

THE ALPINE SUN SHOPPER – April 4, 2013
Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society

CARMEN LEWIS CELEBRATES 100 YEARS – A LOOK BACK

Alpine has long been known for the restorative value of its climate—especially for those suffering from asthma. For years there was a sign in the community that touted: *Welcome to Alpine - Best Climate in the USA, by Government Report.*

Bob and Carmen Bailey were told by doctors that the only way to help their son Claude's asthma was to leave San Diego and move "to the mountains." So, Bob and Carmen took Claude and their younger son Paul on a new adventure. Carmen and the boys stayed at Wildwood Glen in Descanso for a time and Claude's asthma improved. Bob left his restaurant, the family business, in San Diego to travel to Descanso and spend time with the family on the weekends.

Later, the family rented the largest cabin at The Willows from the Walker family; however, Bob was still traveling back and forth. Soon, he had enough and the family began to look in earnest for a home in Alpine. On a house hunting trip one rainy day in 1944, the Baileys stopped at a little restaurant on Alpine Boulevard for a bowl of soup. When paying the check, Bob offhandedly asked the waitress if they had ever considered selling the restaurant. The lady told Bob that three couples had bought the establishment only three months prior and were not considering selling. Bob left his phone number and asked that they call him if they ever changed their mind. Arriving home Bob and Carmen were very surprised to receive a call that very day telling them the restaurant was indeed up for sale. Negotiations took place and Bailey's Café was born.

In a *Voices of Alpine* interview, Carmen told Vikki Coffey of the Alpine Historical Society that the day the café opened was one to remember. Bob hired a cook and a waitress; however, they both quit before opening day. So...the Baileys improvised. Bob waitressed and Carmen cooked. The menu included fried chicken, mashed potatoes, soup and salad and dessert. Carmen doesn't use recipes. She says, "A little of this, a little of that. Taste it. Taste good? That's good!" The restaurant was so busy on opening day that the wife and daughter of the man who ran the gas station in front of the restaurant, Robert Ring, offered their services and soon were busy helping the Baileys serve the crowd.

Alpine was a very different place when the Baileys moved to town. There were no streetlights—none whatsoever. The Log Cabin Café and Baileys Café were the only restaurants and night life for teenagers was nonexistent. Bob and Carmen felt sorry for the teenagers and decided to take action. They began to close their restaurant early on Friday evenings and hand the place over to the young people. Bob hauled their Victrola and records down from their adjacent living quarters to provide music for dancing. The tables were pushed back to make a dance floor in the middle of the restaurant. Locals provided additional entertainment. Phil Hall, who was the postmaster at the time, played the saw using a violin stick. Bill SanSoucie played the violin and Mary Ann Brotherton played the guitar and sang. Many teenagers would play the piano that stood in the restaurant (and, Claude reports, still stands in their home). Claude also tells that he and his brother peeked in at the festivities—they were far too young to attend. The Baileys had only one request of the youngsters: Leave the restaurant in the same condition you found it. That request was honored.

When some pranksters switched sugar for salt, the other teenagers identified the culprits and dished out appropriate punishment.

After Bob's death in 1956, Carmen met and married Jack Hoistad. Mr. Hoistad, who owned Alpine Trucking, assisted Carmen in running Bailey's Café until its sale in 1969. Jack passed away in 1971. Jim Lewis retired from his business machine repair shop in the East and moved to Alpine where he met and married Carmen. They lived here until Jim's death in 2003.

Carmen has been an active part of every facet of Alpine life ever since her arrival in 1944. From scrubbing floors in The Alpine Woman's Club when needed, holding the key to the building to allow renters access, cooking for hundreds of firefighters during times of need, helping out in the schools to just being a friend and neighbor, Carmen Gonzalez Bailey Hoistad Lewis is an inspiration to all who have had the pleasure of knowing her. In honor of her 100th birthday, which she will celebrate on April 26th, The Alpine Historical Society will be hosting a luncheon on Sunday, April 21st at 1:00 p.m. at The Alpine Woman's Club, 2156 Alpine Boulevard. Our good neighbors the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians will be catering this event. Due to limited space, reservations are required. Please contact Carol Morrison at 619-445-2544 or send an e-mail to info@alpinehistory.org to reserve your spot.

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