



The Camarillo White Horses and Tournament of Roses Parade

by

Bev Taylor

The Rose Parade It is an iconic New Year's tradition. You may have watched it for

years. You looked for your favorite float or band. Of course, it is a very special part of New Year's Day and Pasadena's making a place for itself on the map.

The parade was first staged by the Valley Hunt Club, a new social club in Pasadena in 1890. The main idea was for the new Californians to showcase their state's mild winter weather, a place where flowers bloomed all year long in sharp contrast to the East and Midwest.

In that first parade, Grand Marshal, Francis Rowland and Hunt Club president, Charles Holder, mounted their horses and led the first parade through Pasadena. They were followed by flowered-covered carts and carriages and other horses and riders decorated with roses and a display of all of the flowers that bloom here in the winter. Equestrian units have remained an irreplaceable part of the parade. A wide variety of horse breeds have been in the parade: Curly Horses, American Saddlebreds, Miniature Horses, Andalusians, Draft Horses, Gypsy Cobs and Camarillo Whites Horses.



This flower-decked carriage won first prize in the 1895 Rose Parade

COUNTY HORSES TO LEAD PARADE AT TOURNAMENT

**A. Camarillo's Famous White
"Sultan" Will be at Head
of Great Procession**

OXNARDERS TO RIDE

**Charles Donlon, Fred Noble, A.
Camarillo and Abe Hobson
Among Leaders**

A. Camarillo's nationally known white stallion "Sultan" will lead the Tournament of Roses parade in Pasadena tomorrow.

Harry M. Tichnor, chairman of the tournament committee selected A. Camarillo's famous horse as the finest in the state. Mr. Tichnor will ride the thoroughbred at the head of the procession. "Sultan" has been in some of the biggest processions in California and is known all over the country.

Oxnard and Ventura county will be well represented in the monster parade, for in addition to "Sultan", there will be four other beautiful animals from this section in the lead. Charles Donlon, A. Camarillo, Fred Noble and A. L. Hobson, riding their wonderful black horses, will in all probability follow just back of Harry Tichnor. All of the black horses will have silver mounted saddles. The riders and their mounts promise to be one of the outstanding features of the procession.

Oxnard Daily Courier
December 31, 1925

Nationally known white stallion, Sultan, in 1926 led the Tournament of Roses Parade with Chairmen of the parade, Harry M. Tichnor riding. "Mr. Tichnor will ride the thoroughbred at the head of the parade," reports the Oxnard Daily Currier. Following Mr. Tichnor will be a group of four beautiful black horses all with silver mounted saddles. Riding these horses will be Charles Donlon, Adolfo Camarillo, Fred Noble and A.L. Hobson.



1926 Program

Ventura County Star dated
Monday, December 31, 1934

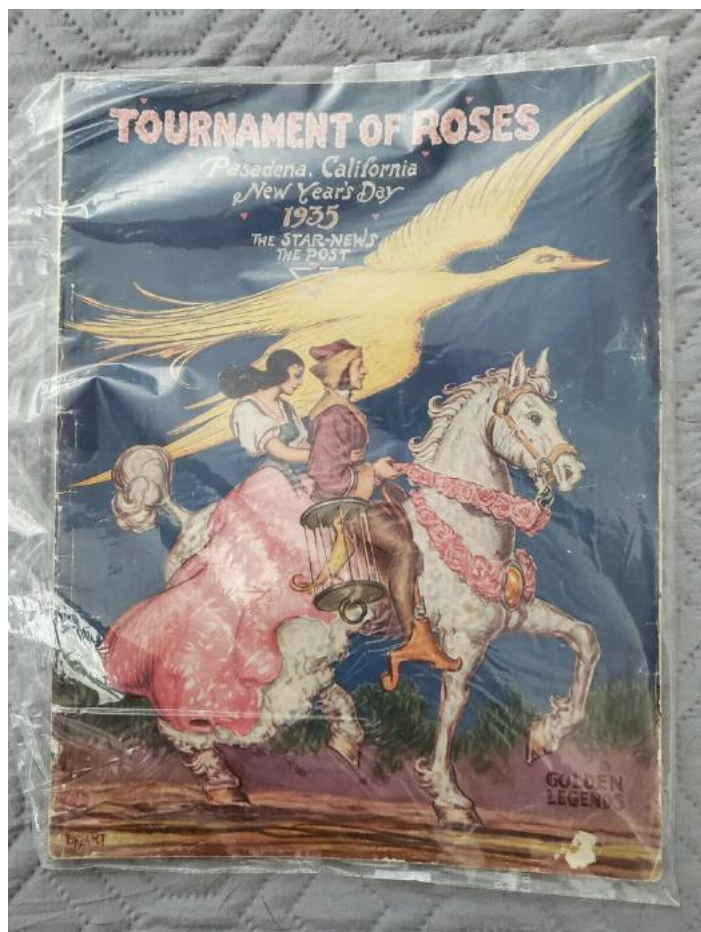
**TO RIDE IN
ROSE PARADE**

**Camarillo White Mounts To
Have Place In Line
Of March**

Seven of the white Arabian steeds from the Camarillo ranch stables will be in the line of march tomorrow when the Tournament of Roses parade wends its annual way through the main streets of Pasadena.

Sultan, the king of the stables, will be ridden by Miss Carmen Camarillo, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Adolfo Camarillo; and other riders and their mounts will be Mr. and Mrs. Harold Burket of Ventura, son-in-law and daughter of the Camarillos, on Diamante and Gavillan; Frank Camarillo, a son, on Borracho; Alfred Petit, a son-in-law, and Johnnie Petit, his son, on Favorita and a new horse; and Mrs. Roy Jones of Santa Barbara on Rico.

The women riders are to be garbed in red satin Spanish dresses and the men in black Spanish suits.



1935 Program

Camarillo White Horses, ridden by members of the Camarillo family, were in the 1935 parade. The riders were attired in Spanish costumes. They were Adolfo's daughters, Carmen Camarillo, Isabella Camarillo Burket and her husband, Harold, Adolfo's son, Frank "Pancho" Camarillo, grandson John Petit and son-in-law, Alfred Petit.

In 1937, the D.N. Booher float "In Memoriam", was escorted by Adolfo Camarillo and four other Camarillo White Horses and riders in the first section of the Rose Parade. That same year Leo Carrillo, on a Palomino, was an honorary Division Marshal. Carrillo and Adolfo, whose roots in California stretch back to the 1769 Portola Expedition, were related through Adolfo's mother, Martina Hernandez Camarillo.



Carmen Camarillo 1938
Costume for Rose Parade crafted by Camarillo relation, Adele Hernandez Flynn

In 1951, wearing Spanish costumes and riding the six Camarillo White Horses, Carmen Camarillo led a group of riders all on Camarillo White Horses with matching silver saddles. The LA Times wrote, "Adolfo Camarillo has been for several years an outstanding figure in every

tournament parade.” Adolfo was invited to participate, but respectfully declined. Riding in the 1951 parade, were his daughter, Carmen Camarillo, granddaughters, Gloria Petit Longo, Paquita Burket Parker and along with family friend Mrs. Arcaida McDermott and Paquita’s two sorority sisters Barbara Wallace and Ferne Geissinger as reported from “The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta” of the Alpha Iota chapter of UCLA.



January 1951 Left to Right:
Gloria Petit Longo, Arcaida McDermott,
Carmen Camarillo, Barbara Wallace, Ferne Geissinger, Paquita Burket Parker

Lead Tournament Of Roses Parade In Pasadena

THREE of the six girls who led Pasadena's famed Tournament of Roses Parade on New Years Day were Gamma Phi Betas from Alpha Iota chapter at U.C.L.A. They are, left to right, Paquita Burkett, Barbara Wallace and Ferne Geissinger.

Dressed in glimmering red satin gowns, the six lovely equestriennes rode matching white horses with matching silver saddles. The horses are owned by Adolfo Camarillo, early California settler. Paquita is a granddaughter of Mr. Camarillo.)))

PAT TILTON, U.C.L.A.

“The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta” March 1951



1989 Tournament of Roses Program

Memories of the Rose Parade

After Carmen's death in 1987, the Camarillo White Horses were sold to various people in our county. Steven Petit, great-grandson of Adolfo, bought Concha. Joined by Priscilla Galgas, Nadine Webb, and Dr. Martin Gish a parade group was formed. The group was joined by Audra Seldeen, Tanya Lankopf and Judy Aronson. They continued to keep the horses before the public. This group rode in the Rose Parade from 1989 through 2000 missing only a couple of years to ensure that they would be able to ride in the Millennial, 2000 Rose Parade ...the big one!

All of the horse groups were competing to be in that parade. The Camarillo White Horses were lucky to be chosen." All of the horses rode during this period were from the Camarillo Ranch.

Both Audra and Harold Parker, Adolfo's great-grandson, speak of the time and effort it took to prepare the horses and riders for the parade. Audra calls it exhausting. "All of the saddles, bridles and breast collars had to be shined and cleaned, removing the tarnish from the silver. The horses had to be washed twice and put in the barn with sawdust to keep them clean," Audra recalls.

Harold remembers that when he was invited by the Gene Autry Museum to ride in the 1995 parade because he had an Edward Bohlin saddle. He said he took Poncho to Griffith Park daily for about a month to build his and Poncho's stamina. It is a project to put on "the show" as Martina Nicholson, Adolfo's great-granddaughter, called it. Poncho was a great horse for parades Parker recalls. He was proud, loved his own reflection in a large store window, or a car. At the end of the 1995 parade his ears were perky and he was still ready to go.

Harold shared with me in an interview that for the 1995 parade he wore black pants, white shirt and large traditional Mexican hat. His costume included a red sash, a sarape and most likely a vest or jacket. The TV personality George Putman rode in that group. All of the process standing ready to do what was needed for the horses was Meliton Ortiz the rock for caring for the Camarillo White Horses, Parker says. Audra adds, regarding Putman, that he road in parade after parade on a gorgeous Palomino.

Martina remembers at about 10 years old going with her mother, Carmelita FitzGerald Nicholson, to a hotel the night before her mother would be riding one of the white horses in the parade the next day. Carmen was worried that night about the big trailer and Meliton Ortiz getting everything ready. "It was a big show", Martina wrote in her notes to me. It was a big job to be ready for the parade. "The parties the night before had a lot of energy, socializing and drinking and some important people came to visit Aunt Carmen. I think Ronald Reagan came one evening to the hotel. You can be sure it was a big party!" remembers Martina.



Left, Meliton Ortiz and unknown man with Camarillo Ranch White Horse truck and trailer. Undated photo

As part of his duties, Meliton Ortiz was responsible for countless hours of Camarillo White Horse parade preparation. Since boyhood, he had worked and trained with Camarillo Ranch horses. Meliton always gave each horse thoughtful and skillful attention. When he feared the forthcoming iconic red parade costume might flutter in the wind and startle the horse during a

parade, Meliton devised the perfect solution. He wore the red dress and rode each Camarillo White Horse galloping around the Ranch as the costume flapped in the wind.

Meliton also enlisted the help of the Ranch children with the parade training. He had them bang on pots and pans to help the horses become less sensitive to noise. So the horses would gain experience and confidence with unforeseen objects, the children also helped Meliton by putting up make shift obstacle courses of sticks and logs and even splashing buckets of water in the training area.

Each horse was exercised daily for several weeks. Most were ridden several hours a day. Grooming included trimming excess hair on the horse's legs, chin and ears with an electric clipper. "Very few horses will stand to have a clipper in their ears," said Meliton in a 1975 Camarillo Daily News interview. Bathing is also important. "If you don't wash them all the time, their coats become yellow," explained Meliton.

The day before the parade, the horses are groomed, their tails combed, and one coat of silver paint applied to their hooves, reported the Camarillo Daily News. Afterwards, the horses wore blankets in their stalls. The morning of the parade, they were groomed again. One more coat of silver paint was applied. Then they were taken to the trailers. Back home after the parade, Meliton would release the horses into corrals where they were free to roll into dust to remove the feel of the saddles.

Meliton Ortiz holding up a parading costume



Meliton Ortiz explaining how he trained the Camarillo White Horses to be comfortable with the red dress.
Undated photo

Finally, it was much too much for everyone. Martina thinks they stop going in the late 1960s. The horses were not stabled overnight before the parade. And the priceless silver mounting had to be protected.

At the end of the parade, Audra says that when they dismount, their feet are numb and it is hard to stand. “We all high five and say, we made it to the end. We had been awake for more than 30 hours and very tired as were the horses. All of the horses received extra rations after a Rose Parade.

Everyone who participates or helps make it happen should receive an extra portion of gratitude for the joy they make happen. *Thank you so very much!*

The Tournament of Roses has cancelled the Parade for 2021. It will be one of the few times in its 132-year history that it has been cancelled. The other times were during the Second World War, 1942, 1943, and 1945. But there will still be a celebration, Sheryl Crow leads a long list of performers and celebrity guests.

*One Final Note...*One of the best parts of writing this has been the opportunity to ask members of the family and friends of the Camarillo White Horses for their stories and memories of the parade. I have been helped with an interview with Harold Parker and notes from Audra Seldeen and Martina Nicholson. I have incorporated many of Audra’s memories in this look back at the Rose Parade and the Camarillo White Horses. But I would like to bring you all of Audra’s memories as she shared them.



Photo courtesy of Camarillo White Horse Association

ROSE PARADE RECOLLECTIONS

1989 – 2000

by

Audra Seldeen

When Carmen Camarillo passed away in 1987, the famous Camarillo white horses were sold to various people in Ventura County. One great-grandson of Adolfo, Steven Petit, had bought Concha. He joined with Priscilla Galgas, Nadine Webb, and Dr. Martin Gish to form a parade group. Audra Seldeen, Tanya Lankopf and Judy Aronson joined the group and all continued to bring the horses before the public.

This group rode in the Rose Parade from 1989 up through the year 2000 missing only a couple of years to ensure they would be able to ride in the Millennial, 2000 Rose Parade...the big one! All the horse groups were competing to be accepted in this parade. The White Horses were lucky to be chosen.

The week prior to the parade, two representatives of the group were required to attend a Marshal's breakfast where the very strict rules were supplied; and everyone left understanding exactly where to park, what time to arrive, and what to do in all circumstances.

Our television commentary would always explain how Adolfo Camarillo had purchased Sultan in 1921 which began his legacy of the Camarillo White Horses and how Carmen Camarillo continued the tradition. We were careful to make sure they received credit for the fame of the horses.

The City of Camarillo was grateful to have their namesake (Adolfo's) historical horses representing the city in this important parade. While other Southern California Cities paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for their beautiful floats and received two minutes of air time, the Camarillo White Horses and the City would receive the same two minutes if worldwide TV coverage at no cost to the city. The City of Camarillo declared the Camarillo

White Horses as the official animal of the city with a beautiful written proclamation to that effect and listing all the horses had done for the city.

The Rose Parade provided an elegant celebration a few days before the parade in appreciation to all the equestrian groups and our group did not miss this. Sometimes it was held at the Pasadena Tournament of Roses House. Once it was held at the Gene Autry Museum. And once it was at the Rose Bowls Field when Roy Disney was the grand Marshal. Disney sponsored the event and spared no expense with ice sculptures, delicious food galore, live band entertainment and even more of the Disney characters appearing.

Getting ready for the parade was exhausting: All the saddles, bridles, and breast collars had to be shined and cleaned, removing the tarnish from the silver. The horses had to be washed twice, and put in a barn with sawdust to keep them clean. Equestrian Groups were required to arrive at midnight and stand on the freeways under bridges, all night. If a horse didn't tie, you would end up holding the horse by hand, all night. At 8 o'clock all riders must be mounted. Some years we were lucky and would have an early number such as 15 or 25; and we would get to start about 8:30 or 9:30. If we had an entry number of 70 or 120, you would be sitting in your saddle for hours before the parade began, and another two hours through the parade route.

The parade route was about 7 miles long. The most thrilling part was coming around the corner from Orange Avenue onto Colorado Boulevard. There were hundreds of TV cameras on dollies that would rise 20-40 feet in the air. Cameras from all over the USA and even foreign countries. This is where the paid-audience scaffolds for seating were placed; and where the horses would be most likely to unseat their rider, frightened because of the sudden crowd, noise and camera apparatus everywhere. To this day, I am amazed none of our group ever had to experience falling onto the hard asphalt.

The next seven miles were spent waving and saying, "Happy New Year!!!" to an audience of over a million people spread out on that long route-all friendly and waving back. Sometimes it was a sea of red because Ohio would be playing in the Rose Bowl and their color was red. Our outfits were also red, and they were convinced we were cheerleaders for their team...and sometimes we were-and they would go wild when we rode by clapping and cheering.

One year, we followed behind George Putman, the famous TV newscaster who rode in every parade. He rode a gorgeous Palomino. He never missed the Rose Parade.

One year a controversy occurred when the descendent of Christopher Columbus was chosen as grand marshal. The Native Americans became very upset. Senator Ben Lightfoot agreed to be co-marshal and rode along the carriage. However, the protesting Indians did not stop protesting; and would rush at the horses, banging their drums. The horses would be frightened and try to run away. One lady fell off in the group ahead of us. The police did not stop them from banging on the drums, but held them back with their batons.

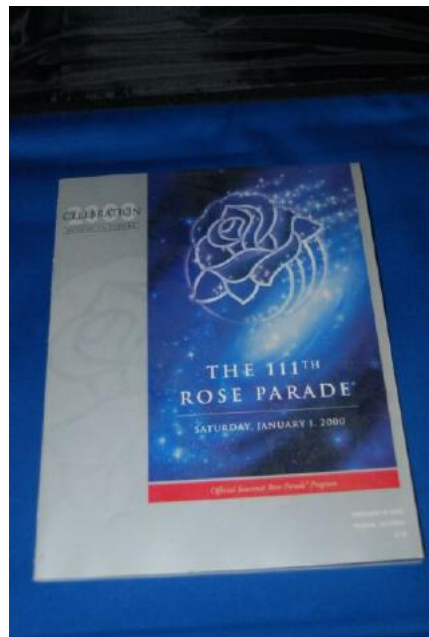
At the end of every Rose Parade, when we dismounted, our feet were numb, and it was hard to stand. We would all high five, and say, "We made it to the end." We had been awake for more than 30 hours and very tired as were our horses. All the horses received extra rations after a Rose Parade.



Photo courtesy of Camarillo White Horse Association
At the Rose Parade



January 1, 2000 Rose Parade
Photo courtesy of Camarillo White Horse Association



Rose Parade Program 2000

Bits and Pieces About the Rose Parade

- There was a “Song of the Pasadena Rose Parade” discovered by Janie Shaheen. It was sung by Bob Ryer.
- Rain is rare on New Year’s Day in Pasadena, but it happens. It has rained 10 times on parade day.
- The first Rose Queen was Hallie Woods in 1905. She was chosen by her classmates at Pasadena High School. She had to make both her dress and her float. In 1913 and 1914 there was both a queen and a king of the parade. Later on, the lovely dresses were designed by noted designer William Cahill.
- The first football game was in 1902. Stanford was trounced by University of Michigan 49-0.
- The early parades ended with the Valley Hunt Club members going to the town lot to have an athletic competition. Some of the events were: Roman style chariot races, foot and bike races, and Polo played on burros.
- The parade is not held on Sundays. If January 1st comes on a Sunday the parade will go on the following Monday. Some say it superstition. But a more practical reason is that the bands would frighten the horses tethered at church along the route. There have been 18 times for the parade to be on the second.
- The first band was from Monrovia Town Band.
- Notable grand marshals: Walt Disney, Micky Mouse, Kermit the frog, Charles Schultz
- There are over 900 volunteers who donate about 80,000 hours to make the parade the gem it is. One Camarillo gal, Melanie Jackson, remembers being a petal pusher, gluing flower petals to floats. She walked down the street from her home in Burbank with friends from her church several years to join in the fun. Melanie, while working for the Reagan Library, worked on the float for Reagan’s continental in the parade.
- The parade is five and a half miles long. From the formation area the parade goes north on Orange Grove Boulevard and makes the famous 110 degree turn each on Colorado Boulevard.
- Cal Poly an Ornamental Horticulture student, Don Miller, at the university deserves the credit for their first float in 1949. They are known for their humor and mechanical wonders on the float.
- Grand Marshals Bob Hope, Richard Nixon, Earl Warren served twice and Shirley Temple three times.



Shirley Temple, Grand Marshal 1939



Pasadena Tournament of Roses Program 1951

Special Thanks

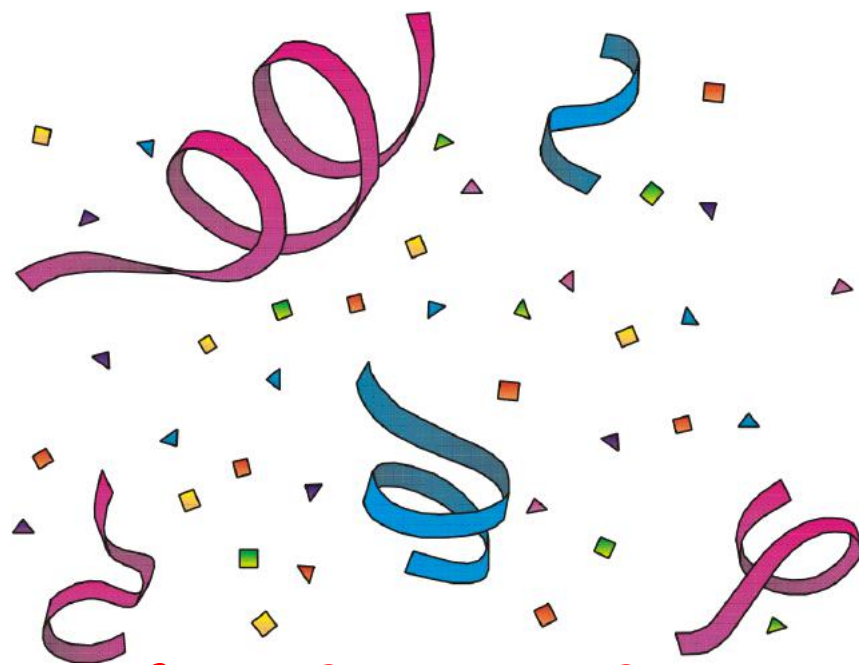
to

*Tom and Theresa Marvel, Martina Nicholson, Rey Ortiz,
Harold Parker, Lynn Preiss, Audra Seldeen,*



Photo courtesy Camarillo White Horse Association

Happy New Year



from the Research Team!

Best Wishes for a Safe, Healthy and

Happy 2021

*Do you remember the Snowstorm of January 1949?
Please send your stories and photos to Beth by January 4, 2021.*

Thank you!

historylongago@me.com