

## President's Message

**Last year**, when COVID-19 reached us, I think many were optimistic that in a few weeks the virus would pass through like a tornado and we'd be back to our normal lives in no time. Meanwhile, as we wait this thing out, it's a perfect time to binge watch several multi-part, multi-season Netflix shows on TV.

But it became clear it was going to take much longer – maybe until Labor Day. That date seemed pessimistic and a bit discouraging, but nonetheless hopeful. As the days passed and the holidays approached the virus spread worsens, holiday parties and large gatherings are canceled including our annual Gala. Having now extended beyond the one-year mark with vaccines readily available, we have new hope an end is near.

While we cannot provide definitive dates, we can assure you we are planning to hold our Gala in January 2022. We understand that reopening banquet facilities may come with certain restrictions including allowing more space among participants and perhaps managing the size of our events. Once we get the green light, you will be the first to know when it is safe to resume our normal schedule. There's nothing we enjoy more than bringing Orange history to life for our members and friends and we can't wait until we see you again.

Jane Owens  
President, 2021

## The Hotel de Blount - El Modena, California

**El Modena** was a fair distance east of Orange and you had to cross the Santiago Creek, which often flooded – its dreams of prospering from the boom times of the 1880s seem unlikely, but that didn't discourage it. **The Hotel de Blount, Blount Hotel, or The El Modena Hotel** was situated at the base of Tom Thumb Hill, on the north side of Chapman Avenue, just where the El Modena grade now begins its rise into the Orange foothills. It was bulldozed away in 1980. Early in 1888, the Orange, McPherson, and Modena (OM&M) street railway ran up Chapman



*The Hotel de Blount - El Modena - 1888*  
Avenue from the Plaza to Alameda (Esplanade). It was reported in the Orange Tribune on March 17, 1888, that the railway was to be extended east to the Blount, but that work was never completed. Powered by a horse or mule,

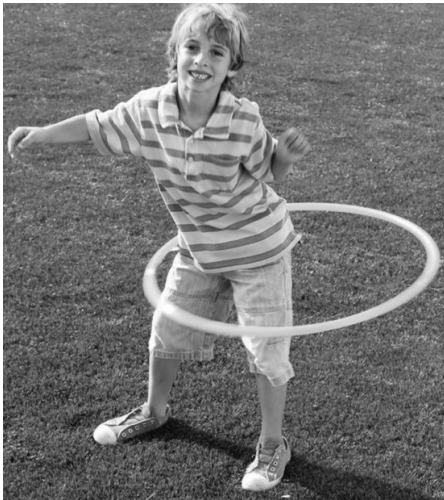
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# Under the Orange Peel

Rev. Nathan Riley

Ralph Story's iconic, *"Things that Aren't Here Anymore"* got me to thinking about stuff we did as kids growing up here in Orange that you don't see much any more-like boys playing "army men" with posed plastic soldiers, or kids with slingshots or schoolyard children running



across the school grounds guiding wire hoops or our version of that transferred to home-old wheels we guided with thin flat boards up and down the driveway and sidewalks. Or who

could ever forget Wham-O's hula hoop? I read recently that, "with giveaways and national marketing and retailing, a fad was started in July 1958; twenty-five million plastic hoops were sold in less than four months, and in two years, sales reached more than 100 million units." Oh, yes! We spun those colorful hoops 'til the cows came home, around our necks, our waists and knees for hundreds, even thousands of times. Didn't you? We played marbles, flew kites and balsa wood airplanes. Remember? We made human pyramids and shot our cannons filled with "Bangsite." We tightened our metal skates to dress shoes with our skate keys and raced



around the block. We strapped on our holsters and shot our cap pistols at each other. We played

board games like Clue and Monopoly and our neighbor's made-up game he called



"Tunnel" where we went around a board trying to get rich "digging" for precious metals. We had snail and rock races. We played croquet and badminton. We made 8 ft. tall teepees out of riverbed bamboo, blankets and burlap. We built forts and spent countless hours digging tunnels and trails in the dirt. Took my grandson out some time back to do the same when I learned he never had. I remember my sisters playing with paper dolls, jacks, jump ropes and Melody Bells. There was "Mother may I?", "Simon says", "Kick the wicket" and "Red line" What do you recall as games/pastimes that you don't see much anymore?

**Hotel de Blount** - continued from page 1

the animal rode the return trip on a small platform behind the railcar and let gravity do the work back to Orange. The three-story hotel opened in early 1888 and in November the Santa Ana wind blew a large portion of the roof off. It was hoped, of course, that this symbol of stability and promise would entice the railroad to build a spur to the area. It didn't, and the wooden structure burned to the

Blount - continued of page 7

# Miniature Golf, Trains and Cars

## - The Orange Connection -

If you visited Irvine Park in the last 25 years, you've probably seen the little train that runs around the pond. This train began running there in 1996. But, before this train, there were two others that ran there and a golf course too.

Jim Sleeper wrote in "Bears to Briquets" – "As the twenties closed, southern California was caught-up in the miniature golf craze. Still an *aficionado*, James Irvine hired Balboa pro Ed Dickinson to lay out a diminutive course on the park's south side.

"Complete with a waterless fountain and screwed-down Matterhorn, 'The Oaks' opened August 29, 1930. State Senator Nels Edwards was the first to tee off, although failed to make 'the tough shot through the cannon.'

"Like most fads, 'peewee golf' faded fast. In 1935 Robert H. Davis leased the site for a miniature train ride. Water lines were run to supply a stubby locomotive which pulled three cars around an 800-foot track. A tiny depot, unaccountably called 'Weber City,' bore a sign reading 'Pop. 5 or 6.'"

On June 12, 1935, In the midst of the Depression, The Santa Ana Register reported about the "Weber City" train being used in a newsreel made by Universal Pictures. The film featured 13 of Santa Ana's richest school kids acting as train operators and passengers. It was shown in Orange County theaters in July of that year.

By 1937 the train belonged to Frank B. McGowen of Santa Ana. He in turn, sold the

train under a conditional contract with Harry Otis Tipple of Long Beach. The contract stated the train was to remain in California until payment was complete. One night in early November 1937, Tipple, the locomotive and two cars it pulled, disappeared. Tipple even took up the tracks the train had run on and loaded them into a truck and headed for parts unknown. Tipple still owed McGowen \$650 for the train.

Some days later, in Bernalillo, New Mexico, Tipple was involved in an accident when another vehicle crashed into the truck carrying the train, killing the other driver. After being held in New Mexico during the investigation of the fatal crash, he was returned to California to face charges for the theft of the train.

"Like it's peewee predecessor, the steam went out of miniature railroading. Downed wires from a Santa Ana wind had already speeded its demise after a parent was electrocuted while waiting at the station. The last toot from the 'Weber City Express' was when Tipple made-off with the whole lot"

However, in 1939 another train would come to Irvine Park and Sleeper didn't mention this incarnation. That train was owned by Philip Martin, who had built an Atlantic Type (4-4-2) for 10-inch track, while living in Detroit, Michigan. It was reported that he had been employed as a tool and die maker at the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia, before moving to Detroit. There, he had his own machine shop, where he constructed a miniature engine and passenger cars. Philip operated the train in local Detroit parks for two seasons in - 1935 and '36.

Continued on next page

He, his wife, Mary and son Raymond (plus the little train) moved to Los Angeles in 1937, ostensibly for work in the aircraft industry.

By 1940 the family was living in Orange and in the census that year, he stated his occupation was now, amusement business. His son Raymond was listed as working in the family business. They rented a house on Park Street, south of Chapman Avenue in the El Modena area of east Orange. Philip had enlarged the gauge of his train to 18 inches and brought it to Irvine Park the previous year, where it would run for nearly four decades. It too was located on the south-side, just outside the old park entrance. Rather than steam powered, it was driven by a six-cylinder Ford engine, with a three-speed transmission and hand operated clutch. Just turn the ignition, let out the clutch and you're rail-roading.

Son, Raymond Charles Martin registered for military service at age 21 in October 1940 and served in the U.S. Army. In 1943, while stationed in the Pacific during World War II, he

met and married his wife, Pat in Rockhampton, Australia.

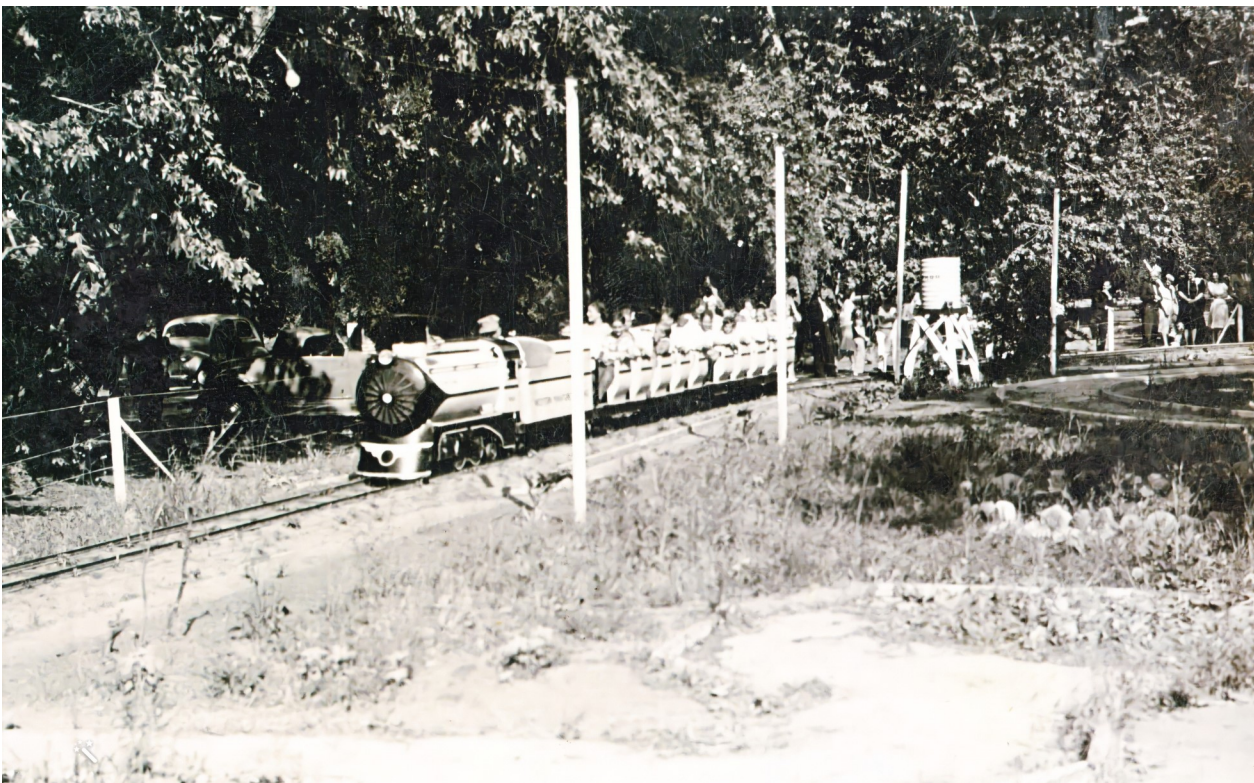
Following the war, Ray returned to Orange with his wife. He rejoined his dad, working on the Irvine Park train. Shortly after Ray would operate the concession by himself.

Philip Martin fell seriously ill in the later part of the 1940s and although he eventually recovered, he sold his interest in the Irvine Park Train to his son.

There had also been a 1/5-mile dirt track for small gasoline-engine cars located inside the train tracks. Ray would continuously modify these cars and eventually had cars that he referred to as, "micro-midgets." Early on, he ran just five cars to avoid crowding on the track, but there would be other, faster cars in the future.

### **The Santa Ana Canyon Miniature Railroad**

"Philip had started building the steam engine that he had always dreamed of creating before falling ill, but his desire to complete the work



1940s – Irvine Park. Philip Martin's train. Dirt car track is seen on right.

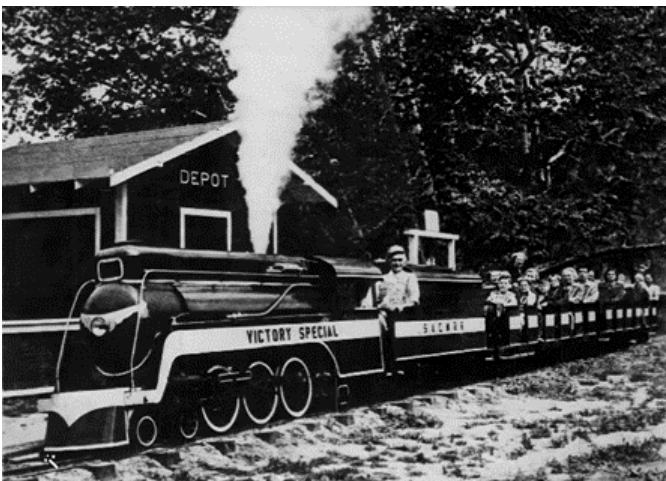
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*Photo is courtesy of Jason Arthur, Irvine Park, O.C. Ranger.*

drove him on and he credited that desire with overcoming his illness. He drew all his own plans and detailed sketches of his dream loco. He turned the 20-inch drivers in wood before having them cast in steel. Through four and a half years, during which his wife helped him achieve his dream, he completed the work in 1950. The train was named the **Victory Special** in honor of this great triumph over illness and the locomotive was numbered 6474 corresponding to their ages on completion.”

Mr. and Mrs. Martin moved their train from their Orange home to the beautiful natural wilderness in Santa Ana Canyon, which they named Sycamore Park (today Cecil Featherly Regional Park). Here they built the mile of track and put the train in operation.

“Due to the nature of the place, considerable excavation had to be done by a large bulldozer. Twelve-pound mine rail purchased new in 1950 was laid.”

The train consisted of a Pacific-type locomotive (4-6-2) 22 feet long over-all including its tender. The engine and tender were 4 feet 3 inches high. The tender, 9 feet six inches long, carried 55-gallons of fuel (diesel oil) and 100-gallons of water. The boiler operated at 125 pounds of pressure. The engine pulled two 16-foot-long cars that could seat 12 adults or 16 children in each car. The overall weight of the miniature train was 4.5 tons.



“The route of this track is very scenic with its right and left curves up and down grades with beautiful oaks, sycamores, willows, and many types of vegetation on all sides.”



*Pausing the train at Midway station to allow the passengers to dip their feet into the Santa Ana River. Engineer Martin rests against the riverbank*

“After a little over two of the happiest years of his life running this train and seemingly in the best of health with always a warm smile on his face, Mr. Philip J. Martin passed away suddenly on May 17, 1952 at the age of 76.”

Mrs. Mary Martin engaged Orange Attorney Gordon X. Richmond to sell the locomotive in November 1952 and listed the price at \$20,000. When it didn't sell, some friends of Philip Martin and Philip's son, Ray stepped in to operate the train until 1958, when it was no longer operating and its whereabouts are unknown.

Ray Martin was operating the Irvine Park miniature train and the “micro-midget” cars, bringing more of those racers to the Santa Ana Canyon location. It was quite the craze for some years in the 1950s, as many Orange youth and fathers built cars and raced them at Sycamore Park and the Orange Fair Grounds.

*( Continued on page 6)*



*Orange Daily News - April 14, 1955*

The cars quickly became a family project and Martin said the drivers dreamed up a Powder-Puff Derby one day so wives could take the wheel of the cars on the track.

“Never again,” moaned Martin. “Those gals went crazy. They were running across the infield to hit someone who passed them. The first

thing I knew, they were all stacked up. They never did finish the race.”

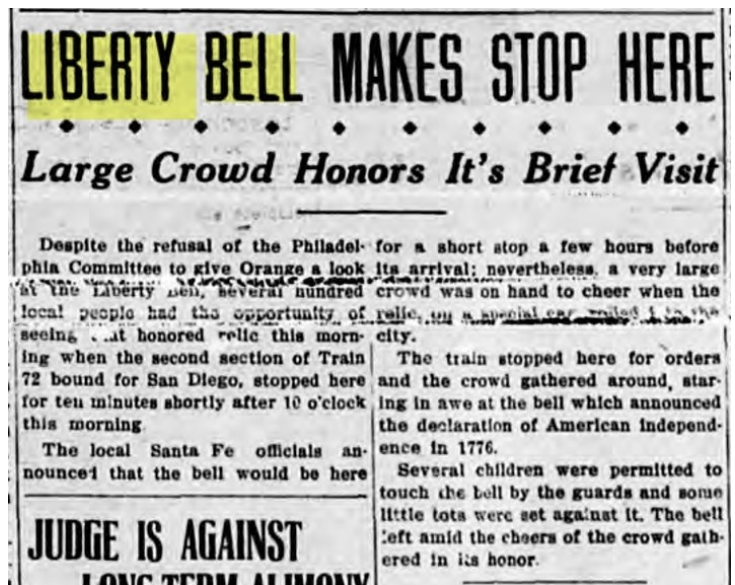
By the early 1960s the “micro-midget” craze died down, the train in the Santa Ana Canyon had stopped running and Ray Martin gave up the lease on the property. He continued to run the smaller train and cars in Irvine Park until sometime in the late 1970s. Ray Martin had been living in south-Orange County, but moved up to Napa Valley following retirement. The fate of the Irvine train is also unknown. Raymond Charles Martin died in Napa on July 13, 2013 at age 93. He and Pat would have been married 70 years that September. Ray was a longtime member and President of the Orange YMCA and Rotary International.



### Liberty Bell Stops In Orange

While doing some research on the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego I learned that the Liberty Bell was exhibited at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco from mid July 1915 to November 11 1915. On its return east, the Liberty Bell was taken to the San Diego exposition for a three-day visit. The special train carrying the Liberty Bell had to pass through Orange County twice on the trip to San Diego. The original plan called for the train pass through the county without much fanfare south bound passing through shortly after sunrise and north bound in the dark.

However, delays leaving San Francisco and other problem had it running about three hours late and had it arriving Orange about 10:00 am. The Santa Fe agent put out the word the Liberty Bell would be in town on short notice and a crowd gathered at the depot. - Clifford Prather, Editor - Orange County Railway Historical Society's Newsletter, Orange.



*Orange Daily News - 12 November, 1915*

**Lady Lawyers.** The first woman from O.C. admitted to the bar was Margaret Gardner of Orange, in September of 1911. However, she never practiced here. The first female attorney to practice locally was Mrs. Clara R. Cushman of Santa Ana in 1922.



NEWSLETTER - (Continued on page 7)

**Blount** - continued from pg. 2

ground on November 11, 1889, taking dreams of a thriving metropolis with it. Originally constructed by George H. Blount, the hotel was owned by Robert and John McFadden at the time of the fire. The loss was reported between \$10-13,000 and was insured for less than half that sum. It wasn't rebuilt. The El Modena line lasted until Santiago Creek flooding in December 1890 severely damaged the railroad bridge. It continued with a truncated line that stopped at the creek, but that didn't last long and the line folded shortly following. The rails and ties were being scrapped beginning in January 1892.

The first Orange County aviation fatality occurred in Olive on May 9, 1913. **Lt. Joseph D. Parks**, piloting a Curtiss bi-wing pusher. Crashed on take-off near Olive school, after landing for directions.

### Interactive Map of Historic Places

The folks at Preserve Orange County have just launched an online map featuring historic buildings and landscapes throughout the county. This map features locations on the California Register of Historic Resources, the National Registry of Places, and the places identified by the Orange County Historical Commission.

The searchable map also features properties that Preserve Orange County has identified as historically or culturally significant that have not yet been designated. This list includes hundreds of modern and late modern sites associated with the development that occurred after the Second World War that came to define Orange County.

The online map is an ongoing project – expanding to fill in gaps with neighborhoods, buildings and other items that should be recognized.

Visit [www.preserveorangecounty.org/interactive-map](http://www.preserveorangecounty.org/interactive-map). If you wish to recommend a site, please email Krista at [knicholds@preserveoc.org](mailto:knicholds@preserveoc.org).



We would like to announce our newest board member, **Jerrica Knight**, who has accepted the position of Marketing and Promotion.

*“Now that things are slowly opening up, we will be making efforts to boost our membership and overall engagement within the community. Please stay tuned!” - Jerrica*

**The Lionettes and Bertha plus The Orange Fire Department History will continue in the next newsletter, depending on how much flak I get about continuing with those topics again. - Editor**

**NOTE:** The O.C.H.S. Annual Dinner for **2021 has been canceled** because of COVID19 concerns. The Board of Directors thought it in the best interest of all concerned to postpone this year's event until January of **2022**. We hope things will be back to near normal then.

#### 2021 OCHS Board of Directors

- President - Jane Owens - [towens46@aol.com](mailto:towens46@aol.com)
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# OCHS MEMBERSHIP

Application for Membership Year **2022** (Membership Year covers January-December)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_



Please return application and check to:  
**Orange Community Historical Society**  
P.O. Box 5484, Orange, CA 92863-5484

OCHS is a 501(c)(3) organization, ID #33-0416234.  
Contributions are tax deductible to  
the fullest extent permitted by law.

## TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP (check one)

NEW

~~RENEWAL~~

(See the mailing label for when  
your membership expires)

Individual - \$20.00

Family - \$25.00

Life - \$300.00

Business/Organization - \$100.00

Donation - \$\_\_\_\_\_

Orange Community Historical Society Members enjoy: programs and newsletters, opportunities to support and contribute to the preservation of Orange history, contact with members of the community knowledgeable about Orange history, and discounts on OCHS merchandise.

## Our Mission

The mission of OCHS is to commemorate the rich heritage of our community. Our purpose is to collect photographs, written materials and related ephemera, promote research, events, activities and programs celebrating Orange history, and sponsor local history endeavors. We remain self-supporting through memberships, donation bequests and special projects.

We welcome everyone.

### LOCAL HISTORY QUESTIONS?

(714) 288-2465 | [history@cityoforange.org](mailto:history@cityoforange.org)

Check out the Orange Public Library's

Local History and 24/7 Reference Service

[www.cityoforange.org/library](http://www.cityoforange.org/library)

The City of Orange website provides a brief history of Orange, as well as demographics and contact information for schools, businesses and organizations in the area.

### ORANGE HISTORIC AFGHANS

Red & White or Green & White Afgans:

\$45.00 with Membership, \$55 without

If undeliverable please return to:

**ORANGE TRIBUNE**

Orange Community Historical Society

P.O. Box 5484

Orange, CA 92863-5484