



# Antelope Horn

Newsletter of the Kern-Antelope Historical Society, Inc.  
Member of the Conference of California Historical Societies  
PO Box 1255 Rosamond, CA 93560  
March, 2022

## Meetings:

### Regular Meetings:

- 2nd Thursday of the month (except July, August & December); 5:30 pm.
- Wayside Chapel Community Church - 2584 Felsite Ave, Rosamond, CA

### Board Meetings:

- 4th Thursday of the month as needed; 4 pm.; all are welcome, email for directions.

## Hello to all our Kern Antelope Historical Society Members

For our March meeting we are pleased to share **an interview with the late Ruth Russell, wife of Jack Russell who worked for the Bell Aircraft Corporation.** Ruth and Jack lived in Rosamond many years and were very active in the local community. Her story of the move to the Antelope Valley from New York and the early days of jet engine flight and supersonic research at Edwards Air Force Base, *from a wife's perspective*, is very interesting. I think this will be a special interview you won't want to miss.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of KAHS.

**WEBSITE:** [www.kahs1959.org](http://www.kahs1959.org) **EMAIL:** [info@kahs1959.org](mailto:info@kahs1959.org)

**FACEBOOK:** [www.facebook.com/KAHS1959/](http://www.facebook.com/KAHS1959/)

## Jack Russell - Bell Aircraft Corporation Mechanic And Long-Time Rosamond Resident, With His Wife, Ruth Russell.

On October 14, 1947, U.S. Air Force pilot Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier in a Bell X-1. Many articles, movies, documentaries, etc. have told that story. But one thing is clear, without the Bell engineers and ground crew, Yeager wouldn't have been successful. According to Major Robert L. Cardenas, head of the project and the B-29 Commander, Russell was a skilled and dedicated Bell mechanic, responsible for keeping the X-1 maintained and its XLR11 rocket engine in working order. In short, he made sure the X-1 was ready to fly. "Without Jack Russell, we would not have made it to Mach 1," (<https://www.historynet.com/bell-x-1-dropping-the-orange-beast.htm>)



Jack Russell, center, front; Chuck Yeager standing at left - with the Glamorous Glennis, (nicknamed for Yeager's wife) - the X B-1 in which he broke the sound barrier.  
<http://thetartanterror.blogspot.com/2013/10/>



<http://thetartanterror.blogspot.com/2013/10/>

An example of Russell's ingenuity was after a later flight.

Yeager's windscreen had iced over so badly he couldn't see, and he had to be talked down to a safe, blind, landing on the lakebed. The icing problem persisted until the indispensable Jack Russell came up with a simple solution. Before each flight he applied a coating of Drene shampoo (see separate article below) to the inner surface of the canopy. It solved the problem and they continued to use it even after the Air Force found a chemical that cost \$18 a bottle.

Another interesting story about Yeager's flight to break the sound barrier is shown in the film, *The Right Stuff*. Yeager had been horseback riding a couple days before the historic flight and had an accident and broke a couple ribs, which he didn't tell



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Jack Russell, left, with Jack Woolams, 1st Bell X-1 Pilot.  
<http://thetartanterror.blogspot.com/2013/10/>

about. But he couldn't pull the hatch closed and, at the last minute, the flight engineer cut off a piece of a broom handle so that Yeager could reach and pull the hatch down without too much discomfort. The part in the movie [*The Right Stuff* - jlw] where Ridley [Captain Jack Ridley, flight engineer and copilot] cuts off Jack Russell's broom is misleading," commented Cardenas. "Russell was in charge of keeping the X-1 maintained. And that also meant keeping it clean. He was a fanatic about keeping the sand and dust out of the hangar. He was constantly sweeping and cleaning. That X-1 was his baby. But in the movie his real role is not even mentioned."

But the personal story Ruth Russell tells is from the young wife's perspective, when her husband was sent from New York, by the Bell Aircraft Corporation, to work on a secret project and couldn't tell her where he was going, to the request she eventually got to come join him somewhere in the Mojave Desert. She and another wife

joined their husbands and Ruth tells about how they were met when they got here, where they lived in the 'early days', and so on. It's a fun and interesting story. In those early days, they lived in several different locations as Edwards had no housing available for the workers of this secret project. Their early homes included Tropic Gold Camp and the Willow Springs Resort, developed by Ezra Hamilton.

The secret project, as Jack told many years later, was developing a jet engine aircraft for use in World War II. "In June 1942, Larry Bell chose as XP-59A project manager his chief test pilot, Robert M. Stanley. Stanley made arrangements to ship the first XP-59A to a remote test site he'd never heard of before. It was referred to in some documents as "the secret station." The location was Muroc Army Air Field, Calif., located between the San Bernardino and Shadow Mountains and named in reverse for the Corum Brothers who had settled the region [now Edwards Air Force Base, jlw]. "It was the farthest I'd ever been from a city," Stanley said. Muroc offered the hard surface of Rodgers Dry Lake for emergency landings."

"The XP-59A (known as the Airacomet), was the first American aircraft to be powered by a turbojet engine. The Bell Aircraft design team in Buffalo, N.Y., produced a jet that flew well but offered little performance advantage over propeller-driven fighters." Ultimately, the contract went to another corporation as Russell recalled to Rae Winters years later. It was after this that the Bell Corporation worked on the X-1. (<https://www.defensemедianetwork.com/stories/xp-59a-airacomet-the-first-american-jet-began-as-a-secret-program/>)



"Bell XP-59A being towed at Muroc Dry Lake, Calif. Note the false wooden propeller designed to conceal the jet engines during ground towing. U.S. Air Force photo"



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In a recent Facebook post regarding Willow Springs, it mentioned the fact that a number of people working on the Bell Project lived there, although it doesn't specifically mention Jack & Ruth, it is interesting. "Between 1918-1930 there were always people living (at Willow Springs), but it had a variety of owners until the Willow Springs Co., which carried on local mining operations, purchased it for their headquarters. In 1952, the Tehachapi earthquake destroyed some of the old buildings but the town managed to stay alive. There were always some tenants in the houses and the restaurant was always in operation, leased out to several people over the years. During the first experimental flights of the Bell X-1 at Edwards Air Force Base, many of the flight crew rented rooms at Willow Springs. Included among the residents were Chalmers "Slick" Goodlin, pilot of the X-1 before Chuck Yeager; Dick Frost, project manager of the X-1 test team, and many others. Female pilot Pancho Barnes was also a frequent visitor. In the mid-1950s, the restaurant was operated by Lawrence and Jean Duntley, son and daughter-in-law of Antelope Valley pioneer Rawley Duntley. The restaurant, which served Basque food, was constantly bustling. After the restaurant closed, Willow Springs village has again fallen quiet, spare for the sound of cars racing nearby." (<https://www.facebook.com/page/314619438695358/search?q=willow%20springs>)

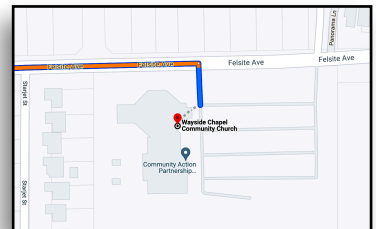


Ruth and Jack Russell at the Webb Cabin in the Tehachapi Mts.



Russell's impromptu solution: "Drene shampoo was introduced by Procter & Gamble of Cincinnati, Ohio, in the mid-1930s. It was the first modern synthetic (no soap) shampoo and it marked the company's entrance into the hair care business. People were encouraged to use it once or twice a week, compared to previous guidelines of washing the hair just once a month." ([https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_688587](https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_688587))

- ★ Thursday, March 10th, at 5:30 pm.
- ★ At Wayside Chapel Community Church, 2584 Felsite Ave, Rosamond, CA 93560
- ★ To reach the Wayside Chapel:
  - From Rosamond Blvd, drive to 30<sup>th</sup> St W and turn north.
  - At Felsite Ave turn right (east).
  - Drive to Wayside Chapel and turn south, into the parking lot, using either driveway.



**Note:** Due to another activity at the church, we will meet in a room upstairs for this month. We will have someone stationed at the main entrance to direct you to the elevator which will deliver you to the third floor.





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Email: [info@kahs1959.org](mailto:info@kahs1959.org)

Please visit the website for more information about Antelope Valley history. Copies of recent newsletters are available, as well as other information. The first online KAHS book is also available. *Glimpse of the Prehistory of Antelope Valley*, by Stuart Glennan, is described as "Archaeological Investigations at the Sweetser site".



Here is the link for the Kern Antelope Historical Society webpage that will take you directly to the Video section: <http://kahs1959.org/Videos/videos.html>. Here is a list of our other videos also. We hope you will check them out.

- Interview with Bill Deaver - <https://youtu.be/72AMyLs6All>
- A Tribute to Jim Williford with Ella Williford Garcia - <https://youtu.be/cxq5rj2505I>
- Artist Ramon Ramirez with Gretchen Winfrey, July 2021
- Our Historical Artist with Gretchen Winfrey (Jedd Strange), June 2021
- History of the Carol's Department Store in Mojave, May 2021
- Terry Burton on Gold Processing, Interview by Chavonne Sladek, April 2021
- John Joyce, Interview by Gretchen Winfrey, February 2021
- JOE PAULEY interviewed by GRETCHEN WINFREY, January 2021
- THE FINAL TOUR, PAULEY BROS. STEEL, Interview by Chavonne Bradley, Autumn 2020



### Kern Antelope Historical Society - Membership Application

Mail to: Kern Antelope Historical Society; PO Box 1255, Rosamond, CA 93560

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, ST, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

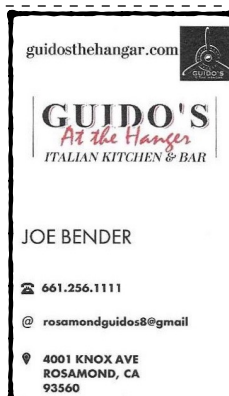
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership:	Dues:	Amount Paid:
Student/Military	\$5	_____
Individual	\$15	_____
Couple	\$20	_____
Family	\$30	_____
Business	\$35	_____

- Note:**
- Club Year is June 1st through May 31st of the following year; new members, paying after February 1st, pay only half.
  - Zelle: [info@kahs1959.org](mailto:info@kahs1959.org)



The Kern Antelope Historical Society greatly appreciates its business members. We hope you will support them and say thanks when you see them.





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The Kern Antelope Historical Society greatly appreciates its business members.  
We hope you will support them and say thanks when you see them.

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## For Sale by KAHS

### **Books - \$10 (\*\$8) Each:**

Here Roamed the Antelope  
Bears - Borax and Gold  
Along the Rails from Lancaster to Mojave  
The Antelopes Left and the Settle-ers Came  
In Love with Life in Lancaster (Hard Times  
1927-1932)  
Antelope Valley Pioneers  
Castles in the Valley - Shea's Castle  
A Page in the History of Antelope Valley: the Arthur  
Pickus Story: His Home for Seventy Five Years  
Mojave, A Rich History of Rails, Mining and Flight  
Gold-Fever - 40 Years Digging Antelope Valley  
History  
Antelope Valley News and Views During Part of the  
Great Depression 1925-1935

**Video DVD - \$15:** Antelope Valley Yesteryears

**Maps - \$4 (\*\$3):** Historic Settlers Circle Map

**Online Book:** *Glimpse of the Prehistory of Antelope Valley*

*\*Members' Discount Prices in Parentheses*

## 2020-2021

### Executive Board

#### **Officers:**

President: Gretchen Winfrey    winfrey3314@yahoo.com  
Vice President: Delores Julian    ddjulirosa@yahoo.com  
Secretary: Janet Winters    poppiesrme@gmail.com  
Treasurer: Kelly Gonzalez    gonzakel@sbcglobal.net

#### **Directors At-Large:**

Terry Landsiedel  
Joe Pauley  
Chavonne Sladek

**WEBSITE:** [www.kahs1959.org](http://www.kahs1959.org)    **EMAIL:** [info@kahs1959.org](mailto:info@kahs1959.org)

#### **General Meetings:**

Second Thursday of the Month, September through June  
5:30 pm - 2584 Felsite Ave, Rosamond, CA  
(Exceptions: June, September & December -  
Location to be announced)

#### **Memberships:**

\$5 - Student & Military; \$15 - Individual; \$20 - Husband & Wife;  
\$30 - Family; \$35 - Businesses

The Kern Antelope Historical Society was established in 1959 for the purpose of learning and preserving the history of California, especially the Antelope Valley, which includes parts of Los Angeles and Kern counties. Speakers are invited to talk at our monthly meetings about aspects of our various cultures. Subjects range from Indians of the past to the Space Age. The Society offers field trips for members to significant locations in and around the valley throughout the year. Come join us to learn more about the wonders of this area we live in and also meet some new people.

### **KERN ANTELOPE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**P.O. BOX 1255**

**ROSAMOND, CA 93560**



*Since 1959*