

Volume 4, No. 3

Antelope Valley Rural Museum

SEPT 2020

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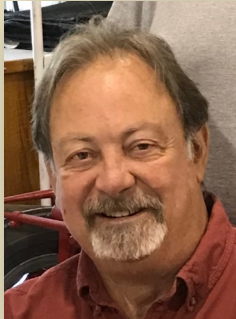
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**CHAIRMAN’S MESSAGE**



The Fair is here, virtually, as the Livestock Auction. That is the only event that can be held this year.

If you have bid on animals before, then they say you are still registered and can bid this year. If you haven't, you can register at <https://auction.showworks.cloud/fair/antelo>. The site has pictures of the 4-H member, animal, bids, and add-ons if you want to support the auction but don't want to buy a whole animal.

If you drive west on Ave. H going over the freeway, you will see the wonderful new building's outer structure. We still need to do plumbing, electrical, internal framing, drywall, etc. Please keep your donations of time and money coming if you can. We will be having our annual fundraiser on February 27, 2021 (hopefully) and another one in April/May.

Bill has made several new cabinets for the new building for a new display of all the schools in the Valley. If you have memorabilia from any school, we will be collecting that in about 6 months.

Hope things are going well for our members.

Stay safe,

*G Simi*

CEO AVRM



## RAWLINGS' REVIEW



### ***FAIRTIME...? NOT VERY!***

Normally this is the time of year when we celebrate and show off our improvements and additions to the AV Rural Museum. We prepare to meet up with old friends and look forward to making new ones. 2020 started with an extraordinary amount of promise. Construction was due to begin soon on our long dreamed of permanent home on the AV Fairgrounds. It was scheduled to be open by now.

**NORMALLY** I “invite” you all to come visit, give us money for your membership dues, donate money, spend money in our gift shop, spend more money on raffle tickets....and all such things that a Finance Officer is expected to do. This NOT being a NORMAL year, I’m not going to do that. Instead I want to thank all of our supporters.

**THANK YOU!** First and foremost to the AVRМ Board of Directors who keep the museum operating along with our network of volunteers, who, with their diverse interests and expertise, make certain there is something for everyone to enjoy in the museum. While it is true that without our Board and Volunteers there would not be a museum, it is also true that without the Staff and Directors of the AV Fair Association and the generosity of the Friends of the Fair, we would not have a place to grow.

**THANK YOU!** To the designers, contractors and materials suppliers who discounted prices and donated labor while building our jewel of a home. These include Barry Munz and AV Engineering, Mark Norris of California Compaction Corporation, JP Toneman, Johnny Zamrzla and the Zamrzla Family, with Western Pacific Roofing, Rob Irwin Masonry, Steve Wane and Builders Unlimited Constructors, and Kingsley Glass.

**AND FINALLY, THANK YOU!** For supporting us by subscribing to and reading this newsletter, following us on our website & Face Book, sharing photos, stories, artifacts & objects of interesting local history, and for promoting us to friends & family. Thank you especially for encouraging us.

*Bill Rawlings*  
Finance Officer



## UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2020

Museum is closed until further notice due to the COVID—19. We appreciate your understanding and hope you are all doing well. Stay safe!



*Come on in and look around*

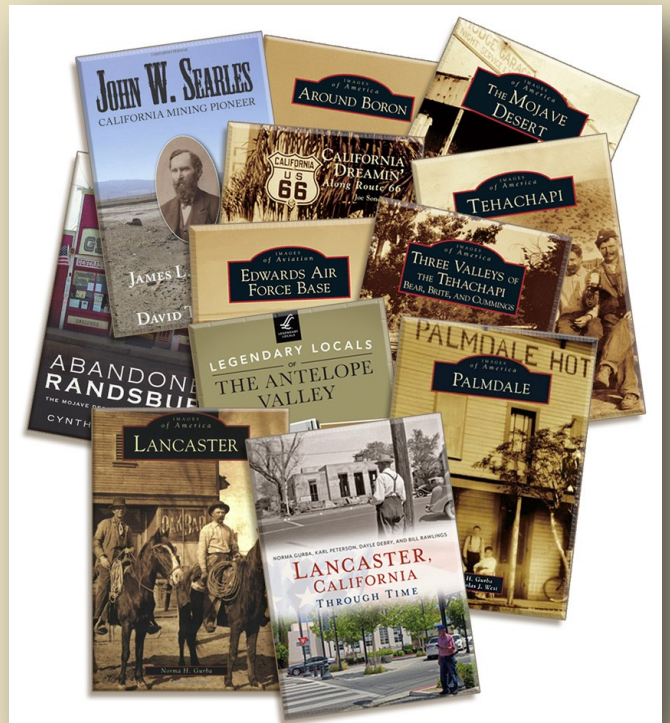
### NEW ONLINE GIFT SHOP!

Many thanks to Carol Stephens for her dedication to the AVRМ and her continued work on making sure the online gift shop is up and running.

We have many interesting books you can purchase through the website for reading during these “stay at home” times. Keep up on local history with some of the books written by our own members! See book titles below.

There are also some comical and some heartwarming ceramic tiles made for us by Rose Sliepka to hang on your wall for a laugh or for inspiration. Please go to our website to order:

<https://www.avmuseum.org/shop/>



## TAYLOR MCPHERSON AKA “BROTHER MAC”

By Dayle DeBry—Editor & AVRMA Military & Aviation Director

In looking for an interesting topic for the newsletter, I came across the following article I had written for the West Antelope Valley Historical Society in 2009. It has to do with history in the AV and also the Antelope Valley Fair, so I thought it would be apropos to include it during this time when it’s “NO FAIR” right now!

As historians and/or history lovers, we are always on the lookout for pieces of our past. Former City of Lancaster Mayor, Barbara Little, and I stumbled upon an unusual rock wall and pillars located about 100’ from the street, on the north side of Avenue I between Sierra Highway and Division in Lancaster. We drove to the site and looked at a very artistically built rock wall. Various types of large rocks were used, mostly oval in shape with quite a large selection of quartz. Nothing else surrounded this wall and two 10’ obelisk-shaped pillars, just a vacant dirt lot on either side.

I called Walt Primmer and he told me the wall was connected with Milt Stark’s uncle but he didn’t know anything else about it.

Milt told me they were built in the 1930s by Taylor McPherson, his uncle by marriage. There were originally two houses on the property with a large truck garden. The produce that was raised in the garden was given to the poor. Taylor also built an auto shop on the property where he repaired cars and also did some blacksmith work. Milt’s family lived in one house and Taylor and his wife, well-known Antelope Valley school teacher Mary (Ince) McPherson, lived in the other house. Taylor and Mary were married in 1925.

Taylor was known as a “jack-leg preacher” and “Brother Mac” who went to various churches around town to preach when the regular preacher was absent. Milt remembered, “Uncle Mac had his right leg removed at the hip when he was about 12 years old. As an adult he had a very heavy prosthesis which he would swing when he walked”.

Taylor built a large, above ground cement tank which he would fill at night with water so he could irrigate the vegetable garden during the day. This tank also served as a place where Taylor baptized members of his church.

The property where the rock wall stands was sold around the time of World War II in the 1940s. Taylor and Mary moved to a home at 44043 No. Heaton Ave. in Lancaster where they lived for many years.

“At this house,” Milt remembered, “Uncle Mac refused to have a lawn. Instead, he built all kinds of rock work like a volcano and a concrete row boat. He built a rose trellis so heavy he had to rent a crane to put it in place. For many years he would exhibit a display for the fair.”

The work he displayed at the local fair is now considered beautiful folk art and prized by many art collectors. Many of Taylor’s carved pieces still survive and are kept by members of Milt Stark’s family. Most of these extraordinary, one of a kind pieces are hand-carved out of a single piece of wood.

Note to City of Lancaster: Please don’t tear this rock wall down without contacting us!

*Left: “Good Americans” carving by Taylor McPherson. Above: “Nuptial Knots.” Photos taken by Milt Stark’s daughter Amy Anderson.*





*Taylor Lee McPherson at the Antelope Valley Fair—date unknown.  
 Note: Artist Jane S. Pinheiro's paintings behind McPherson on the wall.*



*Left: Barbara Little next to McPherson's rock obelisk/pillar Photos taken July 2008. Photos taken by Dayle DeBry.*

*Below: 2008 rock obelisk/pillar connected to a wall built by Taylor McPherson. Structure is on the north side of Avenue I, between Sierra Highway and Division St. in Lancaster.*



**JUANITA NUÑEZ CROTHERS—ARTIST**  
By Lynn DuPratt—AVRM Public Relations Director



*Above: Juanita (Nuñez) Crothers at her easel.*

The Antelope Valley Fair and Alfalfa Festival has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. In 1950 my parents, Wil and Juanita Crothers, moved our family to Lancaster, where my father established Desert News Company, a magazine distribution business. In those days, our parents took us to the Fair, where we enjoyed exhibits, kiddie rides and food. I remember getting lost once when I was quite young. It was terrifying. When I got older I pursued photography as a hobby and entered photos in the Fair competition, proudly taking home a few awards. My brother, Brian, won awards for his metal sculpture and my mother won numerous awards between 1951 and 1963 for her paintings.

My strongest connection to the AV Fair is my mother. For about 30 years she was the volunteer in charge of the Art Department. After becoming chairwoman she no longer entered her paintings in the competition. Juanita was at the fairgrounds days before the Fair opened to set up and take in entries, almost every day during the 11-day event, and after the Fair closed to take down exhibits and return artwork to competitors. She was always supported by a cadre of dependable volunteers, mostly other artists, including Ruth Prue and Priscilla Ferguson.

Juanita didn't drive so fellow volunteers would take her to the fairgrounds or, when we were old enough, Brian or I would drive her. I'd usually hang around to preview the art display and see the adjacent photo exhibit. The AV Fair continued to be an annual destination after I married James DuPratt, a popular high school English teacher, in 1976. We would always head for the Fine Arts Building to see my mother and our friends who ran the Photo Department. Going to the Fair with James was an adventure because he seemed to know everyone: walk a few steps, stop and talk, walk a few more steps, stop and talk. He was also a member of the Antelope Valley Kiwanis Club, which presents the Junior Livestock Auction every year during the Fair. James served on the Antelope Valley College Board of Trustees from 1985 until his death in 1997.

Among the Fair directors who oversaw the Art Department during the time Juanita worked there were Jane Pinheiro and Marilyn Ekezian. After volunteering for 25 years she was honored with the AV Fair's Blue Ribbon Award. All of this, of course, was when the Fair was in its old location at Division Street and Avenue I in Lancaster. Juanita passed away in 1993.

Juanita, an early member of the AV Allied Arts Association, chaired the organization's annual Arts Festival held in Exposition Hall at the fairgrounds. She owned Crothers Fine Art Gallery in the old Fire Station 33 on Cedar Avenue in Lancaster. The gallery featured the work of many well-known local artists, including Walt Lee, Jane Pinheiro, Charles LaMonk, Doug Oliver, Lynn Karp, John Burgess, Rich Sim, and many others.

Art has always been a part of my life. When I was quite young my mother tried sewing and piano. She even built a window seat in our house with cabinets on either side and under the cushion. She was not exactly thrilled about landing in Lancaster in 1950. I was just two then, but she later told me she "cried and cried." Soon she picked up a paintbrush, met some other artists, and became part of a thriving local arts community.

Somewhat by chance our own home became central to that community. Juanita discovered Walt Lee, a well-known California artist and retired Los Angeles Times cartoonist, living with his wife Frida and their chihuahua Chula in a small house near my father's business. He didn't have an art studio. We had a large detached garage behind our house on Date Street where my dad started his business before building a warehouse on Avenue K near 20th Street West. Soon Walt set up his studio in half of our big garage. He painted there and also had a number of students, including 12-year-old Doug Oliver.

During that time Juanita was among a small group of women who would pile into a station wagon with their easels and art supplies to go out and paint on location with Walt. Sometimes I went with them. They often went to Leona Valley or Acton, where the landscape featured picturesque old barns, rolling hills and pastures. In those pre-politically-correct days someone amusingly dubbed this group of female artists "The Harem."

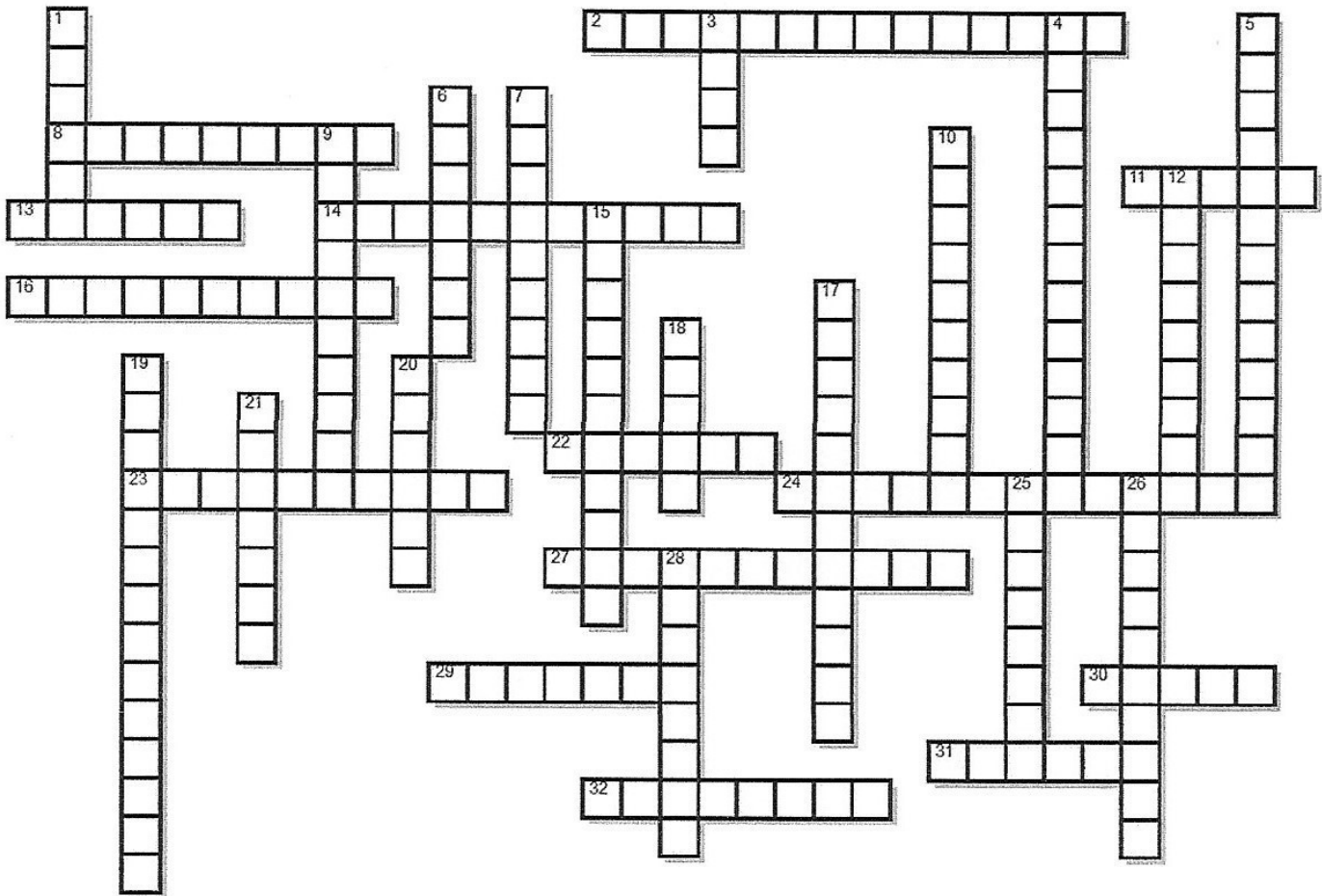
Juanita was born in El Paso, Texas, in 1922, the daughter of Mexican immigrants. She grew up in Los Angeles. During World War II she was a "Rosie Riveter" in an L.A. defense plant, where she met my father.

A prolific artist, Juanita left behind numerous paintings as her legacy to her family and community.

*Juanita's many AV Fair ribbons 1950s—1960s.*



We hope you will enjoy this “**Antelope Valley Communities**” crossword puzzle created by Karla Archuleta, inspired by a crossword puzzle created by long-time historian Milt Stark in the 1990s. Remember, the questions all lead to place names in the Antelope Valley *and surrounding areas*.  
 Answers on page 9 of this newsletter. Have fun!

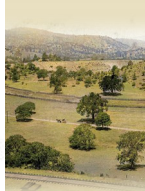


**ACROSS**

- 2 The Buttes dried up lake
- 8 It was the homeland of the Kawaiisu people
- 11 Located 13 miles of #9 across (male name)
- 13 "Of the South" in Spanish
- 14 A socialist colony
- 16 Named after a Judge
- 22 Conway Twitty's real first name
- 23 A bright community
- 24 "Green Acres is the place to be"
- 27 A fruity flower
- 29 Apple in Spanish
- 30 A lost community; 14 miles northeast of Ravenna
- 31 Named after a Senator
- 32 A town of tiny rocks

**DOWN**

- 1 Previous name of Almondale(female name)
- 3 Previous name of Quartz Hill
- 4 Home of the monster
- 5 Along the Old Horse Thief Trail
- 6 Spanish referred to it as "The Spring of the Cow"
- 7 The basic monetary unit of South Africa
- 9 Valley of the Palms
- 10 A mound of gems
- 12 Not the city in Pennsylvania
- 15 Named after a Spanish rancher
- 17 Named by Miners from South Africa
- 18 Founded by the Red Rover Gold Miners
- 19 An English surname plus a yard of flowers
- 20 20 Mule Team Borax Terminus
- 21 A whistle stop
- 25 The mistaken Joshua Tree
- 26 An early name of the Neenach area
- 28 Named after the daughter of a Railroader



**MAN & WOMAN'S BEST FRIENDS**

We all need a bit of cheering up these days and the perfect way is to snuggle up with your dog, cat, or whatever you may have. They won't judge you for anything you do—just give you a lot of love and affection in return.

*Left, center: Major John Stege, Army Air Corps P-38 Lightning pilot and AVJUHS graduate, Class of 1938, with a beautiful dachshund.*

*Below: Gladys (Houghton) Cummings (Mrs. Edwin E. Cummings) on her front porch.*

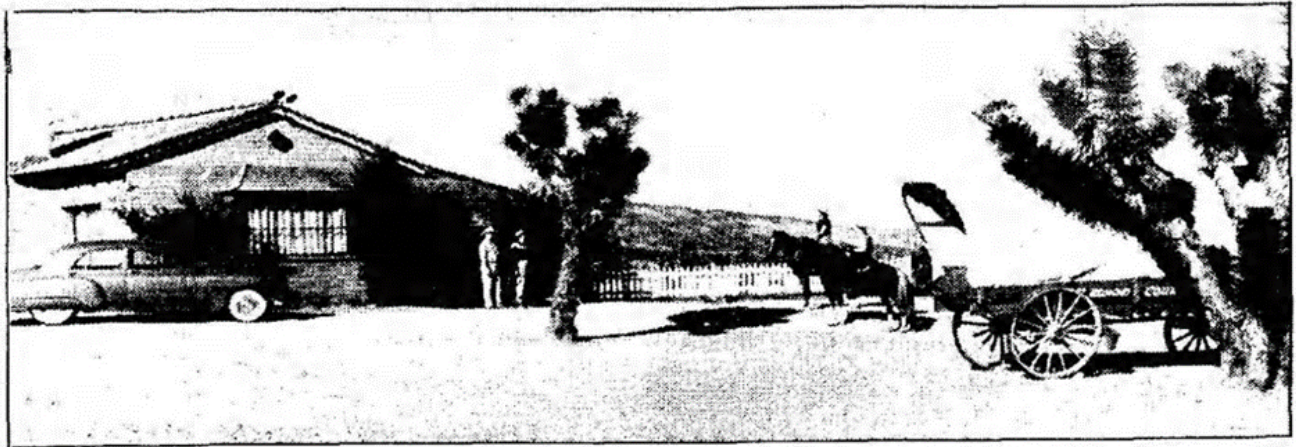


*Below: Aviatrix Florence "Pancho" Barnes with "Chito."*



*Above right, center: Airmen at War Eagle Field with mascot "Tailwheel" going for a ride in 1944. Above: 3rd from left World War I, France, with 1st Lt. Lawrence W.P. Kingsbury, USMC 42nd Infantry "Rainbow Division" with dog "Blackie." Lawrence was the brother of Rose (Kingsbury) Blum.*

*Right: William Morris Redman with his buddy.*



**INVESTORS—BUILDERS**  
**ANTELOPE VALLEY IS READY!**  
 First stage of aircraft development here calls for \$20,000,000, and that is only the beginning. Hundreds of homes needed here in '53 & '54. This Valley is greatest spot in the West. Good for long sustained boom. Send for our booklet & call on us for every real estate service.  
**Melville J. Courson & Assoc.**  
 38351<sup>1</sup> Sierra Highway. Palmdale.

*Los Angeles Times, Dec. 14, 1952*



*Matchbook cover*

**Motel & Coffee Shop**  
**Palmdale, Calif.**  
 11 deluxe units, coffee shop seats 50, income \$4200 per month, 10 acre lot, chicken equipment for 3000 chickens. Ideal for man and wife. Price \$40,000. \$20,000 cash. Might consider leasing same.  
**El Rancho Courson**  
**PHONE 105J**

*Pasadena Independent, June 24, 1945*

**DUDE ranch. Beaut. 4-bdrm. & 4-bath adobe home. 9 guest cabins, swim. pool, caretkr's. home, barn, corral, horses & tack. All furn. complete. Owner retiring. \$40,000 handles; bal. easy terms. Melville J. Courson. Phone Palmdale 74.**

*Los Angeles Times, June 11, 1949*

## MELVILLE COURSON IN THE NEWS

By Karla Archuleta

Melville John Courson was born on December 31, 1891 in St. Louis, Missouri, to William Courson and Mary McAllister. He was the oldest of four boys. In 1910, he was working as a bookkeeper for a manufacturing company in St. Louis. He enlisted in the Armed Forces in 1917 and served during World War I. By 1920, he is working as a traveling salesman for Rober Goods. He moved to Southern California about 1922 and went into the real estate business, living in Long Beach and then San Diego.

Melville married Mary Avis Johnston on May 7, 1926 in Los Angeles, California. Melville and Mary had one daughter, Mary Veronica Courson, born in 1929 in St. Louis, Missouri. They moved back and forth between St. Louis and Southern California over the next few years. By 1935, they were back in Long Beach and were living in Los Angeles by 1940.

In 1941, they moved to Palmdale and built the El Rancho Courson Motel, which had a dozen rooms, by recommendation of actor Don Ameche's (Amici) father, Felice Amici, who owned a local business at the time. A year later they add a café, which became known as having the best food in the Antelope Valley. By the end of 1943, they began building 17 bungalows and cabins on the ranch. In 1944 they purchased the 2450 sq. ft. home that they had been living in. The ranch had been visited by many well-known Hollywood celebrities such as Howard Hughes, John Wayne, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans.

Melville's real estate business began to flourish and he served as President of the Palmdale Chamber of Commerce in the early 1950s.

He died on December 4, 1952 at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Sawtelle, California, and his final resting place was at the Old Palmdale Cemetery. Melville has rich, deep roots in our AV history in the 1940s and 50s. May he always be remembered.





## THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE AVR M!

### Membership Application for the **Antelope Valley Rural Museum**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues \$20/person \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interest as a volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

Tax deductible Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

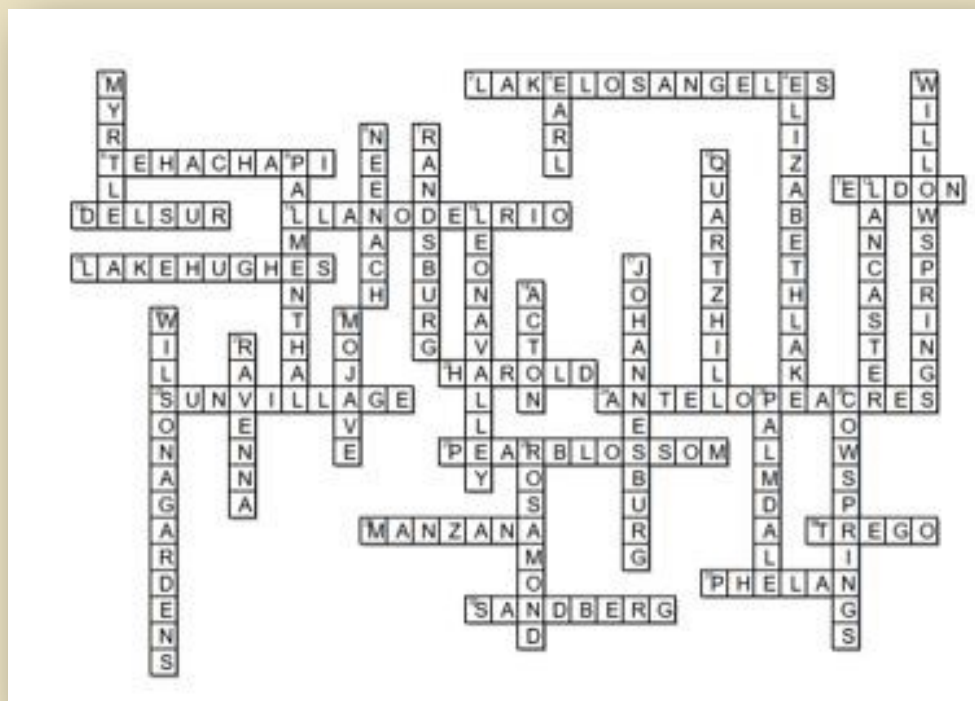
Bronze = \$100 Silver = \$1,000 Gold = \$10,000

**Please make checks payable to:** AV Rural Museum

Mail to: AVR M P.O. Box 1316, Lancaster, CA 93538

Donate and pay dues via **PayPal** on our website: [www.avmuseum.org](http://www.avmuseum.org)

Answers to crossword puzzle on page 6. How did you do?!



*Milt Stark and portrait of Mary McPherson  
Photo taken by Dayle DeBry*



Website: [www.avmuseum.org](http://www.avmuseum.org)  
[www.facebook.com/Antelope Valley Rural Museum](https://www.facebook.com/AntelopeValleyRuralMuseum)

Mailing address:

AVRM  
P.O. Box 1316  
Lancaster, CA 93584



Contact us:  
[avmuseum@verizon.net](mailto:avmuseum@verizon.net)

*Donate and pay dues via PayPal and credit card on our website*

## ANTELOPE VALLEY RURAL MUSEUM GIFT STORE

Annual membership dues	\$20.00
Hats—all baseball hats (Members)	\$10.00
Hats—all baseball hats (Non-members)	\$15.00
Lancaster, CA Through Time	\$25.00
History books—all books are priced at:	
Images of America “Lancaster”	\$20.00
Images of America “Palmdale”	
Legendary Locals of the AV	
(Above AV history books signed by Norma Gurba)	
P-38 Lightning	
Images of America “Edwards Air Force Base”	
DVDs Listed DVDs are priced at:	\$20.00
Jane Pinheiro Wildflowers NEW!	
Yester Years—AV History 1876—1942	
1987 Rural Olympics (narrated)	
Evolution of the Rural Olympics book	
(On DVD—Excel & Word Doc format)	

The AVRM is a 501(c)(3) public charity  
EIN: 27-1002922

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The AVRM will honor the history of the Antelope Valley with documentation, preservation, exhibition, and education.

### DONATIONS

Pickus Challenge 2020—2021 Building Fund	\$1,000
Honor the Past Plaques and Display Sponsorship (Custom laser cut wood plaques with Personal memorial or message)	\$1,500
Bronze Sponsorship Donor	\$100
Silver Sponsorship Donor	\$1000
Gold Sponsorship Donor	\$10,000

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