

Memories from Bruce Harvey

Growing up in the 50's in the Bay Area I was one of the lucky ones to enjoy the summer life in Monte Rio Vacation Wonderland. My Great Grandparents built a cabin on Starrett Hill back in 1905. Today we are proud to have a sixth generation of the Marshall – Harvey family enjoying the cabin during the summer months in Monte Rio.

In my childhood years the family would venture every Memorial Day Weekend to Monte Rio to open and air out the musty interior and prepare the cabin for another fun filled summer. Returning to the Bay Area to finish out the school year, we would count the days until our Fourth of July weekend return for the summer. Memorable were our rides by ferry from the old Richmond pier (before the Richmond - San Rafael Bridge was built) where the highlight of the ride was to buy a box of Jujubes. This would keep us kids quiet and occupied so none of us would wander off and fall into the Bay.

With the Fourth of July festive weekend over, my dad would head back home and leave my mom with three very active children, myself being the youngest. First thing Monday morning after the July 4th weekend, we would head to the Monte Rio beach for swimming lessons with Couch Jimmy Underhill. Dad returned each weekend but we were on foot during the week. Thank goodness for Noonan's Market, Bartlett's and Bob's Meats. I also remember the excitement when the ice man came with blocks of ice for our refrigerator and ice chips for us kids.

One of the great highlights of our summers was the Bohemian Show, always the third week of July. If Dad could get away from his office, we would attend the Show at the Skating Rink behind the Rio Theater. As a little boy I fondly remember Art Linkletter as the Master of Ceremonies, listening to Charlton Heston's deep voice, Yul Brenner boldly singing with that shiny bald head, and the very talented and funny Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy skits.

Over the years my summer months turned to other interest, so the yearly trek to the Monte Rio cabin became fewer and far between. My parents continued to enjoy the Shows at the Monte Rio School and would relay the interesting portions they enjoyed. Over the years, my own family has enjoyed the cabin, but it was never convenient for us to all to be in Monte Rio during the Show dates.

With retirement looming and the 100th Show on the horizon, my wife, Ingrid and I made a point to be at the cabin in July 2011. My first encounter attending the Show in forty-nine years was, well, let's just say - very chaotic and I must admit – very fun! Hearing about the early morning chair setup, I marched past the Pink Elephant at 5:30am to the end of the line over Dutch Bill Creek and down River Blvd. I found the early morning crowd to be jubilant and friendly ... until that 7 AM gate opening. The experience quickly reminded me of Southwest Airlines boarding process, "calling all – cattle?" All in all, we all survived that chair roundup and loved the 100th Show.

The following year I retired and was thinking, "there has to be a better way to get good seats". Hearing Michele McDonell's invitation seeking volunteers for the Show, I offered our

help, visualizing a better seat location for the 101st Show. The week before the Show, Michele asked us to meet her at the Amphitheater on Tuesday morning before the Show with other volunteers. We expected maybe an hour of chair brigade instruction and then our assigned time to be on site Thursday morning.

Well, you've heard the term "Lost in Translation"? Michele quickly introduced us to the other volunteers and a few minutes later, said to me, "you can work with Bill to learn what to do." OK, I just was introduced to two people named Bill, and seeing Michele quickly disappearing to other priorities, I had no idea which Bill was my mentor of the day! I was thinking, "this isn't the chair setup gig I was looking for". The right Bill soon emerged and had me pruning trees, separating Christmas lights, pounding stakes, and hanging lights along the perimeter of the amphitheater. As the day wore on, I was informed that the next day was the chair layout meeting. But no, the next morning I was helping ferrying signs, tables, cases of wine, cups, etc. from the MRVS storage to the venue. I learned that the Chair volunteers were scheduled to meet at 6:30 that evening and when I asked "that includes me, right?" Michele said "Oh! we have plenty of chair volunteers, so there's no need for you to return tonight, see you tomorrow." "WHAT!"

Oh my! It's now been 7 years since that fateful day that I first volunteered for the Chair Setup on the day of the Show. So far, I still haven't been assigned to that job ... yet! I must say that I firmly believe that Michele was an Military Training Officer in her past life, she knows just how to get the best out of people and at the same time keep them happy. It has been quite a delight and a privilege to be on her team for the Monte Rio Variety Show.