

Inland Valley Storytellers August 9, 2011

Paul Bublin emceed and brought the refreshments. He invited us to introduce ourselves by telling something from our summers as a child. We enjoyed the reveries and could hear lawn mowers and bees buzzing.

17 people attended: Chris & John St. Clair, Jayne Sjodin, Paul & Josh Bublin, Virginia Stark, Ron Evans, Anna Bedford (she came back!) Adrien Lowery, Jan Baskin, Patricia Snow, Ron Chick, Charlie Young, Sam Quinones, myself, Barbara Rugeley, and new members (we hope), Judy Piette and Leonard Stabb. A new roster is attached. I finally added Charlie Young's name: hooray! Patricia offered to host for Sept. 13 and I've pulled duty for Oct. 11. Hope to see you at the storytelling session.

We heard 6 tellers.

1. Paul Bublin recounted a learning lesson from his younger years. A Scandinavian cabinet maker would assign potential apprentices the task of finding and pulling the rusty nails out of a discarded woodpile, then hammering them straight. The kids who said, after 5 minutes, "I'm done," were not seen again. Paul hung on through the summer to see those re-straightened nails actually used in a project, not just as a winnowing technique for workers. He also saw the man, every morning, honing his steel blade to re-use, rather than tossing it and buying a new one.
2. Ron Chick relates: Our opening of memories of summer brought to mind a unique childhood experience. Growing up on a 142-tree mixed fruit orchard provided me with many experiences not common to city dwellers or even rural kids with "serious farms." Picking and selling door to door the bounty of my family's 1 ¾ acres gave me skills I have used all my life, as well as an avoidance to the task of weeding! The large Queen Anne Apricot tree that produced fruit for weeks at a time and Jams that were so good that years later, the Christmas Morning we opened the last jar is a bitter sweet memory often recalled by my family. Another memory: When I was young a common expression to dismiss someone was, "Ah, why don't you go play jacks on the freeway?" However, at that time, the 91 freeway was still under construction with an off-ramp being cut right through my next door neighbor's land. On Sundays we could and did go out on the construction site, playing on mounds of dirt, going through culvert pipes,

and similar such kid games. However, just before that section of the freeway was opened, we did it. That Sunday, my brothers, friends and visiting kids from around the area went out on the newly pored pavement, playing jacks, riding bikes and skates, playing leap frog, and even pretending to “nap” on a freeway! The world has changed so much that most kids have no idea what, “Playing Jacks” means, and construction sites have fences and guards, so the memory of that experience must be unique to a small batch of Riverside kids in the summer of 58!

3. Ron Evans told us about a time when on Sabbatical, at Trinity College, Cambridge England, he saw the hall at New College being “tented.” His first thought: the circus is in town! No, that was not it. There had been “dust in the soup” at dinner and a careful examination, 3 stories up, revealed a nest of wood beetles in those massive 28’ x 18” beams. Where would one find replacement beams for such ancient wood? After all, it was New College, because it was the most recently founded: 1379! Fortunately, the colleges were endowed by real estate income and, among those assets, were virgin forests.
4. Sam Quinones, even without his daughter, charmed us with the true-tale, “How Mexico Chose the First Chinese-Mexican Beauty Queen.” Mazatlan is obsessed with Beauty Queens. In 1961 the race to become Queen of the Carnival was different from 30 years before: the rich girls didn’t have a lock on the race. Instead, the queen would be the one who collected the most Pepsi bottle caps that had the secret symbol under the cork. Jose Wong raised \$60,000 among American and Mexican Chinese for Isela to compete in the race: the first Chinese Mexican candidate. The Chinese in Mexico had been persecuted with pogroms during the 1930s Chinese Exclusion Acts. When the count came in: Isela’s supporters had gathered 857,000 bottle caps and Isela was declared the winner. The men were clapping and shouting and crying, as she road in the Queen’s parade. They had survived the pogroms.
5. Judy Piette shared memories of her time raising kids in Claremont: “How to Make a Friend.” At Leonard’s Market on Arrow and Elder Drive with her 4 kids, she noticed a little one biting into the apples and replacing them on the pile. When she gave the girl a smack (back when you could do that), the child’s mother complained. Well, Judy had thought the girl her own daughter; they looked so much alike. She called her own child out and, indeed, all agreed they looked alike. Those 2 parents became fast friends for over 50 years, until the friend died last May. Another memory was

about a poor, raggedy woman who walked about own. Judy built up a campaign to provide the woman with clean, gently used, clothing, and had amassed a fine collection, when her friend told her that the “needy” woman was a Claremont College professor and not in need of such charity.

6. Adrien Lowery shared youthful memories of adventurous summer dining. One summer at her Grandfather’s mountain cabin her brother and his friends captured frogs for a fine meal of home cooked frog legs. Other memories included summers working at a kids camp in which the kids collected curious “olives” that always appeared in the fields after the deer were there. Another memory was of her camp director shooting a wounded deer ending the life of deer and resulting in both a fine venison BBQ and the new phrase that explained how the deer was put down “two shots: standard procedure.” That phrase was then used among the camp counselors, often after encounters with misbehaving campers.