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What are you doing this summer?



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In loving memory...



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ABOUTTIMES

the newsletter of the Burbank Historical Society



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SUMMER EDITION



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Summer has definitely arrived in Burbank. I remember looking forward to summer vacations as a child and spending hours at the library reading books. And yes, I was the proverbial book worm that rarely saw the light of day. That doesn't mean I didn't enjoy the outdoors. In fact, I really miss those car trips with the family to visit national parks in states like Arizona, Utah, and Wyoming. I'm proud to say I've visited at least 31 of the 50 states in our country. *Sigh. But then of course I grew up.*

Thankfully, it wasn't all down-hill from there. Different destinations and activities are even more accessible now that we've got the internet at our fingertips. So even if you can't just hop in a car for a road trip, or if you have no interest in exploring books at the library, there happens to be a LOT you can do in Burbank. From aquatics to creative arts, a variety of sports activities and summer camp, there are options for Burbankians of all ages.

Make sure to check out the city's Recreation Guide. And please don't forget about us as you make plans for the summer. The museum will be a great place to stay cool and learn about the city's history.



Hope to see you at the museum this summer!! Enjoy!

Sincerely,
Dianna Briggs
President



MARY MONTGOMERY HOWARD

February 22, 1918 – March 22, 2019



Mary Montgomery Howard, early member and notable benefactor of the Burbank Historical Society, died peacefully at her Burbank home surrounded by loved ones. She was 101.

The youngest of three daughters, Mary was born to Jean and John Sears on the family homestead in Winifred, Montana, February 22, 1918. Following his service in WWI, and while practicing medicine in Montana, her father treated a mining executive and his wife who had been injured in an automobile accident while vacationing in Yellowstone National Park. Impressed by Dr. Sears and the care he had given them, the gentleman offered John a position in one of the New York company's Mexican mineral mines where American doctors were needed for the American families living in the camp.

In a matter of weeks, the Sears family had auctioned off all household goods that wouldn't fit into their traveling trunks and began the journey to northern Mexico. Their destination was the Ojuela mine, a remote mountainside mining settlement 400 miles south of El Paso, Texas. The trip was slow and arduous. It involved several trains, a mule drawn flat railroad car winding up the switchback road to the settlement, then finally crossing the Ojuela suspension bridge--

at the time, the 3rd longest suspension bridge in the world! Mary was five years old.

Although she lived more than eight decades in the Los Angeles-Burbank area, Mary held those early memories of Mexico among her fondest—a kitchen scented by fresh warm tortillas and local dishes spiced with chiles, games played with her two sisters and Mexican childhood friends, and the enchanting Mexican culture of song and music. She remembered that her father enjoyed his work in Mexico and would often request a musician to accompany him on longer trips to treat patients. And, in recent years, she became well known at a local North Hollywood Mexican restaurant as the lady who always requested the post-revolutionary song, Los Cuatros Milpas, from the weekend band.

The family spent 12 years in Mexico. Jean tended to the children's education with tutors in Mexico and eventually schools in El Paso and Los Angeles. In 1935, Mary graduated from Los Angeles High School and recalled her memorable graduation ceremony at the Ambassador Hotel's historic Cocomanut Grove. When her father died shortly thereafter, she left college to work at a Los Angeles bank. There, a few years later, she met and married Burbank builder-developer, Gordon Howard.

Gordon's antique car hobby prompted them to join the Horseless Carriage Club of Southern California. Mary found and restored turn-of-the-century costumes, which she wore to many HCC events. They were return participants in Disneyland parades as well as in their favorite tour from London to Brighton, England. Bundled against the November cold in their 1904 Franklin, they drove the 53 miles to the seaside town of Brighton. Three million people lined the road for the popular event, and participants were invited to dance at the Brighton Ball that night.

Mary herself enjoyed cars and fast driving. She delighted in having a family member visit who would then qualify her to rev up her roadster in the carpool lane. At age 90, she regretfully relinquished her driver's license when an eye injury greatly impaired her peripheral vision.

She loved inclement weather and especially all things ocean---from searching for shells along the tideline with her children to heading for the beach whenever big surf was forecast. Once, during a storm on a cruise through the Indian Ocean, Mary was thrilled to later report that she saw a grand piano slide across the ship's tilted floor.

Longtime community supporters, Mary and Gordon were among the early benefactors of the Burbank Historical

Society where some of her vintage costumes and Gordon's antique cars are on permanent display. The Society's museum complex on Olive Avenue bears the Howard name.

For many years Mary funded transportation for Burbank school children to visit the Burbank museum and awarded grants to Burbank high school seniors. In 2001, she created and chaired the Gordon R. and Mary M. Howard Foundation whose funds continue to provide grants to a variety of community non-profit organizations. She and the family continue to contribute to Family Services Agency of Burbank CARE Cottages.

Mary has been the much loved and respected matriarch of her growing family who will miss her dearly. She lived her long life with spirit, integrity, compassion, modesty and generosity. Mary is survived by daughters Kathleen Phelan Britt of Ketchum, Idaho; Martha Howard-Bullen of Ashland, Oregon; Bonnie Adamick of Westlake Village, California; eight grandchildren and fourteen great grandchildren. Her funeral services were arranged by Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to Family Services Agency of Burbank.



DID YOU KNOW?

Tidbits of Burbank's Rich History

Everyone has heard of Warner Brothers, right? There really were Warner brothers – four of them. But in all, there were actually twelve siblings! Only four went on to create the world-famous studio.

Russian Jews, their real last name was Wonskolaer. Anglicizing last names was a common practice at the time. But they also changed their first names: Hirsch became Harry, Abraham changed his name to Albert, Shmuel was reborn as Samuel, and Jacob became Jack. The little studio made it big early on with its Rin Tin Tin series – but it was the talkie that really put them on the map.

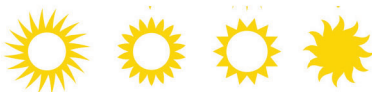
Prior to 1927's "The Jazz Singer," when people went to the movies, what they saw were silent movies. Warner Brothers were out to change that. Well, not all the Warner Brothers cared to – but Albert sure did. Albert poured his heart, soul and money into making what is considered the first talkie. Albert believed in and stood up for "The Jazz Singer" even when his brothers mocked it and criticized him for going so far over budget.

But “The Jazz Singer,” which starred the nation’s most popular singer-performer, Al Jolson, would have an impact few people could predict – but Albert knew it would. Too bad Albert never got to see it.



Because Albert was so dedicated to getting “The Jazz Singer” made, he neglected everything else in his life. He worked nearly 24/7 and didn’t even take care of his own health. That included his teeth – and an abscessed tooth led to a sinus infection that led to pneumonia – and guess the rest. Yes, on the very evening of the premiere of one of the biggest movies ever made, its maker dropped dead. Albert was only 40.

The brothers never made it to the premiere. But the film industry would be changed forever. And so would the three remaining Warner Brothers.



It’s been called “the classiest dive bar you’ll find,” but did you know that Burbank’s beloved watering hole “The Blue Room” was founded in 1947? Check it out at 916 San Fernando Road and drink a drop of history! (Note: The Burbank Historical Society’s own founders, Harry and Mary Jane Strickland, met there!)



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In May of 2018, the President of the United States pardoned a long-gone but powerful boxer named Jack Johnson. Did you know that Johnson had a connection to Burbank?

It was 1910 and Jack Johnson was the nation’s first-ever African American to become the World Heavyweight Champion. Because he was black, not everyone was happy about it. Boxing promoters sought a strong white boxer to take Johnson on. They found one – a previous heavyweight champion and current resident of Burbank, Jim Jeffries.

Jeffries owned and ran a large ranch on what is now Buena Vista at Victory (and beyond!) He not only had a working ranch, but he also had a big barn on the property that he used to hold amateur boxing matches. He also trained people to be boxers, including Hollywood stars who played boxers on the silver screen. (Remember John Garfield?) That barn was very popular.



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Open Saturdays & Sundays 1:00pm to 4:00pm

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PURCHASE A SPECIAL LEAF!

Price: \$250

See the tree leaves on the beautifully painted wall mural found in the Sence Room. The leaves are in remembrance of a loved one or to recognize a family member.

To purchase a leaf for the tree please ask one of our board members or docents for the Tree of Life form to fill out.

JACK JOHNSON (CONT'D FROM PAGE 3)

By the time the boxing promoters asked (no, begged) Jim Jeffries to fight Jack Johnson, Jeffries had been retired for ten years and was in no shape to take on Johnson. But the promoters sweetened the deal (think money) until Jeffries felt he could no longer refuse it.

Jack Johnson beat Jim Jeffries. Jeffries later said that even in his prime, he could not have beat Johnson. On the night of the fight following Johnson's victory, race riots erupted nation-wide. And the nation was not on Johnson's side.

At the time, some said Johnson "flaunted" his victory. The word "uppity" was used and the fact that Johnson dated and married white women greatly upset people. Johnson was even arrested for violating The Mann Act, which does not allow a man to transport a woman across state lines for illicit reasons. Johnson went to prison for that, which many people found an outrage.

Jeffries died a Burbank hero; Johnson died nearly penniless in a car accident that today we'd call road rage. Johnson was mad about not being served in a diner.

The 2018 pardon? It was for that "trumped up" (groan!) Mann Act arrest.

Jeffries' ranch was demolished after his death in the 1950s. Houses were built in its place, plus shopping centers featuring a Ralphs where the barn once stood.

But you can still see Jeffries' bar -- it's at Knott's Berry Farm!

And now you know The Rest of the Story. It's not a pretty one. For more information, look up the renowned 1970 movie "The Great White Hope." Although they changed the names slightly, it is based on Jack Johnson. And what a treat it is to see a very young, very talented James Earl Jones!

