



# The Historian

Preserving Today for Tomorrow

Volume 1 Number 5

November – December 2007

## Peace at Pearl Shattered December 7, 1941

By Cheryl Walker, Leisure World News Staff  
Writer, December 6, 1990



Jim Peirano – 2007 and 1938

That Sunday, December 7, 1941, newly promoted petty officer first class U.S.N. Jim Peirano was feeling great.

On liberty in Kaimuki, Oahu, approximately 15 miles from his submarine base at Pearl Harbor, he and his 1-year-old son Grant

were on their way to buy groceries at Yee Hoy's market.

It was early, 6:45 a.m., and quiet—except for the drone of planes moving purposefully across the sky.

Peirano remembers thinking it strange for the brass to get the boys out for an exercise on the Lord's Day, but he shrugged it off as a necessary precaution.

At Pearl, everyone knew the Japanese were on the move, but were unable to pinpoint where. Peirano's two most recent sea patrols on the U.S.S. Dolphin SS169 were to Midway and Wake islands to check out reported sightings of Japanese submarines. Luckily both had proved uneventful, nothing more than false alarms.

Peirano, thus, thought nothing more about the overhead planes during his 10-minute errand until he returned home with his milk and bread and turned on the radio.

*See Pierano - Page 4*

## Evelyn Shopp, Retires Editor of The Historian

Ever since I had a poem published in the "Daily Oklahoman" over 70 years ago, I have had dreams of being a writer of some kind. The dream never materialized, beyond a few professional articles. Instead, I found creating newsletters for various groups and producing family stories to accompany genealogical research an interesting substitute. That was the background I brought to the Historical Society when I was elected to the Board in 1985. Immediately I was elected as its Secretary, a job that was mine for 8 years. Minutes do not really substitute for "writing."



Evelyn Shopp – 1988

The Historical Society had a two page publication in early years. This was expanded to a small four page publication, but it was never published on a regular basis and the editorship seemed rather haphazard. As President, 1993-94, I edited the newsletter and it was produced when there was news enough to warrant it. During the next three years, as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, the newsletter became secondary to our desire to increase membership and to the ever-pressing need for a building of our own. Each issue carried the names of new members, contributions, and of upcoming programs and trips. In 1996, I prepared a mock up of an eight page newsletter and proposed a bimonthly publication. The board agreed and the next month the president appointed an editor!

*See Shopp - Page 5*

## MUSINGS

### **Bob Miller**

I would like to congratulate Bob Miller, the new President of GRF. Bob has been a member of the Society's Board for 12 years. He was responsible for moving the Globe to its final resting place adjacent to Clubhouse 7. For obvious reasons, Bob has resigned from our Board so that he can direct all of his energy to GRF. For the Society and the community. *I would like to thank Bob Miller for all of the things that he has done, and continues to do, for all of us.*

### **Annual Dues**

Enclosed with this edition is a membership application for 2008. I hope that you will decide to continue your support so that we can continue to *Preserve Today for Tomorrow*. Your membership in the Society is a tax free donation.

### **Retirements**

In this issue you will read that Evelyn Shopp and Mari Jan Vested have retired from their tasks associated with the Historian. I am grateful for their contributions to this newsletter. I have enjoyed working with them and hope that we can maintain the standards that they have set.

### **Honoree of the Month**

I am pleased to announce that **Avalon Las Palmas** and **Avalon at The Regency** will continue to fund this program. Our next honoree will be recognized in February, 2008. I would also like to thank the **Video Club of Laguna Woods Village** for their support of the Honoree of the Month and the Veterans History Programs.

### **Board of Directors**

We are rapidly approaching that time of year when the Society's Nominating Committee nominates people to serve on the Board. This year there are five seats on the Board. If you are interested in the services that the Society provides, and you are a "worker bee," please make an appointment with Trish Cassidy so that she can provide the information that you will need in order to make your application.



**Bob Ring**

### **Veterans History**

Did you know that the Historical Society is a proud partner of the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project? For several years, the Historical Society has been active in collecting and archiving the personal recollections of U.S. wartime veterans and the home front civilians whose invaluable work supported their efforts.

To date, hundreds upon hundreds of Laguna Woods residents have participated in the project. Among those is Jim Peirano, whose picture graces the front page of this newsletter and whose thrilling story of rescuing nuns in the South Pacific is sure to have you on the edge of your seat. Our collection of DVD interviews also includes extraordinary stories from individuals like Navy nurses Lenore Rickert and Ninetta Chapman, Distinguished Flying Cross recipient Dick Tyhurst, and James Tsutsui, a Japanese-American who was involved in military intelligence work during World War II. All interviews are available for public viewing at the Historical Society. We ask that you please call ahead before visiting, so that we can be sure someone is available assist you.

### **Share Your Story**

Do you have a story that you'd like share? Veterans can chose to either fill out a short form detailing notable aspects of their service (including ranks held, wartime activities, and locations of service) or submit the same short form and participate in a recorded interview that will bring their tales of service to life! All veterans are added to the Historical Society's registry of Laguna Woods veterans, a copy of which is also maintained at the Library of Congress in Washington DC. For more information please call 206-0150.



**Chris Macon, Curator**

**39% of our Veterans are 65 or older.**

## Charles Ryan



Clown Alley's "Chuckles" passed into the big circus in the sky on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Society's Select Committee had selected Ryan to be its Honoree for February, 2008. Ryan was the founder of the Laguna Woods Village Clown Alley and was also involved in establishing the

Klown Kollege. Chuckles, together with the other members of Clown Alley, entertained people of all ages in hospitals, nursing homes and other public venues.

Ryan collected and distributed wheel chairs, walkers and canes to needy residents. He was the chaplain of the American Legion Post 257.

I am sorry that Charles was not able to be honored by the Society. His tireless efforts to give to others will be remembered.



## Frank Prophet Jr.



There is one less smiling face in the Village; Frank Prophet Jr. left us for a gentler place on October 13th.

Frank was the Society's the Honoree for the Month of July 2002. He was honored for serving as: V.P. of the Community Association, and elected member of Third Mutual Board of Directors, Building Captain of

Disaster Task Force, Secretary of the Historical Society, and a member of the GRF Security Committee.

Frank was a direct descendent of Tecumseh, and a member of the Eastern Shawnee Indian Tribe.

Frank was the Gate 10 guard who held a tennis racket with a sign that asked you to *SMILE*. It delighted him to know that he made "hundreds of people laugh and forget their problems."

## Mari Jan Vested

Regretfully, we say "goodbye" to Mari Jan Vested who has resigned as the producer of our "Bits and Pieces of Leisure World History" page because of poor health.

Mari Jan has been a contributor since March 2005. Most of our readers enjoy reading bits about events that happened 40, 25 and 10 years ago. Until recently, Mari Jan was also one of the Historian's proof readers.

A native of Grosse Point Farms, MI, Mari Jan was a newspaper editor and feature writer for the Ogle County Life and a photographer and free lance columnist for newspapers and magazines. She moved to the Village, with her husband, in 1995. We send her into the next phase of her life with our best wishes.



## New Society Affiliates

- |                                                                                                                     |                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Bank of America</b><br>Banking and Financial Services<br>24211 Paseo de Valencia, Laguna Hills                   | <b>951-4010</b> |
| <b>Douglas Hyundai - Irvine</b><br>Hyundai New & Used Car Dealership<br>14 Auto Center Drive, Irvine                | <b>614-0711</b> |
| <b>Fountains Unique</b><br>Design & Manufacture High Quality Fountains<br>22822A Granite Way, Laguna Hills          | <b>305-7372</b> |
| <b>Hearx West</b><br>Hearing Care Clinic<br>24352 Rockfield Blvd., Lake Forest                                      | <b>461-0166</b> |
| <b>Precision Auto Repair</b><br>Auto Repair since 1980—Auto Club Approved<br>22701B Granite Way, Laguna Hills       | <b>855-9981</b> |
| <b>Union Bank of California</b><br>Banking and Financial Services<br>23511 Paseo de Valencia, Laguna Hills          | <b>830-3200</b> |
| <b>The Willows Foundation</b><br>Retirement Community for Christian Scientists<br>23871 Willows Drive, Laguna Hills | <b>586-5220</b> |



**Smiles of Gratification.** Happy smiles light up the faces of these nuns of the Order of Mary Immaculate, as they are being lowered away in lifeboat from U.S. ship at Guadalcanal, after they had been rescued from another one of the Solomon Islands. Two priests and two nuns were killed by the Japanese before a Marine and Navy rescue force aboard a U.S. submarine reached missionary party.

was mass confusion.”

Confusion which, he added, sometimes tragically resulted in damage done to one’s own side from “friendly fire.”

### ***Confusion and Rumors***

“We were geared to expect sabotage, there were sandbags all around the utility companies, we didn’t expect an attack.

“History shows we ignored many signals, We really didn’t analyze our intelligence.”

“Even though it seemed like

an eternity, the Japanese First Wave didn’t last more than an hour. Mercifully, a Second Wave didn’t materialize—but the residents of Oahu didn’t know that,” said Peirano.

The whole island became a mass of rumors, Peirano recalls, with one in particular dominant over all—that the Japanese were invading the other end of the island.

As rescue efforts proceeded and command struggled to take control, all liberties were cancelled and sentries were established to guard what was left of the United States Pacific Fleet.

As night fell, the jittery sentries often fired first, asked questions later as the statistics began to filter in: 19 ships sunk or damaged, 2,300 lives lost.

The next day, the United States declared war on Japan.

“We started to repair and resupply our ships right away.” said Peirano who adds that only 16 days later at nightfall, his submarine left Pearl for its first war patrol, to the Caroline Islands,

### ***Nuns Rescued***

Peirano, who later served on the Nautilus SS168, took part in 12 war patrols in the Pacific Theatre. During one of these patrols, he had an experience which he believes changed his life. It involved the rescue of 17 nuns, 12 children, and four priests on Christmas Eve, 1942, in the Solomon Islands.

The eldest of the nuns, Mother Superior, though she

### ***Peirano (from Page 1)***

### ***Japanese Bomb Pearl Harbor***

“I heard the announcer say Pearl Harbor is under attack, being bombed by the Japanese. ‘THIS IS NOT A DRILL. ALL HANDS RETURN TO THEIR STATIONS.’”

In that instant, says Peirano, Pearl Harbor became a big funnel with vehicles from all over the island trying to get in its neck.

He donned his white uniform, which his wife had just trimmed with his promotion stripes, and got a cab whose driver had insulated himself against the crisis by getting gloriously drunk.

The closer Peirano got to Pearl, the fiercer the bombing became. When he arrived, he discovered complete pandemonium, as he scrambled to his battle station manning a Browning automatic rifle.

“Everyone was trying to get established. The Japanese planes came in right over our stern, but they ignored us, the submarines. Their targets were the ships five to six hundred yards past our stern.”

Peirano kept up a steady fire, deafened by the explosions of torpedoes as they gouged the decks of the big ships anchored in the harbor.

“Our first job was to get the Japanese bombers, then do what we could to rescue our people. I think we shot down a bomber, but we couldn’t be sure, there



Peirano, with Commander Submarine Pacific Fleet Admiral Grenfeld, just after Jim was promoted to Captain of the U.S.S. Coucal.

had spent more than 30 years in the islands, had retained the accent of the place of her birth, which just happened to be Peirano's too, Brooklyn.

"We struck up a mother-son type of thing (Peirano's mother had died shortly before he enlisted in 1936). We had an instant friendship."



Traditional Polywog Ceremony aboard the Nautilus celebrating crossing of the Equator. After ceremony, the initiates become Shellbacks.

## ***The Pledge***

What's more, as the refugees were cruised to the safety of Guadalcanal, the old nun made him a pledge, in gratitude for his actions during the rescue: "My nuns will pray for you for the rest of your life."

Peirano, who will celebrate his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday on December 18<sup>th</sup>, credits this pledge with the excellent health he's enjoyed throughout the years ("most of the nuns were young") although he thinks a few aches and pains he's experienced of late indicate that perhaps their numbers are dwindling.

## ***War Ends***

After the war, Peirano had no thought of leaving the service, though his original reason for entering the Navy was to take some of the burden off his family during the Depression. In fact, he remained in the Navy until he retired in 1960.

"I never thought of leaving. The first four years after enlistment were tough, but when you got experience it cleared up: I went from captain of the head (ship's toilet), to navigator, to captain of my own ship—the U.S.S. Coucal ASR8. No, I have no regrets, they treated me great in the service."



## ***Shopp (from Page 1)***

Shortly thereafter, I somehow again became the editor, and have served in that capacity, as well as five years as president, until this, my swan song.

What is it like to be an editor, publisher, columnist, researcher, and frustrated writer all in one? I suppose it depends on the attitude and the aptitude of the individual. After a lot of advice, I am still virtually computer illiterate. As a result, The Historian became more and more time consuming. However, it was rewarding because many people took the time to tell me how much they enjoyed my articles.

Being your editor has really been a wonderful experience.



***There are 2.8 million  
Living WWII Veterans***

## Archive Corner

Fran Lindberg

They all remembered the little country store in El Toro, the only place near Leisure World to buy food back in 1964. They remember that the meat was excellent, and that the store sold farm supplies such as cattle feed and workmen would lean against the store front, napping in the mid-day sun.

The “Pioneers of ‘64” met during the week of June 2, 1977 to recall what Leisure World was like before the population exploded and the rolling hills and quaint store became concrete parking lots and large shopping centers.

### The Store

That little Country Store, owned by Steve Osterman and his wife, was located adjacent to the railroad tracks at the end of old El Toro Road, 400 feet north of Muirlands Blvd., near the Santa Fe Railroad. It provided a nostalgic sight in the valley until it was torn down, in the late 1960s to make way for progress and a railroad overpass. But at one time it was the hub of activity for the Saddleback Valley populated by a few hundred ranchers and farmers.

In the summer of 1921 Osterman helped his brother Ben to build the market from the ground up. According to Osterman, “The old wooden store had just burned down and the people who owned it didn’t have enough money to rebuild.”

Since the nearest stores were several dusty miles away in Irvine and San Juan Capistrano, the brothers knew the business venture was a sure bet. Before the ashes of the old store were cold, he and Ben had erected a one-story cement block, tar paper-roofed market as plain and unpretentious as its name. And though it could never be accused of being extravagant, Osterman said people were mighty glad to see the store open its doors a few months after construction began.

Contained among the 30 by 70 foot walls was anything a small rural community could want from traps and feed to hats and ladies’ undergarments. Some of



the prices of the market’s staples were: Steaks – 25 cents; Shirts – 60 cents; and Overalls – 75 cents.

### The Life Style

The market had neither electricity nor running water. Osterman and his wife Lois ran the store six days a week from sunup to 9 pm and half day on Sunday, “until we got smart and shortened the hours,” he said with a wink.

But not to be labeled complete country bumpkins by the city folks in North County, the store had the prestige of owning the only telephone in the Valley. Though the phone originally was inside the store, it was later moved out front after Osterman, who lived in back of the market, was awakened more than once by someone needing to place an urgent call.

Though other people attempted to provide the El Toro Country Store with some competition by setting up shop at other locations in town, according to Osterman, they all failed.

His business not only provided the staples, it also was the unofficial trading post for cattle and acreage. Its veranda provided a forum for heated political debates. It was a place where people could stop by and spend a lazy afternoon catching up on the latest gossip.

Today, Steve Osterman would be overwhelmed by El Toro Road. More than 40 years later, progress has resulted in credit cards, traffic and congestion.

*Adapted from “You name it, ET store had it,” written by Elaine Osborn, Leisure World News staff writer, May 32, 1979 and “They remember the store” written by Myra Neben, Leisure World News staff writer, June 9, 1977.*

## BITS AND PIECES OF LEISURE WORLD HISTORY

(Selected from the *Leisure World News*) . . . . . Mari Jan Vested

### 40 Years Ago — November, 1967

TV-6 started broadcasting 6 hours a day, 5 days a week, offering a new format plus commercial support. Programming started at noon.

300 attended the dedication of Lutheran Church of the Cross' new sanctuary on Sunday, November 12<sup>th</sup>.

Scores of residents were on hand at the El Toro Marine Corp Air Station to hear President Lyndon B. Johnson applaud the "fine job" being done by the Marine Corps throughout the world.

Leisure World's population was estimated to be 9,397 persons who occupied 5,370 manors.

The Lions Club launched their Annual White Cane Drive to fund its sight conservation projects.

Various markets had Hen Turkeys on sale for as low as 27¢ a pound without any minimum purchase.

### December 1967

Plans for a resident-financed 72 unit motel [now Laguna Hills Lodge] adjacent to Manning's Restaurant [now Laguna Hills City Hall] took a giant step forward with the announcement that more than 70 residents had signed pre-incorporation pledges in excess of \$250,000.

GRF approved two new medical plans that would become effective on January 1<sup>st</sup>. The monthly premium for residents 65 and older, while supplemental to Medicare, was \$8.50. The monthly premium for the under-65 plan was \$25.85 for husband and wife, while the monthly premium for a single person living in a manor was \$16.80.

### 25 Years Ago — November 1982

'California Gold' host Huell Howser and Evelyn Shopp, who was in charge of the fundraising effort, cut the ribbon in front of the Historical Society's new facility.

Engineers presented Moulton Parkway widening plan to County officials. Proposal included four through lanes in each direction. County estimated that it would be 5 years before the \$1.5 million project would start.

Various markets had Hen Turkeys on sale for as low as 59¢ a pound without any minimum purchase.

### December 1982

Blackout was a *hare-raising* experience after a rabbit got into a transformer near the Library. Lights went out just as Norman Cousins, prominent political journalist, author, professor, and world peace advocate, was about to speak before a capacity audience at Clubhouse 3. Power was restored about 70 minutes later. The rabbit did not survive.

Supervisors approved holding public hearings on the plans for the proposed San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor Project.

Banks offered Insured Money Market Accounts for the first time.

138 men and women, some from Leisure World, participated in the first Leisure World Super Seniors Tennis Tournament on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

### 10 Years Ago — November 1997

In an effort to dispel the confusion and misconceptions which plagued the cable rebuild project, the Leisure World Boards placed a full page ad in the Leisure World News which defined the need, process and results of the undertaking.

Concerned citizens, from the Gate 14 area, voiced their objections to a proposed hotel complex on the Aliso Viejo Country Club Golf Course.

Jan Nelson (McLaughlin) was elected president of GRF.

### December 1997

Holiday Season began when John and Lee Dudley threw the switch lighting up 8,000 miniature lights on their front lawn.

El Nino—one mean hombre. More than 7 inches of rain, in 48 hours, caused damage to more than 400 manors. Some of the manors had to be gutted and rebuilt before they were fit for human habitation. 20 resident vehicles were lost due to water damage when clogged drains led to the flooding of the garages in three-story buildings. The atrium of the Towers was flooded destroying the carpet in the lobby, gallery, lounge area, reception area and the Crystal dining room.

Project 21 group voted to recommend to the Boards that the community's entry gates and gate houses be spruced up to make them friendlier, more attractive and safer.



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**Peace at Pearl Shattered— See Page 1**

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