



Volume 4, No. 5

Antelope Valley Rural Museum

DEC 2020

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In Memory of



*Barbara Sterk—Farm & Garden
Photo montage on pg. 3*

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CHAIRMAN’S MESSAGE



2020 has been a year to remember. Dealing with the COVID—19 pandemic has put stress on everyone. Small business has been negatively affected as has just about every facet of life. Fortunately, there have been some bright spots during the year. Those bright spots are Mark Norris (Professional Pipeline) for the grading & foundation of our building, J.T. and Kenny Toneman (Toneman Concrete Corp.) for the concrete, and Rob Irwin (IM Masonry) for the block work. In our museum group, Bill Rawlings has built several new cabinets and Dayle DeBry continues to publish the best newsletter ever. Another bright spot is Ruth and Jeff Godde, first responders. Ruth is a nurse at AV Hospital where they are understaffed and trying to figure out how to keep up with the pandemic and stay safe. Jeff is a reserve deputy. Thank you all for your work.

This year we have dealt with health issues amongst the board. Sheila Sola is slowly, but surely, recovering from her health issues. I greatly enjoyed a recent phone conversation we had. Our biggest loss has been Barbara Jones Sterk, our chief docent and general mother hen of the museum. Listening to her and watching her eyes light up as she helped children with crafts or questions will be greatly missed. Via con Dios, Barbara.

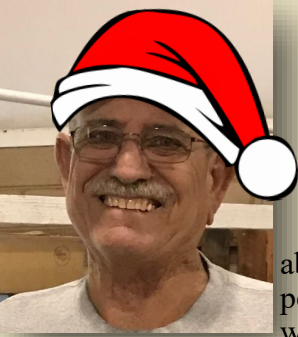
Thank you all for enduring this year and we hope to see you in the museum soon.

Stay safe,

G Simi

CEO AVRM

RAWLINGS' REVIEW



Not Just a Donor Wall, but this giant portable display will also be a *Memorial wall*. With over 220 square feet of repurposed rustic corrugated steel wall space, we will be able to acknowledge all the people, businesses, and groups who through their generosity

have made our growth and local history preservation possible. One whole face and at least one end panel will hold the DONOR lists, while the remaining area will feature Memorials to those deceased volunteers who worked hard to improve the AVR, as well as lists of those who donated in memory of family and friends. Thus the ANTELOPE VALLEY RURAL MUSEUM DONOR & MEMORIAL WALL has been built.



Building the wall required many volunteers. Pictured just after the roof section was mounted to the base structure are Bill Rawlings, Jeff Godde, Jared Adams, & John Calvert.

David Pickus, Jerry Sterk & Pam Rawlings also worked on the wall. Thanks to Jess Baker for salvaging metal from a Forestry Service building.

We also owe Johnny Zamrzla and his family business Western Pacific Roofing big thanks for doing siding and roofing to cover the roof structure.

We also acknowledge the efforts of our design team of Giovanni Simi, Renato DeGuia, Debbie Dino, Angie Hughes, Kathy MacLaren, and me for finding the appropriate design for this project.

Currently our donor levels are GOLD, SILVER & BRONZE. We may be adding PLATINUM as the highest donor level. The greater the donation the greater its prominence will be on the wall.

The **BRONZE** level is for donations of \$100 - \$999 The **SILVER** level is for donations of \$1,000 - \$9,999 and will show levels of \$1,000, \$2,500, \$5,000, & \$7,500. The **GOLD** level is for donations of \$10,000 and greater and will differentiate increasing levels of \$15,000, \$25,000, \$50,000, \$100,000.

Donations are cumulative so that as donors contribute greater amounts their names advance to higher levels.

Merry Christmas to all our friends and supporters. May we all have a safe and joyful Holiday Season!

Bill Rawlings
Finance Officer



Shopping & Giving Many of you are buying gifts and other goodies online due to so many store closures and restrictions this crazy year...I hope you will consider going to smile.amazon.com and choosing *Antelope Valley Rural Museum of History* as your charity. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates a portion of your purchase price to your favorite charity. **It will cost you nothing** but a couple of minutes of your time.



Be sure and check out our website and browse our Gift Shop at <https://www.avmuseum.org/shop/>

Remembering the great times with Barbara Lee (Jones) Sterk
1935—2020

We all miss you very much. Thanks for the wonderful memories...and your beautiful smile!



The following memories were written by Sharron Rich, great-granddaughter of Myrtie (Gibson) Webber, the owner/proprietor of the Western Hotel on Lancaster Blvd. in Lancaster, California. I met Sharron when she came to visit her father's grave several years ago—Ray Paul York—who is interred at Lancaster Cemetery. Sharron has donated several photographs to the Antelope Valley Rural Museum. The photos used here are some of the most recent. I have never seen these photos before, so it is quite a treat to receive them! ~ Dayle DeBry, Editor

MY MEMORIES OF THE WESTERN HOTEL

By Sharron Rich



George Webber, left, Eugenia Sullivan, Frances Sullivan and Myrtie Webber, 1920s.

I am the great-granddaughter of Myrtie E. and George Webber, past owners of the Western Hotel, now known as the Western Hotel Museum. I was born and raised in the hotel until I was 11 years of age. My mother, (granddaughter and daughter of Myrtie and George, explanation coming) Frances M. Holloway, (nee Webber) lived in the hotel when pregnant with me and I came so fast that she couldn't make it across the street to the hospital! I was her third child. She was taking a nap in the afternoon, suddenly went into labor, and I was born. I am the only one of six kids born in the hotel. I was born in 1943 in the middle of World War II.

A few weeks after I was born, I came down with double pneumonia. Penicillin was just then being used for infections and war wounds, but the doctor suggested I have penicillin to save my life. Penicillin was not for public use at the time, and the doctor had to get permission from the military to use it for my pneumonia. Permission was granted, the drug saved my life, and I am still here today. There was a headline in the local Lancaster Gazette which stated, "Miracle Drug Saves Baby." My 15 minutes of fame came very early in life!

Frances Holloway (Webber) was the granddaughter of Myrtie E. Webber. Frances was the daughter of Myrtie's son Frank Sullivan, from Myrtie's first marriage prior to her marriage to George Webber. Frank Sullivan and his wife had two daughters, Frances and Charlotte, my aunt. Mr. Sullivan abandoned his wife and children and Mrs. Sullivan (my grandmother Eugenia) was put in an institutional home for the rest of her life. (*Editor's note: Eugenia's death certificate states she had idiopathic epilepsy. She died of a cerebral hemorrhage in a sanitarium in 1948.*)

That left two young daughters to be raised. Myrtie and George Webber adopted Frances and Charlotte and became their grandchildren's mother and father! My mother and aunt both grew up in the hotel with the Webber's and assumed their last name.

My mother Frances Webber married Ray Paul York in 1938. She had my two oldest brothers, Douglas and Richard, and then me. By the time she was pregnant with me, she had filed for divorce from Ray and had moved back into the hotel with Myrtie Webber. At that time, she was helping Myrtie run the hotel (*George Webber died of stomach cancer in 1934*) along with raising her three children in the hotel. In 1945 Frances married Lee Holloway, who adopted Douglas and Sharron, so our names were then changed from York to Holloway. My brother Richard was awarded to my father so he kept the last name of York. Life is sometimes very complicated.

The hotel, when I lived there, was attached to my Grandma Webber's house (we called her Grandma). There was a swinging door from her dining room to our kitchen on the west side of the hotel and well behind the lobby. I spent a great deal of time with my Grandma Myrtie. Grandma's house was on the west side of the hotel, set back a ways, and had a living room, dining room, large kitchen, bath, and two bedrooms. The Webber house has since burned down. Behind my Grandma's house was a large, three-story water tower. There were two hotel rooms in the water tower—one up and one on the ground floor. The water tower was free standing (*see photo on next page*). There was also a free standing "apartment" behind the hotel and across from Grandma's house. Both the water tower rooms and the apartment were permanently rented to me who traveled with their jobs.

At one point we had cooks who lived in the hotel and cooked for our family. One was a woman named Ms. Murphy, and the other was a Mr. Ruvolo who had a son. Mr. Ruvolo was straight from Italy and was a delightful man to be around.

He cooked the best Italian food we had ever eaten at that time! Ms. Murphy made the best peanut butter cookies I had ever tasted. She also had a Basque boyfriend who visited when the sheep were brought down from the mountains for slaughter. There was a black lady name Xoni, who came and helped clean. She and her husband Philip were the only black people in the town when I was growing up there. They lived on a chicken farm right outside the town boundaries. I remember visiting Xoni and Philip to get eggs and fresh chicken.

My family lived in the section of the hotel right behind the lobby. Our living room opened up into the lobby. Behind the living room was a bedroom that I shared with my younger half-sister and half-baby brother. My older brother Douglas lived in room No. 2 in the hotel. My other brother Dick shared that room whenever he came to visit us, as he lived with Ray York, our biological father. Behind my bedroom was my parent's bedroom, which also served as a dining room. Behind that was the kitchen, and then behind the kitchen was the family bathroom and the laundry room, which then led to the outdoors. That is where I lived the first 11 years of my life.

In 1951, the hotel was the Democratic headquarters for the Presidential election. I remember clearly many meetings in the lobby, and being sent up and down Lancaster Blvd. to put fliers on people's cars to get them to vote for Adlai Stevenson. Of course, Eisenhower won!

The lobby of the hotel was very plain and painted white or light cream when I lived there. There was a couch under the big picture window looking out on Lancaster Blvd. There was a pot-belly stove on the back wall, to the left of which hung a huge deer head on the wall. There were two rocking chairs on the west side of the lobby as well.

When I was about nine years old, my mother decided to open up a donut shop in room No. 1. It had a window looking right out on Lancaster Blvd and the sidewalk. People walked by every day on the sidewalk going and coming from the Post Office next door and other destinations. She installed a huge donut machine and we sold donuts out of a special sliding window which replaced the original double-hung window. I and my siblings frosted the donuts and sold them as well.

My siblings and I were expected to learn to clean the rooms, make and change the beds, sweep and empty baskets, We all worked in the hotel at some time or other. The hotel accommodated only men. Because there was only one bathroom on each floor, state regulations prohibited both sexes from staying at the hotel, so only men were clients.

There used to be two large palm trees which grew right in front of the hotel. They were the markers of the hotel for many, many years. When cleaning upstairs rooms, we used to go out on the balcony facing Lancaster Blvd. to shake the rugs. Clientele also went out on the balcony to smoke. If one looked into the palm trees, you could see rat's nests, old cigarette butts, and soda and beer cans. They tops of the palm trees periodically had to be cleaned out. The trees have since been removed (*and moved*).

I clearly remember the late summer parade that accompanied the Antelope Valley Fair that went down Lancaster Blvd. Every year we made costumes and floats to be in the parade. A couple of times we won best costumes and floats. My grandma, Myrtie Webber, was always involved in the sewing of our costumes. She was an excellent seamstress. Grandma made many of my clothes when I was younger. There was always a central theme to the parade. It was wonderful that the parade passed right in front of the hotel—one of my best childhood memories.

Another great memory was the Sacred Heart Catholic Church annual barbeque. I loved walking up the block from the hotel and watching the men dig the huge ditch, fill it with rocks and flammables, then when ready they would throw big bags of beef on top, cover them with dirt, and let them cook for two or three days. The meat was delicious!

Grandma Webber was also an excellent cook. Her fried chicken was to die for! Her apple pies were the best I have ever eaten and she always made everything from scratch. She made fruit bar cookies that she kept in a huge apothecary jar in her kitchen. The jar was always filled. Grandma allowed me to drink coffee with her when I turned seven. She would make me a little demitasse cup with loads of cream and sugar and a very little bit of coffee. Grandma Webber was a big coffee drinker. I don't remember her without a cup of coffee somewhere in the house. She didn't drink spirits, but she loved her coffee!

I was born when Grandma was 78, and she was able to babysit me for years. She was also able to chase me and catch me when I was bad!

One time in the late 1940s, my Grandma Webber acquired a "new fangled" gas stove. It did not have an automatic pilot light. She was lighting the oven for use when it didn't catch. She didn't turn off the gas, but lit another match to light the pilot. There was a huge explosion and my poor Grandma was burned over her arms, face and neck. I remember clearly how she was covered with bandages for



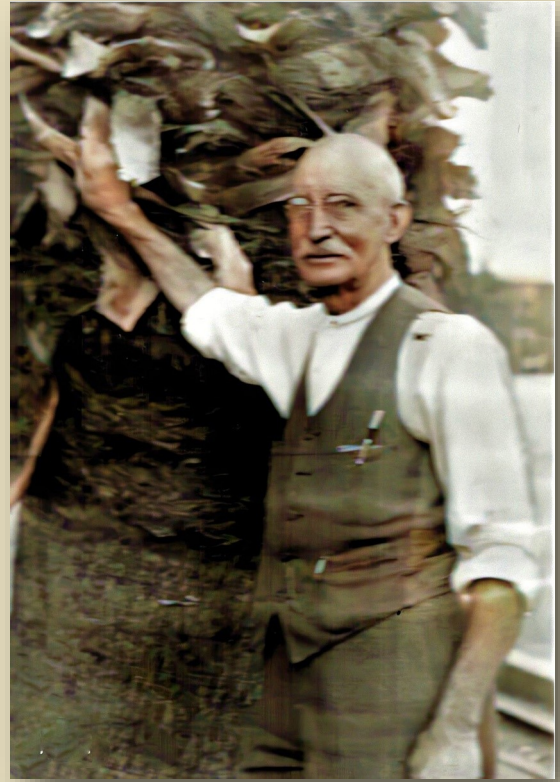
George Webber with Charlotte & Frances Webber, 1920s.

the burns. It was rather frightening for me as a young girl. I loved her dearly.

Another time, my Grandma had a hot water heater that exploded and blew her out the front of her house into a water fountain that she used to have in her tiny front yard. Miraculously, she wasn't injured. She had a few bruises but no broken bones. That happened before I was born. The water fountain was long gone by the time I came along. Her little front yard was along the west side of the hotel adjacent to the Post Office property and was fenced in with a gate opening onto Lancaster Boulevard's sidewalk. I spend a lot of time playing in her front yard.

There was an alley that ran down the east side of the hotel. On the other side of the alley was the five and dime store where I used to browse as a kid, and where I bought my penny candy.

Those are a few of my memories of living in the Western Hotel. I was very pleased to see the hotel being preserved, although it doesn't look anything like it did inside when I lived there. I suspect it looks more like it did at the turn of the 20th Century. The bust of my Great-Grandma Myrtie at the hotel is quite nice. She would be very pleased at being so kindly remembered!



All photos courtesy of Sharron Rich, colorized by D. DeBry.

Above: Myrtie (Gibson) Sullivan Webber, early 1900s.

Above right: George Webber with palm tree, 1925.

Right: Myrtie with granddaughters Frances and Charlotte, 1920s. The girls were adopted by George and Myrtie after their mother, Eugenia Sullivan, was placed in a sanitarium. They took the Webber name after the adoption.

THE JAQUA & PLUMMER FAMILIES

By Janine Simi



*Donald Jaqua Sr. and Sara Attix Jaqua.
Janine (Jaqua) Simi photos, colorized by D. DeBry*

The first of my family to arrive in Lancaster was my grandfather, Donald Jaqua, Sr. who came in 1934. He worked for Fernando Mill out of Van Nuys and they wanted him to manage their Lancaster location. He was born in San Francisco in 1898, worked in many types of jobs, from butcher to airline machinist for Howard Hughes, before and after his service in the army in WWI, and married Sara Attix with whom he had corresponded during the war. They had 2 sons, my father Lee Sheldon Jaqua and Donald Jaqua, Jr. They were in their final years of elementary school when the family moved to Lancaster.

William Dewey and Marie Marcy Plummer, my maternal grandparents, moved to Lancaster in 1935 after Dewey and a colleague, Art Westcott, decided to partner in the establishment of Westcott & Plummer Drugstore. From the stories I've heard, the soda fountain is as remembered as the pharmacy portion of the business! Dewey was born in Kansas in 1899, but moved to Lander, WY where he became the first licensed pharmacist in the state after serving in the army in WWI. Upon seeing Marie

Marcy for the first time outside the office where she worked, he said, "I'm going to marry that girl!" Their daughter, Thelma Genevieve, was born in Lander a few years later.

Did you know Antelope Valley High School had a swimming pool? That's where Thelma Plummer and Sheldon Jaqua met before they started high school, but apparently it wasn't a moment like when Thelma's dad first saw her mom. Thelma became known for excelling as a violinist and Sheldon for his natural athletic ability. Sometimes he would play in a baseball game and run in a track meet on the same day. He still holds a record at AV High School for a low hurdle event. Oh, wait, that event was removed from competition after that year! Thelma went to UCLA and earned a teaching credential while Sheldon earned an AA degree after attending AV and Ventura Junior Colleges. It would be after WWII and opening Jaqua & Sons building materials with his dad and brother for Sheldon and some years of elementary school teaching for Thelma before they would again connect, marry, and raise three children, Marcy, me, and Randy. There would eventually be six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren as of this writing.

A third local business also had family ties - Bishop & Lusher Electric was started by two of Sara Jaqua's nephews. In 1948 Sara and Don Jaqua Sr. built the first house out of Jaqua & Sons blocks on the south side of Lancaster Blvd. close to 17th Street West. By the late 1950s there were three block houses owned by Don Sr., Sheldon, and Don Jr. and their wives on Lancaster Blvd. They weren't next door neighbors though, there was a house in-between. Dad always said that was needed space so no one would argue!



Sheldon and Thelma Jaqua.



A favorite story told to us by my Grandpa Jake was about the importance of education when he didn't get a job at an oil company. The manager knew him, was aware of how hard he worked, and wanted to hire him. However, the company had a rule, even in the 1920's to drive a truck, that their employees had to have a high school diploma. As the oldest child, Don's formal education ended when he graduated from 8th grade so that he could contribute to the family income. His sons learned that more education, an AA degree, was needed before they became Navy pilots in World War II. Sheldon flew Hellcat fighters off the USS Hancock and Donald Jaqua, Jr. flew dive bombers.

The Antelope Valley Fair and the Rural Olympics are an important part of the Jaqua family history with Don Jaqua Sr. having been called the 'Father of the Antelope Valley Fair' and known as the originator of the Rural Olympics. Don Sr.'s first known fair experiences dated back to 1914 in Southern California where he rode the County Fair Rodeo Circuit and in the State Fair as a western rider. Family involvement in the AV Fair started in 1938 with Don Sr. and continues with family members today.

Sheldon Jaqua, World War II.

Don Sr., Sheldon, and Randy were all fair directors. The three of them and Don Jr., my husband Giovanni Simi, our son and son-in-law Tylor Simi and Evan Dow, and Randy's children Travis Jaqua and Calli Zamrzla have all been or still are Rural Olympic committee volunteers. Giovanni did not have the opportunity to know his grandparents and became quite close to mine. He considers it an honor to have served as the chairman of the Rural Olympic committee that my grandfather began decades ago.



Left: Donald Jaqua, Sr. and Sara Attix Jaqua with W. Dewey Plummer and Marie Marcy Plummer.



Right: Donald Rex Jaqua, Jr., World War II.



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE AVRМ!

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: AVRМ P.O. Box 1316, Lancaster, CA 93538

Donate and pay dues via **PayPal** on our website: www.avmuseum.org

Los Angeles Times
December 23, 1913

Lancaster Throws Off Dull Care and Proceeds to Celebrate in True Yuletide Fashion.

Lancaster, Dec. 21.—The Christmas holidays are at hand and many social affairs are planned for the next two weeks. Wednesday evening, under the auspices of the Methodist church, exercises will be held in the W.I.C. Hall, to which all the children of Lancaster have been invited. A programme of music has been arranged and a beautiful Christmas tree provided.

Miss Rebecca Ditman entertained her pupils and their parents at the Del Sur schoolhouse. The scene of the evening's festivities was beautifully decorated, while a large Christmas tree covered with ornaments added much to the charming scene. The manner in which the large number of guests were entertained left nothing to be desired.

Los Angeles Times
December 25, 1923

Antelope Valley Turkeys For Many. Sixteen Hundred Homes Here Get Birds Under Novel Marketing Plan

Sixteen hundred Los Angeles families today will group about their Christmas tables on each of which, as the center of attraction, will repose a fine fat turkey. The antelopes left the valley years ago, but their places have been taken by thousands of turkeys and nobody complains.

Because the turkey raisers have had trouble in the past disposing of their "crop," this year M.G. Taylor, president of the Antelope Valley Bank at Lancaster, and R.C. Hitte, president of the Lancaster Feed and Fuel Company, arranged for the sale of the turkeys directly to the consumer.

Four Los Angeles banks and several oil companies took most of the turkeys and arranged matters so that their employees could buy the birds at cost. All of the birds have been freshly killed, and yesterday they were bought into Los Angeles by trucks. The trip took but a few hours. In 1890 the Antelope Valley people used to drive their turkeys to Los Angeles, seventy-five miles, at the rate of six miles a day!



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

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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

Antelope Valley Rural Museum
P.O. Box 1316
Lancaster, CA 93584



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.

