

# Memories

## Charles Vernon Brack

Interview Conducted By Tricia Lukes — 2016



Chuck Brack

After greeting me cordially and offering me a seat, Chuck begins by telling me that he is not the old-time Santee person that his wife, Elaine was. Chuck came out from the East Coast in 1982 and married Elaine. She had lived in San Diego County most of her life, and she did not want to go back East. They lived in Lakeside from 1982 or '83, and Elaine became very involved in the Lakeside Historical Society.

Eventually she left that organization and got involved in the revitalization of the Santee Historical Society.

Chuck told me that the Santee Historical Society started many, many years ago with Ms. Wade. She had all the old documents from the beginning and wasn't sure what to do with them. About 11 years ago, as he recalls, Elaine Brack and Elaine Murphy resurrected the Santee Historical Society.

He believes that it has just gotten better over the years, and although the membership is small, it is a well-functioning group.

It became a non-profit, tax-free organization, and the first few years were very tough financially as there was no income to speak of. Looking through the documents, they discovered that the original Santee Historical Society had a defunct bank account, so they decided to go looking for it. They went to the local banks and to the state, and they uncovered a couple thousand dollars that had been lost over the years. That gave them enough money to get their feet on the ground, and since then things have gotten better.

Chuck reiterated that it was Elaine who was most involved. He accompanied her to meetings and listened to the discussions and planning.

Chuck enjoyed helping Elaine in the roles she took within the Santee Historical Society. He told me that she was a doer and a networker. She held most of the offices with the exception of president, because she wanted to do things, and not manage them.

Chuck also talked about the acquisition of the Barn. In the early days, the Society had a lot of documents from the Wade family, but no place to store them. They went to the County and asked if they could use the Barn. At the time, the County was using it for a storage shed. Eventually the County let them in, however, they still used the upper floor for County storage, and they had an office there for recordkeeping. The Santee Historical Society started with sharing the bottom floor, which was in pretty bad shape.

For the next few years the Society was involved with going through the things and organizing them.



*Editor's note...*

*Sometime during the 1970's, the County of San Diego which owns the Barn, painted it bright red.*

*Harriette Wade, Santee's first historian, fought to have it repainted to its present white and green.*

The County rented the Barn to the Santee Historical Society in 2007 but they had to hire painters and electricians to bring it up to code. The barn still had the old 'tube and wire' type of wiring, where wires were passed through insulated glass tubes.

After much hard work, the Society finished the renovations enough to open a current historical museum for the Santee community.

And now some personal information about Chuck...

Charles Vernon Brack was born in Buffalo, New York, November 19, 1918. His father was born in Chicago but his Grandfather was from Germany. His mother was born in London] England and emigrated with her mother and his aunt when she was about 12 years old. The Aunt lived across the street with her two girls. While playing with pea shooters about 1926 his eye was injured. Chuck attended Alleghany College for 1 year. And then Purdue University from which he graduated in August 1943.

He returned home to Gowanda, N.Y. and worked for the Sterling Engine Company, in Buffalo, N.Y., from 1943 -1947. He was working on large, diesel engines.

His friend Charles Thomas asked him to come work with him designing motor cars. The Playboy Motor Company built about 100 prototypes - a 2 seater with steel convertible top. This company eventually went bankrupt.

In 1949 a friend at Bendix, Sidney, N.Y. invited him to work with him in a division making diesel fuel injectors in the Magnito section. He retired as the engineering manager in 1980 but stayed on as a consultant for 6 months enabling him to travel in Europe.

Throughout these past 30 years he visited a cousin, Sally Merrill, here in Santee, Ca. He got to know the neighbor, Elaine. Chuck and Elaine married in 1982 at the Presbyterian Church in Lakeside and helped raise her two teen-aged girls. (They now have 4 grand children) Chuck enjoyed playing golf and played most of the courses in San Diego,

He still lives in the house they bought in Lakeside about 1983.

