

An Alpine History Mystery – Solved!

Forrest & Hazel

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Not long after Don and Jennie Taylor and their three children moved to Alpine, their daughter Hazel went off to college in San Diego. Upon graduation, she took a job teaching school in La Mesa. But her heart belonged to Forrest, a young carpenter who followed the Taylor family from North Dakota to Alpine to continue working with Don Taylor – and to remain close to Hazel. So when Forrest asked for her hand in marriage, Hazel accepted his proposal and changed her name to his. They were forever after known as Forrest and Hazel Hohanshelt. And, as you are about to discover, this fine young couple left their mark on Alpine in many ways.

After teaching for just one year in La Mesa, Hazel lost her job because of an archaic rule that prevented married women from teaching school. It seems that only single women were considered fit to teach the children. Well, it turns out that Alpine needed a teacher and the Chairman of the Alpine School Board, Mr. Frank Bourne, was willing to give her a try. So in 1928, Mrs. Hazel Hohanshelt started her new job teaching in Alpine's one-room schoolhouse. In Hazel's own words, her first class in the Alpine Union Grammar School consisted of "Twenty children—five in the first grade, three in the eighth and the rest apportioned to the remaining six grades in ones, twos and threes..."

Meanwhile, Forrest worked with his father-in-law, Don Taylor, building cottages around Alpine and later constructing buildings on the Baron Long Ranch in Viejas Valley. In 1933, when the Community Church started building a chapel on Victoria Drive, Forrest was one of the town folks who pitched in to help with the construction. Just a few years later, Forrest and Don built the Hohanshelt's first home on South Grade Road, which they called Stonecrest. Here they lived until 1962 when they decided to build a new home, also on South Grade Road, about a mile south of Stonecrest. Forrest passed away in 1970, but Hazel lived to see her 98th birthday.

The Hohanshelts are long remembered for their community spirit. In 1995 a grateful community dedicated the auditorium at Alpine Elementary School with a plaque inscribed as follows:

"This auditorium is named in honor of Hazel Hohanshelt, a pioneer teacher who taught two generations of Alpine's children. She began teaching in 1928 in a one-room schoolhouse where she taught all eight grades. In addition to the "3 Rs", she taught her students to love literature, music, and drama. With the help of her husband, Forrest, she put on numerous plays and choral events in this auditorium until she retired in 1962. For her hard work, enthusiasm, loyalty, and the love of her students and her profession, we dedicate this auditorium in her honor on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday."

