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Circus Day: a family affair

Highlights of our June 7 "Day of Days"

BRIAN WIERSEMA

Even with thick overcast and unseasonably cool temperatures topping out at 68°, some 500 residents, parents, and friends turned up strong in family unit Saturday, June 7. More than one-fifth of the attendees (over 100) were volunteers and pulled off a flawless 14th rendition of this "day of days".

Most people enjoy the afternoon action. Personally, I favor Circus Day mornings when Mountain Shadows Community Homes is transformed to block-party festivity as *Friends of Mountain Shadows (FOMS)* get ready for their most colorful shindig of the year.



Doug Cook, Grand Marshal of Circus Day Parade, is driven by Kiwanian Nat Heard.



Bagpipers lead the parade.

The action started at the driveway entrance with the Traffic and Parade Team of Doug Cook and his two assistants with walkie-talkies and blazing electric wheelchair speed. Residents Travis Groff and Kenny Lewis went by the handles "Lover Boy" and "The Major," respectively.

Lee and Corky Kleeberger arrived with son Craig. They had beaten the 1:00 p.m. opening parade by nearly three hours. Volunteer Adrianna Guevara followed. She is the office manager for Mountain Shadows Golf Classic chair Robert Chakarian of the accounting firm Chakarian & Associates, making her first volunteer appearance at Circus Day. Travis offered to lead Adrianna to the Office to sign in.

The two departed, passing a kaleidoscope of orange, blue, red, green, and purple helium-filled "donut" balloons tied in bunches to each fence post. It took QMRP Denise Kadar three hours to fill the 400 latex spheres with a hole in the middle. "They are pretty neat," she said.

Drummer Kevin Campbell, wearing kilt and jeweled sword, was the first member of the 42nd Highlander Regimental Pipes and Drums to arrive. The popular act is headquartered in the Queen Mary under the direction of Pipe Major George Hall.

Doug Cook's brother Greg is one of the pipers—and one of 15 members of the extended Cook family supporting Circus Day. Wife Linda

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helped run the Kiwanis food booth and son Greg served as Ringmaster in red coat and tails.

“We used to hold Circus Day in October,” said Doug Cook. “But we moved it to June after one October Circus registered 108°.” Cook, inventor and developer of Circus Day, said the first event was held in 1990. “It was meant as a one-shot thing; a day of fun for the resi-



The residents got into the spirit of the day.

dents. But it proved so popular we made it an annual affair.”

Mom Sandy Sterling arrives to see daughter Sally Whynott in Willow. She stops to rehash an old story from Circus Day ten years ago. Sandy is an identical twin to Susie Kelleher. But Susie got mad at Doug Cook for something and Sandy tried to make up for that by being extra nice to Doug.

Double-threat Doug checked out his digital and video cameras. Kenny talked up new parade entries—the Valvolene go-cart and a red two-story tow-truck bigger than a fire engine.

I moved on to the canopied midway and gaming grounds and

talked with three volunteer superstars: Circus Day chair, FOMS president and MSSG director Carol Haskin, activities director Donna Ponomarenko, and Ash-Pine-Cedar QMRP Denise Kadar, who was also one of the fortune tellers with Birch triplex Q Dan Myer (in sultan’s cap and robes). “Denise really did a lot,” Carol said.

Donna, with help, carried a papier mâché elephant the size of a very large man. The pachyderm, made by Olive DCS Rozella Granados, replaced the circus facade this year in sculptural greeting. The facade, with a tendency to blow down, was placed around the Circus Day entrance as separate, grounded animal/clown pieces.

Office staff showed up in force. Lupe Bryson, with husband Gerald, staffed the ticket booth. Anita Griffin, with her husband Jeff, also added to booth man and woman power.



Ringmaster Greg Cook



Queen Julie Hayden and King Maki Arnold wave to the crowds lining the parade route.

There were lots of husbands, wives, and mothers about. Executive Director Wade Wilde’s wife Sheryl ably assisted, as did Linda Cook and many others. Denise’s husband Tony did the heavy lifting. Denise’s mom, Betty Kadar of Sewing Angels fame, announced that her circle donated 18 gifted, hand-made shower chair covers and as many new privacy curtains to the Houses. They’re now working on Halloween costumes and Christmas wall hangings for Mountain Shadows homes.

By 11:00 a.m. some 50 Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints (LDS) volunteers from four congregations were arriving. They, as booth staffers and resident escorts, are vital to our effort. With them this year to cover the story was LDS’s April Bennett with the church’s Public Affairs office. I talked with Bradyn Meadors, 17. This was his second Circus, which represents how dedicated these church youth are.

Other volunteers came from Methodist and Baptist churches,

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Girl Scouts, City of Escondido volunteer group, Kiwanis, and Gateway Community Church. Kiwanis manned the food booth and donated the pizzas. In her third year on the job, Cheryl Edwards (mom to Shawna Kick in Orange) coordinated volunteers with help from Michelle Stevenson. Cheryl is a wizard at help assignment.

Nine members of Carol Haskin's family came. They included husband Randy, two daughters, and five grandchildren. A sixth grandchild was born at 1:30 a.m. that morning, and Carol was on hand for the delivery. Board member Mary Ellen Alton had five of her family in tow, including husband Len, daughter Jennifer, and 3 granddaughters.

Kiwanians were cruising on a PR coup. Their yearly Circus participation, with photos, made a splash in the *Kiwanis Magazine*, which goes to 83 countries and gives Mountain Shadows its first international exposure. Early K arrivals included Jim Kelley, Ryan Ferguson, Mary and Don Brown, Nat Heard, Steve and Pat Palmer, Alma Plancarte, Howard Wing, and new member David Payne.

Mary Lou Swarner's friend



There was always a line at the Kiwanis food booth.



The "Cake Walk" was very popular, attracting lots of attendees.

Loretta Bell brought a devil's food cake. The Haskin group brought five cakes; the Cook contingent four; and Betty Kadar championed NINE delicious pineapple up-side-down cakes.

Unicyclist and juggler Bobby Hartman worked the early crowd. Charlie Porter's "Spirit of San Diego" calliope provided a background of circus music. Bikers for Christ and Warriors of the Cross arrived on their motorcycles, a parade favorite.

Keith Mitchell (Ivan's dad) dressed as the arresting jailhouse marshal. He wore a two-gallon hat, braided beard, black vest, gold star, toy six-guns, Levi's and tennis shoes.

Long-time Circus supporter Lisa Shea brought 10 Girl Scouts to help. She told me that her daughter,

Stacey, as president of the Meadow Brook Middle School Builders Club (a Kiwanis-sponsored organization), arranged a donation of \$700 to Mountain Shadows Special Olympics. Thanks Stacey—the donation will be put to good use!

In the parade, Doug Cook served as Grand Marshal. King Maki Arnold of Tangelo and Queen Julie Hayden of Maple marched smartly. Aaron "the dirt-biking mormon" buzzed the black-top. A Boy Scout honor guard carried the colors. Escondido city councilman Ed Gallo was the featured celebrity.

The humorous Shriners' two-man "camel" was back. Leo Brewster led it. Ed Scheer, batting cleanup, followed with shovel and a bucket labeled "Camel Exhaust." Lucky Lion Dancers, with drum and gong, outdid themselves as dancing, rainbow-body Chinese dragons. The giant Rode One Truck Tow-truck stirred cheers with flashing lights and tooting air horn. Symbolically, it was a blast. ■



Notes from the Executive Director



Wade Wilde

WADE WILDE

May FOMS meeting busy, well attended

The May meeting of Friends of Mountain Shadows was information-packed and well attended by two dozen FOMS supporters. Topics included reports on resident activities, still looming deep Medi-Cal cuts, and our fund raising campaign.

Activities Director Donna Ponomarenko announced that residents will be attending the summer Camp Able and Mission Bay Aquatics Camp. Residents hold a Bar-B-Q each Sunday prior to the Challenger Little League baseball games. Ladies have player or cheerleader option.

Doug Cook discussed the “Family of Support” fund raiser, which he spearheads. The immediate goal is for \$25,000. Several thousand dollars has already come in. Supporters were asked to incorporate fund raising into their jobs. Donations of cash, in addition to goods and services, are very much appreciated. Yes, even donations of cars are accepted. Our first gifted auto came from our attorney, Erick Altona, from the Escondido law firm of Lounsbery, Ferguson, Altona and Peak.

Medi-Cal cuts still threaten. It’s a good bet that with the huge budget shortfall in Sacramento, the “old” Mountain Shadows (Mountain Shadows, Inc.) probably would not have survived. Cuts of up to 15% will devastate providers, disrupt staff with layoffs, and obviously impact our residents’ quality of life.

The Circus Day raffle had already generated \$1,200. My personal thanks to those vital volunteers who help set up and dismantle our Circus Day set—all in the same day.

The Golf Classic is expected to sell out. The annual event, scheduled for September 15th this year at Bernardo Heights Country Club, has grown from generating \$8,000 per year in discretionary revenue to an expected \$30,000. Outstanding! Players: thanks for delivering supportive sponsors.

QMRP Denise Kadar (Ash, Cedar, Pine) offered insight into the DHS Survey process. It comes with the shock and awe of surprise visits/audits that address meals, proper placements, and everything

from what’s in the medicine cabinet to what’s under the bed.

EVERYTHING is audited. And surveyors spend the entire day, from wake up to bedtime, combing the written records for compliance in health, diet, recreation, and competency.

FOMS President Carol Haskin gave examples of what goes into a conservatorship. Doug Cook added that if residents are 18 or older, they’re “on their own” regardless of functioning level and should be conserved. Looking into a conservatorship? Recommended was attorney Canela Cavado, phone: 619.583.0080.

Attendees included Jamie and Stevie Miller, Dorothy and Bob Merritt, Jan and John Osuyos, Gracie Adams, Denise Kadar, Dona Ponomarenko, R.P. McCormick, Helen van Eik, Virginia Kappler, Pamela Atkinson, Gretchen Merritt, Carol Haskin, Connie Ling, Mary Blackburn, Mary Lou Swarner, Lee and Corky Kleeberger, Cheryl Edwards, Wade Wilde, and Doug Cook.

The next FOMS meeting is August 16, 11:00 a.m. in the Office. Hope to see you there.

Resident activities wide ranging and fun

Some praise is due Donna Ponomarenko, our innovative Activities Director. Take a deep breath and look at the flurry of action:

MARCH: Baseball started, with BBQ fun. Some 30 residents took in “Winnie the Pooh” at Theatre West. Maple played games at Chuck E Cheese. Flower arrangement classes and evening karaoke came on Saturdays. Residents also played table games for prizes at Olive. The players included folks from Oak and Elm. Also attended the Carnival of Cultures in San Marcos.

APRIL: Some 30 clients took part in our Spring Fling Dance and Karaoke. We had social snacks Tuesday and Fridays in the afternoons, table games in the Copa, and Big Screen viewing in the Office. Also,

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wood shop on the 3rd Saturday, photo shop every 2nd Saturday, and Saturday flower classes. Ten of our residents attended an ARC Center rally against state Medi-Cal cuts. Five clients attended a school district meeting considering opening the Nic-Center Pool. Five resident cheerleaders sparked the Challenger Baseball crowd. Horseback riding was still going strong.

Thanks to Portia and Stacy Bibb for hosting a party at their home. Oak and Elm did Chuck E Cheese, with prizes for game winners. Olive enjoyed fun night at Boomer Fun Center. We held our first on-site nondenominational church services.

MAY: Special Olympics began, and bowling and bocci ball, too. Baseball continued on Sunday, with lots of good food and fun. Residents attended a Padres game. And how about this! Some 15 residents went to see Billy Graham at Qualcomm Stadium. A garden concert drew one dozen. Nondenominational church services were conducted by Pastor Drew Davis.

COMING EVENTS include camping at Lilac Oaks, with options for fishing, kayaking, and games. Camp Able and Camp by the Bay beckons, as does the play “Oklahoma” at Theatre West. On tap: Nevada casino visits, summer concerts in the garden with country, big band, jazz, and Celtic music. Add to that mix church services here, more bocci ball, the Del Mar Fair, cooking classes on site, and lots more.

15% Budget cut: Sword of Damocles still hangs over us

The Governor recently released his revised budget proposal, updating and changing some things in the budget proposed in January. As expected, the state is in worse fiscal shape now than in January. There were no changes in the May revision for ICF/DD-H (MSCH’s classification) and ICF/DD-N rates with the exception of a proposed increase of 76 cents per client day for some 7-15 bed facilities.

Our Governor continues his position that rates should be reduced by 15%. Be aware that there is a 3.8% increase for long term care which is primarily for nursing homes only and does not impact ICF/DD-H or ICF/DD-N rates. It would be applied as an offset to the proposed 15% provider rate reduction in the nursing home categories. Thus, if enacted as proposed by the Governor, nursing homes would be cut 11.2% on average. For 7-15 bed ICF/DD-H’s, the cut would be 14.5%.

Others would remain with the 15% proposed cut.

The Developmental Services Network, the trade association of ICF/DD-H and ICF/DD-N providers (Mountain Shadows is a member) continues to push for no reductions to our rates and implementation of a DSN quality enhancement proposal that would result in an actual and significant rate increase of 6%.

Board President Dick Marris surfs the best—Fiji’s Tavarua

(This is the first in a series of profiles on MSSG board members.)

Normally, Dick Marris is nattily dressed in suit and tie. That’s how he looks as volunteer board president and as partner in the insurance firm Marris, Maddocks and Associates.

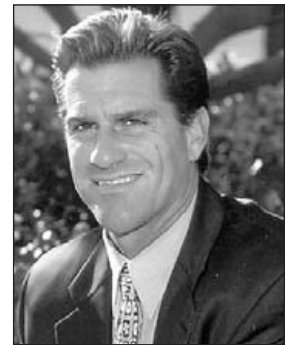
But when Marris goes surfing, as he frequently does, he lets his hair down and gets seriously casual. Recently, Marris—with 30 friends and family—took on the big kahuna of Tavarua Island in Fiji. Talk about seriously casual!

Joining him for two weeks in paradise on this storied island (hosting some of the best surf in the world) were wife Jill and 6-year-old son Jack. “Our group had the entire eight-acre island to ourselves,” said Marris. Tavarua waves are legendary for three awesome breaks, including Cloudbreak.

Marris showed us a copy of a four-spread photo in a surf publication done on his trip, and of course Tavarua looks dreamy. But when you see a major shot of Marris wave sliding the center of a triple overhead (18 feet) barrel, you get a better idea of what the “ideal get-away” is like.

Marris served the Home of Guiding Hands (HGH) for many years, and in a similar leadership role heads the MSSG Board of Directors. HGH serves 150 persons with developmental disabilities. Mountain Shadows cares for 117 such residents. Add those numbers and you get 267 reasons why Marris is dedicated to our cause.

With vast experience as board member and board president, Marris vaults a variety of knowledge and skills about the developmental services field.



Dick Marris

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Additionally, he is Insurance Consultant to the Developmental Services Network, the state's leading association for ICF/DD-H and ICF/DD-N providers.

Marrs is considered an expert in insurance services for care facilities. He currently handles insurance coverage for Mountain Shadows and knows the special needs and legal ramifications of providers. With good reason, Marrs is friend to our residents, staff, and many parents.

His volunteer work extends to other agencies serving developmentally disabled individuals, such as United Cerebral Palsy. As past chair and steering committee person for the Mountain Shadows Golf Classic, his efforts were integral to the raising of over \$100,000 in enrichment monies. Marrs also has been honored as one of MSSG's "Persons of the Year".

So how was Tavarua? "Still Great!" Marrs said. "It

was my first trip back in 14 years, when Jill and I went with another group of Point Loma surfers. There have been quite a few improvements in this time. Now they have indoor plumbing and a swimming pool and tennis court. But the vibe has not changed."

Was the surf up? Like moon in the sky. According to Tavarua locals, the Marrs travelers enjoyed the best surf period of the year to date. Cloudbreak rumbled huge to triple overhead, and the world's coolest rides lasted 15 seconds. Then a cyclone hit right after they left. The reefs, known for pitching, hard-breaking, hollow over shallow coral bottom, provides authentic at-risk adventure.

"What's really unique about Tavarua is you live in authentic Polynesian lifestyle: no phones, faxes, computers, or cars. Credit the vision and dedication and generosity of the Fijian people." ■

Latifa Bentaous, former Moroccan RN, cares

In 1996, Latifa Bentaous came to Escondido as a tourist. She like what she saw and stuck around, making this area her home after working as a registered nurse in Casablanca, Morocco for twenty years.

Today Latifa, 49, is Relief Team Leader for Tangelo. She is dedicated to Tangelo and loves the work: "What do I like best about my job? Everything. All my time is the best when I'm here. For me, it's like family." Latifa has one daughter, Abdessama. It means "server of God" in Moroccan.

Latifa's family of six sisters, one brother, and mom and dad, remains in Casablanca. There three of her sisters work in healthcare. Naima is a nurse's assistant. Rita and Houra are licensed vocational nurses. "Helping other people is in our blood," Latifa said. "We love aiding others."

In her tenure at Casablanca's Ibn-roch Hospital—the largest hospital in Africa—Latifa worked 12 years in intensive care, four years

in surgery, and four years in plastic surgery. Latifa uses her intensive care unit experience every day at Mountain Shadows. "There are many parallels, such as grooming and bathing," she said. "Thus my work here comes easy to me, and I am good at it."

Latifa's career at MSCH began nearly three years ago after reading a position want ad in the Penny Saver. She began as a "noc" working nights in Maple and was promoted to relief leader in Tangelo. There she plans to continue well into the future, and "would like to work up to a position as Team Leader or Residential Coordinator." Currently she works the 5-9 a.m., 4-8 p.m. split shift.

The Casablanca native is well traveled—and spoken. Latifa speaks Spanish, Arabic languages, Moroccan, French, and English. She has visited and worked in France, Italy, and Belgium. "It was not problem finding contract RN work," Latifa said.

Her nursing background also

helps her in "anticipating residents' needs." No one resident is her favorite. "All my residents are fantastic," Latifa said. "I like everybody." She remains grateful for the opportunities Mountain Shadows provides her. "Every day there is something different. And I get so much motivation and help from [QMRP] Lale Laubach and [Team Leader] Sharon Fabian. They work hand in hand with you."

Latifa is quick to point out that there's nothing like Mountain Shadows in Morocco. "We don't have a facility like this in my country. It doesn't exist. If you are a person with disability, you are either cared for by family or you are out homeless on Moroccan streets. That is the difference between the Third World countries and America."

Latifa misses her family, but has taken to life in the U.S. "Here, there is freedom. America is such a fantastic country. There is a lot of opportunity to be someone, even if in your own country you were nobody." ■



Keith and Ivan Mitchell: an arresting Circus pair

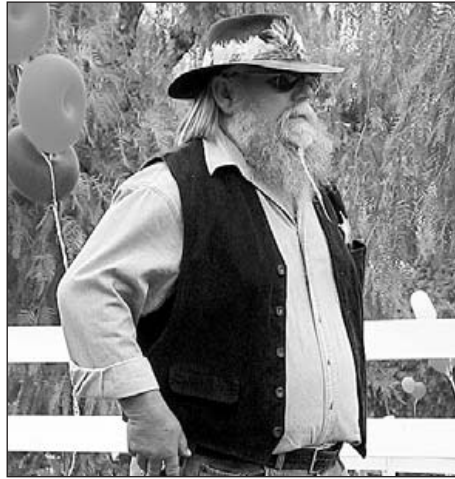
When dad Keith Mitchell took to the blacktop as Circus Day law enforcement officer, sheriff, and jailer, son Ivan assisted him in the lucrative business of arresting and releasing felonious residents.

Since the 2000 Circus, Keith has lent a constabulary hand, collecting on the coming and going of slammer detainees. It cost one ticket to have someone arrested (there doesn't have to be a reason) and two tickets to bail that person out. Last year, Keith added two six guns and a marshal's star to his cowboy outfit. He walks in the parade and then gets *real* busy. "There are a lot of people who need arresting," Keith said. "We've never had an escape."

Never mind that a Circus jail sentence lasts only a few minutes and that it's a play thing, like mind candy. "My job is arresting people," said Keith. "All it takes is someone pointing a finger—and bribing me with one ticket."

How many are jailed on Circus Day? "They're countless," said Keith. "And a lot of people we corral more than once as repeat offenders. We can stack six persons at a time in the jail house."

Keith's Circus Day involvement is just one of his many participations as a Mountain Shadows dad. At the Halloween Dance, he stayed late, collecting trash and mopping floors until late with Executive Director Wade Wilde. This year, after several years as a "buddy," Keith moved up to coach of the MSCH Padres team in the Buddy Challenger Baseball League. Mountain Shadows has two Buddy Challenger teams—the other is the Yankees. They are largely a wheel-



Circus Day Marshal Keith Mitchell

chair bunch. Ambulatory residents of MSCH play on other Challenger teams.

A buddy helps players like Ivan swing the bat, push the wheelchair to the ball, help pick it up and throw. As coach, he does a *lot* more.

Keith is a retired Pacific Bell service technician, the man who came to your house to install a line or phone jacks. He also operates Transfusion Wire Werks, a company that provides Pac-Bell type services—only cheaper. Call him at (760) 941-1149.

Ivan, now 20, has been living at Jacaranda for 11 years. Dad shows him with attention and shares the ball field at Jesmond Dene Park with Ivan every Sunday in the April-to-June season. (QMRP Fred Lindahl calls the two "quite the loving pair.") Among Ivan's favorite things: being in water and "riding on a bumping road with the wind in his face."

A student at San Pasqual High School, Ivan prefers country and Hindi music and "gets a big kick out of being pushed around on the ball field." Considered a lower

functioning resident, Ivan—who cannot speak—nonetheless makes choices and cues his preferences on music or going outside for some fresh air.

In his "spare time" Keith and his youngest daughter Bailey, 12, do Tae Kwon Do three times a week. Keith is a black belt. Bailey is just two belts back, with brown. "We're hopping most of the time," said Keith. Others in Keith's Vista home cast are wife Cathleen and son Graham, 16.

Keith also goes activist as needed. When son Ivan broke an arm at school due to faulty equipment, Keith arranged a meeting with teacher and principal. They thought he was going to sue, but the dad just wanted the program fixed—and he got it done. "I know I could sue you people for negligence," Keith said. "But the thought of making money off my son makes me ill. But I might change my mind if the problem isn't corrected."

"I want Ivan to be as good as he can be," Keith said. "I want to ensure that Ivan is happy and well cared for."

Ivan's father admits he was at first scared of placing Ivan in a care facility. "I wanted to be sure of the place," Keith said. "Then I saw Mountain Shadows and I told my wife it's the best place I've seen."

Ivan is stocky, like his dad. The youth stands 5'7" tall, has dark hair and a rugged look to go with a warm, gentle demeanor. "He like to be read to," said Keith. "But he definitely has people preferences. If you're not a nice person, he doesn't gravitate toward you." ■

All green and go on St. Pat's Day



Saint Patrick would have been proud to be at Mountain Shadows on his feted day here, March 17.

We served up a culinary success in a party hosted at the main office.

Activities Director Donna Ponomarenko fed green to hungry residents looking for a mid-day snack. The menu: green cupcakes, green punch, and green ice cream as minty chocolate chip.

“We really enjoyed ourselves,” said Ponomarenko. Brian Stafford of Willow House liked the ice cream best. Patricia Gregory of Orange House “had a good time with all my friends.” Wayne Miller of Tangelo House blended in nicely with his green holiday hair.

Check out our web site

Biographies of our distinguished MSSG board members are available on the Internet at

<http://www.mountainshadows.ws>.

Plus, you will find regular updates on what's new. Check us out and keep current on what's happening or look at back issues of this newsletter. And while you're visiting, be sure to give us your e-mail address and comments.



Donations accepted here

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