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MY PART
IN THE
DE ANZA EXPEDITION

by
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Blaney High School
Cupertino

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INTRODUCTION

The De Anza Expedition Re-enactment of 1976 was a Bicentennial project of both California and Arizona with the cooperation of Mexico. In 1775 Juan Bautista de Anza was a Captain for the Spanish army stationed at Tubac, now part of Arizona. He dreamed of exploring the area around Monterey for an overland route to Alta California. The Viceroy of New Spain Bucareli granted him permission. On his successful return Anza was made a Lt. Colonel and given a decree by King Carlos III of Spain and orders from Bucareli to make his "impossible dream" come true. He was to take colonists on the route to establish a mission and a presidio in the San Francisco bay area.

The expedition of 1775-76 was long and difficult. There were 39 families. Half of the 120 children were under 10 years old. There were soldiers, servants, muleteers, Indian interpreters, Ft. Font, Lt. Jose Moraga, and Sgt. Grijalva. Around 700 saddle horses and pack mules and 355 head of cattle and supplies had to be transported across barren deserts and rugged mountains. In their entrance into the Imperial Valley they were almost defeated by the worst cold winter. Some had never seen snow. Quite a few of the cattle and mules froze to death. But the colonists pushed on. A child was born on Christmas Eve near Riverside. The trek continued the next day. De Anza gave the colonists courage and inspiration. They loved and respected him as a man and a soldier.

I was eleven when I became interested in the trek. My Mom worked almost a year on the planning. I saw our "soldiers" practice in their great uniforms and followed the re-enactment through our county. I walked as a colonist from San Antonio Mission and then to Carmel Mission and San Juan Bautista Mission. After Santa Clara County I participated as a muleteer from Burlingame to Golden Gate Park on a pony. Then I went into the other counties with my Mom who took pictures of the celebrations at the campsites and plaque dedications mostly in parks. The whole trek was a great experience for me. Now early California history is very special in my life. I want to share my personal side of the De Anza trek with you.

The De Anza Expedition Re-enactment of 1976 followed as close as possible to the original trek of 1776. Each day through our county was a hard day's ride. There were parades, community celebrations, park dedications and plaque dedications as the soldiers went northward on March 24, 25, 26 and 31. Expert horsemen had to volunteer their time and ride at their own expense. They knew that they would be camping out and that they would have to provide everything for their horses and trailers and for their meals. Each "soldier" had to make application for the trek. The same riders also were expected to resume their riding when the ride reentered the county on April 5, 6 and 7. The muleteers and soldiers were signed up with their alternates in case they were ill or could not take off from their jobs on any of the days. The last few days the men rode from Stanislaus County and went back through the mountains and through Henry Coe State Park to San Benito County. This was the only part of the trek that I did not participate as only De Anza and his soldiers made the exploration of this area. I met them again when Lt. Moraga brought the colonists through toward the end of June.

Rol Bergen, an electrician and horseshoer from Cupertino, was selected as De Anza. He had good qualifications. He had been in the rodeo circuit for years. He decided to take time off from his work and begin training for his part. To really resemble the leader he grew a beard and sideburns. Ken Oliver of San Jose played the part of De Anza's right hand man, Lt. Jose Moraga. They both wore the uniform similar to that of George Washington complete with tri-corner hat and white ostrich plume and purple cape for Colonel De Anza. Brother Timothy from Mission San Antonio was Fr. Font. He wore long flowing robe tied in the middle and a very wide and very heavy leather hat and leather sandals. I first met him at the Mission San Antonio and he was very excited to have received the very first historic marker which became part of De Anza Square sundial plaza. That was my beginning of the trek.

The soldiers were accurate according to research done at the Presidio of San Francisco Army Museum. Their costumes were black wool jacket and pants and black boots. Over the boots were leather leggings. The knee length over jacket was made of double stitched deerhide to deflect the arrows of the Indians. They wore black bandanas under a black hat with a red ribbon around the crown. They had swords and shields. Each one of these had different city logo painted in colors on tooled leather. Most of the cities in the county contributed money to have these uniforms made in Arizona. A local tailor sewed the jackets. The muleteers wore a red sash with hanging fringe. They wore red bandanas under black hats like the soldiers. Of all the counties our riders looked the best because of the unity of the uniforms. I watched them drill together with their Sgt. Grijalva who gave commands to them in Spanish. Each soldier carried a lance which had the colors in ribbons of the various cities along the way. The Spanish flag that the explorer Portola used had the royal coat of arms from King Carlos III. A historian from Arizona brought her own and had autographs of all the participants she met from Tucson to San Francisco. This was to be given to the Tucson Museum.

On the morning of March 24 the riders from Santa Clara County met with the riders from Monterey at Mission San Juan Bautista in San Benito County. Our uniforms had been loaned to the San Benito county riders for their part in the ride. So now with their colorful ribboned lances, the Spanish royal flag, and the Bicentennial flag our riders made their grand entry into the county after crossing private property to Gilroy for a parade at 9th Street and ending at Leavesley Road. The mayor and dignitaries exchanged proclamations and decree from De Anza. The first commemorative plaque in the county was dedicated at 6th St. and Monterey Road reading that De Anza and his men had "crossed this area" in 1776. The Santa Clara county board of supervisors had purchased 21 bronze markers to distribute in cities and parksites where the expedition had stopped at campsites and along the trail and at Santa Clara Mission.

The riders continued through San Martin in the late afternoon. Here they received a welcome and pennant and ribbon by the local Lions Club. Near Llagas Creek was campsite #92 which was dedicated with a De Anza plaque. There were motorcycle escorts watching over the group as they progressed through the cities. Sgt. Grijalva seemed very nervous at times because he assumed responsibility for keeping the riders together and the horses from getting "spooked." by the traffic. There was a heavy wind and the sky was overcast. It was dark when they arrived in Morgan Hill and were greeted outside in the cold wind by Mayor Virginia Days. It seemed the whole town had turned out for the festivities. Her elderly mother enjoyed the group most of all. We had all assembled inside the Friendly Inn, which was sure an appropriate name. The mayor gave a scroll and pennant to the riders. The soldiers and mulleteers wanted to take care of the horses first so there was a little delay in getting the barbecue started. Sgt. Grijalva's horse cut his forehead while being led into the trailer by someone who made him nervous. He had to have quite a few stitches, but was O.K. the next day. The soldiers sat among the townspeople and were the "heroes" of the moment. There was square dancing and Spanish dancers and bands from the San Martin High School. Then the Mayor handed each rider a replica of the historic marker to wear through the county. Tonight there were beds inside that the scouts had placed with bedding so that they would be comfortable during the cold night.

Very early the next morning they ate breakfast at 5 a.m. as they were due in San Jose for a 10 a.m. parade from Meridian Ave. to Arroya Park. The mayor and city officials greeted them and on their arrival renamed it "De Anza Park" and planted a tree for the occasion. Then the De Anza plaque was unveiled. It rested in a tilted pedestal made of concrete and dyed. Then there was a delicious steak barbecue with much wine tasting. I stuck to the colas.

Around 3 p.m. they arrived in Campbell and were greeted at John D. Morgan Park by the mayor. He gave them the city proclamation and gifts and the marker was dedicated.

The city of Cupertino had renamed part of the Sunnyvale-Saratoga Road near Stevens Creek Blvd. in honor the trek. The riders could now ride on "De Anza Blvd." They assembled for a parade into De Anza College, their stop for the night. At Rainbow Dr. they headed for the east entrance into the campus. Some Catholic fathers led the procession to the steps of the learning center. We all got good seats facing the flagpole and fountain. Los Californianos were the greeters in their costumes. This made the evening even more colorful. The Spanish royal flag, the Mexican-American flag and the Bicentennial flags were all raised and the anthems of each country were played. The trumpeter sounded his notes and the cannon went off. The plaque was presented to the college president by the Bd. of Supervisors and De Anza was presented the key to the city by the mayor. After several speeches each person lit a candle and mission music was sung by the Stanton chorus. Then everyone joined in the Alabado, the hymn of praise and peace. Some of the people around me became tearful with all of this happening. Then the call came for the festivities inside the campus center. There was a great chicken barbecue and many people had to wait almost an hour in the long lines. Inside there were dancers and mariachi players. Even some of the ladies came around with painted egg shells which were filled with confetti. They are called cascarones for Spanish fiestas. Custom meant that if you cracked one of these on someone's head you liked that person a lot. One of the highlights of the great evening on the campus was the release of pigeons by Fr. Font and De Anza when he said "as members of the 1776 expedition we represent a universal spirit of man, to explore the unknown, to forge ahead, and to realize the fulfillment of a dream. During the Bicentennial we celebrate the meaning of this spirit in America. We release these pigeons to symbolize the spirit of American freedom." As if this was not enough there were fireworks and then the flags were removed from the poles and taken into the cafeteria by a boy scout troop. The students and the city knew the meaning of the trek after this night.

It was early morning on March 26 when the riders left the college. They were invited by both Los Altos and Los Altos Hills for a pancake breakfast. All were in great spirits and everyone praised the other for the contributions they all had made. They rode out of Shoup Park in Los Altos and the mayor paused for a few minutes with the De Anza plaque in his hands to show where it would be installed in Lincoln Park. There were many excited school children who had been given the chance to see the riders. My friend, Ada Smith who was 92 and one of the oldest of the residents, was cheering along with the kids. She told me that it was a great thing to see history pass before her like this. She talked of her horse and buggy days and the time she saw the landing on the moon by our astronaut. The trek proceeded to the next spot for the marker. They were clearing the brush for a little park at Edith and Fremont. Then toward Stanford and another plaque was unveiled and dedicated by the mayor of Los Altos Hills at Miranda and Fremont. It was already in place on the colored cement pedestal which was made in San Jose. Then the riders crossed over Foothill Expressway to the Veterans Hospital in Palo Alto. The hospital chaplain said prayers and directors of the hospital and members of the women's historical group invited the group to eat in the hospital cafeteria and then attend the reception in behind the main building. There were delicious cakes and cookies. Then the ladies had a costume contest. I met the proud parents of one of the soldiers. Trif could only talk about his young son. He seemed to find the trek a real patriotic thing and later joined as a soldier to make the Moraga expedition with the settlers.

The mochila, the saddle bag that carried the official documents from the expedition, was transferred to the rider from San Mateo County. George Cardinet, President of the California Horseman's Association, spent close to \$2,000 to have the heavy leather bag hand tooled with emblems of royalty and symbols and coat of arms of the Spanish king. Later he was to hand carry it to a museum in Washington, D.C. Usually a courier went on ahead to make sure that the mochila arrived at the same time as the original trek.

After 3 days the trek returned to our county the morning of March 30. Near Sunset Magazine office the official documents in the mochila were transferred back to our riders. De Anza and Moraga planted a tree near El Palo Alto and then joined the rest down Middlefield Rd. to Embarcadero where a tiny park was dedicated with the historic marker. I wondered how anyone could ever find it again. It was so difficult to find a place nearby on the busy intersection to park and to walk over to it.

Around 11 a.m. the riders turned on Rengstorff to the Rengstorff Park in Mountain View. There was a short parade with high school bands. Members of the old Castro family were there for the Declaration of Castro Day. The plaque in its concrete pedestal was dedicated from a flat bed truck in front of the community center. Later the workmen placed it on the grass in front of the main building. We all bought tickets for a terrific lunch of beef stew and barbecue. The people were all very friendly and did not want to let the riders go on their way so soon. But they had to leave the good food and fun and head south to a small parade in Sunnyvale at Murphy Park. The mayor gave De Anza and Moraga a proclamation with the Sunnyvale crest. After receiving the scroll from De Anza he presented him with a huge cake in the shape of the plaque complete with the drawing of De Anza on horseback done in icing. The plaque was placed in a large boulder and looked very good this way. The Historical Society had refreshments for all the riders, but there was so little time that they had to be handed the cake as they prepared to leave. I mean small pieces of it. They had to make it to the University of Santa Clara. The fathers greeted them on the steps of the old mission church. It was a beautiful picture with the flags waving and the costumed riders at the old wooden cross there. A mass was held and then all went to Ryan Field where the horses were tethered and watered and the men could rest before a barbecue for the students. Poor Fr. Font. Rather poor Brother Tim. He had ridden on his donkey with huge monk robes and a 20 pound double leather hat. He was ill from the ride and had a terrible headache.

Again at 5 a.m. the soldiers were given breakfast by the Santa Clara Women's Club. This was the last day March 31 in our county. They had to hurry to get to Milpitas. It was cold and dreary when they stopped at Milpitas City Hall. The place was full of children and dignitaries to make the morning one to remember. Everyone was enthusiastic. The riders met the ones from Alameda County and exchanged the mochila. Then they all returned to the City Hall to dedicate the De Anza plaque and eat another breakfast. It was around 10 a.m. now.

April 5, 6 and 7 our riders met the Stanislaus County riders for their trip back through the mountains and Henry Coe Park to San Benito County. Very few people saw them at all. They slept out and did all their own cooking. Only a supply jeep and a photographer made the trip with them. Deep in the park there was a plaque dedication. One of the riders was the forest ranger from there and his brother.

In two more months Lt. Jose Moraga would lead the colonists north from Monterey to the San Francisco bay area.

On June 19 De Anza riders from Monterey County and Santa Clara County met at San Juan Bautista Mission to ride that morning to Gavilan College. We had all spent the night before out in the field back of the Mission. Some were sleeping in cars, some on the ground in their sleeping bags and some in their horse trailers. The excitement was there. The horses were all tethered nearby and we were all set. Dr. Juan Ignacio Rodriguez, the representative from Mexico, was there. I had met him down at San Antonio Mission when he played the part of De Anza. He could speak good English and seemed to get along fine with everyone on the trek. I was with him inside San Juan Bautista Mission when he saw a crypt which had his exact name. I wondered if this was a very common Spanish name. He just laughed. "Nacho", the name we all later called him, wore a tan outfit, his Mexican gentleman cowboy clothes. He never wore the costumes that our riders had. He did wear the purple cape and tri-corner hat with a plume. He just looked at the uniforms of the soldiers and shook his head saying that they were not the same as 200 years before. But careful research was done by the Presidio of San Francisco and they were responsible for the designs. "Nacho" did his job well and never complained of the extreme heat and the long rides each day. Back in Mexico City he is a "Sunday" charro and is a leading trick rope man. In fact everywhere we stopped for city doings I saw him rope the girls standing around admiring him. They all loved it.

I was the only school kid from Santa Clara County to participate through our valley. I had walked with boy scouts and other kids around my age mostly from Monterey County and San Antonio Mission. I used an old buckskin vest and cut it down to my size and put rawhide drawstrings on it. Then I got a white cotton long sleeved shirt that had a draw string neck and my father's black pants and put a drawstring on the top. This is the way the colonists were pictured in old paintings. I wanted to really look the part. Later when I became a mulateer I used the same blouse and pants and added a red cumberbund and red bandana for my head which I tied back in a triangle. My aunt made the poncho out of heavy black wool that was lined with yellow wool. That was real work for her.

At Gavilan College the riders all enjoyed box lunches around noon. They all gathered their horses around a large pond that I think was part of the college golf course. They were all enthusiastic and had a few cups of wine for a toast. Some of the riders from Monterey county took a few more days off from their work so that they could go on this part of the trek. Now we were dressed as colonists as close as we could get to the original ones. It was nice to have Dr. Rodriguez from Mexico with us. Mr. Cardinet from Concord was dressed as Lt. Moraga. He had two costumes made for him. He was the one who made sure the mochila was always on time from county to county. He had spent so much of his own money to have it made. The riders were going a little too fast for us walking. When we made the turn to the left to go up Hecker Pass road they had to ride single file as there were so many cars. This time there was no protection from the police and the cars did go fast. This was a pretty part of the trip. There were so many poppies and lupins and a yellow weed flower and a lot of pampas grass. I liked going up into the mountains. It was a little difficult to walk up though and we all got very hot. It was the middle of the day now. We saw an area that said "Fishing for 16 years and below". It was a bridge over Uvas Creek. So we stopped and walked around the banks. My Mom stopped to take pictures of us. She was just warning us that it was awfully slippery when she did slip off the bank and into the water. It was funny to see her surprised look. Her costume was full of mud. She was sitting in the water with her camera up in the air and laughing with us now.

I thought we would never reach the top. Finally we arrived at Mount Madonna County Park. It was so nice to have shade and a nice area to rest. They spent the night here and the next day took the back route through the Santa Cruz mts. to Los Gatos. We had to walk back down. We saw fields of cactus for the first time and lots of winery places. There was a field of all colors of flowers and some modern houses being built. We had to go back for the trailers and bring them to Ranchito Stables. Frank Raineri, one of the muleteers, ran the place. He was the only Spanish speaking rider. He was a descendent of Juan Bernal.

Los Californianos members were waiting when we got there. There were two brothers named Strickler and their beautiful mother who wore a beautiful costume. I believe they were descendents from the original trek too. All of us pitched in to set up the tables and help make the salads. I got to walk the horses when they arrived and then feed and water them. We have to be very careful with them. If they drink too much when they are sweaty they get cramps. The riders were so tired and thirsty. They saw to their horses first all the time. The corral was just below the big ranch house. I got to sit on "Puki", a white horse that was very gentle. His master was Jim Hester from Apple Valley. He was over 75 years and had come all that way from southern California. He had arthritis so bad that some of the days he had to be helped on his horse. I guess this is where I became a muleteer. This is a helper to the riders. They also take care of the pack mules. Everyone had arrived except one of the boys from Monterey County. He was just 15 and was lost on the trail. Finally when we were all eating the sheriff drove up with him. It was easy not to find the ranch road. We had a great time that night. Everyone was singing and toasting. Frank would not let anyone help him barbecue the best steaks I have ever had. Neighbors around the ranch offered their cabins to us for the night.

Now it was June 22 and the riders were forming. Sgt Grijalva was a little upset with them and was giving some sharp orders in his Spanish for them to shape up. He even got after "Nacho" and said they had to be more military. We followed along to Lexington School. Summer school had just started and the principal asked for us to show. So the riders formed a line in front of the school kids and Moraga presented the school with a copy of the original orders. Then the principal gave him a certificate and presented me with a yellow sweat shirt with the Lexington cat on it and "cerro del gatos". I was so happy to have it. I am going to give it to the museum in Sunnyvale when we get a larger place. Nacho did a few rope tricks. The school kids were happy and clapping their hands.

Now the men were going really into the brush. The colonists trailered the campers and trucks to Cupertino to wait for the riders. They had to come through rugged country. It was close to 105 degrees and a really hot spell. I don't know how they did it. The trails were very dusty. Finally they appeared around the Stevens Creek Dam. They were worn out in the extra hot sun and had no place to cool off. They headed up the steep road to the Regnart farm and ranch. By the time the horses were all taken care of and the remaining campers were brought up from Los Gatos there were hardly any people left to greet them for their dinner. There were a couple of tables with cold cuts and 1 bottle of wine. Cardinet was finishing it off when "Nacho" begged for "el vino". Cardinet owned a candy factory which made a bar called "U-No". He did not bring any samples with him. They really would have melted this night. There was nothing to do here. We had only 1 light strung over the eating area. I had heard there were many rattlers on these fields so I did not explore like I usually did. Everyone was cozy in their campers and vans and we had our sleeping bags. Doc's horse got into a water bucket and was groaning on his back. Doc was worried and walked him a lot. Now I saw what they meant by keeping a sweaty horse from drinking right after a ride. Sgt. Grijalvo usually never left his horse's side. He even slept close to him. This ranch was quite high up and the view of the bay and the valley was clear. Permission had to be gotten from all the ranch lands for the trek to ride through. Each area had its own padlock.

It was now June 23 and everyone was invited to a special beef stew dinner made by the local Los Altos Hills women's club. The trek went through the green hills away from the public view to Westwind Barn. It was high up in the hills in the center of a residential area. This time we didn't have to worry about the snakes getting us. The ladies and the dignitaries even did the clean up work. We kids found our way to the loft where we spent the night in the hay. The riders got to take showers and went to bed early for the next day's trek.

On the morning of June 24 our riders had to meet the schedule at the county line for the next group to take over. They met at San Francisquito Creek. Many of our riders joined the San Mateo riders and made the trek for the next days to Golden Gate park. Here is where I went from colonist to muleteer and rider. From Burlingame to the Cow Palace I got to ride a little pony called "Candy". The thrill was having all the riders from all the counties meeting here for the last grand celebration before the final parade in Golden Gate park. My Mom brought back from the city of Santa Clara a beautiful certificate of appreciation presented to her by the city historian Mr. Warburton and the mayor and other dignitaries from the Bicentennial. They dedicated her plaque near the City Hall.

I had made a lot of friends along the way. I learned a lot about the valley by going with the trek. I really felt I could never get this experience by just reading, It had a lot to do with just being so close to the countryside and enjoying so many different places. The kind people we met along the trek made it perfect. I am proud of my ribbons and certificates from San Francisco.

Now I have my own horse, my own soldier's uniform, and am the youngest member of the De Anza Lancers. We try to keep the spirit of De Anza alive. We were part of De Anza's "impossible dream". Peace be with you. Vaya con Dios!



Los Altos TOWN CHIEF

TAKING PART in the March 22 dedication of the De Anza Trek Historic Marker at McClellan Park Ranch in Cupertino were Joe Docknahl of Los Altos Hills and Dane Beezley of Sunnyvale, two of the riders in the 1976 bicentennial event. The bronze plaque, permanently marking Campsite 93 of the original De Anza Expedition of 1776, was designed by Doris Beezley, former Los Altos resident who was also the county coordinator of the historic markers along the original trail and campsites. The horse is Docknahl's Whiskey.

LT. COLONEL
JUAN BAUTISTA
DE ANZA
BY DECREE OF
CARLOS III
OF SPAIN



LED AN EXPEDITION
TO THIS SITE—
THE MISSION BEING
TO COLONIZE THE
SAN FRANCISCO
BAY AREA