“HAPPY NEW YEAR 2003!”

First Motion Picture Unit Reunion

**First Motion Picture Unit Revisits Culver City**

by Julie Lugo Cerra

In the past 60 years, the First Motion Picture Unit (FMPU) that served at “Fort Roach” (Hal Roach Studios) during World War II, has only had three reunions. The CCHS was privileged to co-host three retired photographers who came for the October, 2002 reunion events: Robert Elliott, Daniel McGovern and William Register.

The Society held a “pre-event” on Wednesday, October 30, by hosting our guests for lunch at the Cerra home before transporting them to West Los Angeles College (our co-host) to hear them talk about their experiences in Culver City. Steven Rose acted as the emcee, presenting them with gifts while wearing three hats: CC Historical Society president, CC Councilmember and president of the CC Chamber of Commerce.

WLAC president, Frank Quiambao, stopped by with supportive comments. His office arranged for the video taping of the event which was held in the Fine Arts Theatre gratis to the Society.

After a short slide presentation by the City Historian, Julie Lugo Cerra, to welcome the men back to Culver City, Program Vice-president Ross Hawkins moderated their discussion, while Mark Morris video-taped the retired service-men’s remarks. We now have priceless memories from these three gentlemen in our archives for posterity.

**Three Delightful Gentlemen**

Robert Elliott, who served as a Staff Sgt., flew in from Florida for the events. He has been our most helpful source of information about Fort Roach in recent years. The City Historian flew to their last reunion to interview him two years ago.

Mr. Elliott, a noted still photographer, brought some humor to the mix when he told about the saluting dilemma at the studio.

(cont’d on page 6)

**THE “LIVING HISTORY” PROJECT MOVES FORWARD**

by Julie Lugo Cerra

Living History is alive and well in Culver City! The first four scripts are complete and they are in the hands of the Culver City Unified School District. They will be previewed at the January General Membership meeting (see box below).

The first actors will be volunteers from Culver High, who will receive community service credit for their time. The scripts were written by Joan Jakubowski (cont’d on page 6)

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**JANUARY 23rd GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

• “LIVING HISTORY PROJECT” PREVIEW •

The next General Membership Meeting of the Culver City Historical Society will be held on Thursday, January 23, 2003 at 7:00 pm at the Sony Black Box Theatre at the Culver City High School, 4401 Elenda Street, Culver City.

[Please note special date and venue for the Winter General Membership Meeting.]

Our planned program for the January General Meeting will be a preview of the Society's new “Living History Project” with enactments from the first four scripts which will be used by the Culver City Unified School District (see story above).

This promises to be a fascinating and entertaining evening and the public is invited to enjoy the free program. Students are encouraged to attend. For more information, please call Ross Hawkins at (310) 287-4558.
HAPPY 2003! As another year passes into history, we in the Culver City Historical Society are very proud of this past year’s accomplishments and look forward to the events and programs planned for 2003. Many folks have given of their days and time for the society’s purposes. Many of the following highlights were created for the purpose of collecting, preserving and sharing the history and cultural and civic accomplishments.

The Culver City Historical Society. Founded in 1985, the non-profit membership-based organization is the official collection of memorabilia and artifacts and for computing this collection.

BEACON LAUNDRY ARTWORK

It was a pleasure to see the Beacon Laundry Artwork, “unveiled.” It has certain historic references and I encourage everyone to visit and take a look. The mural includes local landmarks and there is a fountain below with the fabrication of the back of a Hulme Clock.

For three generations, the Marks family has been well-known for their beautifully decorated buildings and we could now refer to the following collection and archives of the Museum CI. Marc Wilam and Museum Cataloger Cathy Zemerson have worked on this project for many other dedicated volunteers. We hope many of you will come to our office at the West Los Angeles College sometime in April to view our treasures. Watch for more details on our schedule.

Preserving and presenting our City’s heritage is the paramount goal of the Culver City Historical Society. More in-depth articles on various civic notables and a collection of poetry in Culver Historical Highlights in the coming months may give you ideas on possible subjects to cover and welcome articles on appropriate topics.

JOSEPH NEUMAN: A LINK TO THE PAST

Just when I thought that the last people were around the winter days of 1923, I was picking up the phone and getting the answer away. I received a call from writer and film historian Maureen Solomon to tell me that I had to meet and interesting of all the best of Joseph Neuman.

Maureen, a friend and colleague of our Editor, Judy Stangler, from Judy’s days at the American Cinemateque – advised me that Mr. Neuman had been interviewed by the noted film historian, Kevin Brownlow, produced the fantastic film on Hollywood’s silent era for the BFC and the author of the book “History of the Movies.” The interview with the giants of the silent era.

Brownlow is producing yet another film remembering the life of the BFC, “De Milo,” and interviewed Neuman who had worked as an assistant director to Cecil B. De Mille at the Studios to Pathé and moved over to MGM. Maureen interviewed Brownlow’s interview covered only a fraction of Neuman’s history and that he was a valued figure in motion picture history. We should be informed for the information he had.

REEL LIFE IN CULVER CITY

It was on The Trip that Neuman had his first directing chore. The director, was Robert Z. Leonard who became too sick to work, giving Neuman the chance to direct. The sequence where Allen Jones sings the famous “The Dandy Serenade” song to MacDonald while riding in a stagecoach.

After The Trip, Neuman began directing short subjects for Metro where up-and-coming directors like George Sidney and Gordon Douglas were learning their trades on such projects as the “Crime Doesn’t Pay” series and the Pete Smith Specials.

DIRECTED ARMED MILITARY

During the war, Neuman directed several films for the Army. One that he was particularly proud of was Diary of A Sergeant starring Hurd Russell, who played both of his hands. According to Neuman, William Wyler and Samuel Goldwyn saw the film and hired Russell for a key role in Best Years of Our Lives, for which Russell won an Academy Award as Best Actor.

After the war, Neuman continued directing at several other studios including Universal, Columbia, and Twentieth Century Fox. He directed a minor gangster film with George Ratt called Lucky Nick that gained public notoriety with Ratt accused of laundering money for gangster Lucky Luciano. Neuman laughed and recalled that he was sure Ratt was innocent and considered him really to be a “very gentle person, not at all like his screen persona.

Neuman returned to MGM and Culver City in the late 1950s to direct four episodes of Rod Serling’s popular “Twilight Zone” series, and in 1961, he directed a tight western called Hard Boiled with James Arness and focused on Hamilton called Thunder of Drums.

We hope to have Joseph Neuman as our guest speaker in April. Look for more details in our next issue.

ATTENDED VENICE HIGH SCHOOL

Newman came to California from Utah with his parents in the early 1920s and attended Venice High School when Myron Loy was completing her senior year there. Tragically, Newman died when his father died suddenly from a heart attack at six.

Neuman was drafted during the war and went to work as an office boy at MGM. He was interviewed by his son, Alan McCollum, with Newman recalled that he worked at the studio almost from the beginning. He remembers when his father died at the studio with his mother, Mauritie Stiller. “Nobody dreamed that he was going to be the international star that he became when she first showed up at the studio,” he remarked. He also mentioned that he had been drawn to the spectators at the character role for the GCI version of Bob and working as an assistant director on several Jeannette MacDonald films including San Francisco, Kern Marie and The thin Filly.

Notes from Your City Historian by Judy Lora Cerra

CULVER CITY VIRCT: www.culvercity.org

Culver City’s website offers a great deal of information about the city (go to “City Information,” then “History”), New to the website is an opportunity for anyone to write the “Ask the Historian” questions. One of the first inquiries came from someone who wanted to know about a small studio, the Ramonye Studios. I was lucky to find the 1920 Culver Call newspaper everyone to everyone which included a photo of the Ramonye Studios. It is now posted on the website with the answer. In the last week alone, I have received 29 inquiries.

THE EXCHANGE CLUB

Speaking at the Exchange Club is always a pleasure and a bonus to see old friends like George Newhouse, Earl Edgerton and Red Callahan. In the first quarter, I have spoken on Rancho Life, when I even taught them to milk a Spanish cow! (For the record, it’s best accomplished by tying her back legs together.)

In December, I shared some of Harry Culver’s own words with the club. After finding Culver’s California Club speech reprinted in a 1914 Culver City newspaper, it has been a terrific tool for learning about our founder and his thinking.
2002: A YEAR IN REVIEW!

“HAPPY NEW YEAR”
AROUND THE WORLD!

Shubho Nobobosho (Bengali)
Gung Hay Fat Choy (Chinese)
Gott Nyttar (Danish)
Gelukkige Nieuwjaar (Dutch)
Shoma Mobarak Bashad (Farsi)
Hyvää Uutta Vuitta (Finnish)
Bonne Année (French)
Aith-bhialain Fe Nhaise Dhuit (Gaelic)
Gutes Neues Jahr (German)
Eulychismenos Voo (Greek)
Hauoli Makahiki Hou (Hawaiian)
Shanah Tovah (Hebrew)
Naya Saal Mubarak (Hindi)
Boldog Újévét (Hungarian)
Buon Capo d’Anno (Italian)
Akemashite Omedetou Kainouryos Chronos (Japanese)
Sehe Bokmanee Batasuyo (Korean)
Gott Nytt Ar (Norwegian)
Szszesliwego Nowego Roku (Polish)
Feliz Ano Novo (Portuguese)
S Novym Godom (Russian)
Feliz Ano Nuevo (Spanish)
Nakutakia Heri Ya Mwaka Mpya (Swahili)
Gott Nytt Ar (Swedish)
Mutlu (or Hos) Viltasi (Turkish)
Ngikufisela Unysaka Omusha Omuhle (Zulu)

May 16-19: For the Fiesta La Ballona, Woodie & Martha Tolkien donated a miniature store for the CCHS raffle drawing.

Sep. 21: At the first Appraisal Fair, Julie Lugo Cerra manned with Marc Wanamaker who shared his expertise on the value of collectibles and the art of collecting.

The new Historical Note Cards debuted in October.

Maxine Mytar was special guest speaker at Oct. 15 General Membership Meeting.

Dec 17: Sean Hawkins’ first public photo with dad, Lee Hawkins, and Grandma Jackie McCandless (proud grandpa, CCHS Program VP Ross Hawkins, is behind the camera).

St. Augustine’s Boys & Girls Choir had a cameo role in an army training film (1944), (from FMPU event, Oct. 30)

The CCHS “Heart of Screenland” custom throw blanket commemorating our City’s heritage continues to be a best-seller with proceeds going to the Culver City Heritage Museum fund.

"FMU" (cont'd from page 1)

Elliott pointed out that there were commissioned officers, enlisted men and actors all working at the Hal Roach Studios together to make training films. Some actors were privates dressed as generals, which made it difficult to know the "real rank" of many of the uniformed men.

"LIVING HISTORY" (cont'd from page 1)

and Julie Lugo Cerra. They include
Harry Culver at age 33, giving the famous speech at the California Club in Los Angeles; his daughter, Pat Culver Battle, in her 80s, talking about her father; two students talking about the local Native Americans, the Agua Caliente; and dialogues from the early settlers, the Machado brothers, Agustin and Ygnacio.

Please join us for an enjoyable evening of living history in January!

MORE FMU EVENTS

After our event, the three gentlemen left to attend a dinner hosted by the Warner Brothers. Jack Warner was the first commander of the First Motion Picture Unit. The next day, the still photographers were hosted at the Ronald Reagan Library.

HARRY CULVER, founder of Culver City, was 33 in this picture when he gave his famous speech at the California Club in Los Angeles to announce his plans for the new city.

"NOTES" (cont'd from page 2) and some are of a personal nature. One young woman is trying to find her father, Leland Leek, who attended Venice High in the 1960s. If anyone knows of him or his family, please call me so we can help him. I am looking for a 1967 Venice High Yearbook, where his photo might appear as a junior. As a Cultural Affairs Commissioner, let me remind you that the Cultural Plan for Culver City, which includes the Public Art and Historic Preservation, comes to the commission in its final draft form in January, 2003. Please join us in support. You can see it on the city website or check with the Cultural Affairs office in Parks, Recreation and Community Services. The next step will be to go to City Council. This will be an amazing accomplishment, and just another validation of the importance of HISTORY.

PAT CULVER BATTLE, daughter of founder Harry Culver, will be portrayed in the new Living History Project.

"THANK YOU" (cont'd from page 2)

Long-time residents, actor/musician Woodie Tollken and his wife Martha have donated a "parrot' sketch" for movie poster by the late commercial artist Theodore Van Dusen, the creator of the famous "Carnation Milk". Appearing in the sketch which was drawn in 1941 are film stars Irene Dunne, Robert Montgomery and Robert Preston. Also from Van Dusen's collection are drawings from political cartoonist Lou Grant.

And a long overdue thanks to CCHS past president Lu Herreria for her generous donation of Citizen Newspaper articles and photographs from the Culver City Business and the Professional Women's Club.

With the help and support of these wonderful people along with our members and volunteers, the Society's collection continues to grow and be enhanced with some fabulous items. Thank you all and we encourage others to follow their lead. If you have items that relate to our City's history and cultural development, please call (310) 267-4555.

RENEW YOUR CCHS MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

Remember that all CCHS memberships are due for renewal as of January, 2003. If you haven't already renewed, please send payment today. Please support your Historical Society.

CALENDAR

JAN. 23: WINTER GEN. MEM. MEETING: 7 PM: "Living History" 
MAR. 29: Major Ralph Ramirez Lecture (TBA) 
MARCH: CCHS Board Meetings change to 3rd Wednesdays 
Become a member of the Culver City Historical Society Today!
Join others in preserving the history of the "Heart of Screenland" and the efforts to create the Culver City Heritage Museum. We can't do it without you!

**TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP**

- Benefactor ($1000)
- Family Lifetime Member ($500)
- Patron Member ($100)
- Family Member ($25)
- Individual Member ($15)
- Corporate Sponsor ($500)
- Individual Lifetime Member ($250)
- Business Member ($50)
- Organization ($15)
- Student Member ($5)

**Name/Company:** ____________________________  **Telephone:** ____________________________
**Contact Person:** ____________________________  **Fax:** ____________________________
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Please make checks payable to **The Culver City Historical Society** and mail to P.O. Box 3428, Culver City, CA 90231-3428. For further information, call (310) 287-4558.
Contributions of both historic and social significance as well as monetary donations are encouraged, and the CCCHS IRS tax exempt status may make such contributions tax deductible.

**BUSINESS MEMBER ROSTER**
These fine Culver City area businesses support our work to preserve Culver City history for future generations. Please show YOUR support by your patronage of their services and products.

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