



# **GUAJALOTES, ZOPILOTES, Y PAISANOS**

**Newsletter of the Hillsboro Historical Society**

**August, 2012  
Volume 5 Number 3  
Editor: Harley Shaw**

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## ACTIVITIES

### Membership

As a result of our changeover to a membership organization, we are reviewing our policy regarding distribution of newsletters. For the present, we will continue to send the digital newsletter to everyone who is on our mailing list and will add new members to that list as they join. If we have no email address for members, we will mail them a hard copy of the newsletter. Any members receiving digital copies that would prefer to receive a hard copy can email me at [hgshaw@windstream.net](mailto:hgshaw@windstream.net), and I will add you to our postal mailing list.

As of August 12, 2012, we have 13 family memberships, 25 individual members, and two business memberships. This totals 40 memberships representing 52 individuals.

This rapid response to our request for members has perhaps caught the membership committee off guard. They are now working on getting membership cards printed and catching up the necessary records. Needless to say we deeply appreciate the response.

### Events

The Ladder Ranch tour organized by Jamie Lee was a resounding success. Here is his personal assessment :

“Saturday afternoon at The Ladder was a great success due to the beauty of the venue itself and the efforts of Harley, Patti, Donna, Dawn, and the beautiful and elegant box lunches prepared by Steve and Angela, and the charm and knowledge of Steve Dobrott. One of the ladies commented that she would have paid twice as much if she had known there was going to be a Sam Elliott look alike. I think she meant Steve. I have had five emails from people asking me to sign

them up right away if we plan other outings...which of course we will.

The total for the day plus two new memberships came out to \$1,050.00 so we hit the \$1000.00 I had hoped for.”

Thanks to Jamie for organizing this event and special thanks to him for funding the lunches.

We will have no Labor Day event this year. As noted in earlier minutes, the Music Festival failed to produce income proportional to the labor and expense of organizing it. Several members worked on a script of the Oliver Lee trial compiled by Garland Bills. They hoped to develop a play, or at least a reading that might be performed as a regular event. Turns out it was more complicated than anyone imagined it might be, and won't be ready for Labor Day. Without some major draw, we decided that any associated events and the silent auction weren't likely to stand alone. We hope to regroup by this time next year, if not before.

### Black Range Museum

Sonja Rutledge has continued working with June Anders regarding purchase of the museum. Sonja and Barbara Lovell have written a draft business plan in anticipation of upcoming fundraising efforts.

### Peltier Paintings

Monica Donovan at the Leonard Peltier Gallery reports that the current economic downturn has severely affected the art market. She has had few queries on any of the paintings she advertises.

## EDITOR'S REPORT: NEWS AND COMMENTS

As noted in the Activities section, we are moving forward in our effort to acquire the Black Range Museum. June Anders has offered the property and its contents to Hillsboro Historical Society for \$150,000 and has said that she specifically wants HHS to own it. She is not, however, in a financial position to donate it and must consider the needs of her heirs, something we understand very well. We all feel that the price is right and that preservation of the museum and its contents should be a priority for Hillsboro and our part of Sierra County.

Purchasing the museum is no small undertaking. We learned during our earlier effort to

acquire the old courthouse and jail property that raising six-figure sums within a community as small as Hillsboro is a major challenge. At present, we have \$25,000 already allocated to the museum purchase. \$20,000 of this is residual from the courthouse project. We would like to find a benefactor who would be willing to match our existing \$25,000.

In order to come up with this kind of money, we are undoubtedly going to need to step outside of Hillsboro and probably outside of Sierra County in our fundraising efforts. Having helped a land trust in Prescott raise money to protect a historic landmark, and having watched Patty Woodruff hustle funds for a swimming pool in Chino Valley, I can tell you that the ongoing small projects and events can keep a project alive, but it is the few large donations that bring such projects to completion.

Sonja and Barbara, as noted earlier, are drafting a business plan for the museum to show prospective donors that we are serious about this endeavor. I believe we need a single individual with wide contacts to plan and execute our fundraising. Such a person need not live in Hillsboro. In fact a interested individual with roots in Hillsboro who lives in a larger population center might well be more effective. We feel strongly that preservation and operation of the Black Range Museum is of critical importance and are now reaching out for help from all who understand and perhaps fondly remember our unique village.

Our Vice President, Stretch Luna has submitted his resignation from our board, effective August 18, citing health issues. Stretch says his interest in Hillsboro history is as strong as ever and he will continue researching and writing his self-published brochures. He also intends, within his capabilities, to continue his work on the cemetery which in the past has included placing flags on all Veterans graves on Memorial Day. Stretch deserves special kudos for his work at the cemetery as well as his ongoing efforts to record and publicize Happy Flats history. Stretch's family tradition maintains that a Mexican settlement existed at Happy Flats for a couple decades before Hillsboro was founded in 1877, and Stretch continues his efforts to substantiate that tradition. Anyone who might have documentation of earlier occupation of our Hillsboro/Happy Flat site on Percha Creek, other than early Mimbres pit houses or temporary Apache camps, should contact us. We'll see that Stretch gets the info.

Also, Stretch informs us that Tranquilino Gutierrez passed away on May 12, 2012. Tranqui-

lino was one of the few remaining natives of Happy Flat.

## LOCAL HISTORY

Part of the fun about editing a small, local newsletter lies in the variety of material submitted. Unlike purely academic journals, we aren't limited to detailed, scholarly and peer-reviewed papers (although we certainly appreciate receiving them when they arrive). We can also print stories about "how things were" written by people who grew up here. Bobbie Ostler has again graced our pages with her memories of attending school from Hillsboro in the 1970s. Some folks may squirm at the notion that anything as recent as the 70s can be called history. But such memories are fresher and probably more accurate than documentaries assembled from older secondary literature. They will increase in their historic value with the passing of each new decade. We thank Bobbie for the delightful tale that follows.

### **First Grade Bobbie Hale-Ostler**

Starting the first grade in 1973 was a major turning point in my life. Hillsboro had lost the privilege of having a public school a few years before I started school. So, just like everyone else in Sierra County, I would attend school in T or C. I would leave the familiar comforts of our little 'government mobile home' and board the number 7 bus for a thirty-two mile trip each way. I do not remember having first-day jitters as school would be a new adventure. And I had the comfort of Mom and my brother Reid taking me the first day. My greatest concern was not wearing go-go boots and my sister Kathleen's purple suede, leather-fringed jacket. Instead, I wore a dress and pig tails.

As soon as we arrived at the little school on Date Street, I was thrilled to see a real playground filled with a merry-go-round, swings, and monkey bars. I had rarely played on a playground before. I had been on swings at the KOA Campground near Caballo where Mom would do laundry. But this playground was huge and full of other kids. "Your teacher is going to be Betty Strebeck!" Mom exclaimed pointing to Miss Strebeck. "She and Reid did student teaching together in Carlsbad and she spent Thanksgiving dinner with us." My eyes wandered from Miss Strebeck back to the sun's rays bouncing from one piece of metal play-

ground equipment to another. Mom then pinned a note to my clothing indicating that I would ride school bus number 7. She also pinned on my lunch ticket.

The bell rang and we ran into the little classroom. We stood up with hand on heart and began the day with the Pledge of Allegiance. We wrote our names on our Big Chief notebooks, pencils, glue, and erasers. All the small items fit neatly into our cigar boxes. The Big Chief notebooks stayed on top of our desks. As Miss Strebeck passed out the ancient Dick and Jane readers, I became fascinated with her long silky hair and long nails. From then on, I have had long nails.

I strained to focus in class as the sun's rays quickly found me in the classroom tantalizing me with the playground. Morning recess finally arrived and I darted out to the shiny playground. Patty Duke, Edda Lynn Greene, Robert Zamora, Ronnie Montoya, and Christine Simon were some of the first children I met. Soon I became close friends with a nice quiet girl named Melissa Coker.

The rest of the first day's details are a blur. The last bell rang at 3:10 and I found the Hillsboro line for the number 7 bus. A couple named Linda and Marshall drove the bus then. Linda was there for the ride home, along with the Beach Boys playing on the eight-track. Mom, Reid and our dogs, White Pup and Honey were waiting for me at the General Store. After the first day, I would get off the bus in Hillsboro and wait for my dad at the General Store. Thankfully, I was able to eat a burrito and have a soda while I waited for dad to get off work.

Early to bed and early to rise to catch the bus on time became a routine for me. Marshall picked us up at 7:15 along with country-western music on the eight-track. Every morning Louie, the kind janitor would greet us with a smile and a hand shake. Mr. Sitz, our principal would often have morning playground duty. Reading quickly became my favorite subject. It was comforting to know that my siblings and Aunt Mary might have read from the same Dick and Jane Books. There were valuable lessons outside of books as well. We held our breath as we watched Miss Strebeck paddle Windy Miller in front of the class. Melissa and I found out what Miss Strebeck's nails felt like on our arms when she separated us when we could not stop talking and laughing.

Miss Strebeck taught us the priceless lesson of accepting other people no matter how different they may be. One day, Miss Strebeck an-

nounced that a new boy, Ben would join our class. She said we would be paddled if we made fun of Ben. Ben came into the class wearing long hair and a head band. He was shy and needed extra help in learning to read. Miss Strebeck carved out daily reading time for him. Miss Strebeck also carved out daily English lessons for another shy boy who spoke only Spanish. The Spanish speaking boy was also protected by Miss Strebeck. She asked us to help both boys in reading and English. I wish I could remember the Spanish speaking boy's name.

In October, we moved to North Percha in the Black Range on my grandmother's homestead. I had to ride a few extra miles to the bus stop in Hillsboro. I would leave the serene homestead with its kerosene lamps, bubbling creek and the smell of fresh evergreens and enter a world of other children and electricity. Each evening, we would hook up the TV to the generator. I would strive to brush my hair straight, smooth and shiny like the ladies on Star Trek. When Reid told me that the women were wearing wigs, I was crushed. "Those can't be wigs. I will make my hair shiny!" Reid walked away laughing when I yelled at him. The wig incident was more shocking than learning the truth about Santa.

I still have a scar on my right knee where I ripped it open on a piece of metal sticking out of the sidewalk at school. We were running a race before we were to catch the bus home. I ran past the piece of metal and suddenly I felt blood oozing from my tights. My tights were torn and the cut was deep. I didn't think anything of the wound; rather I was focused on catching the school bus. Melissa told Miss Strebeck about my knee.

"You need stitches," Miss Strebeck said as she held the separated pieces of bleeding flesh together. Tears welled up in my eyes as I realized she would not let me get on the bus. Mr. Sitz came over and took me in his office.

"I can't call my mom, Mr. Sitz. We don't have a phone in the mountains." I finally shared my fears of making my parents worry. Mr. Sitz called my Step-Grandmother, Georgia Hale. Georgia taught school at Arrey Elementary. Georgia would meet Mr. Sitz and me at the junction. But first, Mr. Sitz took me to Carrie Tingley Hospital for stitches. I was comforted by my cousin, Daisy Wilson who was the nurse on duty that day. She cleaned my wound and Dr. Sherman stitched me up. Georgia met us at the junction and we rode to Hillsboro. My Dad met me at Georgia and Grandpa's. Mom was

surprised when I came home with stitches.

Next to reading, I loved Mr. Duke's music class. We went more than once a week. Mr. Duke played his guitar and we sang. We learned tunes from the Beatles and John Denver. We diligently practiced Christmas carols for the Christmas program. I did not tell my parents about the Christmas program until the night we were to perform. So, we made a flying trip from North Percha to T or C, just in time to sing. I cannot remember very much of first grade after Christmas.

I do remember my first haircut. It must have

been in the spring toward the end of first grade. The older girls on the school bus were letting their long hair fly out the window. Oh, that looked fun. So, I untied my braids and flung them out the window. It was great fun until I got off the bus with a horrid tangled mess. My mom took me to Barbara Wilkin's beauty shop and she cut my hair into a pixie. I didn't mind as I liked the wash and go hair style.

I will always be thankful that God blessed me with a good start in first grade.

**Membership Subscription  
Hillsboro Historical Society  
P. O. Box 461  
Hillsboro NM 88042**

The Hillsboro Historical Society is a (501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to collect, preserve and share the history and historical artifacts of the Hillsboro, Kingston and Lake Valley communities in New Mexico. Its membership comprises supporters and volunteers who may choose to participate in many aspects of the Society's mission including fundraising, collection and conservation, oral histories, museum establishment, special events and programs, administration, and other related opportunities. Member benefits include the Historical Society quarterly newsletter, priority registration for lectures, summer programs and field trips, and an invitation to our Annual Dinner and Silent Auction.

We welcome your support and membership. Dues are \$25 annually for individual or family and \$50 for business memberships. Please mail this completed Membership Subscription, along with your check made payable to Hillsboro Historical Society, to the above address.

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