

ARTI-FACTS

The Newsletter of the Award-Winning Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Preserving the History of Idyllwild and Surrounding Communities
in the San Jacinto Mountains

AUTUMN 2014

MAGGIE DUTTON: AN IDYLLWILD ORIGINAL

By John Blodgett

One day, Marlon Brando was waiting in line at Dutton's Corner Store, the market Margaret "Maggie" and William "Leigh" Dutton ran in Fern Valley in the 1950s. Marlon stood watching as Maggie was ringing up groceries for the woman standing in front of him. When Maggie finished she turned to Marlon, but not to wait on him. Not yet. "Don't just stand there," she said. "Help the lady out with her groceries."

That's how Maggie and Leigh's son Roger of Idyllwild remembers it. "She had no sense of this person's important and [that] person isn't," he said. "To her everybody was in the same boat. I think that's why people still remember her."

Maggie and Leigh moved to Idyllwild from Anaheim, California, in 1948 with Margot and Roger, the first two of three children. Maggie had been working as a reporter for newspapers in Anaheim, Riverside and Hemet, but up on The Hill the couple found what work they could. Leigh drove the school bus for a while, and for Maggie there were odd jobs to be had whenever a movie was being filmed.

According to a Town Crier article published



Maggie Dutton (right) and her good friend Eleanor Johnson depart New York on a 1966 transatlantic voyage.

IAHS Archive

also ran the Village Market, Village Hardware and Lumber, and the liquor store, all familiar to present-day residents and visitors, and the Clothes Horse, a clothing store that now is the Lumber Mill Bar and Grill. For a few years in the early 1970s the Duttons owned Pinecraft Furniture, which Roger managed (not to be confused with Selden Belden's earlier manufacturing business).

Maggie was a hostess of renown, and one of her parties made the national news. On Sunday, Oct. 1, 1961, local restaurateur and wine expert Robert "Bob" Balzer held a party in honor of his friend

(See Maggie, page 3)

on July 9, 1981, Maggie said they originally intended to stay in Idyllwild for only a year. Instead, they became firmly entrenched. For three decades starting in the early 1950s, she and Leigh operated a number of Idyllwild businesses, sometimes more than one at a time and some of which are still open today. They started with Dutton's Corner Store, which was known as Fern Valley Market under different management, located in the building that's now the Creekstone Inn. They

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Arti-Facts

Co-Editors: Adele & Bob Smith
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BEHIND THE SCENES

Annual Raffle....

This year's raffle offers another historic piece of furniture: a genuine Pinecraft double bed, signed by Selden Belden. As a bonus we're adding a new quilt crafted by Hill resident Annamarie Padula. All yours for just a dollar (if you have the right dollar), or multiply your chances with 6 tickets for \$5.

Tickets are available at the museum during open hours, and the drawing will be held on Friday, December 12. The winner need not be present.

Our profound thanks go to board member Nancy Borchers for donating the bed and to Annamarie for the quilt.

Another Fix-Up Job Finished....

Your continuing generous support enables us to use surplus income to reduce a backlog of maintenance projects that have been needed for years. So, in recent years we've put a new roof on the museum and rebuilt and paved the driveway to our handicap parking area behind the museum building.

Now we've just completed refinishing both the museum and office buildings. Tom Bloom did such a fine job of power-washing and staining that a stranger would have a hard time telling which of our buildings are old or new.

Digital Town Crier project....

A second batch of old Idyllwild Town Criers, covering 1954-1956, is now accessible on the Web at genealogybank.com. This gives us word-searchable access to every issue of the newspaper from 1949 through 1956, years that were fundamental to the postwar development of Idyllwild. Even this partial collection has been significantly enriching our recent publications and museum exhibits.

We began this long-term project two years ago with support from the Idyllwild Community Fund and the Rotary Anns. We still have complete sets of newspapers for 1957 and 1959-1964 ready to be scanned at an estimated cost of about \$3,100. Donations from interested members to accelerate the project are certainly welcome.

Ice Cream Social....

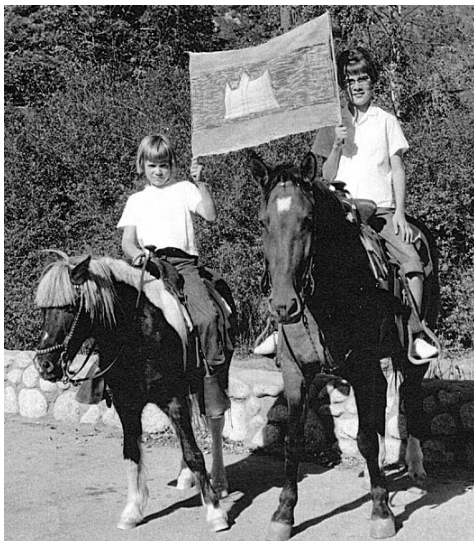
Labor Day weekend brought perfect ice cream

(See Scenes, page 4)

MAGGIE ... (continued from page 1)

Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Cambodian Chief of State, who was wrapping up a diplomatic visit to the United States. Bob had asked Maggie to host the event, and, according to Maggie's youngest child, Claudia Dutton Hollis, he originally wanted to entertain the Prince with a formal meal and fine wines. "Maggie convinced him that the Prince's visit should be informal, relaxing and a reflection of Idyllwild's hospitality," said Claudia, who greeted the Prince's motorcade astride her horse and holding a homemade Cambodian flag. So the menu became hamburgers, baked beans and bottles of California champagnes.

The menu change illustrated Maggie's anomalous character. As her friend Barbara Roth attested in an email, she was "a proper Lady," raised by "very British" parents who had immigrated to the United States. According to her daughter-in-law Myra, Roger's wife, that upbringing



Claudia Dutton (right) waits with her handmade replica of the Cambodian flag to greet Prince Sihanouk on his arrival in Idyllwild.
IAHS Archive

Fern Valley home was a rollicking success, with Maggie the star. "[The Prince and his entourage] were charmed with her and told her they wanted to take her back to Cambodia," said Claudia. "They said they would send the white elephants out to greet her, which apparently was a



Maggie and Leigh (far right) pose with California Gov. Pat Brown in 1962.
IAHS Archive

translated into traditional food and etiquette at family holiday dinners. That she served a prince beans might seem improper, until one considers she was indeed honoring tradition -- that of the Southern California mountain town she called home.

The party at Balzer's

very special honor."

In perhaps the most formal moment of the party, the Prince, bowing low, presented Maggie with a gift "to give to the little girl who made the flag of his country and had welcomed him to Idyllwild." It was an ornate candy dish made of silver in the shape of a pumpkin, a smaller version of what he had presented to President John F. Kennedy at a White House dinner the previous night.

In addition to running businesses and hosting parties, Maggie occasionally

acted as a medical assistant to her best friend Edna Price, a registered nurse who was Idyllwild's defacto doctor at a time when the nearest health care to be had was at the Hemet hospital. Sometimes Maggie found herself as primary caregiver. Roger remembers her tending to a boy's cut hand while sitting next to a stew cooking atop the pot-bellied stove at the front of the Village Market.

"She had such a huge heart," said Myra. "She would help anybody."

(See Maggie, page 4)



Maggie Dutton (standing) in performance at Town Hall; Leigh is seated at far left.
IAHS Archive

SCENES ... (continued from page 2)

weather this year, and the community responded in droves to enjoy cold sundaes and floats on the patio and in the garden on the museum grounds.

Once again we are deeply indebted to our hospitality whizzes, Linda and Larry Turner, for staging this annual celebration of summer's end.

Facebook Page launch....

IAHS has entered the 21st century with the launch of our new Facebook page. You can find us at www.facebook.com/IdyllwildAreaHistoricalSociety.

We'll be using this medium to supplement *Arti-Facts* and our website, keeping you up to date on current happenings at the museum. In addition, we're regularly posting interesting old photos that

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tell about the Idyllwild area's past. Check our page often to learn what's doing now and what used to be.

Our thanks go once again to our media duo, John Drake and Rebecca Frazier, for getting this outlet up and running. ♪

MAGGIE ... (continued from page 3)

For the last five or so years of her life, as her own health deteriorated, Maggie allowed others to care for her. Roger and Myra moved into the Dutton family home on South Circle Drive, where Roger had spent his high school years, to assist her. Myra says her spirit and dignity remained intact until the end. Once, she entered the dining room with a rose in her mouth, kicked up a leg, and recited poetry; other times, she was content to sit with a box of chocolates and a good book from the library.

Myra says Maggie was not a particularly religious person, but, perhaps in response to Myra's own strong spirituality, she promised to "try really hard when [I] get over on the other side" to send a message. "It was the motherly wish, I'll-never-leave-you sort of thing," explained Myra.

Maggie died May 25, 2005, at the age of 87. About a month later, Myra woke from a dream in which both Maggie and her mother – whom Myra had always wanted to meet – appeared over Myra's garden, a place Maggie had enjoyed spending time. Later that morning, Myra walked out to the garden and discovered that her favorite white rose bush sported five red flowers.

Was it a sign from Maggie? Myra thinks so. "Alice in Wonderland" was among Maggie's favorite books – her great-great-grandfather was an acquaintance of the family of Alice Liddell, who is thought to have inspired the story – and Myra says that morning Maggie was simply "painting the roses red," as directed by the song in the book.

"Ever since then, we've had red roses on that white rose bush," said Myra. "But never before. And I've had that bush for years and years." ♪

THE COMPANY WE KEEP

New and Renewing Members – July through September 2014

NEW MEMBERS

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June Lake Historical Society	June Lake
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We thank the following local businesses and people who provided items for the gifts we give the folks who open their homes each year to Idyllwild Home Tour visitors: A Cut Above, Gary's Deli, IAHS Museum Shop, Idyllwild Gift Shop, Ben Killingsworth, La Casita, & Middle Ridge Winery.

YET ANOTHER RECORD-SETTING HOME TOUR

With the usual excellent weather, artistic embellishments, and intriguing variety of mountain homes to explore, our veteran team of coordinators – Charlotte Groty, Nanci Killingsworth, and Carolyn Hall – have once again staged an outstanding tour.

The turnout of 529 tourgoers exceeded the previous record by 13%, and while the crowd tested the capacities of both Idyllwild streets and our docents, participants' comments remain enthusiastic. In addition, tour revenue will account for nearly half of IAHS's budgeted income for 2014.

The generosity of residents who open their doors to crowds of curious visitors is a basic ingredient



A quiet moment during a lull in the parade of visitors.

FrazierDrake photo



Docent teams pointed out highlights of each home.

FrazierDrake photo

for a successful tour. We thank our homeowners Dick Dorisse & Morry Copeland, Jerry & Marianne Corey, Phyllis Curington-Brown, Liz Chiment, and Stewart & Valerie McClure. They received

individualized appreciation baskets stocked with gifts from the IAHS Museum Shop, as well as from A Cut Above salon, Gary's Deli, Idyllwild Gift Shop, author Ben Killingsworth, La Casita restaurant, and Middle Ridge Winery.

The atmosphere at the museum was enlivened by musician Jac Jacaruso and artists Kathy Bryson, Gary Glasheen, Karen Johnston, Bonnie Reynolds, and Veda Roubideaux. A new feature this year was the optional wine-tasting staged by Chris & Melody Johnston of Middle Ridge Winery.

It takes a cross-section of the village to put this event on, and we effusively thank all these wonderful volunteers:

• **Hosts & Docents:** Nancy Borchers, Maureen Boren, Jorgine Brause, Corrinne Brown,

See Home Tour, next page

HOME TOUR ...

(continued from previous page)

Diann Coate, Morry Copeland & Dick Dorisse, Karen Dorn, Bonnie Doshier, Carol Herman, Pamela Fojtik, Barbara Jones, Shirley Kribs, Lynn & Mike Kollar, Diana Kurr, Virginia Lumb, Kathleen Masey, Sandi Mathers, Lynnette Mathews, Joan McCullough, Diana McVey, Joyce Miller, Diane Pappalardo, Earl & Peggy Parker, Janet Pedersen, Marlene Pierce, Melinda St.

Pierre, Carol Simonek, Vicky Streeter, Toni Sullivan, Jimmie & Hedy Tyson, Sallie Warwick, Nickie Watts, Kay Wanner, Betty Wilcox, Sandi Wilkes

• **Parking:** Dan Carpenter, Chic Fojtik, Larry Kribs, Terry Kurr, Chuck Streeter

• **Musicians:** Mary Carroll, Jac Jacaruso, Vicki Jakubac, Barbara Rayliss

• **Logistics, Signage & Refreshments:** Larry & Linda Turner, Richard & Carolyn Levitski, Bob Smith

• **Tour Booklet:** John Drake, Rebecca Frazier,



A steady stream of tourgoers passed artists' booths in the Village Garden on their way to refreshments at the museum.

Bob Smith photo

Charlotte Groty, Nanci Killingsworth, Joyce Miller, Bob Smith

• **Ticket Sales:** Sharla Carpenter, Kathy Duncan, Virginia Mathas, Dawn Miller, Annamarie Padula, Adele Voell

• **Media:** Carolyn Levitski, Charlotte Groty
Accounting: George Groty

Database: Mary Carroll

Now go mark your calendar for our 15th home tour on Saturday, September 19, 2015! 📅

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If a gift membership, please enter donor's name and address:

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Museum Hours:

11 am - 4 pm

Winter Schedule (Sept. 6-June 14):

Saturdays & Sundays, also

Friday, Nov. 28

Friday, Dec. 26-Thursday, Jan. 1

Monday, Jan. 19

Monday, Feb. 16

Monday, May 25

Keep up with us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/IdyllwildAreaHistoricalSociety>

Visit our website:

www.idyllwildhistory.org

For special tours and other business,

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e-mail to info@idyllwildhistory.org

Admission Free

Donations Welcome

Reminder: Annual Raffle Drawing, Friday, December 12

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and for their interest in our local history:

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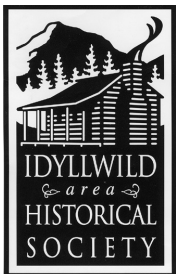
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