



The Hourglass

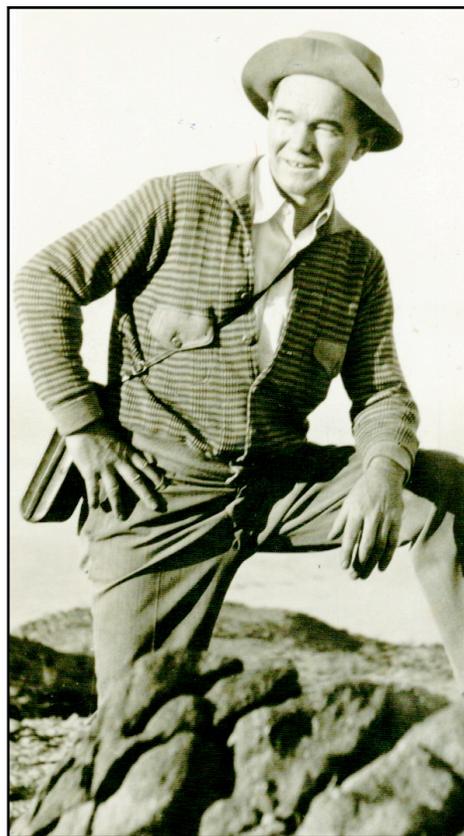
“A Natural Desert Rat”

Randall Henderson, eldest of the Henderson Brothers, published Desert Magazine and helped found Palm Desert.

Randall Thomas Henderson was a man not known in common hours. He truly marched to his own cadence, was a man of honor, had determination and mayhap was a tad stubborn.

He was the eldest of the four Henderson brothers. He and brother Cliff, the youngest bro, and of course, a few others, were instrumental in developing the idea of a new desert town.

As I was a child for most of the years that I knew this uncle, I don't recall a great deal about him. I am going to rely on his biography by his close pal, J. Wilson McKenny, who worked along side Randall in the newspaper/magazine business. The two of them spent many a time camping out in the rugged desert seeking and learning amazing secrets of this unique clime.



Randall Henderson, publisher of the original Desert Magazine, January 8, 1926.

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Event Calendar

**Grand Reopening
at the Firehouse**

On October 1st
10 AM to 3 PM

**Fall Luncheon
and Founder's Day**

Monterey Country Club,
Social on October 26th
11:30 AM

Coffee & Conversations

with Phillip Ferranti,
Portola Community Center
On October 28th at 7 PM

Firehouse Yard Sale

November 12 & 13

Coffee & Conversations

with Janice Lyle,
Portola Community Center
On November 18th at 7 PM

Art Appraisal Day

at the Firehouse,
November 19 at 10 AM

Museum Hours

10 AM to 3 PM
Monday, Wednesday,
Friday, Saturday

The Museum reopens on
Saturday, October 1, 2011

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

This has been a busy year and a busy summer. But first let me mention that we have recently lost some key people in our community: Eyvone Riddel, daughter of Randolph Henderson and long time manager of the college bookstore; Carl Bray, a long time painter and desert resident; and Ed Ruxton, husband of Adele Ruxton and a former teacher in the area. All passed away in the last few months.

Kim Housken, Madonna Marman and Barbara Eastes put on an excellent potluck again this summer. Again, the food was real homemade food and was it ever tasty and plentiful. If you have not made it to one of these pot lucks, you need to do make sure and allow for it next summer.

Don Graybill offered to become the vice-president and was unanimously elected by your board. Don is one busy guy that is always there to lend a hand. He is also working on becoming our webmaster.

We have got our lease updated with the city. The previous lease was written many years ago and the world has changed. In working with the city we also now have Stephen Aryan, assistant to the city manager, assigned as our working liaison to the city. It has

been a pleasure to work with Steve. Jean Benson is our council liaison and Bill Kroonen is our alternate council liaison.

Doug Hammer has taken over the reins of the "Fire Memories Museum." We have had some talks with him and he will be working with us on the fire display. They are putting together a new fire museum in the pass area.

Adele Sandman and her team have been busy getting materials ready for the yard sale. If you have anything you would like to donate, give us a call or drop it by.

Susan Marie Weber, Harry Quinn and Adele Sandman have been busy on our first try at inventory. They are changing the display in the 'barracks' and inventorying what is coming down and what is going up. This is a learning experience.

We recently met with DesertARC and will be hosting another art show for their clients this coming January. Last year was such a rewarding experience for us and for their clients.

Don't forget to check our web page www.hspd.org for events that are coming up. There is also a calendar on the web page with all of the latest events with dates and times.

Come join us for our fall opening on October 1.

—Brett Romer

The Mission and Purpose of the Historical Society of Palm Desert (HSPD)

To preserve, record and provide access to its historical collections.

To relate an on-going history of the City through exhibits, publications, media, programs and events.

To support, with volunteer efforts, activities sponsored through the Society and co-sponsorship with other private and public agencies.

HSPD is organized as a non-profit corporation that supports its mission and purposes in a responsible manner. The Society cares for the materials and pieces in its possession as unique and irreplaceable objects of local history and strives to protect and preserve its collections for posterity.

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Newsletter

Duchess Emerson, editor
Ty Davison, layout

Newsbits

Opening Day — October 1, Saturday

We will reopen this fall on Saturday the first of October. Adele and Anne are preparing some goodies to entice you to come down and get this year started off right. Also, we are always in need of docents to assist with the daily operation of the facility. Louise Neely is coordinating the docents and will be very happy to help you in preparing for this task. You can make contact with Louise through Anne at 760.346.6588.

Fall Luncheon and Founder's Day

This year we are combining the Fall Luncheon and Founder's Day. The event will be held at the Monterey Country Club on Monterey Avenue on October 26. Arrive about 11:30 AM to have some time to chat with the other in attendance before lunch is served. Barbara Keedy Eastes is pulling this event together. If you have any questions or if you want to make a reservation, call Anne at 760.346.6588. Parking is convenient at this location.

Coffee and Conversations—October 28

Phillip Ferranti will be our speaker. Philip has authored the all-time best-selling books in the valley: *75 Great Hikes in and Near Palm Springs* and *140 Great Hikes in and Near Palm Springs*. He has also authored the regional best-seller, *Colorado State Parks, A Complete Recreation Guide* and the nationally acclaimed book: *Hiking! The Ultimate Natural Prescription for Health & Wellness*.

Philip was the founder in 1992 of the desert's largest hiking club, The Coachella Valley Hiking Club. He has written for Backpacker Magazine, Health Magazine, and Bottom Line Tomorrow concerning outdoor/hiking topics.

Since 1992 Philip has helped organize and advised many hiking groups/clubs and personally conducted over 1500 guided hikes. He is available for public speaking and slide shows on local (and out-of-state hiking trips) and national hiking issues and trails.

Lecture is at the Portola Community Center and begins at 7 PM.

Firehouse Yard Sale

The Firehouse Yard Sale will occur on Saturday and Sunday, November 12 and 13. Adele Sandman and her trusty crew have been very busy getting things ready for this event. Judging by the amount of 'stuff' scattered about the firehouse and a stuffed container, this should be an outstanding sale. If you have anything to contribute, bring it down or give Anne a call at 760.346.6588. Also, we will need several more people to help out on this event. Please give Anne a call to volunteer to help out. We will be happy with whatever time you can give.

Coffee and Conversation—November 18

Our speaker this evening will be Janice Lyle, Director of the Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands. She has been very busy the last few years developing the visitor center for a new historic house museum on the Annenberg estate in Rancho Mirage, California. The first part of this project is slated to open this fall.

From the Sunnylands web page:

Sunnylands is scheduled to open in early 2012. Construction was completed on Sunnylands Center in 2011. Surrounded by a nine-acre garden, the new Center will offer exhibitions and audiovisual materials explaining the architectural history of the site, its art collections, its important visitors, the philanthropic legacy of the Annenbergs, and the ways in which all new work embraces an ethic of environmental sensitivity. In addition, there has been restoration and renovation of the historic estate. Completed in 1966, the house, designed by A. Quincy Jones, requires upgrades to make it accessible to the public and seismically stable. The infrastructure of the grounds is being carefully evaluated to include 21st-century technology while maintaining the property's cultural landscape.

Lecture is at the Portola Community Center and begins at 7 PM.

“A NATURAL DESERT RAT”
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Randall was born in Shenandoah, Iowa in April of 1888. Under the sign of Aries, astrologists would say he would be "by nature fiery, hot and dry—a natural desert rat." At age 19 he headed west to find his future, and did so by hopping an "empty but well used cattle car."

With various jobs, he worked his way through U.S.C. waiting table, washing dishes and painting houses. At SC he was the school welterweight wrestling champ, captained the varsity basketball squad, and served as student body president his senior year. He later said that the most important task of his student life was a part time job as a sports reporter for the *LA Times* where a fellow reporter advised him to become a country newspaperman. He worked small jobs here and there in Arizona learning the details of the newspaper trade. Within a year, he returned to Los Angeles to marry Vera Riopel who was the daughter of the painting contractor for whom he'd worked.

He went to Blythe and with a partner set up a print shop to publish the Blythe Herald. In 1918, Randall left to become a pilot for service in WWI. After the war, he and his partner bought the

Calexico Chronicle. Forward to 1937, when he and Mr. McKenny, his future biographer, launched *The Desert Magazine*. The two ended their partnership, but not their close friendship, two years later. Randall continued with his quite impressive magazine until 1958 when it was sold to another magazine publisher.

In time, he moved his magazine publishing quarters to Calexico and then El Centro. In late 1948 he made the final move to El Paseo Drive in the new little city of Palm Desert.

The buildings for *The Desert Magazine* were marvelous pueblo style—one housing the publishing plant with a desert art museum located just inside the entrance. The other building was for the employees as there was no housing available in the area at that time. (My cousin Evonne told me that the “help’s building was built around a large patio where their kids played and the laundry was hung out. Now it is the lovely restaurant, Jillian’s!”) The handsome new *Desert Magazine* plant was a terrific boon to the burgeoning little town.

In the many intervening years, Randall and Vera became parents to Randall Jr. (Rand) and Evonne; later Randall divorced Vera. At age 56, he returned

For Members Only

Free Notary Service

Susan Marie Weber, our Wednesday morning volunteer, is offering to provide FREE notary services to members only. To avail yourself of these services, you will need to call Anne Tuttle, 760.346.6588, and make a reservation. The reservations will be for Wednesday mornings only.

Having, in the recent past, needed a notary service I know how much this offer can mean. Thank you Susan Marie from the entire membership.

to military service, and was stationed in Africa in WWII. It was at this time that his son, Rand, lost his life in the Saipan campaign, killed by a Japanese sniper on the island of Tinian.

Randall and Rand were extremely close father and son through Rand's young years, and Randall had planned on Rand taking over the magazine. Quite literally, our whole family fell apart at his tragic loss.

Randall's daughter, Evonne, who recently passed away, was circulation manager of *Desert* for several years. In 1949 Randall married Cyria, a very well known and talented sculptress. (Cyria sculpted the wonderful bust of Eisenhower at the Palm Desert Community Church on Hwy 74. She also made an incredible one of my Dad which sits proudly in my home.)

The *Desert* art gallery housed THE most wonderful desert paintings. As a teenager, I spent hours there, literally amazed at the beauty of the art work. How did the artists catch the glorious hues of the desert? That art gallery was a very popular attraction for both desertos and visitors alike.

There is so much fascinating and eclectic history in Randall's biography, *Desert Editor*, telling of his endless desert experiences. He was a fearless adventurer—into hidden canyons with huge rocky drop offs to pools waaaay below, to a hidden oasis with endless kinds of cacti and palms. The glorious sunrises—which my Dad always called ROSY

It was at this time that his son, Rand, lost his life in the Saipan campaign....Quite literally, our whole family fell apart at his tragic loss.

FINGERED DAWNS—and the starry nights when it seems you can reach up and almost touch the stars, for me, two of the most moving experiences in the desert. I don't know if the *Desert Editor* by J. Wilson McKenney is available these days, but surely the local libraries must have copies. It is a must read for any true desert rat.

Randall passed away in 1970, but he is honored at the BLM Information Center up Hwy. 74. There is a lovely tribute to him with a posting of his:

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Mini-Muster

The Historical Society and our city fire service out of Station 33 under the direction and guidance of John and Madonna Marman is promising to be another outstanding event this year.

The schedule is:

- Sept 29 at Gerald Ford Elementary,
- Oct 4 at George Washington Charter,
- Oct 6 at James Carter Elementary,
- Oct 11 at Ronald Reagan Elementary,
- Oct 18 at Abraham Lincoln Elementary.

All activities run from 9 AM to about 1 PM.

If you have not been out to one of these events, you really must come out and see one. Even better is to come out and participate. We can always use some additional help. I am not sure who has more fun, the kids or the fire fighters. Anyway, it is a great activity, both for the learning and for the fun.

“A NATURAL DESERT RAT”
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

THERE ARE TWO DESERTS. One is a grim desolate wasteland. It is the home of venomous reptiles and stinging insects, of vicious thorn-covered plants and trees, and of unbearable heat. This is the desert seen by the stranger speeding along the highway, impatient to be out of ‘this damnable country.’

It is the desert visualized by those children of luxury to whom any environment is unbearable which does not provide all of the comforts and services of a pampering civilization. It is the concept of fiction writers who dramatize the tragedies of the desert country for the profit it will bring them.

But the stranger and the uninitiated see only the mask. The other desert—the real desert—is not for the eyes of the superficial observer, nor the fearful soul nor the cynic. It is a land whose character is hidden except to those who come with friendliness and understanding. To those the desert offers rare gifts; health giving sunshine, a night sky that is studded with diamonds, a breeze that bears no poison, a landscape of pastel colors such as no artist can duplicate, thorn-covered plants which during countless ages have clung tenaciously to life through heat and drought and wind and the depredations of thirsty animals, and yet each season send forth blossoms of exquisite coloring as a symbol of courage that has triumphed over terrifying obstacles.

To those who come to the desert with friendliness, it gives friendship. To those who come with courage, it gives strength of character. Those seeking relaxation find release from the world of man-made troubles. For those seeking beauty, the desert offers rarest artistry. This is the desert men and women learn to love.”

This was a man of steely resolve; an intense but somehow gentle demeanor; a very bright and driven soul. In every issue of *The Desert Magazine*— on the last page—my Uncle Randall wrote a column called JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME. I suspect that it often was a mirror into the soul of this amazing fellow—
Randall Henderson.

—Duchess Tomson Emerson

Obituaries *Notable Palm Desert lives remembered*

EVONNE HENDERSON RIDDELL, 1909-2011

Palm Desert has lost a long time friend of the desert, Evonne Henderson Riddell.

Evonne passed away peacefully in her home on April 20, 2011. She was one of the original residents of Palm Desert Community, having moved here with her family in 1948. She worked as circulation manager of her father, Randall T. Henderson's magazine *Desert*, for many years

in the '40s and '50s. She worked in the College of the Desert bookstore from in 1961 until she retired in 1970.

Evonne was a devoted mother to her son, Randy, and her daughter, Jeanne. She loved to travel, was an avid reader, and an extremely loyal and compassionate friend.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to the Palm Desert Historical Society.

ED RUXTON, 1921-2011

Ed was born July 18, 1921 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Edward and Ada (Fisher) Ruxton. He passed away August 14, 2011 in Rancho Mirage, California.

Ed moved to California at age 6 and lived in Los Angeles and Whittier. He graduated from Garfield High School and Whittier College with post studies at Claremont College. He taught elementary school in Los Angeles and later served as Superintendent/Principal in Olancho, CA.

In 1956 he located to the Coachella Valley where he took on the responsibilities of Teacher, Principal and Superintendent. After some 36 years as an Educator, he retired from the Coachella Valley Unified School District to become involved in many volunteer activities, among these, Docent at the Living Desert for the next 23 years.

Edward was a veteran of WWII; he was drafted in 1942, inducted into the Army at Fort MacArthur, sent to Great Britain, France and Germany and was in Germany when the treaty was signed. He was later discharged at Lompoc, CA (Camp Cook) as Sgt. First Class Edward Ruxton.

He returned to Whittier to resume his studies and graduated a year late, but a part of the class of 1943. Ed lived in the Coachella Valley for 55 years and spent 47 years in Indian Wells. He built his home in 1964 and watched the many changes in the area, especially the formation of the city and the influx of people to the desert. He also, during that same year, married Adele

(Curtiss), a Kindergarten Teacher at Oasis School and between the two, when they weren't teaching, they traveled the world, sharing many of their adventures with others upon their return.

He was a long time member of the CA Retired Teachers Assn., serving in many capacities, including President of the local Division #43.

He liked history and math and loved to recount the early days when he first arrived in the valley. He was an avid photographer, loved anything on four wheels (Porsches, especially), and devoted much time and effort to causes concerning the education of children. He was on board at the beginning of Headstart, coordinating and directing programs for the preschoolers throughout the valley as well as taking on the responsibility of teaching adults to read and write English.

Ed died very peacefully of complications associated with Alzheimer's disease. Thank you to his caregivers at home, the staff at Eisenhower Five Star Club, his doctors, Fire Station #55 in Indian Wells, the special group at Mesquite Manor, where he spent his last days, and many friends who stopped to visit him.

Edward is survived by his wife, Adele. His ashes are interred at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier beside his mother and father. Memorial donations may be made to Eisenhower Five Star Club, Living Desert, IW Historic Preservation Foundation, CA Retired Teachers Assn., Division #43-Scholarship Program, Whittier College or a charity of choice.

CARL BRAY, 1917-2011

Carl Bray, one of the last of the early desert artists, died on July 23, 2011 in Banning. He was 94.

From "Carl Bray: Grandpa Moses of the Desertlands" by Ann Japenga:

"Carl Glen Bray was born in the Ozarks, and never lost his slight Okie inflection and warm country manner. Add a turquoise bolo tie and other Taos touches, and you have an amalgam style....

He came to Indio in 1936 and got a job on the Southern Pacific railroad, working as a switchman, brakeman, herder...and just about every other thing. He started painting on the job.

Carl and (wife) Luella bought a plot of land along the highway in Indian Wells in 1953 for \$1,000. He built his home there, reinforcing the pumice stone walls with discarded steel from the Indio railyard and hauling in stones from Berdoo canyon for the two-sided fireplace. He and Luella raised four kids in that home. Carl sold the gallery in 1999 and moved to Banning."

Information about Carl's life and his work can be found at <http://www.californiadesertart.com/?p=29> and at <http://www.californiadesertart.com/?p=993>.

Business Supporters

We would like to recognize our business supporters and encourage our membership to support these local businesses. When you visit these businesses, please let them know that you appreciate their support of our Historical Society.

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