

# The Branding Iron

Duarte Historical Society

October-December 2011

## President's Message

*Claudia Heller*

**H**istory is often allusive, but thanks to common folk who take the time to record events both mundane and extraordinary, the past may be enjoyed by people of today. One such example appeared in the Fall edition of *Classic Trains Magazine*, a copy of which may be read at the Museum library. Following is an excerpt from this heartwarming story, a part of Duarte's history.

Jill Miller was eighteen years old in 1950. Bedridden with rheumatic fever, her contact with the outside world had diminished to the point that her life revolved around the sound of passing trains. Jill lived on Duarte Road near the railroad tracks which run across the street from the City of Hope. To pass the time in her quiet, lonely world Jill would wave a small flag back and forth through an opening in her window each time she heard a train passing by.

O.D. "Orrie" Kelly, a veteran regular engineer on train 20, the *Chief*, noticed the flag waving and became curious. He checked with other crew members about the little white frame house (since destroyed) and the "flag waver" but no one knew a thing! So, one day he returned by car to the home of the flag waver and to Jill. A long lasting friendship between Jill, Kelly and dozens of train crew members began to blossom.

Soon monetary collections poured in and as Christmas neared, the crews collected gifts and even bought her a recliner chair and television set, "a relative rarity in those days."

As time went on, Jill's story was told in an *L.A. Times* article following which the Railway Club of Southern California befriended her. When she was able to leave her house, the Club sponsored an excursion train to San Diego with Jill as the guest of honor.

(See page 2)

## 17TH ANNUAL SALUTE TO ROUTE 66 PARADE



*Michael Ramos, great, great, great, great grandson of Andres Duarte rides the tram with his friend, Linda Thomas*

**D**uarte may have lost most of its Route 66 icons, but the community gathered in full force to salute the Mother Road at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Salute to Route 66 Parade last month. As is tradition, the parade was followed by a picnic at Royal Oaks Park, celebrating the 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's Incorporation.

Aboard a 1948 pacific electric tram, Duarte Historical Society volunteers and Andres descendant Michael Ramos waved proudly to the crowds along Huntington Boulevard. The tram is owned by Nicholas Montalvo of Duarte and his partner, Jill Prestup, president of the Venice Historical Society. It is now rented out for parties, weddings and tours. At one time it was a familiar sight at Venice Beach and the Santa Monica Boardwalk from 1950 to 1962 when PE was dissolved.



## Jill Miller (from page 1)

It was on a Sunday in October of 1951 that Santa Fe diesel No. 167 led the 10 car train to San Diego with an all-volunteer crew on board. The event fulfilled Jill's wish to see the Pacific Ocean.

When Jill gained back her health and graduated from high school. Her friendship with the train crews persevered and in time she fell in love with Harold Bussy, a young engineer. The couple married and moved to San Bernardino. As time went on, Bussy died, Jill later remarried, and today, at the age of 79, she lives in Los Angeles.

\*Many thanks to Kalmbach Publishers for permission to share this story. \*© 2011, CLASSIC TRAINS Magazine, Kalmbach Publishing Co., reprinted with permission.



***Parade Grand Marshal Chuck Henry with DHS Vice President Sheri Uhlig***



***Museum tram riders above: Douglas Ross and Curator Irwin Margiloff; Pauline and Mark Montgomery; Mariellen and Bruce Staller; Alan Heller; the smiling group!***



## CEMETERY WALK SET FOR NOVEMBER 30

They may be departed, but their stories tell the deep dark secrets of Duarte's history. Join us on a walk led by Historian Steve Baker, through the gravesites at Live Oak Cemetery, 200 E. Duarte Road, Monrovia. There our pioneers of Duarte will come alive and tell all.

Beverages and appetizers will be served at 5:30 followed by the walk ending at 8 p.m. Please bring a flashlight for the walk, although the parking area is well lit. Admission is free.

### AMERICA'S NATIONAL TREASURES TO FILM LOCALLY

Original Productions, a TV production company, is working on a show called *America's National Treasures* for the National Geographic Channel. They will film in local museums and are seeking people to provide objects to be examined by their hosts to determine their historical value. *It's sort of like Antiques Roadshow.*

Maybe you have items that may be featured on the show. If chosen, you would visit one of the locations to show what you have.

Also, Original Productions will be filming local building places to add historical depth to the show. They are interested in our museum collections and also would like to receive recommendations for some historical places around Duarte.

Either Email the show directly at [AmericasNationalTreasures@gmail.com](mailto:AmericasNationalTreasures@gmail.com) or respond to [margiloff@verizon.net](mailto:margiloff@verizon.net) for more information.

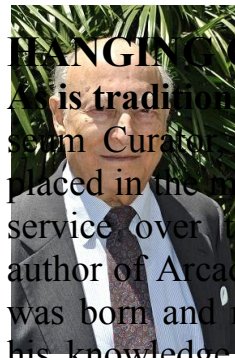
Irwin Margiloff, Curator

## BIRD WALK SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 20

Meeting at the Museum in Encanto Park, we will gather at the Bioswale at 8 a.m. where Kimball Garrett, collections manager of the L.A. County Museum of Natural History, will talk about the natural history of the area. The walk will take us through Encanto Park and into the river bed with the aim of spotting resident species and maybe Fall migrants.



Donuts and coffee will be served in the museum prior to the walk, and upon return to the museum we will gather to create a list of birds spotted. Binoculars are helpful. Dogs are not. The walk will proceed despite inclement weather. For more information call (626) 358-0329.



### HANGING OUR CURATOR

It is tradition, a photograph of the Museum Curator, Irwin Margiloff, has been placed in the museum in recognition of his service over the years. Margiloff, co-author of Arcadia Press *Images of Duarte*, was born and raised in New York. Yet, his knowledge of Duarte history is commendable.

**PLEASE SUPPORT THE MUSEUM BY PAYING  
YOUR 2012 DUES. THANK YOU.**

**HELP!** The Museum needs a volunteer to transfer the collection of videos of historical interviews and events to DVDs. If you can help, please call the museum at (626) 357-9419 and leave a message. We will contact you to make the arrangements.

☺ **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**Nov. 20: Birdwalk, 8 a.m. Meet at  
Museum**

**Nov. 30: Cemetery Walk led by  
Steve Baker, 5:30—8 p.m.**

**Duarte Historical Society & Museum**

P.O. Box 263, Duarte, CA 91009-0263

777 Encanto Parkway, Duarte

(626) 357-9419

Open: Saturdays: 1-4 p.m.

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays: 1-3 p.m.

Web page: [www.duartehistory.org](http://www.duartehistory.org)

President: Claudia Heller

Vice President: Sheri Uhlig

Treasurer: Steve Baker

Secretary: Terri Hanks

Curator: Irwin Margiloff

Director: Boyd Leeson

Docent Coordinators: Betty Jacob,

Ruby Shiroma, Sheri Uhlig

Video Library: Mary Somerlott, Buck Gwynn

Photographer: Alan Heller

Exhibit Coordinators: Pauline Montgomery,

Mark Montgomery

Branding Iron: Claudia Heller, Jim Kirchner

Webpage Master: Irwin Margiloff

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THANKS TO DALVINA GOURMET COOKIES OF ARCADIA FOR DONATING THE MUSEUM  
DOORS, FRONT AND BACK.

