J. Wilson McKenney, "God only knows how I have missed my brother Phil every day of my life since his passing. He would have been a full partner in the new desert venture had he lived. As little boys of 6 and 8, we had earned our first pennies and nickels in Shenandoah, Iowa where our father had a drug store."

On July 14, the first post office opens in Palm Desert, followed by a fire station, church, library and pharmacy. Getting a post office in Palm Desert was a key event in its development.

A second and larger Palm Village Market was opened in a building nearby the first Village Market. Bob Keedy remained manager of the new store for three years. It was a full-service grocery market.

Randall Henderson is elected as Honorary Vice President of the Sierra Club "in recognition of his efforts to acquaint the public with the values of deserts through his writings and publications." Francis Farquhar, the Sierra Club president who made the nomination, said he believed Randall Henderson was "a sincere conservationist in the true Sierra Club tradition."

Firecliff Lodge opens. It becomes the first great attraction in the area for visitors. It was a venture between Clifford Henderson and Leonard Firestone.

* * *

The beginning of the famous White Sun Desert Ranch in Rancho Mirage. The Dengler family drives out to Rancho Mirage from Pasadena on March 17 so that Jack Dengler can sign escrow papers to purchase "The Eleven Mile Ranch" on Magnesia Falls Road in Rancho Mirage. The owner was Colonel Hainer who had taken over the property in the early 1940s in hopes of making it into a guest ranch but discovered the project was too much for his frail health.

The ranch was started by William Everett who staked a claim for it in 1925 calling his homestead "The Eleven Mile Ranch" since it bisected the distance between stagecoach stops in Palm Springs and Indio. Everett planted grapefruit trees on the land and had good crops for a few years but a frost killed all the trees and he sold the ranch to Southland Land and Realty who wanted to establish an Egyptian-style subdivision that would be a reincarnation of the Nile Valley with camels, colorful tents and belly dancers. But their plans vanished in the crash of 1929. The third owner Harry Jones leased the place to Doctor Earl Tarr who ran it as a school for asthmatic children until

Will Rogers agreed to finance buying the ranch for Tarr's school. When Rogers was killed in a plane crash in 1935, the future of the place seemed doomed. But a loyal group of Rogers' Hollywood friends like Gary Cooper, Mary Pickford, Norma Shearer, Basil Rathbone and Tom Mix contributed money to keep the school going until 1941 when WWII drained away the school's teaching staff. The ranch was then purchased by Colonel Hainer who had a dream of making the property into a guest ranch.

1948

The Shadow Mountain Club opens. Background recap. As World War II began, Gen. George Patton and his troops descended on the area, as it was a perfect training ground for the soldiers bound for the North African desert. Uniformed soldiers filled city streets and along with their wives, moved into downtown hotels. After World War II ended, Patton's troops had long folded their tents and wheeled away in jeeps leaving just tracks in the sands midway between Palm Springs and Indio.

With an upswing in the economy, developer Cliff Henderson and his brother Randall had visions for this tract of empty desert as they literally began drawing new lines in the sand that later became the thriving resort city of Palm Desert.

One of Henderson's first developments was Shadow Mountain Club, a mid-century modern stone, wood and glass clubhouse that half circled a gigantic figure-eight swimming pool. The recreational facility officially opened in December 1948 with a spectacular aquatics show. Club members and stockholders were courted with tours, parties and special events. With high dives, water slides and metal mushroom umbrellas, the pool and clubhouse perched overlooking the desert surrounded by snow-capped mountains. This breathtaking view was and still is an icon for attracting investors, businesses and residents to Palm Desert.

The club drew celebrities, presidents, and future residents. Designed by Tom Douglas of Hollywood, the original brick clubhouse was surrounded by a lake, polo field, racetrack and 18 miles of paved roads. It was home to cottages, a golf course, tennis courts and stables. The

long, low structure had large, stone fireplace wall, restaurant and bar with wide windows that looked out onto the pool below. Cabanas flanked each side of the pool that was enhanced with high diving boards and slides. The club provided the single best source for immediate visual recognition of the benefits available to the new residents of Palm Desert and became a potent real estate exhibit as well as the most popular and exciting entertainment destination for movie stars, politicians and families from the surrounding community.

Year-round living was touted as early as 1956 when Shadow Mountain's July *Sun Spots* newsletter featured the "huge pool a focus of summertime activity." Duchess Emerson recalls that, "The Shadow Mountain Club opening coincided with the advent of the Hot Rocks so many a Saturday we all went down there for marvelous evenings of dining and dancing to Art and Dotty Todd's great music. All ages gathered there in those days and a true family club it was. We ranged in age from ten to the eighties; our dance partners could be each other's parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts or friends. I recall a terrific square dance with a full of vim and vigor octogenarian."

About this this, as Duchess Emerson recalls, the Tomsom family lost their Palisades home to a slide in the canyon. The family moved up the coast to Malibu and found a Cape Cod home on the beach that was affordable. Tommy named the beach house Yacht House and he built a neat little raft and anchored it out in the ocean where he could sit and think of the Kontiki crossing the Pacific.

As his daughter Duchess recalls, "Always, his incredible imagination nudged him onward and upward. The beach life helped to stem our great sadness over the loss of the family home. And then, the desert became even more important to our family. Dad had a new big dream – of retiring to hard work – building a Spanish hacienda. Which he did build."

Cliff Henderson begins real estate development north of Highway 111, under the name "The Palm Desert Corporation." His brother Randall Henderson moves his publication, "The Desert Magazine" into the first commercial building in the area, still standing, at the southeast corner of El Paseo and Highway 111. Cliff Henderson opens the Shadow Mountain

Club, which attracts celebrities and publicity to the area.

In a precedent-setting move, William Boyd buys the rights to all of his Hoppy pictures. He thus secures the rights to the name "Hopalong Cassidy" and forms a company called "Hopalong Cassidy Productions." To help raise the \$350,000 to purchase the rights, the Boyds sold their ranch home north of Malibu and moved into an apartment in Hollywood. "We were," Grace Boyd recalled in a 1991 interview with *The LA Times*, "down to absolutely nothing."

The 17,000-square-foot Desert Magazine Building opens. A huge entrance held a massive wooded door and carved above the door were the words "Friend or Stranger, You Are Welcome Here." It was the first commercial structure to be completed on the south side of Highway 111 opens in October. Designed in Pueblo Revival architecture style, it housed the printing and publishing offices of *Desert Magazine*, an art gallery, gem shop and bookstore. John Hilton painted a mural in the office and exhibit room. Evonne Riddell, daughter of Randall Henderson, managed the bookstore. It also served as headquarters for the first local newspaper, the first federal post office authorized for Palm Desert, the first local bank (a branch of the Bank of America). Over the years, many groups and community organizations – including the local choir and a little theater group – met inside the building.

The first apartment building in Palm Desert opened in 1948 next to the Desert Magazine Building. It was built by Randall Henderson to house the staff of the Desert Magazine. Five apartments, each with two bedrooms and a bath, were arranged around a pool in the center courtyard. The apartments are the site of the current restaurant Jillians.

A subsidiary business to the publishing of *Desert Magazine* was Desert Press. It confirmed Randall's earlier analysis that orders would come from a distance because of the strong mail order part of the business. Leland Quick brought his *Lapidary Journal* account to the press and rented a space in the new *Desert Magazine* building. One of the early customers of the Desert Press was Harry Oliver and his *Desert Rat Scrapbook*.

In March of 1948, the entire 440 acres that Johnson had

acquired from Gillette was subdivided. Mollin Company sold their interest in the Palm Village area to I.C. Stevens of Palm Springs.

* * *

Marshal South dies in a trailer in Julian, California on October 22, 1948 of heart failure and is buried in an unmarked grave in El Cajon. Marshal wrote Henderson and told him that he was "very weak, but if a cure is possible the desert will do it." He told Henderson that he was working on two new articles. A month later, on October 22, he died. He was 59 years old. *Desert Magazine* announces Marshal's death in the December 1948 issue, which included his last published story. Henderson's final comments are particularly apt in understanding South:

"He was a dreamer – an impractical visionary according to the standards of our time, but what a drab world it would be without the dreamers. Marshal's tragedy was that he tried too hard to fulfill his dream. He would not compromise. And that is fatal in a civilization where life is a never-ending compromise between the things we would like to do and the obligations imposed by the social and economic organization of which we are a part."

"Marshal wanted to live a natural life...so he moved out to Ghost Mountain to be as close to Nature as possible. If he had been a hermit that would have worked very well. But Marshal was not a hermit by nature. He wanted to raise a family – and impose upon his family his own unconventional way of life."

"Therein lay the weakness of his philosophy. He despised the rules and taboos of the society he had left behind, and immediately set up a new and even more restrictive code for his own household. And therein lies the explanation of the break in the South family life..."

"Marshal's magazine stories were popular because of the beautiful prose with which he expressed the dreams which are more or less in the hearts of all imaginative people. Those of us who knew him well, felt for him the respect that is always due a man with the courage of his

convictions. We'll miss his stories of the desert trails. We will remember him for the artistry with which he expressed ideals we all share.

"

Marshal's wife Tanya raised the children, who all grew up to lead very successful lives. She continues writing her poetry for *Desert Magazine* until Henderson stepped down as editor in 1959. Her name is found on 202 poems in the magazine.

However, a different perspective is given on Marshall South by western historian Peter Wild in his book Marshall South of Yaquitepec. Wild sees South as the type of icon that readers of *Desert Magazine* needed to as well as a force for promotion of the magazine that Randall Henderson needed. As Wild writes in his book, "He was popular in his day because he held out a romance easily digestible and coming with the immediate sugar rush of yearned-for treacle. In short, Marshall South offered simple answers in the midst of tumultuous times." And, Wild notes, that "In a parallel life, the man who peached peace, love, and gentleness towards the earth and all its creatures also was cranking out lurid pulp fiction, tales laced with violence, particularly with abuse to women."

As Wild notes towards the end of his book, "Despite all of the overwhelming evidence contrary to the popular image Marshall South projected, he continues to have thousands of admirers ... who, I suspect, base their adoration of the man far more on what they enjoy imagining him to have been than on an informed understanding of his life and writings."

1949

William Boyd acquires his older pictures from Paramount Studios in 1949 and sells them to television stations. The first TV station to show a Hoppy movie was KTLA-TV in Los Angeles. There were 66 feature movies and 52 half-hour television shows. Over the next few years, Boyd marketed all sorts of products and received royalties from his comic books, radio and records. Approximately 2,400 products were endorsed by Hoppy. The most valuable was probably the

Hopalong Cassidy tricycle.

As America's first real television hero, the wise and tough cowboy with the friendly grin became a show business phenomenon.

Boyd, as Hoppy, appears on the covers of *Life*, *Time* and *Look* magazines. During a 26-city tour, a million fans turn out to see him.

Grace Boyd recalls in a 1976 interview that that she "made a point of being in the background." She says, "As far as the kids were concerned, Hoppy was Hoppy. He didn't have a wife or family. When the young ones would ask who I was I'd say I'm Hoppy's mommy."

The first volunteer fire company was organized by Bob Keedy who was Chief of Volunteers and Kay Olesen who was Captain.

* * *

Randall Henderson marries Cyria, a talented sculptress.

* * *

Tanya South writes "A Sequel to Ghost Mountain" for the April 1949 issue of *Desert Magazine*, telling readers how well the children are doing since they left the mountain. The below note offers such a contrast to the beginning article of Marshal South in *Desert Magazine* in 1940 when he began reporting their primitive lifestyle away from civilization on Ghost Mountain.

"We have pleasant comfort in a light, airy four-room apartment on the summit of a steep hill. Our pooch, the frisky Ginger, is a definitive personality in our household, and our four large tortoises are now waking up from their long sleep. I passed a Civil Service examination. To date, I am tapping typewriter keys. God has been very bountiful with love and mercy, and fruits thereof. Adios, good friends, and warmest regards!"

1950

The Palm Desert Fire Control Station was built. It was the only building west of Highway 74 and the first permanent firehouse in Palm Desert. It was built on land donated on

El Paseo for this. Today, it houses the Palm Desert Historical Society.

The Sun Lodge Colony of ten acres was completed and originally consisted of 35 cottages (ultimately 60). Clifford Henderson and his financial backers developed the colony. It was bounded by Shadow Mountain on the South, San Pablo on the West, El Paseo on the North and Larkspur Lane on the East. The units were one story vernacular wood frame and brick and concrete block with gabled roofs and attached garages and wide picture windows. They were situated in expansive landscaped lawns, pools and drives. The pool became a gathering spot for owners who used the homes on weekends or as second homes. The Sun Lodge Colony area today is home to the exclusive Gardens on El Paseo, the center of the world famous shopping area.

Randall Henderson in the "Just Between You and Me Column" of *Desert Magazine* in September of 1950 writes "Probably we will have more visitors than ever in desert country this fall. Hope these visitors will not spend all their time in the pampering environment of luxury resorts. For it is in the secluded canyons and remote mountains that the medicine gods of the desert country hold their clinics."

Randall Henderson ventures with three friends into the mountainous terrain known as The Pinacates across the Arizona border in the Mexican state of Sonora. The Pinacates were at the base of a tortuous range of black lava and pitted with hundreds of craters, believed to be the residue of a volcanic inferno. As Henderson writes in *Sun, Sand and Solitude*, "Four of us went into this region in two jeeps. Our access was over Camino del Diablo, the Devil's Highway, from Yuma, Arizona. This old trail was trodden originally by Mexican prospectors who were lured to California by the discovery of placer gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848." Their destination was Crater Elegante, the largest of the estimated five hundred craters in this region.

Having four-wheel-drive vehicles, Henderson writes "We found a route down the precipitous wall to the bottom of the crater, and our altimeter registered a depth of 610 feet from the rim above to a little playa in the bottom of the pit. Near the base of a cluster of senita cactus stalks

we piled a little cairn of stones, and in a plastic container deposited a record of our descent."

1951

Palm Village and Palm Desert officially merge into "Palm Desert."

The *Lapidary Journal* and its Editor Leland Quick move into the Desert Magazine Building.

1953

William Boyd (Hopalong Cassidy) and his wife Grace retire to Palm Desert where they build their winter home, painting it black and white, their favorite colors. Grace Boyd has by this time acquired the name "Tripalong" because being a tiny lady, she had to take at least two steps to every one of her 6' tall husband's long strides.

In his years in Palm Desert, Hoppy could easily be recognized as he drove his white Cadillac around Palm Desert, stopping at Ed Mullin's pharmacy & fountain joining the early morning coffee crowd to solve the problems of the day. Saturday mornings, Hoppy would come to the pharmacy to greet the children and their parents and pass out wooden coins with his name and picture on them. He even participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony when a new frontage road opened. He didn't use scissors. Rather, he shot it apart with his trusty six-shooter.

Development in Palm Desert by March of 1953, seven years after construction first began to develop Palm Desert there are 30 miles of roads, 150 homes completed (another 24 underway), 14 hotels representing investments in excess of \$3.5 million.

1954

Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce incorporated.

In the Spring, McKenney joins Randall Henderson and two other men for an exploration trip into the mountains of Baja California. The group's Mexican drivers dropped them off in a pine and juniper forest of the Sierra Juarez, a

plateau about twenty miles south of Rumarosa, a tiny settlement on the Mexical-Tijuana road. The 4,000-foot descent was much rougher than the group anticipated. McKenney saw Randall was exhausted. At 66 years old, he was having a hard time keeping up with men in their 40s.

Henderson turned to his old publishing partner and said, "Mac, there must come a time in every man's life when he must know that he has reached the end of his trail. He must find easier and safer routes to get where he must go. I think in this hour I've come near the end of my trail."

Randall Henderson founds the Desert Protective Council, a grassroots organization that promote, celebrates and protects the natural and cultural wonders of California's southwest deserts through education, advocacy, and science.

1955

According to the Shadow Mountain Club's newsletter *Sun Spots*, on Christmas day in 1955, Hoppy and Topper (his famous movie horse) gave a Christmas party for all the children in the Coachella Valley. Nearly 1,800 came, including parents. Autographs were signed for all the children who wanted on and anyone wanting to have a picture taken astride Topper were quickly boosted into the saddle.

The Palm Desert Lodge, the "Pink Motel" was built along Highway 111. In front of the pink-colored building was a large neon sign. The motel was set back from the highway and surrounded by green lawns, a pool and palm trees. Some of the guests would stop at the local market and buy supplies to make a meal in their kitchenettes.

Desert Protective Council founded with Randall Henderson as one of the incorporators. Originally, it was to preserve the integrity of Joshua Tree National Monument which later became protected as a National Park. The original mission was "To safeguard for wise and reverent use by this and succeeding generations, those desert areas of unique, scenic, scientific, historical, spiritual and recreational value, and to educate by all appropriate means children and adults to a better understanding of the desert."

Randall Henderson becomes restive about providing a manager for his publishing enterprise because he wanted to work on

what he called "The Book."

1956

Year-round living at Shadow Mountain was touted as early as 1956 when Shadow Mountain's July Sun Spots newsletter featured the "huge pool a focus of summertime activity."

1957

Bing Crosby purchases 16 acres south of Highway 111 that was later to be called the Silver Spur Ranch.

1958

Bing Crosby moves into his home in the Silver Spur area. President John Kennedy was to visit the Crosby home on various occasions. Crosby becomes honorary Mayor of Palm Desert at a big bash held at Shadow Mountain in 1958 with Edgar Bergen, William (Hopalong Cassidy) Boyd and their wives attending. Water ballets, diving and aquatics shows in the famous figure eight pool, dinner and dances, fashion shows, and on-property movies were standard fare of entertainment during this era and included such stars as Esther Williams. The Ironwood Country Club home now surrounds the Crosby home.

The Sandpiper Condominiums began construction on 55 acres west of Highway 74 and south of current El Paseo. The original concept was of a resort hotel service with residential privacy but the hotel was never built. The intent of the builders was to provide carefree and elegant living in full view of the surrounding mountains and desert. The development was featured in many high profile magazines and often photographed and received many architectural awards. With the Sandpiper project, the young city of Palm Desert gained fashionable and convenient housing and served as an example of excellence in urban housing and landscape planning.

College of the Desert founded and plans to build a campus through bond issues totaling \$5.5 million.

Randall Henderson places *Desert Magazine* for sale and finds a buyer for it in Charles Shelton. Randall had reached his 70th birthday and was slowing down. But perhaps more important was that a different type of person was coming

down to the California desert. As McKenney observes in *Desert Editor*, after the WWII, the tastes of people who turned to the desert for recreation differed widely from the modes and patterns of those who supported Henderson's original editorial credo. The new crop of readers – not necessarily desert residents – liked the uninhibited style of the new writers and were attracted to the large four-color photographic pages of the new *Desert Magazine* after Randall Henderson's years of publishing it.

Selling the magazine allowed Henderson to continue work on "The Book" a fictional socio-economic book that posited a Utopian community. Henderson would continue working on the book over the next years even after it was rejected by Knopf in 1964. It eventually came to be a 327-page manuscript.

* * *

The Anza-Borrego Desert State Park acquires acquires the old Ghost Mountain property of the Souths called Yaquitepec. Curious desert explorers begin hiking the trail up to the primitive old home, off San Diego County Highway S-2, to view the ruins. Invariably they ask themselves why someone would have chosen to live in such a dry desolate area with small children for all of those years?

A one-mile-long steep trail from the southern edge of Blair Valley, in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, leads up to the site on a flat just below the top of the mountain. The skeletal remains of the house still stand: a rusted bed frame, the base of a large adobe oven, the frame for an arched doorway, and the many cement and barrel cisterns that once caught the seasonal rainfall, the only water available other than what was hauled up the trail.

Holiday Realty Corporation founded in September by Dick Coffin. One of the first large real estate companies.

1960

The new city of Palm Desert has 3,000 residents, with the population doubling every 3 1/2 years. Celebrities like Ike and Mamie Eisenhower, Harold Lloyd, Fred Waring, David Janssen, Gerald and Betty Ford make Palm Desert their home.

Cliff Henderson marries Marian Marsh. One of the early sound era's most attractive young leading ladies, doll-faced Marian Marsh enjoyed a short yet significant film career as the star of several memorable 1930s melodramas opposite some of the cinema's best, most charismatic lead actors. In her heyday, she was described as "the perfect story-book heroine [whose] innocence, delicate beauty and vulnerability made an audience want to protect her from the lascivious, lustful fiends who were drawn to her."

Her youthful, wide-eyed innocence combined with an innate delicacy to make a storybook heroine who was the perfect counterbalance to the licentious characters who often menaced her on film. So successful was she as a damsel in distress that she quickly became typecast, which impeded her development as an actress and helped bring her film career to a premature end.

Born Violet Ethelred Krauth on the island of Trinidad, she moved to California during World War I with her mother and three siblings. She appeared in more than 40 motion pictures, but was best known as actress Marian Marsh, the doll-faced 1930s film star who played the teen milkmaid Trilby mesmerized by John Barrymore in "Svengali."

Mariane discovered the desert in the late 1920s with her brother Tony when they would drive out from LA to the Coachella Valley. They would hike the mountains and canyons, enjoying the primitive, untouched beauty of the desert.

During her movie breaks, she would always come out to the El Mirador Hotel in Palm Springs. She recalls (in her 1997 interviews) "I stayed in a bungalow closest to the pool. There was a party almost every night. It was heavenly. We played tennis, took drives and rode horses and went hiking." She would attend all the big parties at Charlie Ferrell's Racquet Club in Palm Springs. "It was the perfect place for relaxation for the stars. Everyone there was more or less famous and we were all young and very happy. Our conversations centered around pictures, agents, directors and studios. We were all in the same boat and had the same feelings."

* * *

A few months before the end of his presidency, Eisenhower and his wife Mamie were visiting the desert, which they had grown fond of. On Sunday, Oct. 23, 1960, the Secret Service showed up to scout out the Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church, which was then located on Portola Avenue, he said.

Local residents filled up the sanctuary, leaving many to stand outside.

"And then the moment arrived," Orr said. "The presidential limo headed up Portola and stopped at the curb. Secret Service agents suddenly appeared – and then out stepped the Eisenhowers."

He said a hush fell over the congregation as the couple entered.

"The crowd rose on an unspoken signal in respect as Ike and Mamie were ushered to seats in the front row," Orr said.

When Eisenhower left office at the age of 70, he decided to make Palm Desert his winter home.

"The congregation at first rose spontaneously whenever the Eisenhowers arrived, but within a short time Ike requested their attendance not be announced in advance and that the congregation remain seated when they arrived and exited," he said.

The Eisenhowers have a home on the Eldorado Country Club given to them as a gift and they spend the winters in Palm Desert.

* * *

In November, Randall Henderson is among the 18,000 persons who drive out to California's Death Valley National Monument for the Annual Encampment of the Death Valley '49ers. The '49ers are Westerners organized to perpetuate the historical traditions of hardihood and courage exemplified by those doughty Americans who trekked westward to the newly discovered gold fields of California in 1849 and the following years.

The 1960 program was of special interest because it included the dedication of the new million-dollar museum financed jointly by the State of California and the

National Park Service. But, as Henderson writes in Sun, San and Solitude, "Actually, the 1,907,000 acres in the Death Valley Monument themselves comprise a colossal outdoor museum. Their geology reveals much of the story of the evolution of the planet over a period of millions of years, and the artifacts from ancient beach lines tell much about the aboriginal life of its first human inhabitants."

1961

William Boy's horse Topper dies after a Rose Parade appearance. Hoppy never replaced him. He felt no other horse would be as gentle around children.

Palm Desert's first tennis courts opened at Shadow Mountain in 1961 and have been host to many famous tennis and sports figures throughout the years.

Palm Desert has a population of 4,600 and an assessed valuation of \$14 million.

Randall Henderson publishes "On Desert Trails, Yesterday and Today."

The first "Golf Cart Parade" is held.

* * *

Marian Marsh Henderson founds Desert Beautiful, a non-profit, all-volunteer conservation organization to promote environmental and beautification programs. "We planted palm trees along the West Coast and were the first to plant palms in the lower valley [Coachella] to Palm Springs. If you want to leave something behind, plant a tree!" she told author Dan Van Neste in a 1998 interview.

"Cathedral City was the most messy city ever," she told the Desert Sun in 1999. "Every single vacant lot had broken-down cars just dumped on all of them."

As the group's president, she organized volunteers to collect rubbish on vacant lots and other desert sites, initiated an early recycling program and encouraged developers and city and county officials to include greenbelts, trees and shrubbery on their properties.

1962

Classes begin at the new College of the Desert.

1964

Jack Pepper, the new owner of *Desert Magazine* after Henderson, interviews Randall Henderson for the March 1964 issue of the magazine.

Henderson quotes a favorite line by John Muir: "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread places to play in a pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike." He then went onto to expand with his own thoughts. "That was true when John Muir lived. It is a truth of even greater significance today, for these are confusing times. While humans push and crowd and burn themselves out in a crazy stampede for more profits and higher wages and the satisfaction of personal vanities, nature goes along in her own serene way, undisturbed by the petty bickerings of the passing parade of homo sapiens."

1966

Mariane Marsh Henderson dies.

1967

Desert Rat Scrapbook stops publication. Oliver gives the operation to ex-merchant seaman Bill Powers, who produces two more issues (Packets One and Two of Pouch Twelve) and reprints a few old issues. Then, he abandons the DRSB and disappears, possibly returning to sea.

1968

Palm Desert population estimate of 8,462.

Randall Henderson's book *Sun, Sand and Solitude: Vignettes From the Notebook of a Veteran Desert Reporter* published by Westernlore Press. The book consists of reflections of Henderson on the desert and his deep and poignant wonder of desert living. The book today is out of print known to just a few. But it ranks with the greatest books on the spirit of the desert ever written.

In many ways, the book harks back to the memories of the 1930s when Henderson and his teenage son spent camping and their campfire discussions and his son's dissatisfaction with the educational system, a dissatisfaction that mirrored his father's feelings about it.

As Randall Henderson writes in one telling part of the book, "I have long felt that the failure of our educational system is that it deals mainly with the intellect of the student, and almost completely by-passes the equally important faculty of feeling. Teachers train the mind and ignore the emotions. How few students come out of schools with the ability to recognize within themselves, and the integrity to confess to their bondage to the passions of anger, jealousy, hate, greed, ruthless ambition, fear and intolerance. And what a penalty we pay for this ignorance."

Randall Henderson's entire life, in retrospect, seems devoted to helping his son Rand, as well all who listen, *feel* nature rather than *understand* it.

1970

On May 11, Raymond Sherwin, secretary of the Sierra Club, writes to Randall Henderson "It is with great pleasure that I have the privilege of informing you officially of your re-election as Honorary Vice President of the Sierra Club ... I think we all experience a warm feeling of gratification to be reminded of our association with you."

Randall Henderson's reply to the honor was "What a satisfying thing to be a veteran conservationist in these days when an entire nation – and perhaps all the civilized world – is being awakened to the critical importance of preserving our planetary environment."

Randall Henderson dies on July 6. He was 81 years old.

Mr. & Mrs. John Fraim (parents of the author) move to Indian Wells from Los Angeles.

1972

Cliff Henderson made a member of the Aviation Hall of Fame

J. Wilson McKenney, Business Manager of Desert Magazine and lifelong friend of Randall Henderson, publishes the book *Desert Editor*. The book argues that Randall Henderson and not Cliff Henderson was the real founder of Palm Desert.

In the long letter, Cliff Henderson suggests that the wife of Randall Henderson – Cyria – really financed the book.

1972

William Boyd (Hopalong Cassidy) dies. At a loss after his death, Grace Boyd begins her more than 35 years of volunteer work at the hospital in Laguna Beach where her husband spent his final days.

But Hoppy always remained part of her life, including winning a two-decade legal battle stemming from a copyright infringement suit, and appearing at Hoppy tributes.

"Everybody I talk to is looking for a hero," she said at the Lone Pine Film Festival in 1995. "They say, 'If only we had Hoppy again,' or somebody like that. The children don't have role models. Who do we have?"

1973

City of Palm Desert is incorporated.

1974

A long letter from Clifford Henderson to author J. Wilson McKenney provides new insight into history of Palm Desert and the battle he had with his brother Randall. McKenney was the co-founder of Desert Magazine with Randall Henderson and his book praising Randall Henderson's important contribution to desert colonization *Desert Editor*. Randall's brother Clifford strongly disagreed with the assessment of the book. The salutation of the letter reads "Dear Mr. McKenney – Dreamer of Futile Bad Dreams."

1976

Cliff Henderson was named an "elder statesman of aviation" by the National Aeronautic Association in 1976, and in the same year was presented with the Aerospace Trophy by the International Order of Characters.

1978

Edgar Bergen dies.

1980

"I wanted a smart avenue," Henderson says about El Paseo in a 1980 interview.

1983

Dorris Thompson passes away a few months before her 59th birthday.

Tanya South, wife of Marshal South, looked back bitterly at the whole 17 year episode on Ghost Mountain (1930-1947). And when others wanted to create a memorial, she writes (at the age of 85) "The idea of establishing a cultural preserve to 'honor' the stark, miserable existence that Yaquitepec represented is quite absurd to me. Marshal has glorified our existence on the mountaintop in his articles in the Desert Magazine. He was a superb fiction writer."

1984

Cliff Henderson dies at Rancho Mirage near Palm Desert on March 26, 1984 at the age of 88. His wife, Marian Marsh, survives him.

1985

Desert Magazine stops publication

Demolition of the Sun Lodge Colony begins with the last of the cottages demolished in 1993.

1986

Tommy Tomson passes away in August.

1987

JW Marriott Desert Springs Golf Resort starts. It is the largest development ever undertaken in the desert. When it opens off of Cook Street and Country Club and still surrounded by a good amount of undeveloped desert land.

1996

Leonard Firestone dies in Pebble Beach, California

1997

Tanya South, widow of Marshal South, dies on May 31, just months short of her 100th birthday. After the grand experiment in primitive living on Ghost Mountain, she maintained her privacy after all the children were grown and gone. She never granted an interview. She never lost her anger toward Marshal and always cherished her Rosicrucian books. Her daughter Victoria said, "Her focus was very much inward and her faith sustained her, even if she didn't show it to others."

The City of Palm Desert opens Desert Willow Golf Resort in an effort to increase tourism and revenue to the City. It is located on Country Club Drive and directly north of the JW Marriott Desert Springs Golf Resort.

2000

On October 24, President Clinton signs legislation designating 272,000 acres of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains a National Monument. The new designation expands by 80,000 acres what is previously the Santa Rosa Mountains National Scenic Area. Parts of the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation and portions of the San Bernardino National Forest are now included in the Monument.

* * *

The city of Palm Desert has become one of California's fastest growing cities. In 1980 the population was 11,000 and then 23,000 by 1990 and 41,000 in 2000.

2002

Current population of Palm Desert has grown to 42,350, with another 31,000 making Palm Desert their seasonal home.

Desert Willow Country Club starts in 2002.

2004

The City of Palm Desert dedicates a hiking trail in honor of William Boyd or Hopalong Cassidy. The trail was dedicated to a man who never compromised his image of "The Good Guy in Black." Mrs. Boyd and members of his family attended both the dedication and an open house at the Palm Desert Historical Society to honor this American legend.

2006

Clifford Henderson's wife Marian Marsh dies at age 93. She has become known as Mrs. Palm Desert. Marian was a 5-foot-2-inch dynamo who championed her late husband's role as a pioneer with the same tenacity she brought to environmentalism. "When you'd say they all founded Palm Desert, she'd say, 'No, they didn't. It was just Cliff.' "

2009

Duchess Emerson (daughter of Tommy Tomson) visits the old Hot Rocks. The area, she notes, still stands "but is built up with million dollar homes now so that it's hard to find the little RR tie house."

She recalls that "The Hot Rocks area became too crowded for Tommy about forty six years ago so he moved up the hill to Royal Carrizo where he built an authentic Spanish hacienda with a black smithy, capella and much more. It embraced the last of his many incredible dreams."

2010

Grace Bradley Boyd dies at 97 years old. She has no survivors. A private service is held at Forest Lawn Memorial-Park, Glendale, where she is interred next to her husband.

As Grace Bradley, Boyd appeared in 35 films, including "Too Much Harmony," starring Bing Crosby, "The Big Broadcast" of 1938 with W.C. Fields and Bob Hope and "Come on Marines" with Richard Arlen and Ida Lupino. The petite, Brooklyn-born actress, who launched her show business career as a dancer, was often cast as a femme fatale or "the wrong girl" but she played a variety of characters. Her most enduring role, however, was off-screen – as the wife of William Boyd.

History of the Coachella Valley & Palm Desert
Hal Rover, President
of PD Historical Society
Mayor's Breakfast 6/10/2003

If you allow yourself to dream a bit, you may see the early Cenozoic development of the Pacific plate as the earth's surface cooled and buckled, mountains elevated and valleys formed. The Coachella Valley is just a continuation of the Gulf of California.

The Salton Sink, as it is known, reaches from the Whitewater Pass to the Gulf and includes sand dunes, faults, gorges, bedrock, volcanic knobs, hot springs, hot brine wells and snail and clam shell deposits. It is the largest dry land area below sea level in the western United States.

The Colorado River emptied into this part of the Gulf, and for 300 or 400 years deposited a silt delta across the Mexican border and alternately caused the Sink to fill and evaporate. This area became known as the ancient Lake Cahuilla, not to be confused with the current reservoir at the end of the Coachella Canal. You can see evidence of old Lake Cahuilla in the water stains above La Quinta on the mountain walls. This valley took its name "Conchilla" as dry beds yielded millions of tiny sea shells when 18th century Spanish explorers saw no lake- before any Salton Sea.

Of course, the Salton Sea is just an accident that happened 100 years ago, when a flooding Colorado River broke its banks in Imperial County to our south. Only herculean efforts by the Southern Pacific Railroad and Imperial Irrigation District restored the river to its banks by 1907.

While our nation was still forming in the late 1700's, there began to be stirrings and some human movement threading its way in and out of valleys and mountains. The Cahuilla Indians were active all over this area on its alluvial fans and rocky terrain. They lived in scattered rancherias, each with its open space and water supply somewhere nearby. The Portrero band of Beaumont, Aqua Caliente of Palm Springs, Rincon, Toro, Martinez, La Mosa and Cabazon all were living off the low desert lands.

There was a "red flag up" about this desert. Even Juan Baptista

de Anza made his way paralleling the Mexican border in 1774, avoiding unknown spaces out to the north. He moved west through the Imperial Valley and climbed out through Borrego Springs and Oak Grove on his way to colonize San Francisco.

In 1769 Junipero Serra found his way along the the coast as he began to build his mission chain to Sonoma. About 1820 the padres of the San Gabriel Mission established a rancho in the San Gorgonio Pass. Still, no one was venturing to the vast lowlands.

Around 1815 there were scattered reports of Indians having knowledge of salt deposits, and of oxen-drawn carretas making their way to open deposits below sea level in the Salton Sink. In 1823 Captain Juan Romero successfully journeyed from San Gabriel to Tuscon with the news of a good well at Indian Wells; but Romero reported to superiors that it was "completely impractical."

The Spanish period of history in California ended in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Only a few stout souls reportedly explored ways to traverse a trail from Mexico to Sonoma.

When California was admitted to the union in 1850, the first legislature created 27 counties. At that time the Coachella Valley area was all part of San Diego County, until Riverside County was carved out in 1893.

On January 9, 1847 the well-known Mormon Battalion reached the Colorado River. They had trudged from Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe to the river. Upon encountering the Algodones Dunes west of Yuma, they dipped south, emerging at Plaster City. The Battalion moved again through the Sand Diego Mountains and Warner's Ranch, then to San Luis Rey Mission near Oceanside. Again, no one was testing the unknown desert; it was too risky, availability of water was questionable, and temperatures were unlivable.

An active and growing population was awakening throughout the west as gold became the elixir and stirred hope in the hearts of hearty men and women. News, sometimes slow to spread, carved deep desire in men to search for precious metals to make them wealthy and secure. It was a risky existence.

One such sighting became reality at Ehrenberg, Arizona across the Colorado River from Blythe. Word spread through the new state. Prospectors from Sutter's Mill and all over the west

hurried south only to find a foreboding desert to forge; but forge it they did and the well-known Bradshaw Trail was established.

In 1862 William Bradshaw of the California Fremont Expedition decided to capitalize on traffic and established a wagon road through the desert to Ehrenberg. There were stations at Whitewater, Agua Caliente, Indian Wells, Torres and Martinez. Chief Cabezon was reportedly most helpful in receiving new routes through Palm Springs and the desert to complete this gold route. Each location required adequate quantities of water for weary hopefuls as they prayed for gold at the end of the rainbow. Dos Palmas is still a viable oasis, it and the Bradshaw Trail can still be traversed to this day, now by automobile. It parallels 1-10 from Hwy. 86 to the river.

The U. S. government set up a railroad expedition to explore the pass to Yuma in 1853. Lt. R. S. Williamson and William Blake, a geologist from the Smithsonian Institute, combed a roadbed for a rail and water route in order to complete the transcontinental railroad to Yuma. The push for railroad extension caused serious water needs, as the now giant steam engines required vast supplies at regular intervals always near railroad sidings. By 1876 Indio (then known as Indian Wells) was connected by rail to San Bernardino and Los Angeles. One year later the line was completed to Yuma.

A member of the Williamson Expedition, the 27 year old William Blake was a geology, mineralogy, and archeology expert who studied the physical aspects of the Coachella Valley and the Colorado Desert. He prophesied that artesian wells would be discovered all over Mecca, Thermal, Coachella and Indio. There was some marked success by the Southern Pacific Railroad in digging wells at that time. It was later, by 1888 that his prediction was to be fulfilled.

In the years following Blake's statement about artesian wells, a growing number of farmers who homesteaded the area found volumes of water just below the surface. Greater numbers realized the need for collective water development as land acquisitions slowed due to too many users sucking liquid from the southeastern desert floor. A proposal in 1917 to channel water from Baldwin Lake and the Whitewater River to the Imperial Valley hit Coachella Valley settlers like a brick. How could anyone bypass this valley to supply the wants of others in the northeast Imperial Valley?

Production of dates, vegetables, and citrus were attracting great interest among farmers now, since there was an active railroad available for shipping. Because of the mushrooming needs for water, the time was ripe to enter this collective water effort. Settlers must protect their rights, and so the Coachella Valley County Water District was formed in May of 1918.

About this time and a few miles to the west, a handful of property owners saw this alluvial fan and dunes called Palm Village (soon to be Palm Desert) as a bubble of opportunity. For 36 square miles of Indian Wells and Palm Desert, the first record in 1910 show that well-drilling was done by Walter Schmid. Eighteen wells had been drilled by 1919, and the Palm Desert Community Services District was established to handle the growth.

The stage was set for a dream to become a reality." Who would have guessed that the Henderson brothers, Randall, Cliff, Phil and Carl could nudge a new community out of what was officially called Sand Hole by the UnitedStatesgovernment.

The war was over, materials became available, and mirages occurred in the form of the Desert Magazine Building (now L.G.'s Steakhouse) and the Shadow Mountain Club (the first real social magnet in paradise to draw buyers who wanted to own a little piece of it) Both of these facilities were opened in 1948. It was not long before 1620 acres were purchased and divided into 17 parcels of land south of Highway 111, where houses began to sprout up and a city would eventually be Edgar Bergen, developer of the Charlie McCarthy puppet, invited Cliff and Randall Henderson to visit him at his ranch on Portola. He was recuperating in this dry climate and believed the brothers could also benefit.

Randall Henderson decided to move his printing business and popular Desert Magazine, published since 1937, from El Centro to this new area. He had begun his publishing venture with 618 subscribers, a total circulation of 7000. Mostly because of Desert Magazine circulation, a new post office was built and opened in July of 1947.

Cliff and Phil Henderson, Edgar Bergen, Harold Lloyd, Leonard Firestone and others owned the Pan Pacific auditorium in Los Angeles and had many contacts with the rich and famous. A town layout was completed and 19 investors accumulated large sums of money to build roads and water mains. The cove was made ready

for a whole community. In early 1945 Cliff and Phil formed the Palm Desert Corporation to secure funds for streets and water, sales promotion and landscaping.

Phil, the third brother, died August 1, 1946, leaving most of the developing to Cliff because Randall was inundated by the workings of his publishing company (Desert Magazine). Randall never became a direct participant in the community development project However; he was always pushing for a complete community; libraries, theater and churches.

Much of the planning by the Henderson brothers began as early as 1944. It was in January of 1945 that Wilson McKenney met with Randall at the Desert Magazine site. The magazine and printing site was then begun by R. P. Shea of Indio at a cost of \$216,000.

These two Hendersons, Cliff and Randall, took different paths to the same end. Cliff was more publicized and better known on a national level. He was the first director of Los Angeles International Airport in 1928. He launched construction of the airport's first buildings before becoming the Managing Director of the National Air Races from 1928 through 1939. He originated several aviation expositions including the Bendix Trophy Race, the Thompson Trophy Classic, and the Powder Puff Derby. One aeronautical history book stated that, next to Charles Lindberg, Cliff did more than any other individual to attract American attention to aviation. He was listed as the P. T. Barnum of aviation.

Clifford Henderson's career spanned two world wars, beginning with the 35th Ambulance Unit in France during World War I. He served with the Army of Occupation in Germany and was commissioned in 1921 at Clover Field, California. World War II found Cliff in Dakar, Africa as the Military Commissioner, and after the invasion he served as assistant to Lt. General Harold George in the Army Air Corps, where he retired as colonel atwar'send.

The rest is more history. In 1946 few believed Cliff and friends paid an average of \$26 per acre for 17 parcels. Water was still their darkest threat. The cost of lots on El Paseo was \$4000. They dug the first well at 612 feet, and eventually six others were added to supply growing demands.

Cliff had lofty plans for Palm Desert. Twenty miles of streets and water mains were built before a lot was sold. He was brash

enough to cover all this property with a property owner's association with contract covenants and restrictions. Cliff wanted a class development. Twelve miles from Palm Springs; a huge dream and maybe with a huger ego. A few great people, with several Hendersons in the lead, and look what developed. Phil administered, Carl sold, Randall preserved, and Cliff developed. That may be over- simplified, but this community came along rapidly and soundly as the plan unfolded.

We have only a few years of history since the 1940's, but this all happened because of early exploration, foreknowledge, and pain-staking study. There truly was a formation process. The entire country was really in its infancy. Pioneers with curiosity and spirit bounced in and around this area until enough believers came and stayed.

The Juan Baptistas, Junipero Serras, Cahuilla tribes, and William Blakes had little water, no railroad, and meager backing; but gradually the process evolved into a united front. Slowly tenacity wins, because of a few dreamers who came through the Pass.

Hopalong Cassidy's Creed

The highest badge of honor a person can wear is honesty. Be truthful at all times.

Your parents are the best friends you have. Listen to them and obey their instructions.

If you want to be respected, you must respect others. Show good manners in every way.

Only through hard work and study can you succeed. Don't be lazy.

Your good deeds always come to light. So don't boast or be a show-off.

If you waste time or money today, you will regret it tomorrow. Practice thrift in all ways.

Many animals are good and loyal companions. Be friendly and kind to them.

A strong, healthy body is a precious gift. Be neat and clean.

Our country's laws are made for your protection. Observe them carefully.

Children in many foreign lands are less fortunate than you. Be glad and proud you are an American.

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