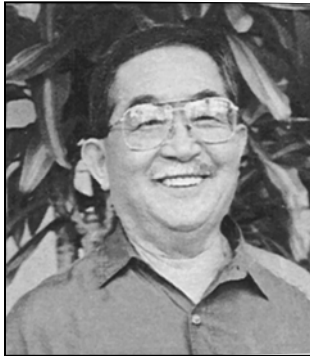


The Historian

Preserving Today for Tomorrow

Volume 2 Number 5

September - October 2008



James Tsutsui in 1993.

Life at Santa Anita

[In February 1942, President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order that said that all persons of Japanese Ancestry were to be excluded from the West Coast. Tsutsui's family, who were American citizens, were relocated to Santa Anita two weeks later.]

While at Santa Anita, to keep us busy, we were given work to do. There were a great number of people working on camouflage tents for the armed forces. These nets were huge nets that hung from the ceilings of the stadium down to the stadium floor and as colored burlap strips were woven into this netting it was raised.

I was working on a gardening crew and we were assigned to trim a huge hedge. It was an oleander hedge that lined the northern perimeter of the track and there was a chain link fence that was eight or ten feet tall with barbed wire on the top. We were given make-shift ladders that were made out of two-by-fours and given lopping shears and hedge shears to trim the oleanders.

One day I was up on a ladder and I was topping the oleander. Of course, the oleander would grow outside the fence and I was leaning over the fence trying to top the oleander when I heard a voice say, "Get back inside that fence!"

And there I saw an armed guard, a military policeman, and I said, "All I'm tryin' to do is trim the oleanders like we were told to do and the only way to trim is to reach over."

See Tsutsui - Page 3

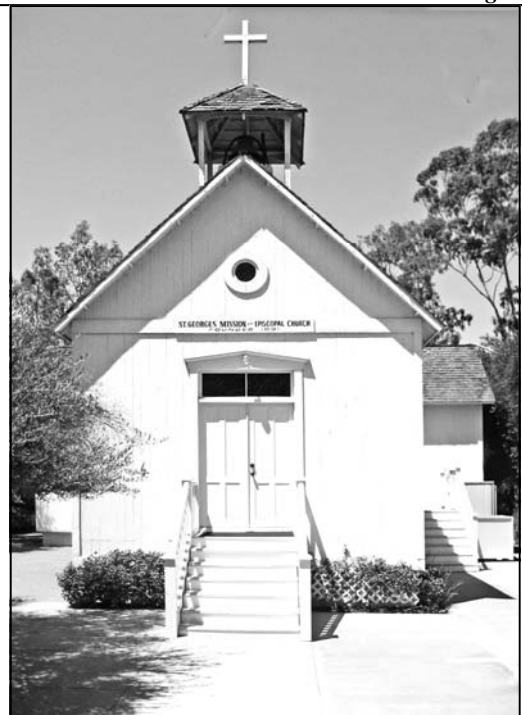
St. George's Mission of the Episcopal Church

St. George's Episcopal Mission was built in the summer of 1891 as a house of worship for English settlers recruited to El Toro by Dwight Whiting. The Mission was originally located on Whisler Drive (about 800 feet East of Muirlands Blvd.) and El Toro Road. It is the last remaining rural 19th century church in Orange County and all that remains of the English colony that settled in El Toro

The Mission's construction was the brainchild of Dwight Whiting, a Bostonian who moved to El Toro for health reasons. The church's vertical wood siding and its relatively tall building proportions suggest the strong influence of the Victorian *San Francisco Stick* style of architecture. The most prominent architectural feature of the church is the simple, low profile bell tower which is astride the ridge of the main roof over the double entry doors. The church originally consisted of one room to which wings were added about 1897.

Curiously, the story of the building of St. George's Mission begins with a business failure. Some land speculators had bought much

See Mission - Page 4



St. Georges Episcopal Mission was moved to Heritage Hill in 1976 and restored.

MUSINGS



Bob Ring

This Month's Stories

Life at Santa Anita and A Wonderful Life are transcripts of **Jim Tsutsui's** and **Frank Buchanan's California of the Past Videos**. All of the Society's *California of the Past* videos, which were made possible with the assistance of the Orange County Public

Library, can be viewed in the Society's conference room or online at:

<http://orangecounty.blip.tv>.

I would like to thank **Darelene Carpenter, President of Amigos de La Colina** (Docents at Heritage Hill) and **Keith Melford, Treasurer of the Saddleback Area Historical Society**, who assisted me in the preparation of the St. George's Mission article. Darelene took Evelyn Shopp and me on a very informative tour of Heritage Hill. Keith helped me gather information from the Saddleback Area Historical Society's archives.

The basis for most of the St. George's article was an article written by Sid Bomhard for the Daily Pilot in 1991 and a pamphlet titled, "The First 75 Years of St. George's Episcopal Mission" written for the Anniversary Dinner held on December 4, 1966.

Honoree of Month

Our congratulations to **Marty Rubin**, our Laguna Woods Honoree for September and **Marlene Carr** our Honoree for October.

We are grateful to Las Palmas and The Regency for funding this program as well as the Video Club, whose members video tape the ceremony.

New Affiliate

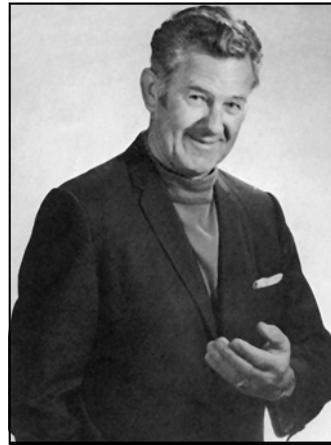
I am pleased to welcome **AristoCare** as a Patron of the Historical Society. Whether you need companionship or help with daily activities, AristoCare offers a combination of services to meet your personal *in-home* care needs. All care is initiated and supervised by a Licensed Nurse.

AristoCare

Putting the heart Back into Home Healthcare

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Laguna Hills – Telephone 297-3600

A Wonderful Life



Frank L. Buchanan

My name is Frank L. Buchanan, Sr. I was born in St. Louis, Missouri [on] April 22, 1912.

Entertaining was just born in me. I sang in high school. I've done over 30 big movies and 15 times [on] TV, and I'm still going.

The family moved to Los Angeles. I started school there in Los Angeles at nine years old. At 12

years old, I was in a show at the Sabler Theater on Central Avenue. I learned a song called "My Pretty Snow Deer." It was taught to me by a man who was boarding at our house. In that contest I got first prize. The prizes in those days was a bag of groceries. No money, just groceries.

I graduated in 1926 at Jefferson High School. I was eligible to take the Civil Service Exam for the L.A. Fire Department. So I became an L.A. fireman. I took charge of Engine 14 and Engine 30 from Central Avenue in Los Angeles.

Retirement

Twenty-eight years later, I retired from the L.A. Fire Department as an acting battalion chief. The main reason why I retired was I had fallen down one time on a fire and I broke my back. For six months I was in a cast.

So, from then on, all I was doing was one movie after the next and shows. Oh God, I belonged to nine big clubs in the Los Angeles area. I was always going to do a show or be interviewed. I gave Mitzie Gaynor flowers at one of her shows in Las Vegas. I sat next to Martha Raye while we watched her daughter perform for an audition in a movie.

Then I met up with Timothy Carey and through Timothy Carey I joined the movie business. I produced a big movie called, "Ladies of Pasadena." In that movie I did five different roles.

Later on, I met up with Milton Berle and he introduced me to his brother Jack Berle. Jack Berle and I did dozens and dozens of movies together. It was just a wonderful, wonderful life for us.

Tsutsui (from Page 1)

At which point he worked the bolt of his rifle's chamber around, brought his rifle up to ready, and said, "I told you to get back inside that fence!"

Well, naturally I climbed right down and I put down my loping shears and I didn't work any more that day. That was the first time, ever, that I had a gun pointed at me.

On another occasion, someone happened to look back towards the stadium and noticed that all the camouflage nets had all been lowered at the same time, which was quite unusual. We knew something was going on, so we left our tools there and ran to the main part of the camp, and there we found turmoil. People milling about and the excitement was caused by word that had gotten out that the interior police force, which was a private police force, on the guise of looking for contraband, were going through the barracks and the stables where we were housed, and they were stealing valuables from the evacuees.

[Tsutsui and his family were transferred from Santa Anita to an Internment Camp in Jerome, Arkansas. They were released in 1944 and relocated to Seabrook Farms, New Jersey.]



Tsutsui, age 19, became a squad leader.

Life After Internment

I graduated in February of 1944. While in April I received notice from my draft board to report to Omaha, Nebraska for my pre-induction physical. After I got my '1A' a man interviewed me and asked me what branch of service I preferred. And I said, "Well I'd like to join the Marines."

He looked at me and he said, "You're Japanese, aren't you?"

I said, "Yes, I am."

He said, "Didn't you know that Marines are the only ones fighting the Japanese?"

And I said, "Well, I thought I might come in handy because I understand a little Japanese."

And he says, "Well, I appreciate your loyalty" and he took a rubber stamp and he stamped my papers and it said *Classified Service*. That meant that I was limited to certain areas of service.

Then orders came through for me to report to another white company. The platoon leader came to me and he said, "Tsutsui, I want you to be a squad leader."

And I looked at him, the Lieutenant, and I said, "Sir,



Leo Jones, Tsutsui, Donald Blas, John Swart on a Rod & Gun Club fishing trip in September 2003.

you know I'm Japanese."

He said, "Yep."

And I said, "Well, I don't know how the guys would be, you know, to taking orders from me."

He looked at me, and he said, "You're an American, aren't you?"

And I said, "Yes, sir!"

He said, "You're my squad leader."

I received my discharge from active duty [in 1946]. I enlisted for three years in the enlisted reserve.

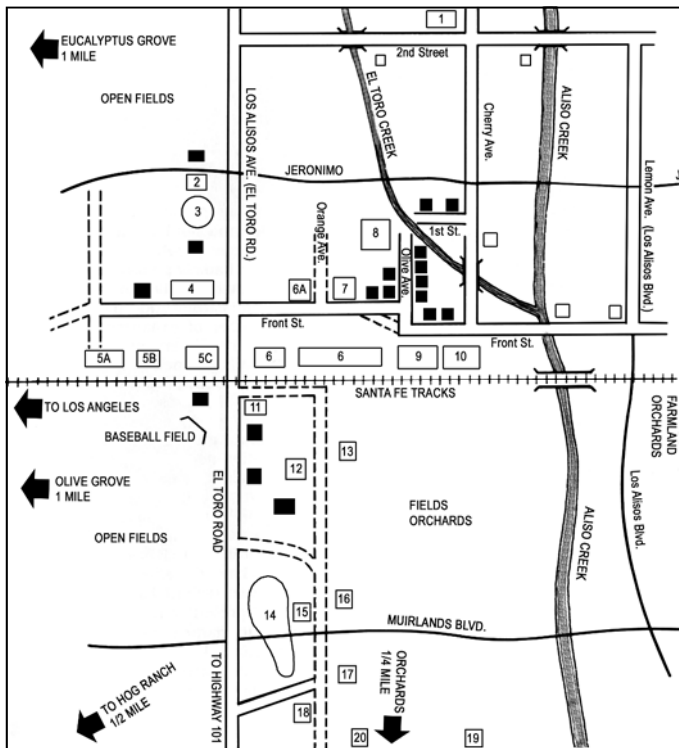
In the meantime my wife had moved to New York and was working in New York as a governess. So, I went to join my wife [Jeanne] in New York and I missed the slower pace of living in Los Angeles. So I convinced my wife that we should come back to Los Angeles and start our family here.

We came back in the latter part of 1946. I decided to transfer my family from Los Angeles to Orange County. We bought a home in Santa Ana. This was in 1960. When we bought movies of that home [we saw that] there was nothing but farm land all around. It was before all of the development started.

In the meantime, I had worked for a restaurant called, Bianco Restaurant. After I had left the restaurant in 1980, I went to work for a landscape construction company as sales manager. The largest contract that I was able to obtain for the company was the landscaping of Main Place in Santa Ana.

[Tsutsui retired in 1990 and kept busy working part time.]

So we moved to Leisure World in the year 2000. I think that's one of the best moves that I have ever made. I belong to the Rod & Gun Club and you couldn't ask for a better group of guys. We're just like one big family. We have everything here including wonderful people.

Mission (from Page 1)**Downtown "Old" El Toro 1915 - 1964**

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Bennett House | 7. Blacksmith |
| 2. Grammar School /
St. Anthony's Catholic Church | 8. Red Brick School |
| 3. Community Hall | 9. Cattle Pens |
| 4. Country Store | 10. Clay Dumps |
| 5. Depot | 11. Pool Hall |
| 6. Warehouse | 12. St. George's |

of Rancho de los Alisos from the Serrano family, heirs of the original Spanish grantee, in the early 1880s expecting to resell parcels at a significant profit when the Santa Fe Railroad came through. One construction delay after another caused the bottom to fall out of this real estate venture and the owners became anxious to get from under their burden.

Speculators Lose - Whiting Wins

Whiting was not so impatient nor pessimistic and grasped the opportunity to acquire these large holdings at an attractive bargain from the speculators. He promptly purchased the remaining 8,500 acres of the rancho from the Serranos.

Whiting set aside 560 acres for building the village of El Toro into the kind of farming community that would benefit all concerned—as well as enhance the value of his extensive holdings. By 1888, he began to breed horses and cattle. He also planted prune, apricot and pear orchards as well as, walnut, pecan and chestnut groves.

Whiting Marries

While on vacation at the new Hotel Coronado, Whiting met Judge and Mrs. William Keating and their daughter, who had moved to San Diego from Nova Scotia. Later, Whiting and Miss Keating were married, and upon returning to El Toro he built a home for her and another for her parents.

A visit to England in 1889 convinced Whiting that “genteel English families” would fit very well in his community. Arriving home, he immediately set about building those amenities appealing to his prospects—library, tennis courts, cricket field. Most important was a church. Since there was none for miles around, local residents volunteered their help, and a site was donated by the El Toro Land and Water Co.

This project especially interested the Keatings, whose son, the Rev. J. Lloyd Keating, was rector of an Anglican Church in England. They also felt it could be a memorial to their other son, George James Keating, who had recently died in San Diego. Thus it was that, principally through the generosity of the Keatings and Whitings, El Toro became the proud possessor of a nice, new white frame church during the summer of 1891. The mission was dedicated to St. George, the patron saint of England.

Mission is Built

While construction was going on, El Toro residents gathered for a first service on Sunday evening, June 7, 1891, in the freight room of the Santa Fe Railroad Station. It was estimated that more than 50 people attended. By October 3rd, the mission was ready for dedication, a ceremony performed by the Reverend William Ford Nichols, assistant bishop of California. By December 3rd the church must have been free from all debt, because on that Thursday afternoon, Bishop Nichols returned to consecrate St. George's—as testified by his framed certification which still hangs on the west wall of the church.

One of the new English families to arrive in El Toro was Captain Huddy, a sailor for more than 30 years, who became very active in church affairs, at times serving as a lay reader. A large ship's lantern from his last vessel was donated for extra lighting in the building. Mrs. Huddy organized the Sunday school.

Keatings Donate Vicarage

The Keatings continued their interest in the church, donating a house and two acres for a vicarage and thirty-six acres which were planted with olive trees to provide income for the church. The records for 1898 show an annual income of \$159.06, with the vicar re-

Mission (from Page 4)

ceiving \$10 a month for his services. They also gave the beautiful hand carved altar with its gold-leaf decorations, a reed organ, both of which remain in use today. Another prized historical relic is the unusual carved oak font whose basin is a graceful South Sea Island clam shell.

In 1893 St. George's became a member of the Santa Ana Valley Missions, and as such was served by clergymen from Tustin, Anaheim and Orange. In 1916, St. George's became a ward of the Rector of Trinity Parish in Orange.

Mission Closes

During the 1920s and early 1930s, many El Toro families moved away because of heavy rains and alternate droughts. This, plus lack of clergy, caused regular services to be dropped, and the remaining congregation joined Trinity. Since St. George's was the only Protestant church in the area, many non-Episcopalians made it their church home. When the doors closed, not even a Sunday school was available for community children.

Mission Reopens

In 1940 permission was granted to use the building for a non-denominational church school. By Easter 1943 services were resumed. And so for several years children of other denominations met together with Episcopalian youngsters, Sunday after Sunday, to learn that faith which was common to all. An entry in the Register records that "54 persons attended the five services held that day" and that "the collection of \$46.70 was the largest Easter offering since 1899."

Leisure World Opens

In 1964 there were just two churches—two tiny chapels within miles of Leisure World. Both were on El Toro Road east of the freeway. St. George's Mission was on the south side, near the train tracks, which in those days crossed the road. St. Anthony's Chapel, erected in 1889 as the El Toro school house and purchased in 1916 by the Catholic Church, was a short distance away on the north side. The chapels, the country store



**The original organ donated by the Keating family.
Courtesy Saddleback Area Historical Society**

(see *Historian Nov. 2007*), a community building and a large warehouse were the landmarks in those days.

The rest was farm land with a few residences.

Of the thirty first residents of Leisure World who had moved into the new manors in Buildings 1, 2 and 3 on the previous Thursday, a few hardy souls found their way to the two chapels on Sunday September 13, 1964. For the others, the Leisure World Foundation (now Golden Rain) held a prayer meeting in Clubhouse I.

The chirping of birds in the olive trees beside the little white frame of St. George's, greeted a few Leisure World residents on that Sunday.

Inside the church, the hanging kerosene lamps provided a cheerful glow. Candles

flickered on the altar, the organ played softly. In the pews lining the central aisle the small congregation knelt prayerfully, oblivious to the obligato furnished by the birds that had found their way into the screened ventilator in the roof.

Ross Cortese' Vision

Ross Cortese had envisioned Leisure World as a total way of life, in which religion, medical care and recreation were all to be included. At Seal Beach he had built a community chapel within Leisure World, and expected to do the same here. In fact, plans for the chapel were actually drawn. But it soon became evident that the individual churches were anxious to establish their own congregations. As a result, Cortese offered to deed nearby property, outside the walls, to each church that had at least 100 members living in Leisure World, provided that construction would begin within two years.

Ground breaking and building of the churches began during the next two years. In the meantime, rooms in Clubhouse I, and later in Clubhouse II, were used for Sunday Services.

Soon after the opening of Leisure World in 1964 the influx of Episcopalians, plus the continuing growth of neighboring settlements, assured the future of this

Mission (from Page 5)

St. George's, promising its growth into a self-sustaining parish. In 1965 negotiations were started to relieve Trinity Church, Orange, of its wardship, again placing the Mission under the direction of the Bishop. These negotiations were completed with the appointment of Reverend Frederick C. Hammond as Vicar-in-Charge on March 1, 1966.

Rossmoor Corporation offered St. George's a building site west of Moulton Parkway. However, in order to have the church more accessible for both Sunday School and adult services for members living throughout the Saddleback Valley, the Church chose to purchase 3.5 acres on Avenida de la Carlotta near the El Toro exit from the Freeway. This site was offered to them by Rossmoor at a price considerably below market value. The ground-breaking ceremonies were held on August 4, 1968. The Reverend Frederick C. Hammond, who had been vicar of St. George's Chapel since 1966, was the first Rector of the new church. The first service in the sanctuary was held on July 27, 1969.

Mission Moved to Heritage Hill

In 1969 five thousand acres of old Whiting Ranch were sold to Occidental Petroleum with the stipulation that Serrano (Whiting) Adobe be donated to a public agency as a historic site. Occidental Petroleum donated Heritage Hill and a mile and a half of Serrano Creek bed to County of Orange for development of a historic park and recreation facilities. Occidental Petroleum proceeded to develop Lake Forest.

In 1973 the Saddleback Area Historical Society was founded and started to work with other community groups and the County to develop the Heritage Hill site. As time passed, other denominations used the Mission until, finally, the original St. George's Episcopal Church and old El Toro Grammar School buildings were purchased by Saddleback Area Historical Society and moved to Heritage Hill in December 1976.

St. George's Episcopal Mission was lifted from the



Interior of St. George's Mission Chapel circa 1893. Note that throughout most of its usage the congregation sat in plain wood kitchen chairs rather than pews, with moveable kneelers place in front of these chairs on which the congregation kneeled. Cloth prayer book sacks were tied to the backs of each chair.

Picture courtesy Saddleback Area Historical Society

stone foundation that supported it since 1891 and was transported slowly to a temporary location near the even-older Serrano Adobe in Lake Forest. The move wasn't without its moments of excitement. Just after beginning the trip up El Toro Road, near its intersection with Muirlands Boulevard, the steeple of the little white church sliced through two 12,000 volt power lines causing a bright flash and a resounding "pop" startling on-lookers. No one was injured, however traffic was snarled for more than an hour.

Since that time the Mission was renovated, and previously boarded up stained glass windows were revealed. When the church was dismantled, many of the furnishings were moved elsewhere, but thanks to interested citizens, missing articles either were returned or replicas provided.

St. George's Episcopal Mission is located in Heritage Hill Historical Park in Lake Forest. The small Victorian church has been refurbished to appear much as it did when early English settlers worshiped there. It is believed to be the first religious building in southern Orange County, except Mission San Juan Capistrano.

Docent led tours of the Mission and the Park are conducted by Amigos de La Colina. Please telephone the Park Office at (949) 855-2028 for information.

BITS AND PIECES OF LEISURE WORLD HISTORY

(Selected from the *Leisure World News*) Evelyn Shopp

40 Years Ago — Sep. - Oct. 1968

The new Geneva Presbyterian Church 700 seat sanctuary, dedicated on August 25, 1968, was filled to capacity at both matinee and evening performances of the Southern California Mormon Choir.

GRF purchased 6.4 acres parcel from the Rossmoor Corporation. The parcel extended from the location of the current hospital parking garage to Clubhouse III. The purchase price was \$2.7 million.

Over 6,000 persons jammed the Clubhouse I parking lot to visit over 110 displays at the Recreation Dept. sponsored Flea Market. On sale - everything from vases to cars!

Leisure World residents were the first people in Orange County to view a new film produced by the Social Security Administration explaining the new Medicare Program.

The grand opening of Downey Savings in Mission Viejo featured the “highest rate in the United States on passbook savings accounts.” Coincidentally, at that time banks did not advertise C.Ds in spite of the fact that they had been available since 1961.

Flu vaccine was available in the Leisure World Clinic for all residents over 60. Persons who had not had the vaccine since 1963 were urged to get it.

Leisure World’s administration offices moved from the Medical Center to the Administration Building which Cortese had used as a sales office. The San Sebastian Complex currently sits on the property occupied by the former Administration Building.

Over 900 people were enrolled in the 42 classes sponsored by the Tustin High School Adult Education Services.

In a speech before the Leisure World Democratic Club Vermont Governor Phillip H. Hoff, campaigning for Hubert Humphrey, emphasized that this election was the “most important election of our times!” *Sound familiar?*

25 Years Ago — Sep. - Oct. 1983

Leisure World Bus schedules were adjusted from 40 to 45 minutes and would eventually go to one hour.

The Leisure World News carried a huge advertising section. There were 9 full page ads from grocery stores and markets. The average issue of the paper

was about 72 pages, considerably larger than the 52 page 1998 editions, and much larger than the present 40 page Globe. *Conclusion: newspaper content reflects advertising revenue.*

A “cat” burglar visited 7 manors with unlocked doors or windows and took a reported \$375 in cash. No other items were taken. An unemployed laborer was charged with the burglaries. He plead guilty and admitted that he had used the same method of operation in five other communities.

Third Mutual Board voted to cancel contract for soft water in the laundry rooms, saving approximately \$30,000 per year.

A ten-year lawsuit ended when GRF agreed to pay Laguna Publishing Co. a \$1.85 million settlement. At issue was the publisher’s right to deliver his newspaper free, door-to-door. This decision caused the Boards to adopt a policy that newspapers could only be delivered to subscribers. The Leisure World News was no longer a free publication. The policy reflected the desire of the vast majority of residents, at that time, who did not want their doorsteps cluttered with advertising literature nor did they want a myriad of vendors delivering material that the resident did not request.

10 Years Ago — Sep. - Oct. 1998

The Horse Patrol, now nine years old, continued to train for emergencies. They carried radios and first aid materials and were certified in CPR.

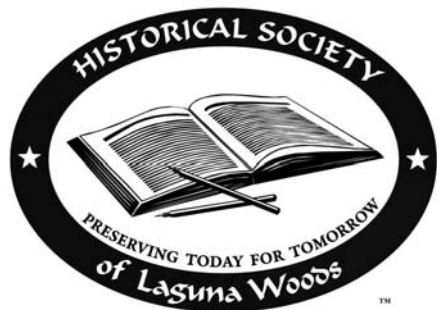
A bomb threat was called in, saying there was a bomb in the men’s locker room at Pool 1. Swimmers in all pools were evacuated and a thorough search was made by the Sheriff. No bomb was found.

6 mo. CD rate at Fremont Savings, now Capital Source Bank, was 5.4%. World Savings, now Wachovia, offered 5.16% on a special checking account.

Security continued to warn residents about telephone scams.

Every issue of The Leisure World News contained stories and/or letters regarding the pros and cons of cityhood. The anti-cityhood proponents seemed to be the most vocal.

Headline bloopers— “Legion Opens Year with Spaghetti”. [*Perhaps they closed the year with spumoni?*]



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On October 27, 1993, a fire started in the Wilderness Park on Laguna Canyon Road and spread quickly, destroying 391 beautiful homes in Laguna Beach, damaging 645 others and burning approximately 17,000 acres. It was a day of fear, panic, bravery and tears. Flames on ridgelines were clearly visible from Bahia Blanca.

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Bob Ring, Editor

Opinions expressed by authors in *The Historian* do not necessarily reflect those of the Historical Society of Laguna Woods.