



VOLUME SIX, NUMBER SIXTY-FOUR

MISSION VIEJO, CALIFORNIA

Jan/Feb/Mar 2023

# MISSION VIEJO REPORTER

## TRASHY LIVING

EARNING SOME CLEAN MONEY FROM SOME DIRTY WORK

## KICKING ASH!

MISSION VIEJO FIREFIGHTERS TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

## I PLEDGE ALICIA

Mission Viejo's Proud First Daughter

### MISSION VIEJO REPORTER

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COVER PHOTO:

Budding Entrepreneur - Ben Mannion



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Dave Leckness  
Editor



# From The Editor's Desk

By Dave Leckness

The Mission Viejo Reporter is designed to bring attention to all the good things this city has to offer. Our goal is to introduce you to people and places you may not have heard about.

Each issue we showcase a few residents and businesses that make up our wonderful city. We get our ideas and articles from you, the readers. In the next few months we will acquaint you with what we call the Difference Makers, ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

The greatest gift to a community is when someone goes the extra mile and it makes a difference. Going the extra mile is doing more than is expected. Going the extra mile is extending ourselves to our full reach. Going the extra mile is getting back up after we've been knocked down, despite whatever has happened.

We want to acknowledge these people. If you know of someone who has gone the extra mile, or been knocked down and got back up or has done something extraordinary, share it with us...we'd like to know.

This issue is jam-packed with cool stuff. We explore some of the demographics of our City, we look at Readers' photos of Saddleback Mountain, we visit some of our local history and visit with a woman who's car still lives after going through one crazy situation after another!

Thanks for reading.

-Dave



FROM OUR MR.POSTMAN LOOK AND SEE DEPT.

## SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED

### LOCAL CARRIER RECEIVES HONOR FROM THE REPORTER

**Ray Moronez** has been a postal carrier in Mission Viejo for 24 years. Every time he pulls his postal vehicle up in front of a house or business, he must do the following: 1) put vehicle in park, 2) turn off engine, 3) put on the emergency brake and turn his wheels toward the curb, 4) then take off the seatbelt. Only then can he put your letters in the mailbox. And after letters are placed in the box, he must do the same 4-step process in reverse: Put on the seatbelt, start engine, take off emergency brake, put vehicle in drive and move forward to the next mailbox and repeat the process all over again. Something he does over 250 times a day. Our readers recently honored Ray with the Mission Viejo Reporter's award for Best Postal Carrier in Mission Viejo. Not to single him out, because all the mail carriers in Mission Viejo are an incredible bunch of people and the work they do is mind-boggling.



Think about the Mission Viejo Post Office's value proposition. They send someone to almost every single home and business in Mission Viejo, six days a week. For the low price of 60 cents! For that mere 60 cents they will even pick mail up from your house and deliver your handcrafted, signed message anywhere in the entire United States!

Thank you Ray for your great service and being our Carrier and thank you to all the Mail Carriers for their hard work and dedication.



FROM OUR SCREEN DOOR DEPT.

# RENAISSANCE **IN MOTION**

## MISSION VIEJO'S FLORENTINE ARTIST

A Villa can be very similar to a house, but villas are known for being luxurious, with their own gardens, pools and fountains, but most importantly it's the art. One-of-a-kind artwork makes the difference. Meet Mission Viejo resident **Gian Rinaldi**, born near Florence, Italy. Gian is an artist, sculptor and inventor. Gian creates many different mediums of art in his home studio here in Mission Viejo. Lately, he has focused on a very rare medium called "Steel-Mesh Sculpture", taking a screen material and fashioning it into beautiful one-of-a-kind pieces. Gian creates small projects like a life size bust, to a life size steel mesh of Jesus on a cross, that now hangs in a church.



Gian's backyard has sculptures that look like giant pieces of sculpted marble, but are in fact, foam blocks covered in plaster, and then sculpted to look as unfinished pieces of work. Inside his home, Gian created a masterpiece wall mural that looks amazing.



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# VANDALIZED, STOLEN, & BURNED

## MISSION VIEJO WOMAN LOVES HER BUG



Holly Lawyer and her VW Bug meant to be with you."

Meet **Holly Lawyer**. Holly and her 1967 Volkswagen bug have been driving Mission Viejo streets for years. The bug has been stolen, caught fire and was vandalized. During its vandalization phase in the eighty's, the VW was spray painted in psychedelic colors.

When the beetle was stolen, Holly thought she would never see her again, however, Holly's mom saw the bug in a parking lot and recognized the license plate. The cops were called, and Holly was back driving her baby.

When the bug's rear engine caught fire most everyone thought Holly should restore her since Holly has had this car (her first car), ever since she was a senior in high school. One of Holly's friends told her, "She's your baby, and the car was always



Holly said, "She's a vintage 1967, the best year VW ever made". **Kevin Brady**, the owner of Brady's Automotive, fixed her all up with new electrical, new fuel lines, new insulation, and Kevin put in a new engine. \$9600.00 later, she is running great, and no oil leakage. The only thing the beetle needs now is a paint job, and some interior clean-up since the fire damage.

Over the years, many people have offered Holly cash on the spot for this little car. People stop and tell Holly stories of when they had an old bug and say they wished they still had theirs.



Oddest thing that ever happened to Holly and her bug: A lady who was crying, approached Holly and asked if she could get inside and kiss the VW's dashboard, because that's what she did with her 67 every day. Holly said, "Ah, what the heck go ahead", and she did.

Today, Holly takes her English yellow lab with her whenever she can, he loves to ride in the back seat.



Holly's Volkswagen Bug on fire in 2017

# WHOA!

# PARDNER!

## THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MV VIGILANTES

The Mission Viejo Vigilantes was a minor league baseball team located right here in Mission Viejo. In 1997, the team played in the Western Baseball League, and was not affiliated with any Major League Baseball team. Their home stadium was Mission Viejo Stadium inside Saddleback College. They ceased operations after the 1998 season.



The Mayor Bill Craycraft and the Vigilantes executives in happier times.

The team wanted a new gigantic state-of-the-art stadium, but with only a handful of people filling the stands each week, the City said "Whoa! Partner!".

The Mission Viejo Vigilantes next play was in court, with the City suing the team and the team suing the city. The City won, and the Vigilantes vacated its offices soon after. The team disconnected its phone and left no forwarding address, leaving an angry band of creditors wondering when--and if--they might get paid.

Today, the only evidence of the Vigilantes is in the beautiful seats that were removed from the stadium and relocated to the softball fields at Craycraft Park on Alicia.



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FROM OUR COLD CASE DEPT.

# DEAD RIGHT

## CADAVER CLASS IN MISSION VIEJO HIGH SCHOOL

In 1986, an insurance company's refusal to provide coverage for Mission Viejo High School's use of a cadaver may have eliminated a teacher's plans using the body as an instructional aide. Hoping to enhance learning, students were given "hands-on" experience, by using real-human dead bodies. In the early 1980's, this elective class was offered to juniors and seniors. They were given the chance to perform minor "procedures" on the cadavers.



Students worked with the latest cadavers

The program's demise came when some insurance companies refused to provide coverage for the cadaver, calling it "an unacceptable exposure."

Officials declined to elaborate on why insurance companies considered a cadaver an unacceptable risk, preferring to "leave that to the imagination." Some suggested that the insurance companies feared the cadavers could make the school district vulnerable to "trauma suits." The reasoning is that a student could be traumatized by the cadaver experience and then sue the district.

It was said at the time, "Many juniors and seniors in this class were eager to study the cadaver, and that, "It would be an emotional letdown for them if they don't get to do it. Tomorrow, we're doing a ratdissection, but that's just not the same thing." – Mission Viejo High School teacher, 1987

FROM OUR HEAVEN CAN WAIT DEPT.

# ALONG the TRAIL

## MISSION VIEJO ROTARY MEMORIAL GARDEN



One of the most popular stops along the Oso Creek Trail is the **Rotary Memorial Garden**. Mission Viejo Rotarians occasionally plant trees in this pristine area, and once a year hold their morning meeting under

the trees and reflect upon members who've made the trip to heaven.

Getting to the grove is exciting, because now along the route, tiny fairies have built their homes at the bottom of the pathway trees and fence posts. There are dozens of these beautiful little homes for kids to examine, if they can find them.



FROM OUR ROMANTIC MISSION VIEJO DEPT.

# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

## HOW DID MISSION VIEJO GET ITS NAME?



I-5 near La Paz Road 1960

Intrigue surrounds the very name "Mission Viejo". Does it imply that it was the original site – as in the "old" or "former" mission? In Spanish, the word is really spelled *misión* and has feminine gender. Thus, in order to agree with the noun, the adjective for *misión* should have a feminine ending – *vieja*.

We know that the modern city was named for the 1845 rancho land grant – which itself was referred to variously as "Mission Viejo", "Mission Vieja", "Misión Vieja", and as "La Paz".

*La Paz* translates as "the peace", so there is an undefinable, yet very romantic quality in each word of the now famous Mission Viejo name and of its first main street – La Paz Road.

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# Ask Aunt Sandy

- WITH MISSION VIEJO'S SANDRA FERGUSON



Mission Viejo's very own advice columnist is a straight shooter and slightly humorous.

## A TRIPLE DOSE OF AUNT SANDY

Dear Aunt Sandy,

I've had three marriages that have failed. Would I be dishonest if I didn't tell my new girlfriend about these ex-wives?

- Secret Keeper

Dear Keeper,

If you tell your girlfriend that you've have three ex wives, if she's the right kind of woman, she'll give that some thought and probably kick you to the curb. Now, let me tell you something, if you've had three you're going to have four.

- Aunt Sandy

Dear Aunt Sandy,

Is it okay to taste grapes at the grocery store?

- Grape Lover

Dear Grape,

You know darn well what a grape tastes like. Either you buy them or you don't buy them. You don't go in there and eat them. However, sneaking a bite here and there is fine, I like to taste the Ben & Jerry Chunky Monkey once in a while myself.

- Aunt Sandy

Dear Aunt Sandy,

How do I get my husband to stop adjusting himself in public?

- Embarrassed in Mission Viejo

Dear Embarrassed,

I know that is true. I know men do that. They grab that thing and shift it around, moving their legs - it's absolutely disgusting. I don't know why they do it, but it looks terrible and is very obnoxious. My suggestion is to give your husband a roll of duct tape and tell him to tape that puppy in place.

- Aunt Sandy

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FROM OUR THE STORY IS IN THE NUMBERS DEPT.

# MISSION VIEJO DEMOGRAPHICS



## POPULATION

Mission Viejo, CA has a population of 102,314 and is the 68th largest city in the state of California.

- 79% of the population is Caucasian
- 11.0% of the population is Hispanic or Latino
- 8.5% of the population is Asian
- 1% of the population is African American
- 0.5% of the population is Other

## EMPLOYMENT & INCOME

The median household income is \$104,886, which is 64% higher than the California average and 90% higher than the national average.

## HOUSING

The median home price in Mission Viejo is 229% higher than the national average. The median rent asked in Mission Viejo is 110% higher than the national average.

## EDUCATION & SCHOOLS

Mission Viejo public schools have average test scores of 53% which is 39% higher than the California average and 8% higher than the national average.

- 93.0% of people in Mission Viejo have completed 8th grade.
- 92.8% of people in Mission Viejo have completed High School.
- 47.2% of people in Mission Viejo have gotten a Bachelors degree.

## CRIME

Mission Viejo is safer than 80% of the cities in the United States. The overall crime rate in Mission Viejo is 62% lower than the national average.

## COST OF LIVING

The cost of living in Mission Viejo is 20% higher than the California average. The cost of living in Mission Viejo is 66% higher than the national average. The cost of housing in Mission Viejo is 194% higher than the national average.

## POLITICS

There are 56,286 Registered Voters in Mission Viejo. Of those voters 55% are Republicans, 25% are Democrats and 20% Other.



# TRASHY LIVING

## EARNING SOME CLEAN MONEY FROM SOME DIRTY WORK

His name is **Ben Mannion** and this is the story behind his first business. It all started when he was just eight years old in the third grade. In his class, there was this one kid, who he was the kind of person that liked to show off, but he was still a good and friendly kid. One day he told Ben and his friends that he had a business, taking out people's trash cans for 100 dollars. His story was short and Ben didn't believe him very much, however it planted a seed.

About a year later, Ben was talking with his dad about ways he could earn money, though he was too young to work at an actual job. Ben remembered his friend's story and asked his father if he could do a trash can business, and his father gave him permission. Ben started by sending out fliers around his street, charging five bucks per month to put out and collect his neighbors' trash cans. He ended up getting his very first customer that week. He kept getting more customers and started passing out the fliers a little further out. In the next year, he hired his two brothers, **John** and **Thomas**. Right now, he has ten customers and is making about \$600 dollars a year.



*Ben Mannion, budding entrepreneur*

# KICKING ASH!

## MISSION VIEJO FIREFIGHTERS TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Mission Viejo firefighters work out of the 3 stations we have here in the City and do an incredible job of handling everything from small calls to major incidents in Orange County.

**Mission Viejo Reporter** spent some time with the firefighters of **Station No. 9** near The Shops at Mission Viejo. Out of the 72 different Orange County Fire Authority fire stations in Orange County, Station No. 9 is one of four that is a home of the **Urban Search And Rescue** equipment. We got a first-hand look at all the emergency equipment that this station has to offer.



**Station No. 9 always has 8 firefighters on duty everyday, 24/7, running A, B & C shifts. Here's the breakdown:**

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# WE LOVE OUR MOUNTAIN

Reader Photos of Saddleback



MISSION VIEJO  
REPORTER



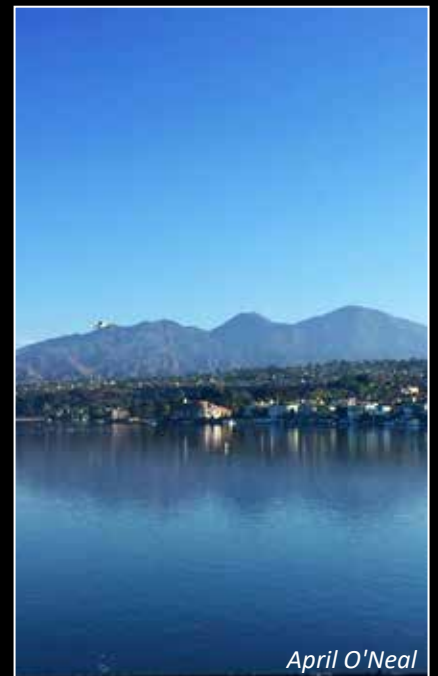
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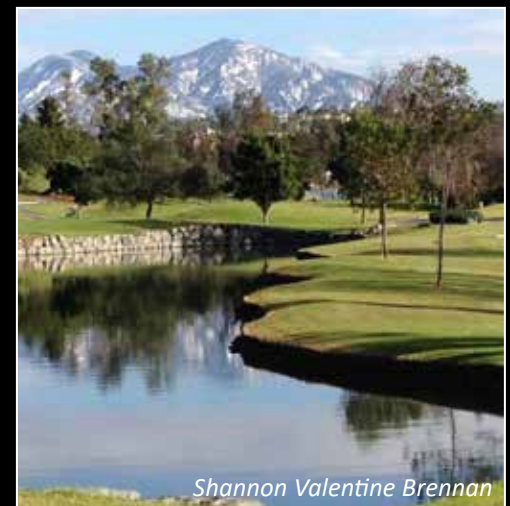
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*Cathe Atkinson Hernandez*



*Pam Quevedo*



*Kevin O'Donnell*



# BRONZE STAR STORY

## Mission Viejo Veteran Bob Slane Shares His Story

The **Mission Viejo Reporter** spoke to veteran **Bob Slane** about his time in Vietnam 50 years ago. Here's his story.

I was a 23 year old Ensign in the United States Navy, and I was stationed at Cau Viet, Vietnam in 1967-1968 with the 3rd Marine Division. (Cau Viet was the Marine Base that is depicted in Apocalypse Now).

During the Tet offensive, I ran a cargo ramp on the Cau Viet River where I offloaded LST ships, reloaded river boats, and sent food and ammo to Dong Ha, Camp Carroll, Khe Sanh, and Con Tien. The Marine Bases we supplied were on two days of food and three days of ammunition. The Cau Viet supply line was the only supply line open as Highway One was shut down.

On March 10, 1968, our base was under artillery attack by the North Vietnamese Army. The ramp we used had pallets of artillery and tear gas hand grenades ready to ship. The NVA delivered a direct hit to the ammo on the ramp. The explosions were so severe that they blew a 14 wheel truck a 1/4 mile up the river.

I was fortunate enough to find safety in a bunker next to the ramp. I was trying to ride out the attack when I heard a group of sailors yelling for help. They were experiencing the effects of the tear gas and could not see. I knew I had to leave the shelter of the bunker and direct the men to safety. There are two factors that influence heroism: one, you screwed up, and you want to make amends, or two, you are a true hero. I screwed up!

I should not have allowed the artillery and tear gas hand grenades to be stored on the ramp in the first place. I bolted from the bunker and ran through an ammo dump and a Petroleum Farm (POL) and guided the six men to safety.



An LST Ship on the Cau Viet River

Now on the hillside overlooking the ramp, I realized the remaining rough terrain forklifts were still vulnerable on the ramp. These forklifts were in rare supply, and if they were destroyed, the supply line would shut down indefinitely. The Marine Bases were extremely dependent on the supply base providing food and ammo. I asked my combat buddies, "Who wants to follow me to get the four rough terrain forklifts off the ramp and in a safe place?" Three brave enlisted men followed. All four rough terrain forklifts were put in safe places and survived the attack.

Later, the Admiral and General Davis, a Congressional Medal Winner from Korea, flew up from Da Nang. The General asked me what happened. I explained, and he said, "I want my staff officer to interview you for Valor."

- In 1989 Bob Slane finally received his Bronze Star from the US Government.



Bob's Military Identification Card



Bob Slane

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### FROM OUR BRAIN TEASER DEPT.

## How many **girls** are in this **photograph**?

The picture features what appears to be a group of girls sitting by some mirrors. This creates an optical illusion, making it difficult to tell exactly how many girls are in the photo.



Photograph by Tiziana Vergari

Answer on back cover



FROM OUR KING'S HIGHWAY DEPT.

# EL CAMINO REAL BELL

## Mission Viejo's Proud Marker

**El Camino Real** (or the King's Highway in Spanish) is perhaps the most historic road in California. It follows the route that Spanish explorer **Juan Gaspar de Portola** followed in 1769. The old trail linked 21 missions and pueblos, and four presidios from

San Diego to Sonoma. It remained the primary road from south to north in California during that time. The original trail changed constantly. It was a dirt path, and as the seasons changed and with weather/rains, the path would alter from time to time.



*The Mission Viejo El Camino Real Bell at the La Paz Road Entry*



The roadside bells have been in place since the early part of the 20th Century to mark the original 700-mile-long route. Originally, there were about 450 cast iron bells along the way, but because of theft and vandalism, the number dwindled down to about 75. There has been an effort to restore all the bells. Replacements are made of concrete, rather than cast iron, to discourage theft. A mission bell exhibit is a permanent part of the Ventura County Museum of History and Art, complete with original cast-iron bells donated by Caltrans. But, shhh, the Mission Viejo El Camino Real bell is made of the original cast iron.



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FROM OUR ANCIENT HISTORY DEPT.

# CHRISANTA IS BORN

## Mission Viejo's First Phase Of Construction



The original freeway entrance to the new community of Mission Viejo - La Paz Road - is seen in this 1967 aerial photo looking south.

La Paz meets the I-5 freeway at far right. Then it crosses the railroad tracks and enters the community at Chrisanta Drive. Mission Viejo High School is at the upper left. In the foreground, are Mount of Olives Lutheran Church at left and the site of the first library and the movie theatre at right.



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FROM OUR ALICE'S WONDERLAND DEPT.

# I PLEDGE ALICIA

## Mission Viejo's Proud First Daughter



Alice Marguerite O'Neill Avery was born Jan. 28, 1917, to Richard O'Neill Jr. and Marguerite "Daisy" Moore. Her paternal grandfather, Irish immigrant **Richard O'Neill Sr.**, purchased 'Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores' in 1882, when the property extended from Mission Viejo to Oceanside.

"She was very proud of her California heritage," said her son **Anthony R. Moiso** who runs Rancho Mission Viejo, the family's remaining 23,000-acre property. "She loved the ranch; she loved the blessing it was."

Alice, for whom Alicia Parkway is named (Alice in Spanish is "Alicia") died in 2014 at 97 years old.



Alicia Parkway as it is today and as it was in 1968.





# CLEAN UP

## THE ART OF KEEPING OUR CITY PRISTINE

To you and I it's gibberish, but to some it's messages. That's why over 1,000 times a year, a select team of Mission Viejo staff members are ready to go to work at a moment's notice.

The Orange County Sheriffs Department contributes the city's lack of a gang presence partly due to the fact that we are very, very aggressive on graffiti.

The average citizen would probably not realize this due to a very aggressive graffiti removal program. Most graffiti is removed within 24 hours of being reported.

The single best deterrent for graffiti continues to be a fast removal of the graffiti. All graffiti is photographed, plotted with GPS coordinates logged into a computerized program and monitored by our Orange County Sheriff Department.



Citizens can report graffiti 24 hours a day on the City of Mission Viejo Graffiti Hotline - **949-460-2924**



# HIDING OUT

## The Tunnels of San Juan Capistrano

In 1991, during a clearing out of the basement of an 1880s-era home once owned in San Juan Capistrano by the colorful Judge Richard Egan, workers uncovered the remnants of a long-sealed tunnel.



Dr. Egan's house today, across from El Adobe Adobe restaurant across the street.

When workers began clearing out the dark basement in the old home, they found two brick archways inlaid into the foundation on the sides of the house and a crawl space that leads off to the front of the home towards Camino Capistrano. Within one of the archways, a tunnel leads towards the present day El

Historians know that the old home, called 'Harmony Hall' by Egan, who was nicknamed "the King of Capistrano," was a centerpiece of the downtown back in the late 1800s. Directly across the street, at what is now the El Adobe, there was a stagecoach depot and Egan's courthouse, complete with a downstairs jail (now the restaurant's wine cellar).

Historians say there was a maze of tunnels in old San Juan, most of them irrigation and drainage ditches, known in Spanish as *zanjas*, connected to the 240-year-old Mission San Juan Capistrano. Many were probably used at times for hiding and escape during San Juan Capistrano's rough years. Although their whereabouts have never been precise, one of the tunnels ran along side the east side of El Camino Real behind what is now a Sizzler restaurant and the crossed what is today 'Harmony Hall' as it appeared in the early 1900's Ortega Highway and cut into the mission near the Serra Chapel. Another was found on the west wing of the mission, on the north side, and headed toward Trabuco Creek. A third was located near Trabuco Creek, heading the opposite way towards the mission. What stories they might tell.



'Harmony Hall' as it appeared in the early 1900's

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## Places We'd Like TO REMEMBER



Crown Valley Parkway and 5 Freeway



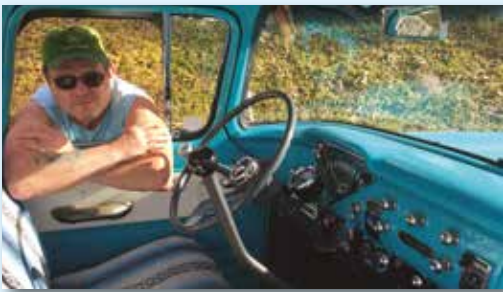
FROM OUR **LIKE A ROCK** DEPT.

# COOLEST TRUCK

## in Mission Viejo

Mission Viejo resident, **Bob Meredith**, probably has the coolest truck in Mission Viejo. It's a 1959 Chevrolet Fleetside Pickup.

Bob purchased it from a parts store in Mission Viejo off Avery Parkway around 1997. It was just a cab and a frame, so it had to be towed to Lake Elsinore where he had an auto repair shop at the time. It had always been a dream of Bob's to restore this classic 1959 model of Chevy pickup, so in nine months, he did a complete off-frame restoration to its original condition by visiting a lot of salvage yards and the Chevy Truck Stop store. He also chose the exterior color and did the paint job himself.



After the massive restoration, Bob only drove the truck to shows, and often had it trailered to events and places. Then one day he said to himself, "This is a truck that needs to be driven." So, Bob did away with the careful and delicate attitude toward his classic Chevy. Today, you'll find Bob driving his truck daily, and in the bed of the truck don't be surprised if you find auto parts, tools, and pieces of lumber. It's a real everyday truck, and Bob loves it. He drives it everywhere and always receives many thumbs up from people along the way.

FROM OUR **HILLS ARE ALIVE** DEPT.

# MISSION VIEJO '64

## PHOTOGRAPHER CAPTURES MISSION VIEJO AT THE BEGINNING



photo by  
**Tom Gildersleeve**

In 1964, living in Santa Ana and home from the Air Force, **Tom Gildersleeve** would routinely go out after work to photograph trains on Santa Fe's L.A.-San Diego "Surf Line."

This photograph is of Eastbound Santa Fe No. 78, about a mile north of where Interstate 5 travels over the tracks. This broad vista of wheatfields is today our City of Mission Viejo.

The Mission Viejo Reporter spoke to Tom, and he said, "It's impossible to figure out just where I was standing, as houses, parks, and commercial firms back right up to the tracks on both sides. Even if you drive up Muirlands Boulevard to the top of this hill, which I climbed from La Paz Road in '64, you can't see the tracks."

-Photograph taken July 7th, 1964





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