



President's Message

Richard B. Rothwell



Thanks to the generous support of some 150 members and friends of SSgt. Reckless, I am pleased to report that we have raised \$34,975 to help place a monument to the First Marine Division war horse aboard Camp Pendleton. With the matching funds from CPHS, our total gift now stands at \$64,975. That is not to say that the task is complete. The project, including production, transportation, and installation, will cost about \$135,000. But, the CPHS contribution alone will constitute a significant part of the funding and will earn CPHS a prominent place on the monument plaque.

I would like to extend special recognition (in alphabetical order) to those individuals and organizations that have been particularly generous in supporting the SSgt. Reckless Monument Fund.

\$5,000 or More

Warner and Debra Lusardi

\$1,000 to \$4,999

Col. USMC (Ret)

and Mrs. Donald Gressly

Lt.Gen. William M. Keys, USMC (Ret)

Mr. Kenny Latham

Pacific Marine Credit Union

Rancho Mission Viejo Corporation

Col. USMC (Ret) and

Mrs. Richard B. Rothwell

Santa Margarita y Las Flores Docents

Ms. Barbara Wong

The Del Mar racetrack hosted several CPHS board members and friends of Reckless at SSgt. Reckless Day on November 9. Opening ceremonies included a Marine color guard and a wonderful Marine soloist who sang our

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What did President Roosevelt say?

by Cal Frantz, *Groundbreaker* Editor

It is conventional wisdom that President Roosevelt, when dedicating Camp Pendleton in 1942, told the Marines to preserve the Ranch House as an historic site. But what did he really say?

The fact is, we don't really know. The official record available to us does not include any specific comments by the president directing preservation of the Ranch House. There were no film or audio recordings of his remarks at the time, and due to the war, his visit was subject to news blackout. There is a journal of his visit, identified as the "Grace Tully Papers," located in the archives of the FDR Library at Hyde Park, N.Y. Jan Seigel, long time member of and volunteer for the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society, acquired copies of this journal not too long ago. From the journal she wrote a synopsis of the president's visit to Southern California on September 25, 1942, which was published in the August 9-22, 2013, edition of *The Capistrano Dispatch*. CPHS vice-president Jim Williams obtained a copy of a journal extract from Jan and made it available to us. The following account is based on this material.

President Roosevelt's visit to Southern California on September 25, 1942, began at 9:00 a.m. at the Douglas Aircraft plant in Long Beach. Later a train ride brought his party to San Juan Capistrano at about 1:15 p.m., where he was met by Maj.Gen. Murray, commanding general of the Southern California sector of the Western Defense Command, and by Maj.Gen. Joseph C. Fegan, USMC, commanding general at Camp Pendleton. A drive down U.S. Highway 101 brought the party to Camp Pendleton about 2:25 p.m. that afternoon. At this point in the journal, a brief history of Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores is inserted into the narrative. The last paragraph of this Rancho history reads as follows:

"Upon authorization of the Secretary of the Navy, on August 3, 1942, Camp Pendleton became a reality on the ranch site. The Marines will harden their men for battle over the historic hills and canyons and teach them to swim and handle boats in the surf of the long stretch of beach line. The historic Ranch House, which was built in 1828, will be preserved as an Officers' Club, to house distinguished guests."

Following this Rancho history, the journal narrative continues with an account of the president's inspection of the Ranch House. While there, he joked with the Marine officers conducting the tour that they certainly had all the comforts of home, and that he was "going to pass a law making this place available to ex-Presidents."

While in the Ranch House patio, the president was introduced to 20-year ranch hand "Pancho" Brown, who told the president about the old days at the ranch. The president told Pancho that he, the president, was going to see that the ranch was kept "just the way it is now."

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Following inspection of the Ranch House, the president's party drove to the headquarters building (now called the White House) for the dedication ceremony. At about 3:10 p.m., the president's party left for San Diego to visit the Naval Hospital at Balboa. Total time aboard the Base was less than one hour; a whirlwind pace even by today's standards.

Nowhere in the journal are there any words quoted from the president directing preservation of the Ranch House. Only two comments by the president are enclosed in quotation marks in the journal, indicating that he actually said the words quoted. The first is the joking remark that he was "going to pass a law making this place available to ex-Presidents." The second is his promise to an old ranch hand that he, the president, was going to see that the ranch was kept "just the way it is now." This second remark was perhaps meant to comfort a man who had just lost his job, but the Marines never intended to keep the ranch "just the way it is now." They intended to turn it into a massive amphibious training base, and that is exactly what they did. The first quoted remark was obviously facetious.

So whence cometh the idea that President Roosevelt himself told the Marines to preserve the Ranch House? A hint comes in the last paragraph of the Rancho history inserted into the journal. Apparently there was some provision in the secretary of the Navy's authorization for the base that the Ranch House was to be "preserved as an Officers' Club, to house distinguished guests." Further, as reported in Linda McIntosh's April 9, 2011, article in the *San Diego UT*, the day following the president's visit, Maj.Gen. Fegan wrote the following to Commandant Holcomb: "He told me as I jockeyed him through what he thought should be done with it. ... He wanted to make a shrine of it." That is a clear indication that President Roosevelt expressed his ideas about the future of the Ranch House, but what he actually said was apparently not recorded.

Whatever was said, the Marines have considered it their duty to preserve the Ranch House ever since acquiring the property in 1942, quite as if they had a presidential mandate to do so. While its designation as an Officers' Club was of very short duration, it served continuously as living quarters for the Base commander until 2007. As an occupied structure, it was always maintained in good working condition. While accommodations for the needs of a resident family were made from time to time, such as modernizing the kitchen, the overall structure and several of the rooms have always been preserved as historically faithful to their 1942 status. And the Navy secretary's provision to keep the Ranch House as a place to house distinguished guests has indeed been honored. Numerous notable personages have stayed in the President's Room in the Ranch House through the years.



Photo by Cpl. Shannon E. McMillan

Currently, the Ranch House is unoccupied and is scheduled for a thorough, and expensive, structural upgrade. This upgrade will continue the Marine Corps' commitment to preserving the Ranch House as a national historic treasure and will, as far as possible, keep the Ranch House "just the way it was" in 1942.

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national anthem. The racetrack played a video telling the Reckless story on the giant infield screen and dedicated the fourth race to her. We very much appreciate their hospitality and support.

Thank you for your continued support in helping us preserve and tell the history of Camp Pendleton. I wish all a happy holiday season and look forward to reporting to you in the New Year.

Richard B. Rathwell

Correction

The person in this photo was incorrectly identified in our last edition of *Groundbreaker*. It is actually Charles Slaughter. Our thanks to Faye Jonason for catching this error.



Photo by Deb Hellman

Mail Preference

If you have received this *Groundbreaker* by regular mail, please consider email delivery in the future as this has become the preferred delivery mode. If you have an email address and would like us to use it, please send your email address to calfrantz@verizon.net. Thanks for your cooperation.

SSgt. Reckless Day at Del Mar

Del Mar racetrack paid tribute to Marine war horse SSgt. Reckless on Sunday, November 9, by naming the day for Reckless and naming the fourth race the "Sergeant Reckless Race." The day officially began with a Marine color guard from Camp Pendleton raising the flag, a Marine singing the national anthem, and a brief video about Reckless in the Korean War. A group of Camp Pendleton Historical Society members and friends were on hand for these events as special guests of Joe Harper, president and CEO of the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, pictured here with CPHS president Dick Rothwell.



Photo by Deb Hellman

The SSgt. Reckless Day at Del Mar was another event in CPHS's continuing fundraising efforts on behalf of the SSgt. Reckless Memorial statue to be placed at Camp Pendleton. Robin Hutton, author of the NY Times bestseller *Sgt. Reckless: America's War Horse*, was there to sign her book for racing fans and did a brisk day's business, as she did at our Las Flores fundraiser in September.

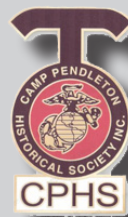
Following the fourth race, a winner's circle presentation featured the CPHS group who were attending the races. The photo below shows the group assembled in the winner's circle, with host Joe Harper in the second row flanked by Robin Hutton on his left and Jocelyn Russell (sculptor of the Reckless statue) on his right. Standing in the middle of the front row (in tan blouse) is Debbie McCain, who as a child of nine years knew Sgt. Reckless at the Camp Pendleton stables.

We are very grateful to Joe Harper for scheduling this day as part of the inaugural Bing Crosby season at Del Mar and for hosting our group. Perhaps this was the beginning of an annual tradition at Del Mar that will honor SSgt. Reckless in future years.



Photo by Deb Hellman

By the way, the winner of the Sergeant Reckless Race was Tigah. Tigah ran the mile-long course in 1:34.72 and paid \$8.00, \$4.80, and \$3.60.



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New Year's Eve Gala

The Camp Pendleton Historical Society is proud to announce a collaboration with and support of the Santa Fe Hunt's New Year's Eve Party at the Mulligan Family Fun Center in Murrieta, California.

Robin Hutton will be there to sell and sign copies of her book *Sgt. Reckless: America's War Horse!*

Tickets are \$110. Must be over 21.

\$25 of the ticket price will be donated to the organization of your choice. Please go to the Santa Fe Hunt website to learn more and purchase your tickets. Don't forget to select the Camp Pendleton Historical Society for your donation! <http://www.santafehunt.com/Welcome.html>

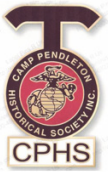
Santa Fe Hunt/West Hills Hounds is a Masters of Fox Hounds Association, MFHA, recognized Hunt located in Temecula, southern California. We are a diverse group of riders, brought together by love of horses, open spaces, country values and riding with a fine pack of foxhounds as they work a scent. We welcome riders of all levels who share these passions.



Family Fun Center

**THE PARTY STARTS
AT 8PM AND INCLUDES**

- Hors d'oeuvres by Four Seasons, La Jolla
- Free glass of champagne at midnight
- Theme Park: Miniature Golf, Go-Karts and Lazer Tag
- Blackjack, Roulette and Craps
- Free \$25 chip to start. 1st, 2nd and 3rd place prizes
- 10 free tokens for arcade with adult redemption prizes
- Silent auction
- Music for dancing
- No-host bar



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*Camp Pendleton Historical Society
...preserving a rich and colorful history*