



# GROUNDBREAKER

[www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org)

Third Quarter 2016

Volume 10 Number 3

## President's Message

*Richard B. Rothwell*



I bring you good news about our Reckless monument project. The statue arrived on July 8 and is residing temporarily in a Camp Pendleton warehouse. We owe a special thanks to Mr. Fred Smith, a former Marine and current CEO of FedEx, whose company delivered Reckless without charge.

Camp Pendleton has approved our installation plans and construction of the monument base is scheduled to begin on Aug. 29. Dedication is tentatively set for Oct. 26, 2016. Our partner, Robin Hutton, and CPHS are excited about this progress and look forward to seeing many of you there.

CPHS assisted with the completion of the cannon refurbishment project aboard Camp Pendleton. CPHS funded the purchase of two replacement wheels for the cannon that Major General Joseph H. Pendleton brought back from his 1920s service in Nicaragua.

The cannon has occupied a place of honor at the Ranch House for many years and had become damaged by weather. Marines of the 1st Marine Logistics Group, led by Corporal Shawn O'Kane, performed the ironwork. CPHS Director Mike Lewis played a significant role the project. Well done, Mike!

Welcome aboard to our newest

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## The flower fields of Rancho Santa Margarita

*By Bill Parsons*



Flower fields aboard Camp Pendleton in 1985. Photo courtesy of the CPEN Archives

***Did you know today's iconic Flower Fields at Carlsbad, located just east of, and clearly visible from, the I-5 between the Palomar Airport Road and Canon Road exits, actually got their very public start as part of a rich tradition of farming and ranching on Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores?***

It began in 1921 when Luther Gage moved south to Carlsbad from Montebello, California. An experienced flower grower, Luther started his farm next door to Frank Frazee where he began to grow and propagate freesia, anemone and gladiolus plants and flowers.

A short time later, Luther had a chance to buy ranunculus seeds. This would lead him to open a business called Luther Gage Giant Tecolote Ranunculus Bulbs. The ranunculus is native to Asia Minor and a member of the buttercup family of flowers. As Luther's flower business grew, he

hired Frank's brother, Earl Frazee, as his foreman.

The Frazee family had been longtime local farmers well versed in the plant growing dos and don'ts of the region. Earl's young nephew, Edwin, helped his uncle and Luther with the business. Ultimately, Edwin began to focus his attention on the unusual ranunculus. Soon Earl became Luther's business partner and in the mid-1930s bought the business from him. Luther would remain in Carlsbad becoming a leading, and long time, promoter and advocate of the city.

Fire would destroy Frank Frazee's farm near the Agua Hedionda Lagoon and he moved his operation north to Oceanside where he restarted anew. In addition to his other crops, Frank started planting ranunculus. Edwin, still a teenager, moved with his family and continued to learn all about the skills needed in seeding,

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# Continued front page, Flower fields



cultivating and watering of the flower. At 16 Edwin left school to devote his time to his father's farm and the ranunculus.

Edwin became quite experienced, and accomplished, at propagating the flower. Over the years, using the techniques he had taught himself, he developed superior bulbs with more colorful and healthier flowers. Eventually, because other growers were unable to keep up, Edwin became the only commercial grower of ranunculus flowers in the United States. Still, ranunculus weren't the only flower Edwin grew in his fields. He became a first rate grower of gladiolus which only added to the extraordinary colors of the fields where his flowers grew.

In March 1938 Rancho Santa Margarita announced plans to open up 2000 acres as farmland along Highway 101 near Stuart (in the area today of Camp Pendleton's main gate). The first 800 acre parcel had already been leased to vegetable and bulb growers. The acreage would be part of a larger plan to open up large tracts of land for farming and future development. The plan also included piping water from the Santa Margarita River which would serve both sides of the highway (Oceanside News, March 24, 1938). It was during this time the Frazee family expanded their flower fields to Rancho Santa Margarita where Edwin continued to improve his ranunculus bulbs and flowers.

During spring months the beautiful, vibrant colors along the Coast Highway were an instant tourist attraction with people traveling between Los Angeles and San Diego. They would stop at the side of the road to take pictures and grab a handful of flowers for a personal bouquet. At one point Edwin and his workers were spending more time stopping tourist from helping themselves to his flowers than working the fields.

In 1942, the Marines moved on to what is today MCB Camp Pendleton. It was during this time that World War II, and then Korea began to monopolize the hearts and

minds of our nation. A sad result was that the fields at Santa Margarita y Las Flores began to lose their luster. The land's mission was changing rapidly and drastically to something other than farming. Still, Edwin continued to work his trade and had become a well-respected, highly sought after counselor in the nationwide flower growing community. Eventually though he realized he probably should, and could, find a better location to grow his flowers.



Ranunculus flower.

Around the mid-1950s Edwin decided the flowers would be more prolific in sandy, well-drained soil with a mild climate. Once again he expanded his operation; this time to the Ponto region of Carlsbad. The fields were now even closer to Highway 101; more accessible to the tourists. With the increased population and traffic, the fields once again became an instant and very popular attraction.



Ranunculus flower.

Finally, in 1965 Edwin's growing operation would move, one last time, to its' present location east of the I-5 corridor. The flower growing season has become an annual regional event with tourists from around the world and school children from throughout the region coming to the fields every day to play, to walk in the fields and enjoy the beauty of the ranunculus, the gladiolus and the sweet peas.

In 2004 Edwin Frazee passed away. In his wake, Edwin left a public legacy that will not be surpassed. The Fields are iconic of not only the City of Carlsbad, but the entire region and the farming nature of the area. It's a legacy begun by the pioneers who settled here and passed on to those who continue to honor the flower fields today.

Aware of the gaps in the story's timeline, if you have information to help fill in those details, please contact me at [cphs\\_info@yahoo.com](mailto:cphs_info@yahoo.com).

*I wish to thank The Flower Fields Foundation's and their essay, "History of the Flower Fields", and Pat Humphrey's and her essay, "Luther Gage – Visionary" both were frequently referred to for facts about the flower fields.*

# Refurbishment of General Pendleton's cannon

By Mike Lewis

Since last reported in the previous edition of the Groundbreaker, the refurbishment of Gen. Pendleton's cannon has been completed.

As previously reported, Maj. Glen Tedtaotao, Commanding Officer, Ordnance Maintenance Company, 1st Marine Logistics Group (1st MLG) eagerly took on the refurbishment project. Cpl. Shawn O'Kane, a machinist from Engineer Maintenance Company, 1st MLG, who was particularly interested and excited to work on the cannon, was designated as the primary lead in this project.

During the last four months, which encompassed over 150 hours of labor, Cpl. O'Kane and his Marines painstakingly and expertly removed over 22 years of wear and deterioration caused by the Southern California environmental and weather conditions. The results of their sustained efforts was a professional refurbishment of this important artifact.

Besides the work on the cannon, the cannon wheels from the 1994 refurbishment were in such poor condition they had to either be reconditioned, refurbished, or replaced with new wheels. Relying on the expertise of a local craftsman, Andy Brochu, a retired U.S. Army helicopter pilot, was enlisted in this refurbishment effort. Andy has been studying to become a wheelwright professional, specializing in turning different types of cannon, cart, and wagon wheels into new wheels. Andy took on the task of refurbishing the cannon wheels to a like new condition, however, due to the significant deterioration of the existing cannon wheels, the cannon wheels had to be replaced.

Andy fully researched the historically accurate replacement cannon wheels and contacted a specialized company that makes the required replacement wheels. Through his diligent efforts, and with funding provided

by the Camp Pendleton Historical Society, the Gen. Pendleton cannon now has new wheels.

Through the diligent efforts of many, the CPHS is specifically grateful to Major Tedtaotao, Cpl. O'Kane, and Andy Brochu for their collective and enthusiastic efforts in expertly completing this refurbishment task. The General Pendleton cannon is now in considerably better condition due to the efforts of these professionals; let's hope it's another 20+ years before we need to tackle this daunting task again!



Andy Brochu and Cpl. Shawn O'Kane stand by the completed cannon at the Ordnance Maintenance Company on July 6. Photo by Mike Lewis



The refurbished cannon at the MCI-West Change of Command on July 15. Photo by Deb Hellman



Check out the CPHS facebook page for a video of Cpl. Shawn O'Kane, USMC who led the efforts in refurbishing Gen. Pendleton's cannon. The video was produced by the Public Affairs Office, 1st MLG.

# Artifact Donation - 35mm slides

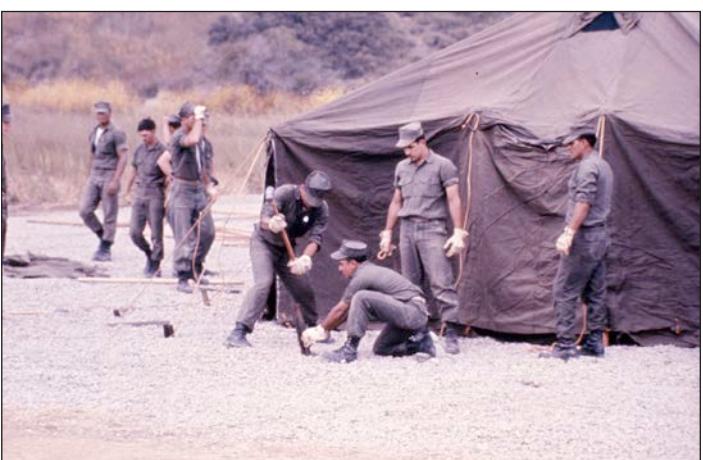
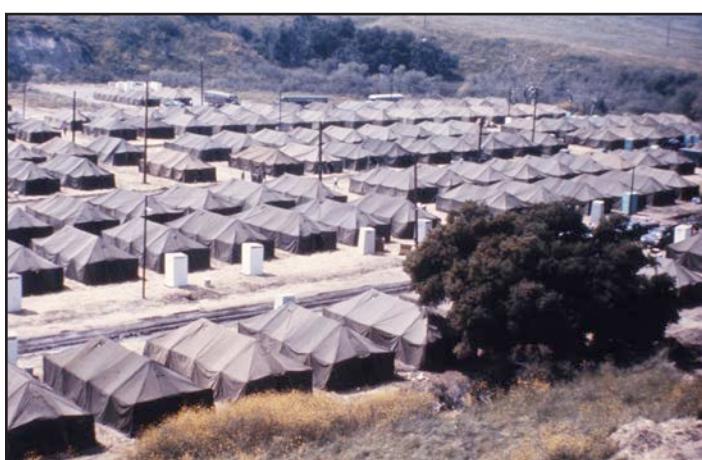


In late-April 2016, the Archives Section, History-Museum Branch was the recipient of a treasure-trove of invaluable archival materials in the form of color 35mm slides, courtesy of the Base Energy Section, Facilities Maintenance Department.

The 400+ slides, discovered in storage boxes, were of the various Vietnamese refugee camps, built and operated aboard Camp Pendleton in the April - October 1975 time period. Before this donation, the extent of photographic materials the Archives Section had of this significant operation were in the form of black and white prints only.

Thanks to Energy Section for their historical awareness in ensuring that these 35mm slides were transferred to the Base Archives.

The images shown reflect the construction of the Vietnamese refugee camps and in use in 1975. Images courtesy of the CPEN Archives.



## 75-Year Anniversary of the Dedication of Camp Pendleton

The Camp Pendleton 75th Anniversary Working Group, including a representative from CPHS, had met a number of times in May 2016 and proposed, debated, and refined concepts/ideas which included exhibits starting in April 2017 culminating with a week of observances and celebrations in September 2017.

Proposed events include a celebratory family and community event, ceremonial troop movement, flag raising at the site of the 1942 base dedication, and an evening colors ceremony; there was also discussion about the level of VIP involvement (POTUS, National/State/Local Elected Officials, Rancho Families, former Base Commanding

Generals and Sergeants Major, etc.)

Proposed concepts were briefed to the Base Commanding General in early June but no final decision has been made as to what actual events will occur during 2017; that final decision will rest with the new incoming Base Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Kevin Killea.

# MCIWEST-MCB Camp Pendleton Change of Command

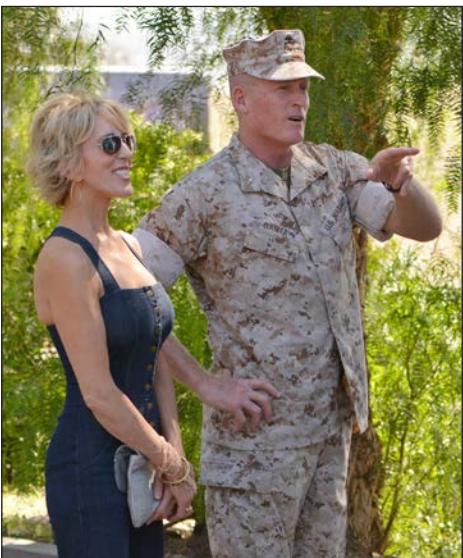


Gen. Ted Banta addressees the guests at the Change of Command on July 15 at the Ranch House . Photos by Deb Hellman

On July 15 Brigadier General Edward Banta relinquished command of Marine Corps Installations West-Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton to Brigadier General Kevin Killea at Cannon Court at the historic Ranch House complex.

General Banta commanded MCIWEST-MCB Camp Pendleton for the past two years; during his tenure, he and his wife, Molly, have both been staunch advocates of the Base History-Museums programs as well as ardent supporters of the CPHS; thanks to General and Mrs. Banta for their sustained enthusiasm and support; fair winds and following seas as you take on your next challenging assignment.

Welcome aboard to General and Mrs. Killea to Camp Pendleton - your CPHS looks forward to meeting with you and supporting your vision in preserving and promoting the extensive Camp Pendleton history.



**Above:** Gen. Ted and Molly Banta before the Change of Command ceremony.

**Right:** Gen. Kevin and Kathleen Killea at the Change of Command reception.



## Camp Pendleton Facts:

Did you know that Camp Pendleton has the following:

- 800 Plant and 700 Animal Species
- 18 Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species
- A population of 80 (approx.) non-native Bison
- Eight Rivers and Creeks with Associated Coastal Lagoons (the Santa Margarita River is Southern California's only free-flowing river with no major dams)



Camp Pendleton bison and warden on Oct. 15, 1991. Photo courtesy of CPEN Archives

**Save the ~~Date~~ Year!**  
**2017**

**Celebrate with your Marine Corps**



# Work on the Mech Museum Completed

In late-June 2016, repairs to the Mechanized Museum were completed by the contractor, Sygnos Inc. As noted in the final walkthrough inspection after repairs were completed, the contractor went over and above what was required by the contract for work on the 73-year old facility...and they completed the project well ahead of schedule (original completion date was September 2016).

The extent of the \$302,000 repair work contract consisted of installing new push-bar doors, building and installing new sliding wood doors (on the front of the building), installing a new ADA-compliant concrete walkway/ramp, repairing all windows, replacing selected wood siding, and installing new

exterior LED wall pack lights. After the professional repair work was completed, the building looks much better!

It is anticipated that the Mechanized Museum will finally be open to the public by the end of July 2016. With the repairs complete, the History-Museum Marines will soon be moving their primary office to the Mech Museum thus allowing the entire facility, versus just the southern end of the museum, to be open on a daily basis (Monday - Friday).

Recommend contacting the History-Museum Branch via email at MCBCAMPEN\_history@usmc.mil or by phone at (760) 725- 5758 before you visit the Mech Museum and/or to book a tour.



Exterior roadside view of the Mech Museum after construction. Photo by Bo Hellman

## 20-years of service



On July 14, the Director, Camp Pendleton History-Museum Branch, Faye Jonason, received a 20-year Federal Length of Service Award and pin from the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3/5, Col. Greg Martin, in a ceremony held at the Base Operations/Command Center.

Congratulations to Faye on this significant milestone; our sincere thanks for all that you do to preserve and promote the history of Camp Pendleton. Despite insufficient staffing and resources, you continue to make the seemingly impossible possible. Here's hoping for at least another ten more years of your dedicated and faithful service!

### *Did you go to the San Diego County Fair this year?*



CPHS did...a special thanks to board members Mike Lewis and Cal Franz for manning the CPHS booth on June 26.

Thanks to the MCRD Museum Foundation for allowing CPHS to share their booth and tell our story.

### *Keep your eye out for ...*



We are looking for old Camp Pendleton postcards; if you have one to donate or know someone who does, please contact us at cphs\_info@yahoo.com.



Vintage Camp Pendleton postcards. Images courtesy of the CPEN Archives



# Upcoming CPHS Events

Save  
the  
Date!

## September 2016 - Member Event

CPHS is coordinating a day with the Assault Amphibian Marines at Camp Pendleton.

The day-long event will include visits/demonstrations/tours at the Amphibious Vehicle Test Branch, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, Assault Amphibian School Battalion, and LVT Museum at Camp Del Mar.

Please join your fellow CPHS members and active duty and veteran Assault Amphibian Marines.

For more information, contact Don Gressly at [marinedag@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marinedag@sbcglobal.net); details as to the specific event date and time will be forthcoming via our Facebook page and email.

## Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2016

A ceremony to officially dedicate the SSgt Reckless Monument is being planned to be held at the Pacific Views Events Center (PVEC) aboard Camp Pendleton; CPHS and Robin

Hutton plan to host a reception at the PVEC following the dedication ceremony. Stay tuned to the CPHS Facebook page for more details regarding this significant event.

## Saturday, Feb. 11, 2017

The CPHS is well into the planning process for its an Annual Awards Dinner / Ceremony / Live Auction fundraising event at the Pacific Views Event Center aboard Camp Pendleton on Feb. 11, 2017. As

event details are finalized, more information will be forthcoming via our website, Facebook page, and direct email and/or postal mail to our members.

## CPHS Member Spotlight



Jenna Glemser is a PhD student in history at the University of Southern California. She specializes in modern military history, and the First World War in particular.

Jenna is married to an FMF Corpsman. She has always been curious about Camp Pendleton's story which inspired her to complete a first article draft on the base's establishment in 1942. She is looking forward to being involved in the preservation of its history.

## Continued front page,

## Message

Board Member, LtCol Charles Kershaw, USMC (Ret). Charlie brings a wealth of experience from his time at the MCRD Museum Foundation and is also the President, 1st Recon Battalion Association.

years. On behalf of our Society I thank them for their backing and wish them the very best in the years ahead.

As always, I also thank you, our members, for your continued support. Without it we cannot fulfill our mission of helping the Marine Corps preserve and tell the history of Camp Pendleton.

*Richard B. Rothwell*



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*A distinguished group of advisors is helping to guide us as we grow. We are pleased to acknowledge their support.*

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# MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Many thanks to our loyal members for their recent membership renewal and continuing support of our efforts to tell the Camp Pendleton story.

Kim Fox  
Wyatt and Susan Hart  
Col Stewart Navarre, USMC (Ret)

Allen and Wanda Prosser  
James and Marlene Tusing  
Robert Williams

Welcome aboard to our newest members who recently joined our cause.

John Boal      Charles Clements      Jenna Glemser

## Member Action Required

Thanks to those Members who responded with updated member information in February. If you have not responded, please do so. Also, please ensure that our Membership Director ([cphsmembership@gmail.com](mailto:cphsmembership@gmail.com)) has your current email address.

## Volunteers Needed

CPHS is looking for volunteers



Oral History Program



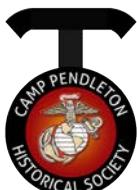
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of 500 likes**



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*...preserving a rich and colorful history*