
RAMONA ROUND UP
Native Sons of the Golden West

Ramona Parlor #109
P.O. Box 292
San Gabriel, CA 91778

Chartered June 9, 1887

GENERAL MEETING

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1997

6:00 DINNER/7:00 MEETING

Surprise Dinner!

Beverage

\$6.00 per person

Earlybirds can play cards!

Held at the

*Grape Vine Room
Near Santa Anita and Mission
San Gabriel*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to all Brothers and Friends:

Good News! The City of Los Angeles has started to pay the reimbursement expenses that they owe us. We are still awaiting the interest check. Our pro bono attorney Kevin Fiore said that if the City drags its feet much longer, he will start legal action against them on our behalf.

The money from the sale is safely in the bank drawing interest from CDS. The interest is being redeposited and so our account is growing steadily.

Once a suitable building is purchased, the finance committee will shop around for a better rate than the 5.15% rate that we are getting.

We are hoping to hear some good news about the building, but have not had a response to our offer from the California Literacy people.

All in all, its been a quiet month of slow, steady progress. Hope to see you all at the next meeting on September 11th.

In Friendship, Loyalty and Charity,

Frank Claro

MINUTES IN A MINUTE

President Frank Claro was off fishing in Alaska at this meeting and First Vice President Chris Lotito was gone as well so the meeting was skillfully opened by Second Vice President Fran Hubert.

She introduced a passel of visiting brothers: Grand President Jess Garcia #116, Grand Vice President Dick Kaufman #183, Grand Third Vice President Clare McCullough #110, Grand Trustee George Wiles #315, Ted Garcia #45, Ken Bell #116, Rubat Zabler #116, Bud Utter #272 and our beloved DDGP Ben White #109. We were all delighted to welcome them to the dinner and our meeting.

In correspondence, a letter was read that was sent to Juanita Stanley from the California Literacy Building. Our offer of

\$240,000.00 and details were delivered on August 11, 1997. The Relocation Committee reported that they hired a professional appraiser for \$500.00 to get our own appraisal on the Literacy property and it reflected their thinking for the price they offered.

Two new applications were read for Mike Addante and Ola Addante, both sponsored by Joe la Casella.

Brother Harry Beardo gave his report on the affair at St. John's Hospital. The native Sons gave a check of \$40,000.00 for the worthwhile cause.

Grand President Jess Garcia gave an inspirational address on the goals for the Parlors. Grand Vice President Dick Kaufman complimented us on our books and our outlook for the future.

A Turnaround or Overnight trip to Stateline is in the works, but we couldn't get a commitment for anyone to chair the committee. We discussed the need for more activities that appeal to the members.

The Opportunity Chance Drawing was won by Sofia Rowe (again!) And she was issued a check for \$200.00 on the spot.

RAMONA PARLOR #109
WALKS FOR AIDS
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 28TH

Several of our brothers have decided to support the fight against AIDS by joining Aids Project Los Angeles on its annual walk on September 28th. The walk begins at Paramount Studio at 5555 Melrose Avenue in Hollywood at 9:00AM. The walk is 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) along the streets of Los Angeles with refreshments and encouragement offered along the way.

The Ramona Team is car pooling from Claro's San Gabriel at 8:30AM. Walking is always a lot of fun and helping AIDS Project LA is a very worthwhile endeavor. Money is raised from pledges gathered by the walkers. If you would like to walk please call Joe Claro at (818) 280-5111 and he will send you a pledge sheet. If you can't walk, but would like to send a donation, make checks to AIDS Walk LA and send them to Joe Claro, 3668 North Chariette Avenue, Rosemead, CA 91770.

SICK AND DISABLED

John Moles and Joe Truffo are not doing well. If you would like to call or visit these ailing brothers, the kindness of your concern will probably do them a world of good.

Mario Brunasso has taken ill and could use a prayer from his brothers also.

Frank Theiss, one time President of Pasadena Parlor, went in for knee surgery on August 29th. He stopped by to say hello before the operation and revealed plans to make a trip to the Alps next summer. We wish him good luck with the surgery and a speedy recovery so that he can have a ton of fun on his trip!

For all of our brothers and their families that are suffering from disease or distress, a sincere wish that health and happiness finds

you soon.

RELOCATION UPDATE

No news. The California Literacy people did not meet last month because several of their members were under the weather with the flu. They will meet again on September 16th and should be able to decide if they would like to continue negotiating with us for the sale of their building. Keep your fingers crossed...this thing just might work out yet!

CLEANING UP L.A.--*Till the Bubble Burst*

Cecilia Rasmussen

This article appeared on July 27, 1997 in the Los Angeles Times: L.A. Scene, the city then and now. It was provided for us by our friend from University Parlor, George Lyman who sent it along with two bars of White King Soap that he wants to donate to the Museum. Hope you find it interesting...

Although Ivory Soap generally is conceded to be the soap that gave American housewives soft skin, Los Angeles' own "house" brand, White King D, offered homemakers much more--cleaner clothes.

The words "White King" once had a magic ring, and it wasn't around the collar.

Young angelinos in the late 1940s and early 50's wouldn't dare miss an episode of "Chandu the Magician," the radio serial that plugged White King for its manufacturer and the show's sponsor, the Los Angeles Soap Co., which cleaned up the region for nearly 130 years.

From the 1940s to the 1960s, radio and TV audiences laughed, cried and ate their hearts out on weekday afternoons during "Queen for a Day"--originally sponsored by White King D--which rewarded the saddest tales of woe with a queen's ransom of appliances and furnishings.

But for housewives in 22 states, White King meant an inexpensive, efficient line of laundry and cleaning soaps--the country's first powdered soap--along with bleaches and fabric softeners to be sold in grocery stores.

For more than a century, the scents wafted over the City of Angels from the soap company's plant, which occupied a one-block site east of downtown.

The White King story began as the nation was marching toward the Civil War. In 1860, 17 year-old German-born John A. Forthmann rolled into the pueblo of Los Angeles, a city of opportunity that suited a teenager who had missed his ship as it left Germany, and swum doggedly to catch it until the crew lowered a boat to retrieve him.

Forthmann bought a small soap business in a shack at 2nd and Spring streets, and characteristically soon doubled its output.

By the coolness of night he sweated over boiling vats of animal fat and lye. During the heat of day he peddled his harsh yellow soap around town, selling from a wheelbarrow and in turn providing the city with an early environmental service: collecting cooking fats from housewives, and pork and meat scraps from restaurants and boardinghouses to recycle into soap.

As the city's population grew, so did the soap trade. By 1874, Forthmann moved the plant to a wooden building surrounded by orange groves and standing close to the Los Angeles and San Pedro Railway, from which he would build a thriving trade shipping soap around the West.

As the soap company prospered, Forthmann purchased building after nearby building and converted each to his needs, eventually extending it for blocks. The brick buildings were interlaced by endless lengths of pipe, conveyors and other industrial trappings.

Back then, soap was soap. It washed clothes, hair and dishes. Baths were rare and traditionally the family wash was done once a month. But the boon to soap came in the late 1880s, when architects began designing homes with indoor plumbing. One of the most spectacular was a 4,200 square foot, 11 room Italianate-style Victorian, built for the Forthmann family (It would later be donated to USC...)

But the soap business was cleaning up in Cincinnati too. The demand for Proctor & Gamble's new white air-puffed floating soap called Ivory made Forthmann decide to duplicate it.

With a mixture of science and serendipity, Forthmann and chemist Frank H. Merrill triumphantly created their product in 1907. Like Ivory, Forthmann's air-injected cake of soap floated rather than melting to mush. It also cleaned better at lower temperatures, which meant housewives no longer had to boil clothes.

But it was also more expensive than the yellow soap, and until after World War II, the company would make both types: cheaper animal-fat soap, and costlier, floating soap with vegetable oil.

After World War I, the nation's first granulated laundry detergent, White King D (for detergent), rolled off the production line.

Although Forthmann's gamble had paid off handsomely, he remained a traditionalist. By 1922, the last year of his life, the city streets were clogged with autos. But at 79, he was still driving to work in a buggy, and hitching his horse to an iron ring mounted in the brick factory wall under a sign that read "No Parking."

The firm stayed in the Forthmann family, and during the depression the company kept most jobs by arranging shorter shifts. Homemakers earned pocket money for dropping off their grease droppings. But the pungent odors from the rancid fat were so overpowering that the neighbors complained, and by the late 1940s, the company stopped making soap from animal fats.

(One decades old rumor maintained that gangsters had killed a couple of troublesome crooks and dumped the bodies in the rendering vats, but it was just a rumor.)

In 1950, the company's biggest problem was the city's problem, too: pollution. However agreeable the soap smelled, the fumes helped put an eye-stinging pall over the city.

So in 1960, Forthmann's grandson Andrew K. Forthmann put more than \$1 million into the plant, adding new equipment that boosted production, with a 110-foot detergent making tower designed to eliminate polluting emissions.

Growth and advertising were like one hand washing the other. The company sponsored the popular radio show “Chandu the magician,” in which the hero Chandu and his friends fought the forces of evil--dirt--to bring cleaner clothes to the West. And the company aimed at the hearts of the housewives with the tearful travails of “Queen for a Day”.

With business booming, the company tried to go national in 1967. A factory it opened on the East Coast closed within a year. Fierce competition in the billion-dollar household soap and detergent business from such makers as Proctor & Gamble was making it harder to maintain a niche on crowded supermarket shelves. Customers who once bought loyally from four generations of Forthmanns were being lured away by new brands.

By the time the plant closed in 1987, only a few employees remained of the hundreds who had once marked their days by the steam whistle that signaled lunch hours and shift changes.

The land, now part of Little Tokyo, is vacant, except for one corner leased as a parking lot.

The entire site was purchased from the soap company by the Evergreen shipping conglomerate for a planned hotel. The project was aborted several years later after the company was caught trying to influence local politics in a money-laundering scheme.

The last visual reminder of almost 130 years of local saponification went down the drain when the old, ornate smokestack bearing the painted legend “White King’ was demolished in 1987.

Ramona Officers 1997

President.....Frank Claro
First Vice-President.....Chris Lotito
Second Vice-President.....Fran Hubert
Third Vice-President.....Al Lingua
Jr. Past President.....Louis Bisetti
Sr. Past President.....Wellesley Peters
Trustee-18 Months.....Harry Scholar
Recording Secretary.....Art Claro
Assistant Recording Secretary.....Pete Pianta

Financial Secretary.....Roberta Overton
Treasurer.....Joe La Casella
Trustee-12 Months.....Leo Baudino
Trustee-6 Months.....Chris Deghi
Marshall.....Dominic Billi
Inside Sentinel.....Verne Koenig
Outside Sentinel.....Lou Francone

District Deputy Grand President
Ben White

Ramona Parlor #109
Native Sons of the Golden West

Meets the 2nd Thursday of each Month
Grape Vine Room
Near Santa Anita and Mission
San Gabriel
(800) 507-0450