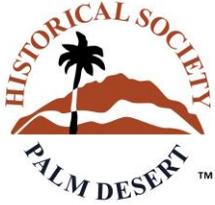


HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT



The Hourglass



Editor Bob Tyler

Fall 2020

Interview with Ron Garcia as told to Bob Tyler, September 23, 2020

I was born in San Antonio, Texas, in 1950. My parents were Richard and Aurora Garcia, I have an older brother and three sisters. My family moved to the old village of Indian Wells when I was one year old. At that time, my father had a landscaping and gardening business and we lived across the highway from the “Ideal Mobile Home Park” in a small cabin north of Highway 111. We lived there for about two years, and then moved over to a little house on Clancy Lane, off Rio Del Sol. The property where we lived was part of the Martin Ranch, which was right on Clancy Lane just across the street from the Allred’s property. At that time Clancy Lane was all orchards, dates, grapes, citrus, everyone had horses and we all had great fun. I have wonderful memories from that time.

Later, after we moved away, the house and ranch became Hawthorne Christian School. Amazingly, our little house was still there until five or six years ago. After we left Clancy Lane, my dad bought a house on Carmel Circle, in what was then Palm Village, and then I walked to school every day. I played Little League baseball from an early age, I was on Palm Desert Peewee’s, then Palm Desert Rotary, so I played baseball every summer until my senior year in high school. I played catcher, and I was the catcher for Art and Sammy Montoya, Mr. Montoya was one of our coaches. Whenever they were playing, I was right there with them. I can remember getting hit in the nose a few times by Art Montoya’s darned fast ball, I’ve been hit more than a few times with a fast ball. Jerry Frost was a pitcher, too, I caught for all the pitchers: Art Montoya, Sammy Montoya, Jerry Frost, Jim Snedeker, Mike Hill, Raymond Ward, Dick Hartley and Allen Bledsoe. Mr. Montoya and Wayne Purves were our coaches.



Top row L-R, Robin Barrett, (unknown), Sammy Montoya, Ron Garcia, Scott Barrett. Bottom row L-R, Lee Barrett, Art Montoya, Allan Rogers

I left baseball after I went to Colts, that was the highest-level team that I played on. When I went to Indio High School I rode a motorcycle, a 150 Suzuki, which was a two stroke so I had to mix the gas and oil together. I called it ole smokey ‘cause the oil came out the tailpipe, and anyone who was riding behind me got coated with oil. We used to ride all the

way to Indio in the Whitewater wash, my bike wasn't really a dirt bike, but I turned it into one! Then I graduated from a Suzuki to a Harley-Davidson, and had a Harley ever since then. I had a 2011 Harley Rocker, a custom bike I built when I retired from the fire department.

I graduated from Indio High School early in 1968 and told my dad that I wanted to go into the military, so he took me to Riverside 'cause there weren't any recruiters down here. The recruiter's office in Riverside was in a strip mall, and there were recruiters there for Air Force, Navy, Marines and Army. My father had been in the Navy, but when I saw a poster of a C-130 with a guy jumping out and holding on to his parachute, I thought yeah, that's me! And so I joined the Army. They sent me to Fort Ord for basic training, then to Fort Benning, Georgia for jump school, then on to Fort Campbell, Kentucky and from there they flew us all to Vietnam.

We first landed in Bien Hoa, South Vietnam which was the orientation center for everyone coming into Vietnam. I was part of the 101st airborne, and it all went really fast, they separated us, you go here and you go there. Then we had a two-week training program where we did maneuvers out in the field, and after that they issued us our gear. I got an M-60 machinegun and a 45 sidearm, there were three of us and they shipped us out to a landing zone. We got there at night, as I recall just as the sun was going down, I remember that I had no idea where I was, there was jungle all around. I almost had to rappel down out of the helicopter, but then we jumped out. I met my sergeant that night, and right after that we all jumped into a foxhole where I set up my machinegun with its tripod, and thirty minutes later we got hit by mortars. If you've never heard a mortar coming in, it makes a weird whistling sound, I'd never heard anything like that before. My sergeant started yelling GET DOWN! GET DOWN! Mortar shells were landing all around us, "Welcome to Vietnam!" Within 30-45 minutes our entire 3rd platoon was almost wiped out. I remember one guy we carried out in a plastic stretcher, we loaded him up into a chopper and they medivacked him out of there. That was my introduction to Vietnam.

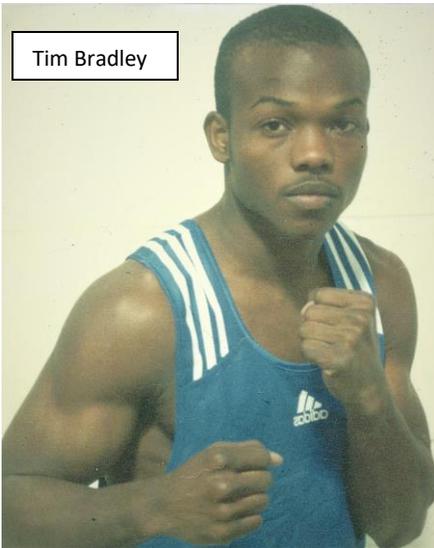


Vietnam @ 1969, Ron Garcia on right

After I completed my eighteen months of duty I was sent to Fort Carson, Colorado for a program to get ready for civilian life. When I was at Fort Carson I joined the Army boxing team there, while I was at Fort Carson all I did was box. I trained every morning, and we went to Denver and boxed against the Marine Corps team, then we boxed against the Air Force Academy team that was at Colorado Springs.

At one time I was living in Los Angeles and working out at the Main Street Gym in downtown LA, I trained there and I thought I was pretty good. My dad and my uncle were trainers there, I even had white boxing shoes like Mohammad Ali. I was movin' around and hitting the heavy bag, and then a guy came over to me and said "that guy over there in the green trunks wants to know if you'd like to spar with him?" I didn't know who he was, and so I said OK, sure! So we started sparring, and he hit really hard, he hit me with some very hard body shots, and I thought uh oh, this guy's a professional. Then I found out it was Roberto Duran. I wasn't the kind of fighter who'd just stand there, I had good foot work and I moved well, but Duran hit really hard, as I learned.

Later, here in Palm Desert, I started my own boxing club, it was actually in my garage and I trained kids to box. What happened was that Sammy Montoya's dad was a volunteer Sheriff's deputy, and I knew some of the local deputies, so I started a youth diversion program in 1976. So the Sheriff's deputies and kids would come to my house and learn boxing, and since I knew boxing, and my dad had been a fighter, I set up a bag, bought boxing gloves, and had a ring with ropes, so I had my Ringside Boxing Club where I taught kids to box. Later, my Ringside Boxing Club became too big for my garage,



and so it turned into Cathedral City Boxing Club off Perez Road. I've had five professional champion boxers in my club: Adam Carrera, Adrian Aleman, Chiquita Bombita, Louisa Cervantes, and Timothy Bradley. Tim Bradley was with me for seven years, but then his dad took him to Coachella Boxing Club. So in 2012 when I retired, I retired my boxing club, I said that's it, so now the only person I train is my daughter. Jose Rodarte asked me to open up a boxing club in Thousand Palms, but I told him no, I'm just not into it anymore.

When I got out of the Army, I worked for the post office here in Palm Desert. I can remember Marian Henderson, my dad was involved with her organization Desert Beautiful, and he worked at the Palm Desert post office, the one at Portola and El Paseo. I also worked at that post office as a clerk and a mail carrier, back then you had to box your own mail. I was a part-time mail carrier, and then I moved up to a full-time carrier. I was what was called a T-6, so I substituted for anyone who couldn't work, I'd take their route, and then I got my own route which was Avenue of the States at Palm Desert Country Club, and I walked all those streets. I also installed a lot of the blue mail boxes you see along the streets, I was in charge of installing those, so I'd drill the holes and anchor them in, that was after I got back from Vietnam in 1972 or '73. After that I worked at Eisenhower Hospital for about five years, they sent me to school in Pennsylvania to service autoclaves, so I learned how to fit and silver-solder steam pipes for the sterilizers. I went to the Police Academy in Whittier and worked as a police officer, then joined the Cathedral City Fire Department, and worked as an EMT as well as a code enforcement officer. I did a lot of multitasking! I also worked as a contract police officer in Desert Hot Springs, and from there I worked for Rancho Mirage as a code enforcement officer.

Ron Garcia

Ed. Note: Ron is happily retired from a long career as a public servant and is still living in the desert.

HSPD MISSION STATEMENT

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

President's Letter

Happy Autumn Everyone! I am excited to announce that our "Friday Night Lecture Series" starts up this month on October 23rd. Due to our houseguest that has completely overstayed its welcome, Covid-19, we will be replaying previously recorded lectures on our brand-new YouTube Channel – details will follow soon and will be announced via email and on related Facebook Group posts. We will be kicking off the first in the series with Luke Leuschner's "History of Silver Spur Ranch."

We have a Fall Membership drive happening right now. If you know of someone who would enjoy being part of an incredible group of Palm Desert History Loving and Preserving folks, please let them know about us and hopefully they

will consider joining and supporting us – everyone is welcome whether they live here or not. Please go to www.HSPD.org and hit the “Join” button.

Also, I’d like to share a little history in the making. Beginning on October 1 and continuing until February 8, 2021, all qualified Female Scouts who have ranked up are eligible to go before an Eagle Board of Review. Having an Inaugural Class like this prevents any one person from claiming they are the first Female Eagle Scout. All Female Scouts who successfully pass their Boards within those two dates are part of the Inaugural Class. Having gone through the backstory, I am proud to announce that a Scout from our HSPD Chartered Troop 1973 has already handily attained a spot in that Inaugural Class! Congratulations Emma for passing your Eagle Board!

Hope to see you all soon. Stay safe!

Rob Pitchford

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In Memoriam

Rose Mary (Hencheck) Romer passed away at home on October 12, 2020. She was married to Brett Romer on 12/28/1963. She has one son Eric Romer (wife Roxane) who lives here in the desert and a granddaughter Brittany Romer who also lives in the desert. She was a life member of the Historical Society of Palm Desert and loved meeting with visitors to the museum and sharing the history of Palm Desert with them. A celebration in her name has not yet been planned.

Archivist’s Report

October is Archives Month! Go to the National Archives website at <https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/american-archives-month> to learn more. The month is typically celebrated with fairs, displays and activities that raise awareness about the importance of keeping history alive.

Bylaws Update

The Board has authorized two changes to the Bylaws to go before the membership for a vote. In the past, the membership would receive Bylaws changes by mail and then vote on the changes at the Annual Meeting in the Fall. This year we will still be mailing notice of changes to the membership but calling for a mail-in vote instead. The changes are: eliminate references to a Past President and reduce the number of Board members from 19 to 15. Look for your packet in November, which will include text of the proposed changes, the Board’s reasons to bring them before you, and a mail-in ballot.

Membership Update

The Board has voted to change the membership year from annually on the anniversary of joining, to annually at the HSPD's fiscal year, which is July 1 – June 30. This change will help our all-volunteer Board keep up with the administrative duties of membership renewals. Between August and next May members whose year is up will be offered the option of a pro-rated dues amount to continue their membership. Then in June of next year everyone will receive a membership dues reminder at the same time, for the following fiscal year. If you have any questions, please email to hspd.firehouse@gmail.com.

Advertising in The Hourglass

Advertising space is available in The Hourglass to current HSPD Business Members at the following rates: ¼ page \$25, ½ page \$50, full page \$75. Rates subject to change. The Editor reserves the right to accept or reject an ad based on its suitability for publication in The Hourglass. Revenue from the ads will be used to offset the cost of newsletter publication and to further the mission of the HSPD.

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