



The Hourglass

Editor: Bob Tyler

Summer 2016

Interview with Edith Morré

April 1st 2016

by Bob Tyler

The Palm Desert Historical Society Newsletter called the "Hourglass" which is our museum newsletter.

Edith – I like to put things in books. At least if they're in books you have 'em in one place. I've got papers strewn all around here.

Bob - Where were you born?

Edith – Bremerton Washington across the bay from Seattle, it's a Navy town.

*The Mission of
the Historical
Society of Palm
Desert*

*To collect,
preserve and
record the history
of our city and
communities and
to provide
access to the
society's
archives and
artifacts through
exhibits,
publications,
programs and
events.*

Bob – Was your father in the Navy?

Edith – No, my Uncle was in the Navy. My maiden name was "Fortier," my father was French, my mother was Pennsylvania Dutch. My father was from Chicago and he was named after the president; James Garfield Fortier. My mother's name was Katherine Hecker, she was one of a pair of Pennsylvania Dutch twins in

Omaha Nebraska, she was born when they had four grown sons, but these twins came west to

Bremerton, 'cause my uncle was in the service. My grandparents bought each one of them a home next door to each other, and then when they married they each had two daughters, Katherine and Katie. I have a sister and we're sixteen months apart, but everybody use to think we were twins, but we always told them "we're not twins, we're sixteen months apart!" My sister is still living, she lives in Reno, Nevada, and she's a realtor there.

Bob – What was your father's occupation?

Edith – My father was an inventor, he invented a copywriting machine, I didn't know much about it, but I know that I inherited that tendency 'cause everything I do, I put it together in a different way than most people see it, they may like it the way it is, but I say no. I think it's fun to look at things from a certain point of view.

Bob – Did you go to school in Bremerton?

Edith – No, we moved to Portland, Oregon before I started school. I went to elementary school in Portland and I went to high school there too, so I grew up in Portland. They had wonderful art teachers in Portland, I was a wood carver and a material weaver, I wove fabric for clothes. I stayed in Portland until I married, and then later I got acquainted with the desert.

Bob – Where did you meet your husband?

Edith – I first got married when I was twenty, my first husband was an architectural engineer, that’s another interest I have, ‘cause he was always working on designing cities, like St. Louis, Missouri where we lived. He was from Paducah, Kentucky and his family was very well known there, he was another very nice gentleman. I find that I really like southerners. When I first came down here to the desert I was going with a man named Donald Duncan who was the inventor of the parking meter, he was from Chicago, but he owned several homes in Palm Springs. I met Dr. Morrey down here in the desert, I think it was in Palm Springs. I met him in the 1940’s, he was from Chicago, Dr. Robert Morrey was one of the founding physicians of Eisenhower Hospital. I got a good education from being a doctor’s wife, they don’t talk about their patients, but you hear lots of things over the phone. In the early days we didn’t have any answer phones, you just had to answer the phone in the middle of the night. We had a home at Thunderbird Country Club for thirty five years, and when we went to a party there (they were party people) when we got home the phone started ringing, and his patients told him that they couldn’t sleep, and I said; “You know something, don’t think anybody in my family can sleep either.” Dr. Morrey was a doctor of Internal Medicine. One of his patients was President Eisenhower, and the president told him the he was the only doctor he’d gone to who didn’t charge him. My husband told Ike that he wouldn’t think of charging him for all he’s done. What happened was that President Eisenhower played golf with his brother and his friends, and Eisenhower’s brother was a patient of my husband’s. Ike’s brother came down here quite often to play golf, and so when Ike got a damaged muscle in his arm and he couldn’t play golf, he told his brother that he’d been to three different doctors and nothing they did helped. Ike’s brother told him that he would take him to his doctor (my

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husband) and at that time there was a new medication called Butazolidin that was being used on race horses for muscle damage. So when Ike told my husband that doctors had tried all the usual treatments, but none had worked, my husband said he’d try the Butazolidin that they’re converting for use on humans as well as horses. And so he did, and in three days Ike called him and said “Dr. Morrey; I’m out playing golf!” And so it worked and it continued to work, so that was a sort of unusual thing that happened.

Bob – When you Dr. Morrey were first married; where was his office?

Edith – We had our home in Palm Desert, but my husband was one of the heads of the hospital in Palm Springs, and so when Cliff Henderson first started building Palm Desert and developing the area out here, they didn’t have a doctor, so I said to my husband; “Would you consider moving your office to Palm Desert and helping those people out there?” And so he told me that he could have two

offices and stay where he wanted to be, and then he decided that he liked it in Palm Desert rather than Palm Springs. My building was the second building on El Paseo, but before that there was a building near El Paseo on Larkspur Lane with a drug store. The drug store was run by Ed Mullins, and was next to Keedy’s restaurant, my husband’s office was next to the drug store. So when I built my building I said “Well honey, I wanted you to be in my building,” then he said “I get compliments on my office, I like my office right where it is.” So then I had to work on him for a while, and I finally got him to come over to my building. I told him “you can have a television, you can even watch baseball if you want to.” So he finally moved over to my building, and it was very good for both of us. I had an exclusive dress shop and his patients would ask things like “Who does that big black limousine out there belong to?” He told them that it was President Eisenhower’s limousine,

and so one thing helped the other. Mamie use to come to my shop, but she didn't buy very much. It was nice for women who were waiting for an appointment to come to my dress shop and try on some clothes, rather than just sitting around waiting for the doctor, and so it helped me and it helped him too. I gave a talk to some people at a country club, and told them that I had to work on my husband to get him to move his office over to my building, and I told them "and he got thirty five years of free rent!" They all roared!



Bob – Now tell me about the building that you built for your dress shop on El Paseo; was it near Larkspur Lane?

Edith – My building was on the north side next door to the best jewelry shop on El Paseo, Leeds Jewelers I think it's

called, they do a million dollars every year.

Bob – Is your building still there?

Edith – Yes, it sure is, but I sold it. I wanted to buy the whole block, I could have bought the rest of the block where I bought my lot for \$135,000, but my husband said "Oh no, I don't want to be a landlord." I thought what's wrong with being a landlord? But I didn't buy it. We use to kid about how much that property would be worth today.

Bob – when you first built your building, were there any other buildings on El Paseo?

Edith – Mine was the second building, there was one building that was before me, and it was owned by a young man named Ralph Dietz, he had a gift shop there. He and his wife ran the shop, they were a nice couple, and they belonged to Thunderbird too. They built the first building, it was a small shop. I had a two story building and had tenants. I had a men's fashion shop there and a beauty shop on the second floor, the girl who had the beauty shop was a friend of a famous hairdresser in Beverley Hills, and she allowed her to use her name. I was

very lucky, there were a lot of very nice and kind people here who helped me.

Bob – About what year did you establish Edith Morr e Fashions?

Edith – I'm not very good with dates, I remember that I use to come down here from Oregon with my sister and we'd stay down here for about a month or so. My nephew came with us, and he was about five years old then and he's seventy two now so you can figure it out from that. I have a magazine here somewhere that tells about my dress shop, we had a lot of publicity.

Bob – So he would have been born in about 1943, so if he was 7 years old, you would have started construction on your building in about 1950. Does that sound right?

Edith – Yes, he was a little boy then. I joined the Tennis Club in Palm Springs, we use to go there a lot and he use to swim, his father was an Olympic swimmer, so we use to take him swimming there, he still swims a lot.

Bob – Do you have any children?

Edith – No, I couldn't have accomplished all that I did if had kids to look after, but I have lots of nieces and nephews.

Bob – People tell me that when you ran your dress shop you were very pretty, and you had the latest fashions from Paris; is that right?



Edith – No, I made everything myself, I had help from seamstresses who did the sewing, but I designed everything myself. I still have closets full of clothes that I

made. I had people who worked for me who did a lot of the sewing, but I did a lot of it myself. Alice Fay, who was married to Phil Harris, was my first customer. Alice and her husband belonged to Thunderbird, that's how we knew them, and they were my husband's patients. Alice came in and bought a sweater with applied animals on it, after that she became a regular customer. At that time there were lots

of celebrity's here, Lily Ponds was one of my favorite customers, and William Boyd (Hopalong Cassidy) lived in Palm Desert. I did my opening fashion show in the shop, I did shows with other shops too, and I opened a small tea room inside the shop so I could serve lunch. When customers left the shop to go out for lunch, they would get distracted and not return, so if they could have lunch in the store, they continued shopping with me. It was a fun profession for a girl from Oregon.

Bob – Did you and your husband go to the Shadow Mountain Club?

Edith – Yes, we belonged there, everybody belonged to the Shadow Mountain Club. It was a really nice club, and Cliff Henderson was quite a character. I think Cliff was a brilliant man in kind of a seductive way, he dreamed up this whole town when he was in the war. I remember that he had a very lovely wife named Marian, I thought she was a very productive



person and she was actually the head of the family. Palm Desert grew really fast, it was a nice experience. We had a lot of friends here, doctors have lots of friends and their patients entertain them. It seemed like everybody in the desert belonged there,

and of course they had that beautiful pool there. There was one fellow I remember at the Shadow Mountain Club, he was a dancing teacher named Lou Kuehner, I just loved Lou, 'cause I took dance lessons from him, I was a young girl then and it was really fun. Lou probably doesn't know that I'm still alive! We were fortunate to meet a lot of nice people here. I have a whole book of my husband's patients. My husband was a very special man, he loved people and he loved his patients. He wouldn't go out of town to go to a party in Palm Springs if he thought one of his patients might need him. He was very very dedicated.

Bob – So your husband had his office in your building for thirty five years, and later did he have an office at Eisenhower Medical Center?

Edith – My husband retired, and then he died in 1985.

THE RANDALL HENDERSON COLLECTION

By Ginny Folkers – Archivist

For the past month I have been processing paperwork from one of our most famous pioneers. In 1937 Randall Henderson founded Desert Magazine. At that time he resided in El Centro, California and published the Calexico Chronicle, a local newspaper. During WWII he and his younger brother Cliff were serving in the military as aviators. One evening in Africa they had a chance to meet and discuss their hopes for the future. Randall was personally familiar with much of the desert terrain in the United States. He wasn't happy with his place in El Centro, so he found some people in Tucson Arizona who offered him a piece of commercial property as well as help with a construction loan. Brother Cliff had plans to build a post-war community, so he asked Randall to look for a place in the California desert that would be good for such a project, if he got back to the State's first.

In 1944 Randall was exploring the Coachella Valley and discovered a cove at the foot of the Santa Rosa Mountains, located between Palm Springs and Indio. Randall and Cliff both agreed that that it would be a perfect site to fulfill Cliff's dream, as long as they could purchase enough contiguous land to form a city.

Randall had made up his mind to move his business to Tucson Arizona, but Cliff pleaded with him to set up his publishing plant in in Palm Desert, the name that the new community was eventually given. Desert Magazine became so popular that people subscribed to the tune of 60,000 issues a month, which supplied the needed quota to build a new post office in Palm Desert. And so the largest commercial building in the area was erected at the eastern end of El Paseo. It contained two huge business, both publishing and printing. Besides all the small shops that were built, the Southwest Art Gallery

displayed many desert paintings and served as a social gathering place for early settlers in Palm Desert.

As I read through hundreds of documents from the Randal Henderson collection, I realize that he was an extreme conservationist. Randall joined many preservation organizations in his lifetime, but the first group he joined was the Desert Protective Council. The past and present have turned into a joyful time that would have made Randall a very happy man. As I continue my curatorial work for the Palm Desert Historical Society, I've read through a great many recent articles in the Desert Sun this last April and May on California's State and Federal parks, Joshua Tree National Park is especially pin-pointed as a place for conservation of the wildlife and natural habitat. We are so fortunate to be living in this peaceful desert cove, nothing can match the glory of our majestic mountains. Like Randall Henderson, we want to preserve our natural environment, just the way it was created.

Site Assessment at the Historical Society
by
Merilee Colton

A consultant from the California Assessment Project, part of the California Preservation Program managed by the California State Librarian, spent two days last month at the Historical Society of Palm Desert's Firehouse and our storage room in the Portola Community Center assessing the HSPD's archives, library and other two-dimensional objects. The consultant assessed the preservation of, and public access to, these collections.

The outcome of this free assessment, which the HSPD applied for in a competitive process earlier this year, will be a report outlining best practices and suggested improvements. Libraries and museums typically use this information to apply for grants to improve the status of their collections. A grant request could be for additional file cabinets, acid-free materials, and other expensive items.

The HSPD was fortunate to be selected for this assessment. When the final report is received later this year, members can make an appointment to review it by contacting the office at (760) 346-6588.

Annual Picnic. I would like to thank all of those who helped make the annual picnic a success this year. Whether you sent out invitations, e-mails, donated raffle gifts, prepared food, loaded chairs and tables or just invited guests, it took all of you to get it done. We also appreciated Rob Pitchford's Boy Scout troop 76's helpfulness with the heavy lifting and cleaning.

Firehouse-Museum

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CHANGES IN HIGHWAY 74
(Cont. from last issue)

by Harry Quinn

It is interesting to me that there have been so few changes in the highway from the Santa Rosa Indian Reservation west to Mountain Center. A few of the bridges have been

improved, (like at Hurkey Creek), some turn offs added and widened and much of this work has been done in the past twenty years.

However, changes from the Santa Rosa Indian Reservation east to Palm Desert have been numerous. One of these changes was due to Mother Nature. One can still see remnants of the old highway against the hill just south of the Visitors Center from when the highway was rerouted after a major storm in 1977. This is also a good place to see quartz dikes cutting through the metamorphic country rock.

The old highway came up rather straightly, crossed two bridges at Carrizo Creek and Dead Indian Canyon, and then made a sharp left turn to the east along the base of the mountain. The bridges and parts of the highway were washed out by a flash flood in 1977 that also took out portions of the City of Palm Desert. After this flood a debris basin and channel were built and the road rerouted to where it is today.

Another change was the removal of the old watering hole, a stone and concrete pillar with a drinking fountain on top and a faucet on the side. This was located at the large paved pullout just below Vista Point. It was where the old cars without a pressure radiator system would start to boil. This was a place to get a drink, fill the radiator, and refill your water bag. Do you any of you remember the desert water bag and why you hung it on the front of the car? The spring that fed this watering hole had good cool water and is now used to water Big Horn Sheep.

Improvements have been ongoing at Vista Point for many years. It has gone from a dirt parking area to a paved parking lot with contoured rock walls and a brass plaque. It offers a great view of the San Andreas Fault and the Indio Hills. It was once a fun place to watch the hang gliders launch, so not all changes have been improvements.

They added a passing lane that I like to refer to as the speed-up-lane. You follow someone up the highway at 30 to 35 mph until they hit the widened area and then they speed up to 55 to 60 mph so you cannot get past them. Then, once they hit the other end they go back to their

30 to 35 mph. And people wonder why we have road rage.

They have also spent a lot of money putting in turnouts along the highway from above the passing lane to the Santa Rosa Indian Reservation. A couple of these are so short that I think they constitute a driving hazard, especially at night. Also, it is too bad they have not spent some money telling drivers what they are for.

They have recently grooved the highway and placed "Bots Dots" in the grooves. The grooves act as thumpers when your tires hit them so alert drivers when they are too close to the center line. They also place the "Bots dots" below the road surface so that snow removal does not remove the "Bots dots". One interesting event happened to me when a driver coming the other way had his wheels on my side of the road to avoid the thumps from the grooves. He basically straddled the center line rather than getting back on his side of the road to avoid the noise.

Lately they have been replacing some of the old guard rails and installing new ones at areas that never had them before. I must say the new guard rails look nice, but they have yet to install one at the point where my wife went over the bank and was killed in 2005. This is about a 150 foot drop.

HSPD FIRST PAID EMPLOYEE

by Bonnie Bowie

In 1988, my husband, Jack and I moved to Palm Desert and after getting settled, my Aunt Rheo (Lawman) who was an Honorary Board member invited me to join and volunteer. The first meeting I attended was just after some vandalism had occurred at the building. File boxes were scattered about the rooms with some larger pictures spray-painted. We all helped to get files put back in the boxes along with many photos, mostly black and white photos and proceeded to try to identify the people and/or events that were in the photos.

The Board President was Ed Mullins at this time. He stated this would be a job to get everything organized into regular office files. To my surprise, Ed called me to discuss if I would be interested in an Office Manager/ Organizer/Receptionist position. He said the Board was ready to setup an office at the firehouse. I was hired as a private contractor serving through the Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce office.



The position was more complex than I had anticipated. My office experience was secretarial duties and was not related to any historical knowledge. But I “rolled up my sleeves” and got busy setting up the files out of the boxes. There were not many visitors in those early years so I was able to spend my working hours doing the office setup. Of course, office furniture and some office equipment had to be purchased or donated. My first computer, an Apple, was donated from the city.

Bob Keedy came almost every day I worked for several months and I could not have had a more valuable history teacher, telling me all the early history and events of Palm Desert. I served under Board Presidents Ed Mullins, Bob

Keedy and Jean Hollenbeck. At this time I also served as Secretary at the Board meetings.

One of my most memorable occasions came one day when I answered the phone and it was Mrs. Randolph Scott inquiring if we had any information in our files on her deceased husband, Randolph Scott. I told her, I would check and send her copies of what we had. Along in our conversation, I told her I had seen many of his western movies as I grew up attending the Saturday matinees. I included a membership application, along with the information I had found because I had told her about the historical society memberships, much to my surprise, she mailed back her membership application with a \$1000 life membership! I was sure proud of that!

I terminated my employment in 1998, at a time when both of our parents needed some medical attention in Northern California and we needed to be there for them.

When I returned to Palm Desert, I trained a couple of ladies who did not stay long. Later I became a Board member and you know the rest of the story. We have a fine Office Manager in Anne Tuttle who has now been there longer than I served.

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Board of Directors 2016 - 2020

The Historical Society of Palm Desert Board of Directors has new officers and several new directors who will take office as of as of July 2016.

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PDHS Officers

President - Harry Quinn, local teacher, geologist/archaeologist/paleontologist and local historian who first came to the Santa Rosa Mountains in 1941. Harry is a graduate of L. A. Harbor Collage, Long Beach State, USC and UCLA.

Vice President – Rob Pitchford, longtime Palm Desert resident, Eagle Scout and Scout Master who is active with our local Troop 76 Boy Scouts of America.

Secretary - Merilee Colton, tireless PDHS supporter who has been diligently cataloging the many items in the museum archive.

Treasurer – Susan Marie Weber, a longtime PDHS supporter, Palm Desert City Council member and former Mayor.

Newly elected board members are;
Sid Burks, a teacher and local historian who authored *“The Salton Sea, a surprising military history.”*

Kay McCune, longtime Palm Desert resident and museum supporter who once worked as a model for Edith Morr  Fashion.

Nerl Porras, a longtime Palm Desert resident and local contractor who manages the

Facebook site *“You know you are from Palm Desert if....”*

Pam Williams, longtime local resident and chair of the City of Palm Desert’s Cultural Resources Preservation Committee.

Retiring officers and board members;

The Palm Desert Historical Society would like to say THANK YOU to the retiring officers and board members who will all remain active at the museum;

Hal Rover
Bonnie Bowie
Adele Sandman

Midsummer Madness

Every summer during the hottest days of the year the Palm Desert Historical Society host our “Midsummer Madness Potluck.” Please join us. This year’s theme is Veteran’s Day *“Proud of our Red White and Blue.”* Members are encouraged to bring your favorite dish as well as a picture or souvenir of your favorite military veteran, whether it’s yourself, a friend or a family member. Scout Master Rob Pitchford and the Scouts from Troop 76 will be presenting the colors.

Details regarding the potluck are in the following flyer.





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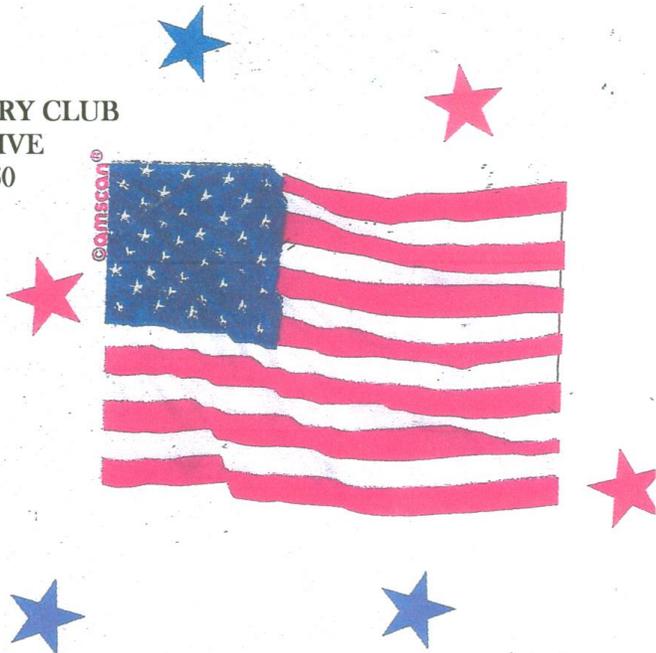
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