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President's Message

Ben Curtis

Who are your Board Members —and what do they do?

The PCPOA is governed by a nine-member Board of directors, all of whom are residents of the canyon and all have been elected at one of our Annual Membership Meetings. Being a member of the Board is a purely volunteer position, and those who volunteer are not paid for their service. We meet as a board on a monthly basis, with various committee meetings taking place between. The only Board Expense is for incidental supplies, Insurance and legal representation.

Recently members of the Board have been expected to respond to resident complaints ranging from Antagonistic Neighbors to Zoning Violations. As much as some would like to think we are a first line of defense for all those types on issues, we are definitely NOT the people to call for Law and City regulation violations. The best we can offer is to provide you with a telephone number or an email address of the person or agency that should be notified of your complaints. Keep in mind, we are just residents like anyone else in the Canyon, and are not in any way responsible for maintaining regulations. We do act as guardian of the Placerita Canyon Special Standards District planning guidelines, and are always at the front line when dealing with planning and development issues that threaten to disrupt our bucolic canyon lifestyle by violating our Special Standards.

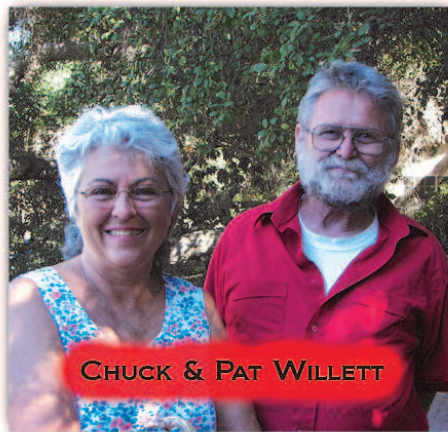
PLACERITA GOLD

Linda Tarnoff

CHUCK AND PAT WILLETT

With the holidays upon us, it is most fitting to celebrate the family life of our good neighbors Chuck and Pat Willett who are our Placerita Gold honorees for Winter 2008. Married for over 50 years, they celebrated their anniversary on August 31.

Journey back with us



CHUCK & PAT WILLETT

Pat was born in Los Angeles, moving to the San Fernando Valley at age 6, attending North Hollywood High and Valley College, where she majored in journalism and a minor in photography.

Raised in North Hollywood where he too attended North Hollywood High, graduating with the class of 1957, Chuck "majored in construction". How does one major in construction one might ask? Well if you started working at age 14 during summers and weekends, sometimes before school at 5:00 a.m.

pushing a wheelbarrow, you too would major in construction.

How they connected

Before hooking up with Chuck, Pat was dating Chuck's best friend Fred. However, after meeting at a football game, Chuck and Pat started dating as did Fred with Pat's friend Sherry. After Pat graduated from high school in 1958, they married and bought their first little house in Encino for \$12,500.

The move to the SCV

When Chuck then entered the Air Force, they rented the Encino house out while living in Denver and Macon, Georgia. After four years away, Encino was just too crowded and too smoggy, so in 1967 they moved out to Saugus, just prior to the birth of their son Charles "Chuck", who was born in 1968.

Then a friend asked Pat to ride her daughter's horse up Bouquet Canyon. Pat was so elated Chuck said "Let's go build a house where we can have horses". (Writer's comment: that's what people who major in construction say and do). Pat said "You can't do that", but he did, ending up building a total of three houses in Placerita Canyon.

When they were looking for a place they looked at Happy Valley, a "people place tolerating horses" and Placerita "a horse place that tolerated people". Hence the decision to move to Placerita Canyon.

Canyon Memories

Chuck and Pat remember riding through what is now Fox's Pasture over the hill to the Mus-

(Continued on page 3)

HOME, HOME ON THE RANGE

FROM STOVES TO SWEEPSTAKES --WHO KNEW?

Here's an interesting tidbit for us Placerita folks. In 1940, W.C. Gaffers and John R. Sattler, prominent Los Angeles manufacturers of stoves, heaters and refrigerators, purchased a proven prolific thoroughbred sire *Ever Bubbling* and a band of broodmares to stock their ranch located three miles east of Newhall in Placerita Canyon.

According to the "Thoroughbred in California" publication, this purchase would support their racing stable with breeding operations. In the racing industry at that time, Gaffers and Sattler were known as "among the most enthusiastic recent patrons of racing and are engaging in the nursery industry with elaborate plans for the future. Their Placerita Ranch consists of 40 acres at an elevation of 1500 feet with fields laid out in alfalfa." It was also reported that their 18 stall barn would be expanded by 40 new stalls later in the year.

The success of their purchase of *Ever Bubbling* "gave Gaffers and Sattler the basis for giving him opportunities at their established stud" and for giving them high hopes for their breeding operations.

Thanks to former PCPOA Board member Terry Payne for sharing a copy of the original article appearing in the 1940 publication.

WHAT ABOUT DISNEY RANCH?

Because this article on the Newhall Thoroughbreds peaked my interest, I wondered if there had been any connection to Disney's Golden Oak Ranch. An internet search led me to Leon Worden's July 11, 2001 SCVHistory.com article which not only indicates that the Gaffers & Sattler property is not related, but turns out to be a most interesting read on its own merit. Thank you Leon!

The Walt Disney Co.'s Golden Oak Ranch is a private, working movie ranch (not open for tours), located just east of State Route 14 off of Placerita Canyon Road. Disney purchased the ranch in 1959, but the area's history as a filming backdrop actually begins much earlier.

Pioneer filmmaker Trem Carr, owned what he called the Placeritos Ranch at the same site as early as 1915. His set designer, Ernest R. "Ernie" Hickson, collected old Western buildings that he imported from Nevada (some say he acquired special lumber in Nevada and assembled the buildings on site), and used them to create a Western movie town for Carr's productions. But Carr soon ran out of money and had to sell the ranch. Hickson picked up his sticks around 1930 and moved them westerly in Placerita Canyon, erecting what would become the Monogram and

later Melody Ranch.

Meanwhile, Carr's one-time movie property reverted to a working horse and cattle ranch that was occasionally used by filmmakers — including Walt Disney, who leased the property for portions of three years in the mid-1950s for the "Spin and Marty" segments of "The Mickey Mouse Club" television show. Disney liked the varied topography so much that he purchased 315 acres for \$300,000 in 1959, increasing his holdings to more than 700 acres in the next few years.

Even while Disney was using it for filming, the Golden Oak doubled as a working cattle ranch for a time. Three real cowboys ran herd on about 50 head and took them to market each winter to be sold for beef. In 1960, Disney purchased a small herd of American bison and used them in his two-part television show, "Sancho the Homesick Steer," and other productions. Within two years the ornery critters proved not to be worth the trouble, and Disney, rather than sell them for slaughter, was convinced to donate them to the County of Los Angeles which put them to pasture down the road at William S. Hart Park in Newhall.

Disney's first feature film at the ranch, "Toby Tyler, or Ten Weeks with a Circus," was followed by numerous family films made both by The Walt Disney Co. and by other production companies.

In the early 1970s the new Antelope Valley Freeway (SR 14) threatened to run right through the property but Disney had a bit of pull with state officials, convincing them to wrap the freeway behind a nearby mountain, shielding the ranch from the noise and visibility.

In the late 1970s, after an absence of four decades, a Western town was reborn at the ranch for "Roots II," and it has remained a prominent feature along with a covered bridge over a man-made lake often seen in "Little House on the Prairie"; a colonial set used in "North and South"; farm houses, barns, fields, country roads, tree groves and a running waterfall.

Next to a church building is an old tree from which the Golden Oak Ranch derives its name. There are those who believe the oak associated with Francisco Lopez's famous 1842 gold discovery is *not* the one recognized as such at the Placerita Canyon State Park up the road, but rather a tree on the Disney ranch property. In fact, a plaque at the ranch says the oak next to the church building is *the* "Golden Oak," and that "Under this tree gold was first discovered in California by Don Francisco Lopez, March 9, 1842."
Linda Tarnoff

tang Drive In where there is now the Cross Valley Connector. They used to ride their horses (shod by previous Placerita Gold honoree Dave Dennis) down the Santa Clara River past “High Chic Curve” due to there being a little hamburger joint which is now where a storage facility is. They used to ride the Santa Clara River all the way to Magic Mountain where there used to be a riding stable called Circle K. They fondly remember riding their horses through sunflower patches higher than people could walk. They remember Basque shepherders driving their sheep before Circle J. was built and how that was quite a site for horseback riders and horses alike, especially horses never having seen sheep! They also remember both horses and cattle running free back where Fox’s pasture is. (Writer’s note: at least Phil Rawlins is keeping that memory alive).

The Houses That Chuck Built

The first house built by Chuck was located at Choke Cherry and Placerita Canyon on the south side. He had a hard time getting a construction loan because banks said the location “didn’t meet underwriting standards due to nearness to oil fields and little neighborhood houses”. Finally a local bank recognized the potential and approved the loan. The ¾ acre parcel had been purchased for \$10,500. Chuck and Pat lived there for four years from 1973 to 1977. After son Rick was born in 1975, due to the traffic on Placerita they thought it best to move. So they found the tucked away lot they are living on today, off the beaten path. However, they do fondly remember living across the street from Candy and Andre Valuzet, and since their sons were the same age, they used to talk about building a tall gate to “slow the idiots down” on Placerita Canyon.

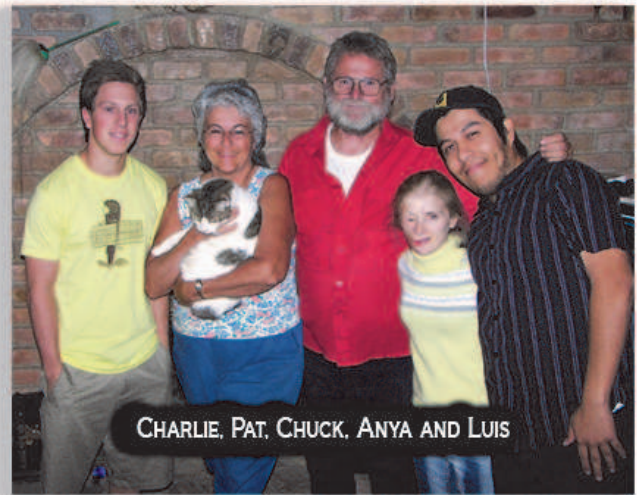
Before they built the house next to their own house, they used to pasture cows and horses to keep the weeds down. Eventually their lot was subdivided and the animals moved closer to their house. It should be noted that the original 2½ acres had been purchased for \$35,000. The adjacent house was sold.

Chuck “pretty much” built his all wood 2800 square foot house by himself, using one helper.

PCPOA and A little about the Road

For many years, Pat was active in PCPOA, even serving as President. She remembers coming home one day after Placerita Canyon was closed and gated and how quiet everything became. “You didn’t realize how noisy it was until the noise stopped”.

She recalls that part of the \$500,000 given by AES when the Co-Generation Plant was built was to monitor the plant. The Ambient Air Study showed that the Co-Gen plant didn’t do the awful things to the air as feared but the study found that our air problems were coming from the freeway.



CHARLIE, PAT, CHUCK, ANYA AND LUIS

The Ever-Expanding Family

Chuck and Pat currently share their home with their daughter from Russia, Anya and her new husband Luis, as well as a Swedish exchange student Charlie.

In fact Chuck and Pat have sponsored and/or fostered a total of 16 children from all over the world, all of which are lovingly referred to as their sons and daughters. In the early 1970’s, they started hosting exchange students, including those with medical challenges as well as refugees from Cambodia/Vietnam war. They were interested in

learning about people from around the world, and have truly enjoyed welcoming their guests into their home.. Recently they have started to visit their children’s families.

“It was a wonderful experience for our own sons who can say they have brothers and sisters from around the world.”, says Pat.

While I was interviewing Chuck and Pat, I had the good fortune of meeting one of their children, an exchange student, Vicente Cordero, and his family. “He came for what was to be one year and stuck around for 14 years, even becoming an engineer for which we are very proud”, brags Chuck. who adds that Vicente refers to him as his American Dad.

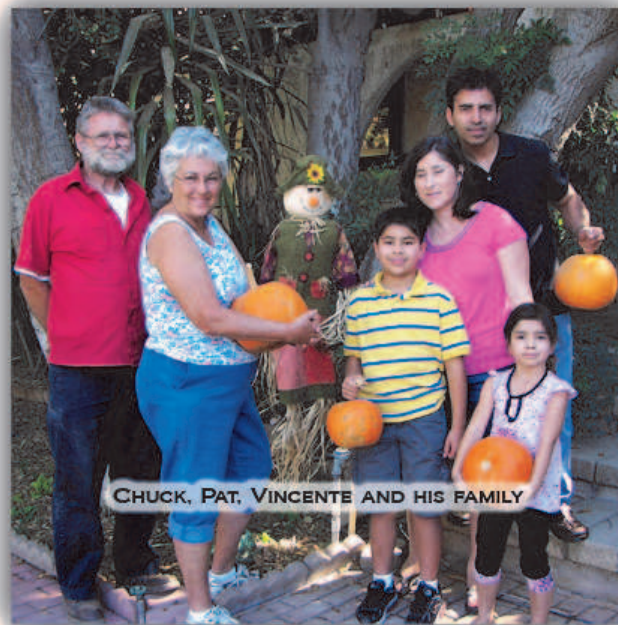
In addition to having two grandchildren from Vicente, they also

have a Guatemalan granddaughter.

Day Jobs

For many years, Pat had her own public relations agency while all the kids were growing up, enabling her to work from home.

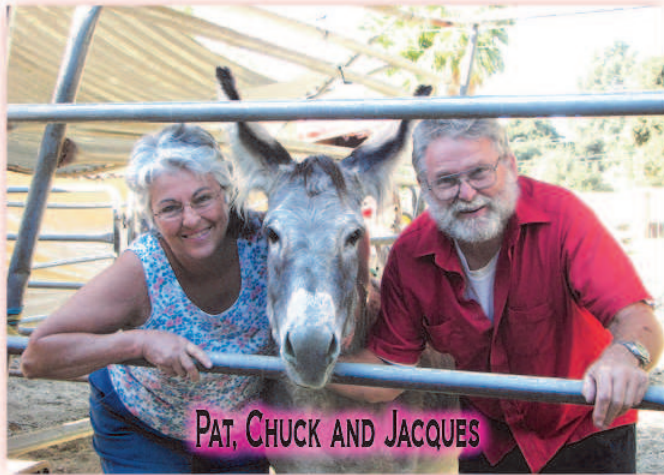
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CHUCK, PAT, VICENTE AND HIS FAMILY

When the youngest child went to college, Pat decided to work full-time for the American Heart Association which lasted eight years, and then she went to work for Hart School District, literally from Heart to Hart. Pat remembers this transition was somewhat difficult for all to absorb. Currently she serves as Community Liaison Officer for Hart, the first in that position, where she has served for seven years.

Chuck is semi-retired, though he still possesses an active general contractor license. Now he's very focused on his property, taking care of their two rescued donkeys, their two rescued husky dogs,



their three house cats), and three feral cats.

Around the World they Go

Their interest now is travel, having been to three Sister City missions to Eros, Ecuador, Nicaragua and the Philippines. Paying their own way, they volunteer in the medical clinics and schools. Due to Pat's involvement at Hart, she has met many generous people who have donated school supplies, toiletries, and cash to buy more supplies. Chuck adds that even the toiletries in their hotel rooms end up being packaged for distribution on their trips.

"Pat and Chuck have changed dozens of lives through their hospitality for foreign students, for children needing medical care, and for their many visits to schools providing supplies throughout the world", says Carl Boyer, member of Santa Clarita City Formation Commission who served on first City Council, who adds that he had the pleasure of traveling with them on trips to Ecuador and Nicaragua.

Community involvement

In 1999, Pat was named SCV Woman of the year for her community involvement with the Education Foundation Board, Zonta, Relay for Life Committee, and let's not forget her Presidency of PCPOA.

Chuck was very involved in the JAYCEES in the 1970's. He built the original memorial at the then CHP office for the four officers who lost their lives at J's Coffee Shop. during a shootout. He built the original bleachers at Canyon High School. Chuck also remembers the Tony and Sue Alamo Foundation providing volunteer labor to assist!

Local fun and film

On what is now the Casden property, they remember the Jaycees sponsoring an annual community fair in the 1970's. The oak tree standing on its own used to be the site of the Jaycee beer booth which may explain its longevity and the sagging one limb, Chuck offers. Also they remember Patrick Swayze and the film "Roadhouse" being filmed there. Rumor has it that Britney Spears filmed a video on Aden and Placerita.

Pat remembers being in Great Britain watching television, seeing the "A-Team" crash at 13th, this when they had been asked by Brits if they saw any movie stars!

Also they be sure to have visitors such as from Ecuador to come visit during the Cowboy Poetry Festival.

Reflections

Chuck and Pat truly enjoy living in Placerita Canyon, both saying "it's a great place to raise 18 kids and animals." We've really enjoyed being here all these years, and watching the area grow, but that has pluses and minuses". Though their property value has obviously gone up, they miss the country atmosphere that used to exist, fondly remembering Dorothy Reilly and her oak tree crusade.

When Circle J was proposed, the concept had been for equestrian residential and trails all the way throughout, which obviously didn't happen. The trails from here to over there just don't exist, they say. (Writer's note: we're still trying)

"Where else can you wake up in the morning to a donkey braying and peacock shrieking", add Pat.

Chuck says, "We've been here a long time".

To Pat and Chuck, thanks for sticking around long enough for us to call you our Placerita Gold. Whenever you see Pat quoted in the Signal about the goings on at the Hart School District, think of their love for children. If you ever see a bright green pickup truck go by, stop and wave because chances are that's Chuck. Thank you both for being such wonderful neighbors and for sharing with us your most fulfilling life to Placerita Canyon. We salute you for being who you are, our Holiday Placerita Gold.

Attention Horse Owners... Waste Management is now offering a recycling program for horse manure, that may be able to save a few dollars over what is the cost of a large dumpster as well as be environmentally correct. For further information, call Waste Management at (661) 223-3411 to learn if this program is right for you.



**MELODY RANCH
WINTER 2008**

With this past summer's "Manure" wrapped up (Billy Bob Thornton-Tea Leoni-Kyle MacLachlan film), Melody Ranch has had a few day shoots but nothing major. After the first of the year, things should start picking up.
Before long it will be Spring and once again the annual Cowboy Festival to be held April 22-26, 2009.
Perhaps a rainy day project could be to dust off and shine up those ol' cowboy boots.
Till next time.....

Where Did This Horse Come From?

by Sandra Cattell

Our canyon has been on an evacuation alert several times over the past few years. I, as many others, have thought through what is most valuable to me, what few items I should save, and what is replaceable. I have my emergency box of supplies in case of earthquake, my camping gear at the ready. Next question: What do I need for my critters?

Many years ago, I worked with Animal Control on the now defunct EVERT (Emergency Volunteer Equine Response Team). I saw first hand the need for animal preparedness. Here are a few hints:

- Have a sufficient number of crates, or transport boxes easily available for small animals. Be sure they are marked with identification: your name, address, and phone number (cell works best here), as well as the animal's name. Crate your animals as soon as you think there's a possibility to evacuate (it's sometimes tough trying to find scared cats or dogs hiding behind the couch or under



"As long as you got a trail in front of you, you got a place to go".

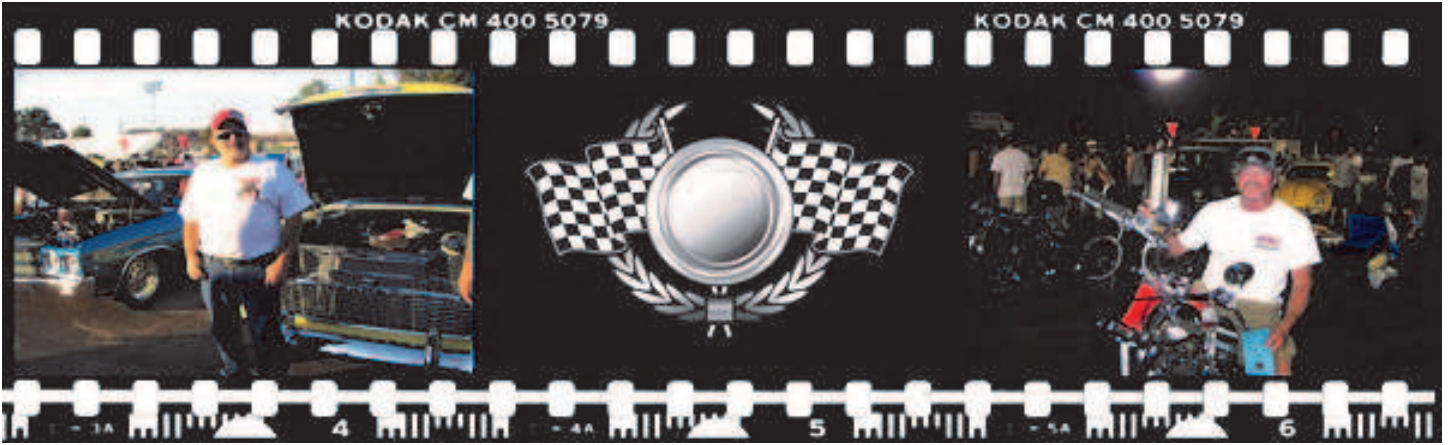
Happy trails everyone!!

the bed when they smell smoke), or leash them.

- Halter your horses and other large animals that use halters. Mark the halter with identification. Luggage tags work great. Another option is to use permanent marker on masking tape, attached to the halter. This also works well with animals without halters, by placing the tape on their back or rump.
 - What does your animal need? Food, food/water dishes or buckets, and animal medications should be included in your animal preparation kit.
 - We have two staging areas (gathering places) for evacuation of large animals in our canyon: Alasta Ranch at the west end, and Bob Jones' Ranch at the East end.
- This is by no means an exhaustive list of suggestions. If you are interested in discussing this more, please call me, or attend our trails meetings in the future. I would be happy to include other ideas in a future update.

HELPFUL INFORMATION - Did you know the City of Santa Clarita offers a grant program to assist homeowners with repairs or correcting code violations that are not affordable? Eligible repairs include leaking roofs, peeling paint or dry rot, broken windows or doors, fallen fences, walls or gates, heating/air conditioning repairs, plumbing or electrical problems or

overgrown brush or trees. The program is income eligible. For example, a single person can make no more than \$41,450., two persons, income lower than \$47,350, graduating up to a five person household with maximum income of \$63,950. For further information call (661) 286-4156 or on the internet at www.santa-clarita.com/housing



SAUGUS SPEEDWAY ROCKS ON....

Linda Tarnoff

Once again the ever popular Saugus Speedway Annual Oldies & Goodies Classic Car, Truck & Bike Show held on September 8, 2008, was well attended by Placerita enthusiasts, with our locals coming home with awards too! Recent Placerita Gold honorees, *Dave and Debbie Dennis*, entered their 1955 Chevy Bel Air and received second place in the 1954-1955 class, but won first for the 1955 portion of the class.

Joe Terrones, entered his 1968 customized SS El Camino and won in the classification for Best El Camino. Joe, proclaiming himself a vintage car enthusiast, loves to hear what everybody has to say and reminisce out loud "back in the day". *Bob Lambert*, joined by his son *Sean* and family of Stevenson Ranch,

entered two cars, a 1961 Ford Starliner and a 1962 Ford 500 XL in the Best Ford contest, winning 2nd place for the 1962 Ford 500 XL. He added that he should have come in first!

For the two wheeled variety, *Ric New* won best foreign motorcycle with his red, white and blue restored 1968 Triumph.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I didn't mention *Dale and Suzon Gerstel* who were in attendance garnering great interest for their Prayer Angels for the Military program. Although their display truck never made it past Meadview, their show still went on. Thank you Dale and

Suzon for all that you do for our military. Donations always welcome at (661) 799-8865.



— Here is a modern Acorn Bread recipe from the book "Cooking with Spirit, - North American Indian Food and Fact", By Darcy Williamson and Lisa Railsback Copyright 1987 by Darcy Williamson. Published by Maverick Publications, Drawer 5007, Bend, Oregon 97701.

Acorn Bread

- 6 Tbl. Cornmeal
- 1 pkg active dry yeast
- 2 C finely ground leached acorn meal
- 1/2 C cold water
- 1/4 C lukewarm water
- 1 C boiling water
- 1 C mashed potatoes
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 C all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbl butter

Mix cornmeal with cold water, add boiling water and cook 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add salt and butter and cool to lukewarm. Soften yeast in lukewarm water. Add remaining ingredients to corn mixture, along with yeast. Knead to a stiff dough. Dough will be sticky. Cover and let rise in warm place until doubled in bulk. Punch down, shape into two loaves, cover and let rise until doubled in bulk. Bake at 375 degrees F for 45 minutes.

One Valley One Vision

By Val Thomas

When Santa Clarita became a city more than 20 years ago, a citizen's group was appointed to develop a vision for the City. This vision became Santa Clarita's General Plan.

A General Plan looks at what is presently in the City – homes, roads, businesses, schools, etc. The General Plan attempts to forecast where the City will be in ten or twenty years in terms of population and then provides a framework to accommodate this growth such as what additional homes and roads, schools and businesses and services such as fire stations, sheriffs, libraries, and parks will be needed to maintain the way of life established when Santa Clarita was formed.

Most cities are formed with a “Sphere of Influence,” a buffer zone around the city where growth and development will affect the city itself. The city has a right to comment on and participate in the planning of these areas. However, Santa Clarita does not have the luxury of a “Sphere of Influence.” That is why we often hear when we complain about traffic that most of the growth is outside of the City and the County determined what roads would be built.

Cities are required to review their General Plans at regular intervals and adjust the vision for the future when necessary. For this review, Santa Clarita and Los Angeles County are working together to provide a single vision for the entire Santa Clarita Valley for the following planning components. Land Use, Open Space and Conservation, Safety, Circulation, and Housing. Hence the term: “One Valley One Vision”.

The preliminary work has been ongoing for several years and the PCPOA Board of Directors has been working to protect our Special Standards District and access to Placerita Canyon. Over the last few months, several community meetings have been held. City staff members were present with visual aids; they were available for questions and a number of modifications were made based on community comments.

The next step is to present the various elements to both the City Council and the Board of Supervisors. Once they approve the package, an environmental impact report (EIR) will be done. When that is complete, the public again has the right to make comments and express concerns.

Your Board will keep you informed of this time frame. We urge you to become involved in the process.

This is your City – and your Canyon!

Placerita Canyon Property Owner's Association

Post Office Box 222204

Santa Clarita, California 91322

<http://www.pcpoa.com>

The PCPOA is formed under Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code as a Public Benefit Corporation that is exempt from Taxation.

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**THE PCPOA BOARD OF DIRECTORS WISHES YOU AND YOURS A
BELATED MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY, SAFE AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR**

Placerita Canyon Property Owners' Association
Post Office Box 222204
Newhall, CA. 91322

Or Current Resident

Working To Preserve and Enhance Life In Placerita Canyon