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Vaquero roping a steer
Edward Borein

A Roundup of California Tales

Special Thanks to

*Bob Braly, Rob Frost, Bill King and Rusty Richards
for taking us "inside history with inside stories"*

Research Team

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A Roundup of California Tales

by
Beth Miller

The tiny yellow flowers, on stalks so tall that they stretched almost up to the horse's withers, hid the bawling calf. The vaquero gave his caballo a gentle tug of the reins for the chase up the hill. His reata was ready. He couldn't do his job without the leather rope. It was spring. The run through the mustard. The roundup was on a cloudless day with gentle sunshine. The rainfall in the earlier months had meant prosperity. The cattle from the different ranchos were sorted as the visiting rancheros cooperated in a roundup and then branded the calves. A lively fiesta and barbeque would follow. But throughout the years, the weather was not always dependable.

In the early 1800s, there were approximately 3 million in cattle in California. But the devastating floods, that took place on and off throughout the mid-1800s, were followed by droughts that wiped out three-fourths of the herds. It was a miserable sight and a calamitous time. Cattle prices plummeted. The economic disaster forced the rancheros to subdivide their land. They were land rich and cash poor. After selling off some of their lands, the ranchers were required to fence in their stock. By 1900, there were 72,000 ranches in California. The cattle industry would survive. The vaqueros' spirit of friendship, along with their equestrian skills, would endure and be inherited by the modern-day cowboy.

Within this historic legacy, the Los Rancheros Visitadores (The Visiting Ranchers) commenced. Ninety men were in the saddle for the first official Rancheros ride on May 9, 1930.

It had all started in 1929 when a small group of Santa Barbara families and friends, set out for a few days of riding and camping in the Santa Ynez Valley. They were led and organized by western artist Ed Borein and his friend Elmer Awl, a landscape artist and estate manager. They would later be joined by successful aviation executive director, John J. Mitchell, who was also a devoted rider and keenly interested in ranching history.

Mitchell would serve as Los Rancheros president for 25 years. Adolfo Camarillo served on the planning committee of the first official ride in 1930. They issued invitations to riders. There was a ban on automobiles. Women could not participate. The riders would bring their own utensils, bedroll and horse.



Adolfo Camarillo (center) crossing Santa Ynez River

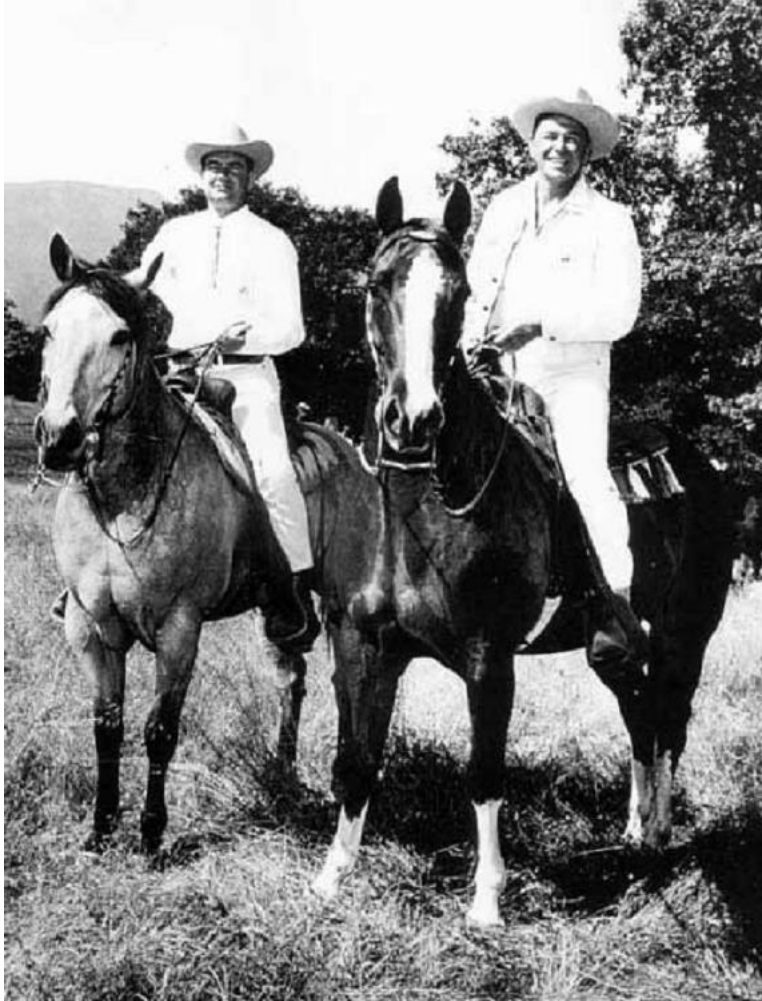
Adolfo, his sons-in-law and grandsons-in-law, would participate in numerous rides. By 1946 Adolfo was still active in Rancheros. He was 81 years old. Meliton Ortiz, the guardian of the Camarillo White Horses, played a crucial role in managing the day-to-day arrangements for a smooth trail ride. Rancheros would divide amongst themselves into groups called “camps.”



Adolfo with Campo Adolfo. He is number 17 Son-in-law Harold Burket is number 21.

One of the largest and oldest camps in Los Rancheros Visitadores was Campo Adolfo which was established in 1933. Robert "Bob" Emmett Clark (brother of Thomas S. Clark, Ventura County Board of Supervisors) along with Adolfo Camarillo helped found Campo Adolfo.

In 1937, Bob Clark's son, William Pettit Clark-Bill, Sr., made his first ride. He was quickly voted trail boss. Over the years he won several Ranchero awards for horsemanship. In the late 1950s Bob's grandson, (William Patrick Clark—Bill, Jr.—future National Security Advisor to President Ronald Reagan) joined the group and became a third-generation member in Los Rancheros Visitadores. Clarks still ride in the Rancheros today.



May 6, 1967 William P. Clark, Jr. and CA Gov. Ronald Reagan on Rancheros ride

Ed Borein was commissioned to design an official Los Rancheros Visitadores emblem. It was struck as a medallion for all members.



Retired Newhall Ranch cowboy, Bob Braly, recalled a tale of Rancho rides. "Ronald Reagan was a Rancho. Everyone was very pleased to greet him," said Bob. The former president had started riding when he was governor of California. "Later, after the presidency, he would come by the Rancheros for visits." Bob also rode at the same time as several members of the Camarillo family.

"I worked with cattle all my life and had been vice-president in charge of livestock for the Newhall Land and Farming Company." His good friend, rancher and actor, Joel McCrea would regularly stop by the office to talk about work and cattle, recalled Bob.

"Joel and his son would help with branding." "It took a few hours and afterwards everyone would meet for lunch. Like the vaqueros of Old California, cowboys "enjoy helping and working their horses," explained Bob.

Another friend, Bill King of Los Alamos, joined Los Rancheros in 1986. He and Santa Paula rancher, Rob Frost, were Mavericks together. "Mavericks are first year members. We became close friends," said Bill.

"It's a fun time with no malice," said Rob. The waiting list to become a member is long and sometimes the wait can be ten years or more.

Rob's membership had been sponsored by Judge Bill Clark's father. The Frost and Clark families are very close. Rob's aunt was recruited to be secretary for the president of Shell Oil, a Clark family member. The Clarks are the "most respected and admired family I know," said Rob. "They could eat biscuits and gravy or caviar. They never forgot their roots."

Rusty Richards, who had been on many Rancho rides, said the "Maverick year is a time of bonding." Everyone holds the same things in common: love of family, friends, horses and country. Rusty, a twenty-one year member of the Sons of the Pioneers, often sang and recited his cowboy poetry for the Mavericks.

Bill King also recalled sitting next to Ronald Reagan, who "could take five questions at a time," from the eager Rancheros. "He played fair," said Bill about Reagan's jokes. "He gave it and could take it."

Reagan regaled with stories and in turn was entertained with a rendition of his favorite song “Cool Water.” Bill King, along with other camp performers, sang the song to the former president.

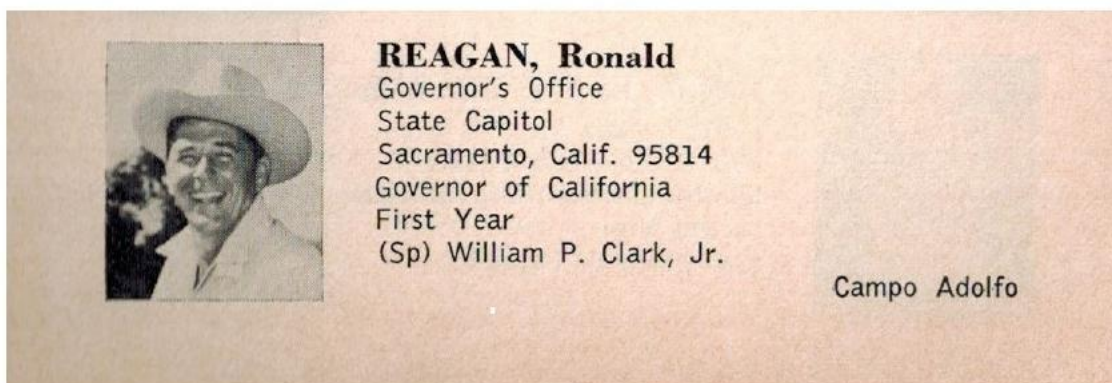
Below is a link to “Cool Water” performed by the Sons of the Pioneers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDtCa8ZgAk>



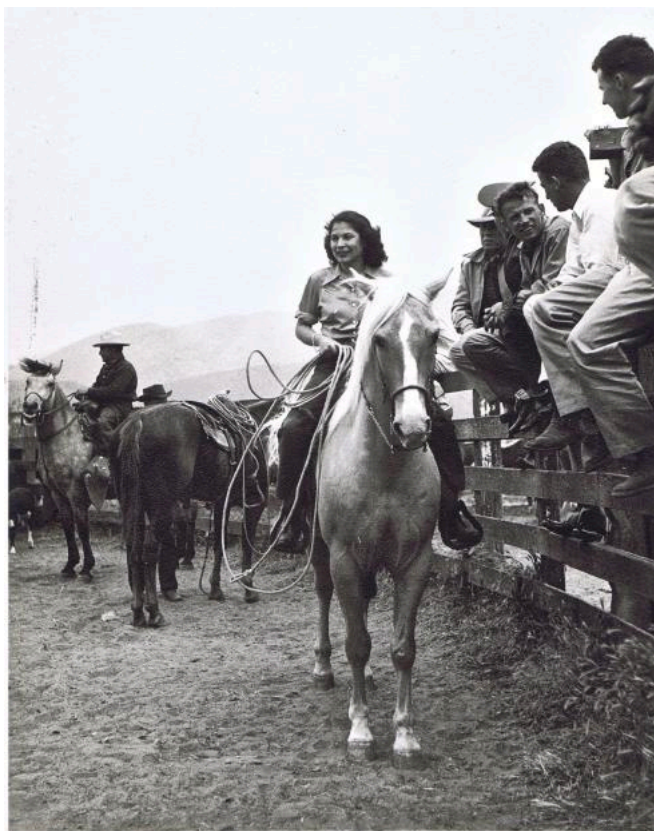
1968 - Rancheros Visitadores Roster - Guest section

Governor Ronald Reagan is being sponsored by *William Patrick Clark* (son of *William Pettit Clark*).



Cattlemen have their ways of networking and Bill King knew members of the Camarillo family. His grandmother was close to Adolfo's daughter, Carmen. He also knew Adolfo's grandson-in-law, Tom Marvel, of Nevada.

"The Marvels are all famous, award winning cattlemen," recalled Bill. "There was one who was a descendant of old California rancheros. Rosita (*Adolfo's granddaughter*) grew up with the Camarillo White Horses. She outrode the Nevada cowboys!"



Rosita Camarillo Petit Marvel
Granddaughter of Adolfo Camarillo

Just as the Camarillos are related to actor/rancher and Los Rancho member, Leo Carrillo, Bill King is also related to the famous Californian through his grandmother, who was Leo's cousin. When Bill's grandmother passed, "Leo sent a beautiful letter to my family."

Old California history crisscrossed through Bill's memories as he told the story when in the 1920s, Leo's father asked the younger Carrillo to stop at a Nipomo adobe to visit an old friend. Leo's most beloved heirloom of early California was

the adobe. He had studied architecture and was impressed by the 1839 Nipomo adobe home designed by Captain Dana. In the 1930s, Leo would restore an adobe in Carlsbad for his own home. Adolfo would send Leo a welcome gift of a horse, cow and mule.

Leo and his brother would preserve the California adobe heritage. In 1940 the two would spearhead the restoration of an adobe in Santa Barbara that would become a Los Rancheros Museum. It would exhibit artifacts from the rancho days.

When Leo had stopped by the Nipomo ranch he found “an old man chopping wood at the Dana Adobe,” said Bill. Vaqueros had once rode through these hills. Leo learned that the Carrillos were related to the Danas when sea captain, William G. Dana married Maria Josefa Carrillo in 1828. They are also related to Richard Henry Dana, the famous lawyer and author of the memoir, Two Years Before the Mast.

From his front porch of his adobe home, Captain Dana could watch vaqueros working the cattle. The Californios tried unsuccessfully to trade with ships for their rope. Ropes were necessary equipment and the crews would never give them up. So the resourceful vaqueros came up with a solution using a material that was in abundant supply. The flat cowhides were carefully cut into concentric circles making one long strip. Then the strips were braided together into a leather rope.

Bill also knew Ed Borein, western artist, and Leo Carrillo through the Los Rancheros connection. Adolfo’s daughter, Carmen, was also close friends with Ed Borein and her cousin Leo. While visiting the Camarillo Ranch, Borein did a quick drawing for Carmen, on plain brown paper. It became a Camarillo family treasure. “Ed Borein was the greatest artist of cowboys,” said Bill King.

Another western artist that Bill knew was Luis Ortega, who specialized in leather work. Ortega recreated the artistry of the vaqueros who painstakingly braided the leather hides into reatas. He had set up a leather shop in Santa Barbara. “Too bad my family just didn’t take a reata instead of the ten dollars rent for the shop,” laughed Bill.

Luis Ortega’s precision rawhide work is prized by collectors and recognized by museums. The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma

acquired 24 pieces of his work. The vaquero galloped through the mustard holding his indispensable reata. In the passage of time, it went from necessary equipment to a recognized work of art.



Rawhide artistry by Luis Ortega

For many years Joel McCrea was active at the museum. According to the book, Los Rancheros Visitadores: The First Fifty Years, “trustees of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame voted one of the founders of Los Rancheros Visitadores, Mr. Jack Mitchell, their gold medal for achievement. The award was presented by Joel McCrea” in 1979, who, like the vaqueros enjoyed riding.

In 2016 Rancho Rusty Richards received a Western Heritage award from the museum. And it came full circle as Joel’s grandson, Wyatt McCrea, of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame, informed Rusty of the honor.

This has been a roundup of tales, from the vaqueros to the Los Rancheros and their stories of California history and its many connections to the past and the present.

Or as Rancho Bill King explained, “inside history with inside stories.”

In support of the statewide efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19, Los Rancheros Visitadores cancelled their 90th annual ride this year.

Do you have a story you’d like to share? Please contact Karin Farrin!

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The following pages are from the Camarillo Ranch Digital File

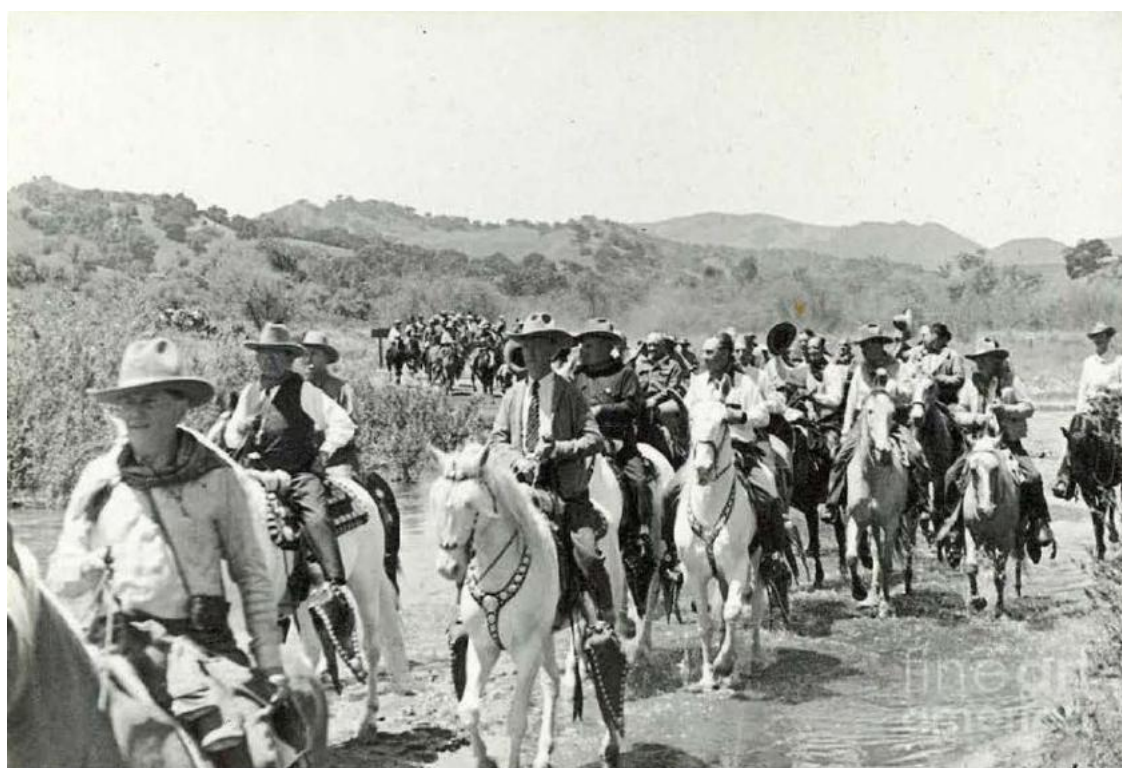


Ed Borein's drawing for Carmen Camarillo

Undated



Crossing the Santa Ynez River Adolfo Camarillo (left)



Nearing Mission Santa Ines Adolfo Camarillo second row left



Mission Santa Inez (Left: Adolfo)



Adolfo Camarillo, Jack Mitchell, unknown and Leo Carrillo at Mission Santa Inez
Mitchell was Rancharo president for 25 years.



ADVICE—E. J. Carrillo, New York World's Fair construction engineer, left, aids his brother, Leo Carrillo, in putting finishing touches on Rancho Visitadores museum.

Visitadores Open Museum

Relics of Ranch Life
to Be Displayed in
Famed Adobe Mansion

SANTA BARBARA, Oct. 15.—
National headquarters of Los
Rancheros Visitadores, that com-

The Carrillo brothers worked on Los Rancheros Museum LA Times 1946

SOCIETY NEWS

Camarillions Have Dinner Party

Honoring friends who leave May 4 on their annual Rancheros Visitadores trek through Santa Barbara County, Adolfo Camarillo and his daughter, Miss Carmen, entertained at their ranch home in Camarillo on past Thursday evening.

Their guests included John Mott and Louis Rico of Los Angeles, Leo Carrillo, motion picture actor of Hollywood, James Richard of Santa Barbara, Alfred Petit, George Fitzgerald and A. K. Kingeman of Camarillo, Dr. C. R. Tilley, Roy Witman, Jack Milligan, Edward Maxwell and Fred Nobel of Oxnard, George Randall and John Lagomarsino of Ventura.

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MONDAY, MAY 2, 1949

OXNARD PRESS-COURIER — PHONE 57

Los Rancheros To Ride Again

Los Rancheros Visitadores, who annually relive a page of California's past in a week-long ride through the mountains north of Santa Barbara, will begin this year's trek on Saturday.

Members and guests from 25 states, Hawaii, and Canada will ride.

Led by Adolfo Camarillo, the Ventura County riders are expected to include:

Mayor Edwin L. Carty, Marshal Robert E. Clark, Police Chief William F. Clark, Joseph W. Cummings, Ward Daniels, Robert C. Davis, A. J. Dingeman, Robert Doud, Harold E. Burket, George Caswell, John Broome, Judge Charles F. Blackstock, Gordon Wiggett, F. C. Hutchins, Edwin Jans, Jr., John A. Lagomarsino, Robert Livingston, James D. McCormick, Hubert McCormick, Alfred McGonigle, Robert Maulhardt, Edward C. Maxwell, John Newman;

Robert H. Pearson, Hugh L. Sellers, Jr., Charles R. Tilley, August Thille, Clarence D. Woolsey, William A. Worthington, Dr. Louis Achenbach, J. R. Canterbury, and Mike Erburu.

Oxnard Press-Courier dated Monday, May 2, 1949

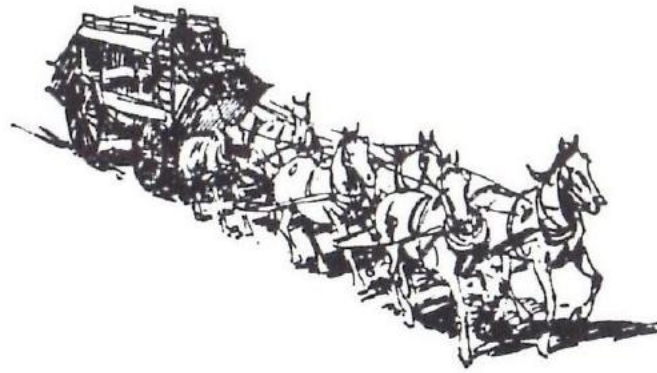
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Campo Adolfo



Either 1940 or 1946 - Ride of Los Rancheros Visitadores (RVs) - Front row on far left is Adolfo Camarillo and 3 Camarillo White Horses (the 4th CWH is behind Adolfo Camarillo). Due to the CWHs in their silver saddles, etc., the RVs are most likely en route to Mission Santa Ines for the blessing of the padres. **Walt Disney** attended both the 1940 and the 1946 RV rides. **Leo Carrillo** is in front row on the far right.

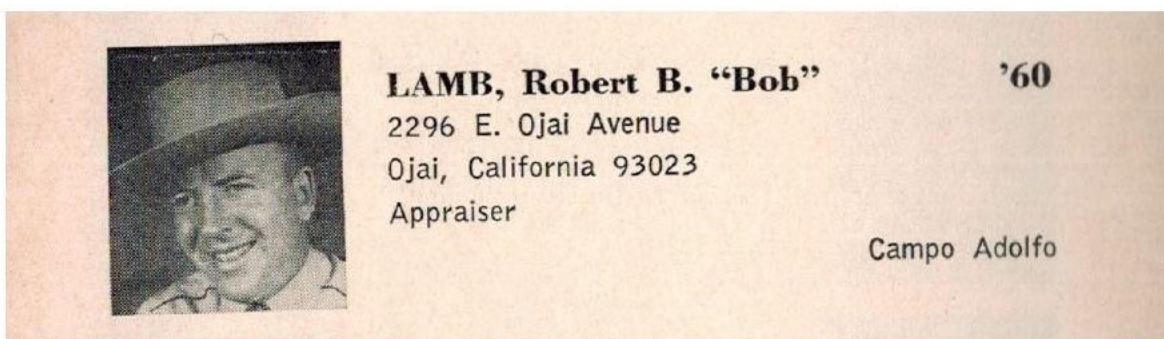
1968 - Rancheros Visitadores Roster - "The date appearing opposite each member's name in the Roster is the first ride that qualified him to make application for Membership, and not the year he became a Regular Member of Rancheros Visitadores."

* Los Viejos Member



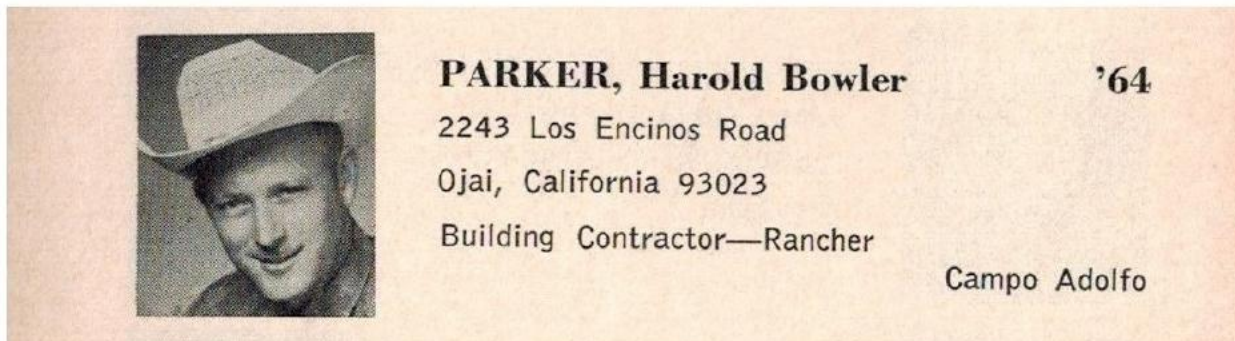
Husband of Isabella Camarillo Burket (daughter of Adolfo and Isabel Camarillo).

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Robert "Bob" Bertram Lamb, II, is the husband of Susana Burket (daughter of Harold and Isabella (Camarillo) Burket). Bob Lamb is the father of Robert "Bert" Bertram Lamb, III (who married Linda Harper).

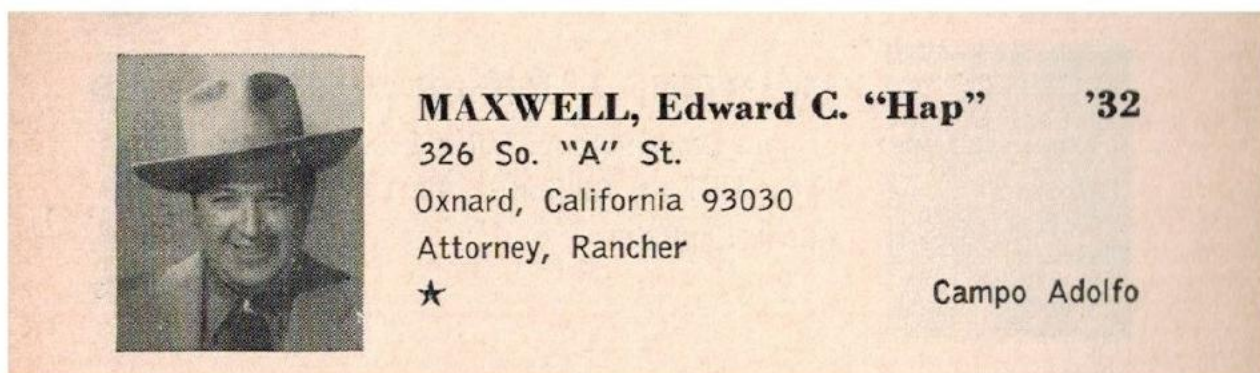
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Husband of Francisca "Paquita" Burket Parker (daughter of Harold and Isabella (Camarillo) Burket).

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[The Camarillo Ranch photo file has some photographs of Edward "Hap" Maxwell on the RV rides.]

Adolfo was so impressed with Hap Maxwell's Cadillac that he ordered one just like it. A new midnight blue 1940 Series 62 Cadillac, just like his good friend Hap. It was Adolfo's first Cadillac.

Easter Sunday March 26th 1932

The Threshold Betwixt the World and Home I mark the Bounds.
My Heart awakes when'er the Knochers sounds;

Name.	Address.	Date.	Remarks.
Jeanie Bicker	Miso Canyon	Easter Sunday, 1932	I have found The Spirit
Jud A. Hare	254 th Santa Clara	Easter Sunday 1932	OF Easter - I shall never forget.
E. O. Jones	Post Hill	Easter Sunday 1932	In this Easter Sunday
Alfredo Puckerton	Rancho del Caballito	Easter " "	or Puckerton's Anniversary?
Ray Puckerton 37	" " "	" " "	Gracias!! Encote!!
Elmer M. Awl	Rancho Juan y Lolita	May 15-'32	" " " " "8
Peggy Lenton	Santa Barbara	" " "	Rancheros Visitadores Vivi
Ignacio L. Mott	San Francisco	July 1 st 1932	O keerio!
Gene Tillinghast	Los Angeles	Aug 17, 1932	The wonderful home
Robert M. Cole	San Diego	Aug 17, 1932	and a great view I have
Thomas Norman Temple	Mokua Homestead Fuente	17 Aug 1932 -	Spacious
			Hospitality & - welcome
			Adios - Hasta la Fiesta -

A page from the Camarillo Ranch guest book

Elmer Awl (sixth name) was one of the original founders and organizers of Los Rancheros Visitadores. He came to the Camarillo Ranch May 15, 1932.



Elmer Awl's Rancheros sombrero with hatband created by artist Luis Ortega.

President Ronald Reagan on Los Rancheros Visitadores
“It’s an old Spanish custom”

Rancheros has always been an enjoyable experience for me. One of the songs that best sums up the sentiment of Rancheros is “It’s an old Spanish custom.” I’d like to share the words with you now.

It’s an old Spanish custom
 for rancheros to ride
 over mountains to the valley
 stalwart horsemen side-by-side.

It’s an old Spanish custom.
 We’re riding again,
 but a bright main moon is shining.
 We’re a valiant group of men.

It’s an old Spanish custom
 for rancheros to ride
 and to visit haciendas
 where the doors are always open wide.

It’s an old Spanish custom.
 We’re drinking a toast.
 Lift your glasses higher, higher
 for tonight we’re drinking to our host.

So, get out your boots and your saddle,
 a bandana ‘round your neck.
 Give the cinch a final check.
 Dig your spurs and start the trek.

Let’s all be glad we’re rancheros
 for we date back to Cortez,
 and the old tradition says
 we meet again in Santa Ynez.

Let’s be caballeros.
 Cast our cares all aside.
 It’s an old Spanish custom,
 so let us ride, ride, ride.

Mission bells toll our parting.
 We all know deep inside
 it’s an old Spanish custom,
 so, we ride, ride, ride.

