

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



Wolf Store

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Our mission is identifying,
preserving and promoting the his-
toric legacy of the Temecula valley.

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Temecula, the proposed Branson of the West

By Rebecca Marshall Farnbach

In the November 1995 election in Temecula, residents of our six-year-old community voted in favor of making Old Town Temecula into a Western music destination some dubbed "the Branson of the West", referring to a small town in Missouri, a hub where well known musicians have performance theaters. In a hotly contested vote the proposal for the development of the music venue, presented as Proposition B, won by a forty-six-vote margin of the 8,146 votes cast. While some of us thought the proposal would encourage business and tourism, other voters voiced concerns about increased traffic. There were others who stood stalwartly against growth of enterprises or in population in Temecula at the time.

Even after Proposition B won by a narrow margin, the Temecula City Planning Department could not satisfactorily solve the traffic question, so Zev Buffman, who proposed the music destination, left town to develop other theatrical concepts in other venues.

We didn't fully appreciate or understand who Mr. Zev Buffman was when he came to town. Most of us saw him as a slick promoter with an objective to feed his pockets and to create havoc on our streets. For many years, and even to this day, Buffman and his dream are laughed at, and belittled.

In reading his recent obituary, he died in Seattle in May 2020 from pancreatic cancer, I found new appreciation for this man who wanted to promote something wonderful in Temecula.

He was born Ze'ev Bufman in Tel Aviv, Israel in 1930. His parents immigrated there from Ukraine. Ze've means "wolf" in Hebrew. Ze've's father Mordechai owned two cinemas in Tel Aviv where Ze've first learned to love performing arts. As a young boy he also gained an understanding of English as well as other languages by listening to the onscreen dialogue.

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

As Ze've grew to manhood, he served in the Israel Defense Forces during the 1948 War of Independence. He later served as an entertainer to the Israeli troops in the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War. In 1951 he came to the US as a drama student named Zev Buffman, changing his last name from Bufman, which was pronounced "Boofman".

He landed some acting roles, including those of two slave characters in Cecil B. DeMille's "Ten Commandments". At some point in production of the film Zev caught DeMille's attention by pointing out that one of the signs in the movie was written in the Hebrew of the present day and not as it would have been 2000 years before.

Eventually Zev transitioned from actor to producer. He owned the Hollywood Dinner Theater and then went to New York where he produced more than forty shows on Broadway. He worked with many well-known stars including Liz Taylor who became a close friend. He owned or managed performing arts venues in Miami, Chicago, and New Orleans.

Zev said his favorite production of all times was the musical "Oklahoma" and that it reminded him of his early life among the settlers in the fledgling new nation of Israel. Maybe that is why he liked Temecula and envisioned something special for our town that at the time had a population of about 45,000. Temecula was a place where people came to follow their dreams in an open space full of opportunities.

While Buffman lived in La Cresta, he chose Old Town Temecula as the location for his Western music capital. Specifically, he envisioned a music pavilion as a focal point on the knoll at the west end of Main Street with access from the street level by stairs. His \$65 million dollar project was to be partially financed from public bonds. It would include a 4,800-seat outdoor arena for rodeos and Wild West Shows, an opera house, two cabarets,

two virtual reality pavilions, a hotel, and a plaza with retail and restaurants.

When the project failed in Temecula, he pitched a proposal to the City of Murrieta to build RogersDale U.S.A. in the Golden Triangle at the junction of Interstates 15 and 215. It was to be a joint project with the family of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans who planned to move away from Victorville where their museum had diminishing attendance.

Taking the lead from the Temecula decision, the City of Murrieta also did not welcome the project. Buffman moved to Palm Springs and then on to Florida where he successfully invested in multiple prestigious entertainment venues before eventually retiring on Whidbey Island in Washington State. The Rogers/Evans Family made a successful move to Branson, Missouri.

I am not quite sure what happened following the successful vote for Zev's proposed music destination and its failure to materialize. I would like to know more about it. If any readers know the full story of what happened at the city planning department level, please inform me by sending an email to: sunbrook@hotmail.com.

After learning more about Zev and his background and experience, I feel apologetic that we didn't give him a chance to build his dream in Temecula. Could it have caused any worse traffic congestion than we have now? Would the tourists to the music center be worse than the weekend midnight crowd in Old Town today?

Rest in peace, Zev. Thank you for loving Temecula. I am sorry you didn't get a chance to develop your dream for us here.

Rebecca is a member of the Temecula Valley Historical Society and is an author and coauthor of several history books about the Temecula area. The books are available for purchase at the Little Temecula History Center, or online from booksellers, and at: www.temeculahistory.org.

Membership News

Welcome new member:
Melissa Wade

Thank you for renewing your membership:

Max Cantu
Kathleen Casas
J. D. Chinaeff & Lisa Woodward
Suzanne Dechert
Martin Dinsenhacher
Ralph & Betsy Domanski
Tom & Michele Elling
Rod & Charlene Fink
Tom Frew
Sandy Helzer
Jack & Penny Houston
Pat & Annette Jennings
Mary K. Lavezzari
John & Bonnie Martland
Sandra Neal
William & Claudia Perozzi
Scott & Lynne Sanders
Bill & Elizabeth Veale

President's Message Volunteer Appreciation

March 9 the Temecula Valley Historical Society opened the doors of the Little Temecula History Center and welcomed more than 30 current and future volunteers to our inaugural Volunteer's Open House on a beautiful Saturday morning.

The weather was perfect, the setting unique, an altruistic vibe inspiring, with the camaraderie and entertaining conversation a huge bonus that day.

In addition to experiencing what third grade students studying local history see, hear and touch during their engaging visits to the property, a number of 'Notable Men and Women', our re-enactors troupe, introduced themselves to the group in character as a delicious lunch was enjoyed by all.

The Historical Society board is so appreciative to all who share our vision and passion to inform and enlighten local residents and visitors alike about the amazing historical significance of the Temecula Valley.

Another open house will be held later this year. Please plan to attend with family, friends and your neighbors to meet our dedicated members while learning a bit about the Temecula Valley Historical Society and the fun, rewarding opportunities volunteering with us present.

Events Calendar

Every Sunday - 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
"Sunday Funday"

Family fun, entertainment, and vendor market.
Antique store is open, and train rides for kids.

Little Temecula History Center is open noon to 5

Every Tuesday - 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Vail Headquarters Farmer's Market

Friday, April 5 - 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Herrkooled VW club Meet-up

Saturday, April 6 - 2 ap.m. to 6 p.m.
Crafthouse Presents - Kidchella

Saturday, April 7 - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
School of Rock

Friday, April 12 - 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Mars by Maya Presents Desert Daze

Sunday, April 14 - noon to 5 p.m.
Misfits Made Blooming Vibes

Friday, April 19 - 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Herrkooled VW club Meet-up

Friday, April 12 - 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Mars by Maya Presents Moonlight Market

Sunday, April 28 - 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Catalina De Robles Blood Drive

Volunteer!!

We are looking for:

A History Center greeter on Sundays.

Vail Headquarters greeter on Sundays &/or Tuesdays

Help at our Antique Store on Sundays &/or Tuesdays

Assistance with 3rd grade field trips at Vail Headquarters and History Center

Portray a historical person from Temecula's past

Scan publications to create digital documents

If interested, please email us at:

info@temeculahistory.org

100 Years Ago in Temecula

From the Lake Elsinore Valley Press, Temecula Gossip Column — April 1924

April 10, 1924

McSweeney Brothers, recognized throughout Southern California as the leading potato growers of this section are planting six hundred acres to potatoes this season. This acreage is somewhat reduced from that planted last year, but still constitutes a large portion of the rich bottom land leased from the Vail brothers by the McSweeneys. Spuds planted earlier in the season are coming up nicely and according to reports are in excellent condition as a result of recent rains.

Rainfall in this district is reported to be over ten inches for the season. Farmers are now optimistic over the crop prospects because of the excellent condition of the ground. Rains have been frequent but not so heavy as to pack the soil thus leaving it in a moist mellow condition.

Constable Jack Roripaugh of Temecula has issued an order to all stock and dog owners to keep stock confined and dogs chained up. These orders were issued as a precautionary measure against foot and mouth disease. While no cases have broken out here the heavy stock interests of this section warrant every precaution possible.

Due to quarantine regulations John Lundy, whose ranch lies across the line in San Diego County, was not allowed to move a recent consignment of baby chicks. Not daunted by such obstacles in his ambition to become a successful poultry man, Lundy has started a temporary chicken ranch in Temecula until such time as he can move his flock.

Friends of Mr. and Mrs. A.F. Nienke are glad to hear that Mrs. Nienke who has been ill for some time is improving under the compe-

tent care of Mrs. L.C. Jennings, a trained nurse of Elsinore. Mrs. J.H. Watts who has been visiting friends here for some time left for her home at Baldwin Park Thursday.

The four room cottage of Ray Thomas and Mr. Joy, recently under construction on their ranch, is now completed, and they are now building a water tank and pumping plant and planning other improvements.

George Kemphefener is making some improvements on his dairy ranch near Murrieta Hot Springs. George is a progressive rancher and believes in having things first class.