



# Fountain of Youth



Niland, CA

California FMCA HMC Chapter News and Schedule of Events

27<sup>th</sup> Year

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*by David Althoff,*



My thanks to Debbie, our new Wagonmaster, for our rally at the Fountain of Youth in Niland, directly across from the Salton Sea. This RV Park surprised many of us – it was very large (between 900-1000 spots), very well kept up, lots of things to do, and the catered dinner was very good. The Fountain's staff were very friendly and helpful. Again my thanks to the Trailbosses: Bart & Debbie Van Holland and Alan & Judy Mersereau! Cont.



Fountain of Youth Spa and RV Resort



The Cheerful Fountain Staff

## 2016 FMCA HMC Rallies

**June 2-4, 2016**  
*CAFMA HMC Chapter Rally*  
Pala RV Resort  
Pala, CA

**September 2-4, 2016**  
*Fall into Fun in Apple Country*  
Ramona Oaks RV Resort  
Ramona, CA

**November 10-13, 2016**  
*Cattle Call*  
Brawley, CA



Trailbosses: Debbie & Bart Van Holland and Alan and Judy Mersereau



Bubbling Goo from Deep Underground



got mud?

President's Message Cont.

Both Vicky and I are from Imperial Valley – and I was raised in Niland. So, we decided to give everyone a mini-tour on Friday. We drove to the mud pots, the old Bank of America building, Salvation Mountain, and the old historic Niland Jail. Many of the mud pots are now under the Sea, but I knew where there were some that we could look at. They are really something to visualize (and there are pictures in our newsletter). We then drove to the old Bank of America in which we had our pictures taken. This vacant bank was the first bank in all of Imperial Valley, then on to Salvation Mountain – and again there are more pictures. Our final stop was the old historic Niland Jail, and as you can see from that picture, it wasn't much of a jail. It was built at the turn of the Century and was still in use in the early 60's. Prisoners were picked up in Los Angeles, transported by the old SP railroad cars to the jail for an overnight stay, and on the next morning to the Yuma Territorial Prison. Again there are pictures we took there.



**WANTED: DANGEROUS FUGITIVES  
ESCAPED FROM NILAND JAIL**

President's Message Cont.

To our surprise – we woke up Saturday to the sound of live machine gun fire from the Navy Seals exercising on their gunnery range in the Chocolate Mountains.

Another big surprise (and there is a picture), was to see a mama Horned Owl in her nest with a baby. Unusual because these owls are not native to Imperial Valley.

All in all we had a really good rally. We had 11 coaches and two there without their coach. The weather was good – warm enough in the daytime to run air conditioning if you needed it, but quite cool in the evening.

Hope to see everyone at our next rally in June at the Pala Casino RV Park.



The Group Visit to the Historical Bank



Vicky, Jerry, Marie, John, Dave, Ella, Alan, Tom, Kathie, Judy, Ellen, Bruce, Gary, Bart & Debbie

# Fountain of Youth

## FROM YOUR TRAILBOSES:

**Bart & Debbie VanHolland and Alan & Judy Mersereau**

Our first 2016 Club outing was held Mar.24-27 at the beautiful "Fountain of Youth RV Resort" just east of the Salton Sea. Our co-trailbosses were Bart & Debbie Van Holland and Alan & Judy Mersereau. Members attending were David & Vicky Althoff, Jerry & Sybil Cale, Bruce & Ellen Chapman. Tom & Annie Danaher, Richard Grieser, Dave & Marie Hilber, Gary Russell & Jean Kidney, Tom & Kathie King, John & Ella Hamilton, and Mike and Elayne Doran.



**Bart and Judy Getting Ready for Omelets in a Bag**



**The Helpers; Jerry and Dave**

Thursday was arrival time and we met for heavy hors d' oeuvres and socialization. Friday morning found us all making omelets in a bag for breakfast along with fruit, juice and coffee. At 10 a.m. our "resident guide", President David, led us on a caravan tour to Niland (he was raised there). We toured the Mud Pots, got saved at Salvation Mountain & visited the historic bank and jail. During free time we could use the mineral baths, salt water pool and other amenities of the campground.



*Spaghetti Dinner!*



Again - we ate. A catered spaghetti & meatball Dinner with salad, garlic bread and dessert was provided by the campground on Friday.

Saturday morning was a pancake & sausage breakfast. That evening the trail bosses did an early Easter Ham dinner with members contributing side dishes. The 50/50 drawing was held with John Hamilton winning 50%, Bart VanHolland 30% and Annie Danaher 20% of the money collected. Sunday - a continental breakfast and good byes. Hope to see everyone at Pala on June 2nd.



**WINNER**  
**John**

# *A Note from your Wagon Master*

## *"Fountain of Youth" Rally at Fountain of Youth RV Resort*

Hi everyone, was great seeing everyone at the Fountain of Youth in Niland. Beautiful weather, wonderful company and great tour guides. Everyone got checked in on time and without any complications. Mom and I were the trail bosses for this outing and with everyone's help including Shirley Gear our Office Manager for FOY we all had a great outing. The happy hour margaritas were a hit, thank you to Dave and Vicky for their margarita machine and the donation of the mixes. Friday we all went on a tour and Bart and I got the pleasure of driving with Vicky and Dave as our passengers. We got an expanded explanation of all the sights.



Our next outing is at the brand new Pala Resort and Casino's RV Park. We are going the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend of their new resort, hope they get the bugs out before we get there. Thank you to Kathie, Tom, Shirley and Bob for being the trail bosses.



### Leonard Knight's Labor of Love

(More on his  
story on page 7)



Oak Glen , unfortunately, was a bust at the current time because their maintenance was neglected .

However, we found a beautiful RV park for our September/October outing. It will be held at the Ramona Oaks RV Resort in Ramona, CA. There is plenty of shade and a pool to stay cool so we don't all melt in the summer heat.

November is Cattle Call in Brawley, Vicky, Dave, Ellen and Bruce are the trail bosses and I'm looking forward to going to the rodeo again as we had a great time last time.

Thank you everyone for your assistance and suggestions.

Debbie VanHolland  
Wagon Master



The Massive Geothermal Plant

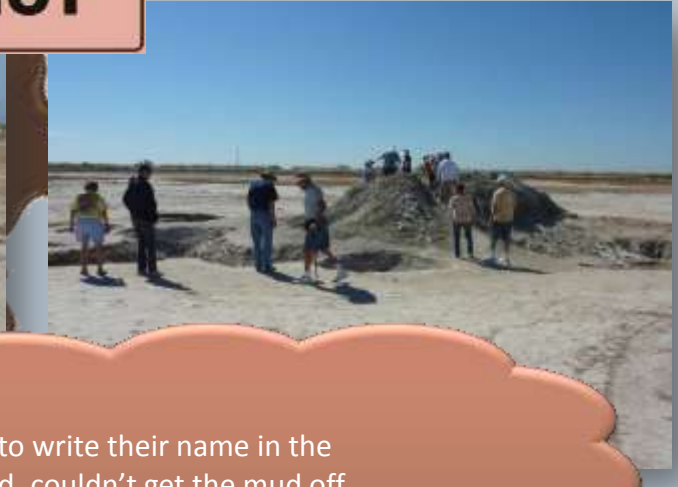


# Mud pot mayhem



**CAUTION  
HOT**

Bruce and Ellen, don't  
Step in the mud!



## Mud Pot Trivia:

Who used their finger to write their name in the fresh Mud Pot mud and..couldn't get the mud off their finger?

Who is this at the Mud Pots 80 years ago?



Dave getting a good  
view from above

# A MAN WITH A MISSION

## LEONARD KNIGHT: BUILDER OF SALVATION MOUNTAIN

Leonard Knight (1931-2014) was a Vermont-born drifter who “stopped [his] truck on the highway in Lemon Grove, California, and all of the sudden ... said ‘Jesus, I’m a sinner. Please come into my heart.’” Repeating the prayer over and over, Knight wept and felt a powerful sense of God’s forgiveness. Salvation Mountain exists as an expression of Knight’s gratitude for this divine gift of forgiveness.



Outside of Slab City, a free RV camp on the remains of an abandoned military base, Knight tried to construct a hot-air balloon with a message of God’s love. Unfortunately that project never got off the ground, but Knight switched gears and began building a “God Is Love” mountain. Eventually, Knight spent the rest of his life creating a colorful structure several stories high, made of hay bails and adobe, while living in a broken down fire truck covered in scriptures. The result of his passion has attracted thousands of pilgrims. It gained notoriety partly because of its appearance in the film *Into the Wild*.

When pilgrims or the simply curious visited Salvation Mountain, Knight often told them the story of his conversion and then told them how much God loves them and everyone. His was a Pentecostal, effusive, inclusive, and entirely anti-institutional evangelical Christianity. Knight didn’t go to church. He was deeply suspicious of wealthy and well-educated pastors but also feared that any church would attempt to co-opt his work and his message. Visitors saw “God Is Love” in enormous letters from far away, and many testified that they “felt” that love as they climbed the mountain. Knight did not warn visitors about the peril of hell, nor did he have anything negative to say about other religions. Instead, he simply told them how he had experienced the love of Jesus. More of a prophet than a hermit, Knight dropped everything (i.e., painting his mountain) to chat with his guests.

With his passing in 2014 at the age of 82, the future of Salvation Mountain is unknown, but for now it stands as a tender prophet’s monument of the love he felt from God which he aspired to share with others.



## A LITTLE AREA HISTORY:

### Niland, California

With a population of 1006 for Census 2010, Niland is one of the larger small towns in Imperial County. This place was called Old Beach when the first post office opened in 1905. That post office closed two years later, but in 1910 another post office opened with the name, Imperial Junction. The town changed its name to Hobgood in 1913 after pioneer Richard H. Hobgood. There was yet another name change, to Niland, in 1914. Enough name changes already! The name Niland stuck. It means "Nile Land" referring to the fertility of the area similar to the land near the Nile in Egypt. Nearby you'll find Slab City, a place famous for squatters who want to live without laws. They call it "the last free place in America."



## SOME PERSONAL HISTORY FROM OUR MEMBERS

As most of you know, David & Vicky are from Niland and Calipatria (Calipatria is 8 miles south). Back when David was a "kid", he and his cousin would fish in the All-American Canal at night. One night it turned freezing-cold – they had no jackets – Niland was 18 miles away, and their means of transportation was motor scooters. So, they putted down to one of the hot ponds and spent the night in the hot water. They did look like prunes the next morning, but lesson learned? Always take a jacket!



Many of you know Vicky's parents, Leo & Louise Metzler (they are Life Members of our Chapter and both are 93 years old.) Leo moved from Kansas to California in the late 30's with 2 high school buddies. And Niland became his final stop at that time. He met Louise at a dance, and several months later, they were married in Yuma, remaining in Calipatria until the early 60's.



# Fountain of Youth Spa and RV Resort History



The story of Fountain of Youth Spa RV Resort started long before the era of RVs. It really begins back in 1938, when construction workers working on the All-American Canal unearthed hot water hidden beneath the desert floor. The workers quickly realized the water was too hot and too full of minerals to be used to mix concrete, so cooling ponds were constructed, and then left behind when the canal project was complete.

Rediscovered after World War II, these ponds became a "hot spot" for workers to bathe in after a long day of labor. These laborers recognized the therapeutic, healing effects of the hot artesian mineral water and quickly shared the news. It didn't take long for word to spread, and by the late 1950s people from all over the country were camping by the hot mineral pools. One of these campers was Clyde Hays, a carpenter from Oregon who worked winters in the California desert. Clyde saw the potential of a community centered around the relaxing hot springs.

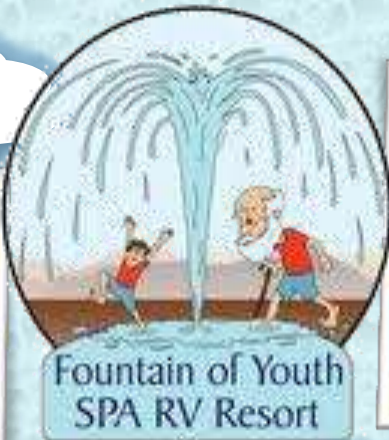


To bring his vision to fruition, Hays suggested a local contractor, J.T. Trily, add facilities and utilities in order to cater to therapy-seeking travelers. Trily, and prospector Frank Domeno, began a two-year process of collecting water samples to find the best spot to tap the springs. Once found, a well was drilled and began to produce 250 gallons a minute of 137 degree water. It is that very well from which Fountain of Youth Spa RV Resort was founded and is still supported today. While the world around, and the RVs have changed, Fountain of Youth continues to welcome winter snowbirds, kings of the road and weekend warriors seeking an active and rejuvenating community.



# Rally Memories

Debbie and Jerry eyeing the goodies



Smiley faces:  
David, Gary & John  
Marie, Dave & Jerry

Morning coffee with  
Richard, Elayne, Mike &  
Bart



Tom...just  
doing his thing



Is Richard wondering  
if that's all there is?



The Brave Mudslingers: Jerry,  
Tom, Kathie, Bruce, Ellen, Vickie,  
Dave, John, Judy, Alan & Debbie



# Amenities

More than just a pool here...

OLD POOL PLAYERS NEVER DIE. THEY JUST SCRATCH A LOT.



*"There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age."*

**- SOPHIA LOREN**



## 2016-2017 Officers California FMCA HMC Chapter

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