

Founders, tribe gather history

By Maureen Brown
Alpine Sun Columnist

During the early Forties, everyone wanted to contribute to the "war effort." In an attempt to involve the young people of Alpine in that goal and at the same time keep the youngsters occupied, the "Junior Reserves" was formed. Members met once a month at the school for activities and fun.

"We were building our first home when these kids knocked on our door and asked my husband to play records for them," said Grace Wilcox, laughing softly in recollection. "Gene had quite a collection of records. I guess you could say we grew up with the kids."

Grace and Gene became the unofficial DJs for the burgeoning group. Their daughter, Marilu, was the unofficial mascot.

"We met at the school auditorium and the Woman's Club," Les Carey remembers, "and did various things to raise money to build the Youth Center."

"We put on a vaudeville show and carnival," added Olive Wooldridge. "Then we began to think that 'Junior' Reserves was too young sounding, so we changed the name to 'Clodhoppers' to go with Gene's music."

Forty years later, the "Clodhoppers" See **Founders**, p. 14

became "The Alpine Founders Committee" and members are still involved in fundraising. The goal now is to determine and document the history of the Youth Center. They are collecting photos, maps and narratives, which will add rich detail of the early days.

Recently the Alpine Founders Committee visited the Viejas Indian Reservation. The committee had been asked to arrange a display for the Open House at Alpine Elementary School on Thursday, April 25 at 7 p.m. They wanted to include information on the local Indian culture as many Alpine children, Olive Wooldridge among them, had attended school with the Indian children.

After an introduction that included a short history tracing the tribe back to the Hokan Indians of Colorado, Anthony Pico presented Tribal Historian and Elder of the Tribal council, Thomas Hyde. Hyde gave a short talk, stressing that the people "lived mainly from the Earth" and in harmony with each other.

When asked about schools, Hyde referred to an old one on the reservation, and said, "When they closed that down, the agreement was to build another school for the

Founders

Continued from p. 13

Indians. And so the money was put into the Alpine School. But what portion, or where, we don't know. It was never made clear to us."

When Hyde said, "Our roads have gotten wider and we have to take in a lot more vehicles to reach and complement the needs of our people," he speaks not of asphalt and cement thoroughfares, but of the intangible roads that lead to self-determination and self-sufficiency for his people.

And yes, the historical exhibition planned for the Open House will include a display of the local Indian culture. It will be provided by the Tribal Education Council.

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