

Movie Personalities Lived in Chatsworth

These are the people in front of the camera who called our community home.

By Virginia Watson, published on www.chatsworth.patch.com
CHATSWORTH THEN AND NOW

Additional photo boxes and comments added by Ann Vincent

In addition to the large number of Hollywood movies made in Chatsworth, there were also many actors, actresses and movie personnel who settled in the area, at least for a while.

Possibly the most remembered couple, due to the huge success of their television program was **Lucille Ball** and **Desi Arnaz**. Shortly after they were married in 1940, they bought a small, not-quite-finished ranch, with a surrounding white fence on five-acres in Chatsworth at the corner of Corbin Avenue and Devonshire Street. In her posthumously published autobiography, Lucy tells of celebrating her 30th birthday in the house and of how Desi enjoyed building the fireplace for the patio and the bath house and how much they loved rural life with the dogs, chickens and orange groves. Both of their children were born while they lived in Chatsworth and the couple was a familiar sight in the community. They shopped at a locally owned "supermarket" nearby on Devonshire Street near Canoga Avenue owned by the **Vellone family**. At first, the couple spent a lot of time in Chatsworth commuting the 25 miles to the studio, but in the spring of 1950 they formed the Desilu Company and soon their responsibilities escalated. Finally they sold the ranch to **Jane Withers** and moved to Beverly Hills.



Jane Withers was a friendly addition to the community. Her daughter attended Chatsworth Park Elementary School and Jane participated in the PTA and the Mother's March of Dimes. She even stayed late to help with the dishes after a fund-raiser and the new Security Pacific Bank opened up especially to accept the money collected that needed to be counted and deposited.



Lots of people in the community have stories to tell about **Roy Rogers** and **Dale Evans Rogers** who moved to Chatsworth in the early 1950s and lived on a 300-acre ranch up next to



Oakwood Memorial Park where Trigger Lane is still the name of the street. The family was an integral part of the community. Roy went to the Rotary Club meetings and the Chamber of Commerce events. He was also a part-owner of the golf course and skeet shooting range that existed before Chatsworth Park South was created at the west end of Devonshire Street. Dale was a busy mother with all the children, but she attended PTA meetings, school events and spoke at the Women's Club meetings. Both she and Roy attended the Chatsworth United Methodist Church (now The Pioneer Church relocated in Oakwood Memorial Park, 22601 Lassen St.). Dale often played the piano and sang with the children in the Sunday School that was held in a little house in back of the church. And the Methodist Youth Fellowship teenage members often ended up in the Rogers' family room on Sunday nights after the meeting, playing games and singing. The Roger's children grew up in Chatsworth but one of the reasons they moved to Apple Valley, Roy said once in a speech, was the bus tragedy that took the life of **Debbie**, the little girl they had adopted from Korea.

Many other movie actors and actresses lived in Chatsworth. **Mae Marsh** was Honorary Mayor of Chatsworth and lived on a ranch there in the 1930s. **Lionel Barrymore** served as Honorary Mayor in the '40s and early '50s and lived on a ranch where Sierra Canyon School is now.

Ginny Simms had a ranch on the east side of Corbin Avenue below Devonshire Street and **Louella Parsons**, the well-known Hollywood syndicated movie columnist, also lived on Corbin Avenue on the west side of the street. Some movie magazines listed them as living in Northridge but locals remember that it was Chatsworth.

Ayn Rand's well-known Richard J. Neutra designed home is no longer standing but it was on Tampa at Lassen Street on what is now partly a gated community called "Running Springs" and partly Nobel Middle School. Rand bought her 13-acre ranch with part of the money from her novel, "The Fountainhead."

2011 GARDEN FESTIVAL

Bea Berman, Chairman

Other movie personalities are **Victor Borge** who lived locally in the 1950s and his children attended Chatsworth Park Elementary School. **Barbara Hale** and **Bill Williams** owned commercial property in Chatsworth during the '50s, '60s and '70s. **Kirk Cameron**, a teenage idol and television star attended Chatsworth High School and was the grand marshal of the local parade one year. His sister, **Candace Cameron**, also attended schools in Chatsworth and is well-known today.

Brandy, Melissa and Traci Gold were three young talented sisters who appeared regularly on television while living in Chatsworth in the 1980s.

Milton and Collette Parsons lived in



Milt Parsons was known for his roles as butlers, undertakers and Morticians.

Chatsworth for many years and devoted volunteer hours to the community through their work with "The Cookie Jar Theatre," a children's theater group, and other drama groups they started with

the Canoga Park Episcopal Church. Their lovely home on Farralone in Chatsworth was often called into service for a play or theater-oriented event. The Parsons also were members of the Chatsworth Historical Society in its early years.

Many other actors and actresses have touched the community, interacting with local people and enriching community life. Among them are: **Keith Andes, Fred Astaire, Warren Berlinger, James Brolin, Dan Dailey, Buddy Ebsen, Barbara Eden, Chad Everett, Paul Kelley** and his daughter **Paula Kelly, Val Kilmer, Dale Robertson, Sabu the Elephant Boy, Kevin Spacey, and Mare Whittingham.**

Chatsworth has benefited from its association with the public personalities of the movie and television world and is a better community for it embracing and enjoying the make-believe world along with every day down-to-earth community life.

It's almost here. Before we know it, May 1st will be upon us and it will be time for our wonderful GARDEN FESTIVAL. Please mark your calendars and tell your friends about it.

We still could use baked goods and new or like new items for our white elephant booth. We also need your help. There is still room for vendors if you know anyone who might be interested. Of course, our wonderful Duchass Tea is always a treat and remember, everything is homemade.

The various Garden Clubs will be there and tours of the museum and the cottage are certainly worthwhile.

Remember, due to lack of parking in the park, a shuttle bus will be available at the north end of the train depot from 11:00-4:00 PM running every fifteen minutes.

Any questions, I can be reached at (818) 341-5449. We are looking forward to seeing you on May 1st.

Watch for the Huell Howser replay of the Historic Acre and his announcement of the 2011 Garden Festival on April 25th at 7:30 PM on KCET

INSTALLATION OF 2011-2012 OFFICERS

As reported at the Business meeting held on April 5, 2011, the slate of proposed officers are as follows.

Co-Presidents	Linda & André van der Valk
Programs, Ways & Means	Bea Berman
Membership	Keith Watts
Treasurer	Ray Vincent
Recording Secretary	Elaine Campbell
Smoke Signal	Ann Vincent
Museum Curator	Virginia Watson
Cottage Curator	Betty Summers
Hospitality	Jelena Csanyi
Garden Director	Jim & Betty Summers
Director-at-Large	Beverly King
Director-at-Large	Connie Ager
Permanent Member	Lila Schepler

These officers will be officially elected and installed at the May 17th General Meeting.