

MILL STREET

Hometown Forum B2
 Bouquets of Thanks B3
 Hometown Happenings B7
 Family Album B8



Overall Picture

By Bill Mead
 ©2000 Country Gems

Tomorrow's actors may live on disks

When the movie "Titanic" came out there was a lot of buzz about the way the producers used computers to create humans for crowd scenes. This led to predictions that future movies could be made without any live actors at all.

I don't know why this notion stunned the industry. Walt Disney invented artificial actors back in the 1920s when he introduced Mickey Mouse and his other cartoon characters that have become nearly as real to most people as the ordinary run of flesh and blood performers. Computerized actors would be just one more step on an already-established path. They would also cut the studio overhead big time. You could pay a lot of graphic programmers with the twenty million bucks Julia Roberts pulls down for doing one role.

This isn't a slap at Julia. If she didn't sell tickets she wouldn't get that kind of dough. I feel the same way about athletes and even rap musicians who rake in what some folks consider obscene amounts. They couldn't do that if they didn't show the right bottom line for somebody.

Getting back to computerizing movie actors, I doubt that it would have much impact on the world of celebrity reporting. Television devotes thousands of hours to keeping us abreast of what the Beautiful People of screen fame are up to; what they are wearing (or not quite wearing), who they are sleeping with and who they might be sleeping with next week. Nearly every publication, with the possible exception of *Scientific American*, wastes thousands of tons of newsprint providing the most intimate details about the lives of people in the entertainment spotlight, many of whom we wouldn't want hanging out with us if we really got to know them.

It's my observation that most of this media garbage is manufactured anyway. What press agents make up is augmented with pure fiction by reporters and editors who haven't been able to sell their own screenplays. Since most of what we are told about actors is make-believe, why should we shrink from make-believe actors? If I were to learn that Madonna was actually born in a Gateway computer I doubt that it would profoundly affect my life. I would pay about as much attention to her in the future as I have in the past.

Some people claim that celebrity worship has been foisted on us by movie moguls. History doesn't bear that out. In the early days, producers wouldn't put the names of actors on the screen lest they start asking for more money. It was the ticket-buying public that launched the star system by hounding the media to divulge the names of the more-popular performers like Mary Pickford. From then on, America's Sweetheart and others began knocking over the studio bosses for bigger slices of the box office pie. We brought it on ourselves, people.

Hollywood's penchant for mixing facts with fantasy concerning its actors reached one peak a few decades ago with the concoction of he-man names, such as Rock Hudson, for promising male performers with commonplace names like Roy Fitzgerald. At that time, Humphrey Bogart (his real name) and a few of his drinking buddies took to dreaming up phony names for actors while downing their vodka gimlets. Their favorite? Would you believe Dung Heap?

Signed copies of Bill Mead's book, *The Napa Valley Outhouse War*, a collection of 57 of his columns, are available at *The Apple Shed* in Tehachapi.

ALABAMA HILLS NEAR



The Alabama Hills take on many different forms and shapes as one changes their vantage point. As seen here the rocks in the area go on and on for as far as the eye can see.

Jack Palance among those at Lone Pine film festival; take sunrise tour of nearby hills

by Chelley Kitzmiller
 Contributing Writer

I've driven through the town of Lone Pine a dozen or more times over the years, on my way to Bishop for great camping and fishing or on my way to Reno for a good time at the slots. I can't recall ever stopping in Lone Pine, although I might have for gas or a snack. It seemed to me the town was nothing more than a bump in the road — a Highway 395 desert town that was a long way from anywhere and completely unremarkable.

Boy was I wrong! This past October, Jack and Elaine Palance invited me to go with them and their granddaughter, Lily, to the Lone Pine Film Festival. Elaine sparked my interest when she told me they would be featuring westerns, including one of Jack's ("The Lonely Man," 1957). Having never been to a film festival before, I wasn't sure what to expect but I've always loved westerns so my answer was as quick and sure as Jack Wilson's (Jack Palance) six-guns in "Shane" — yes!

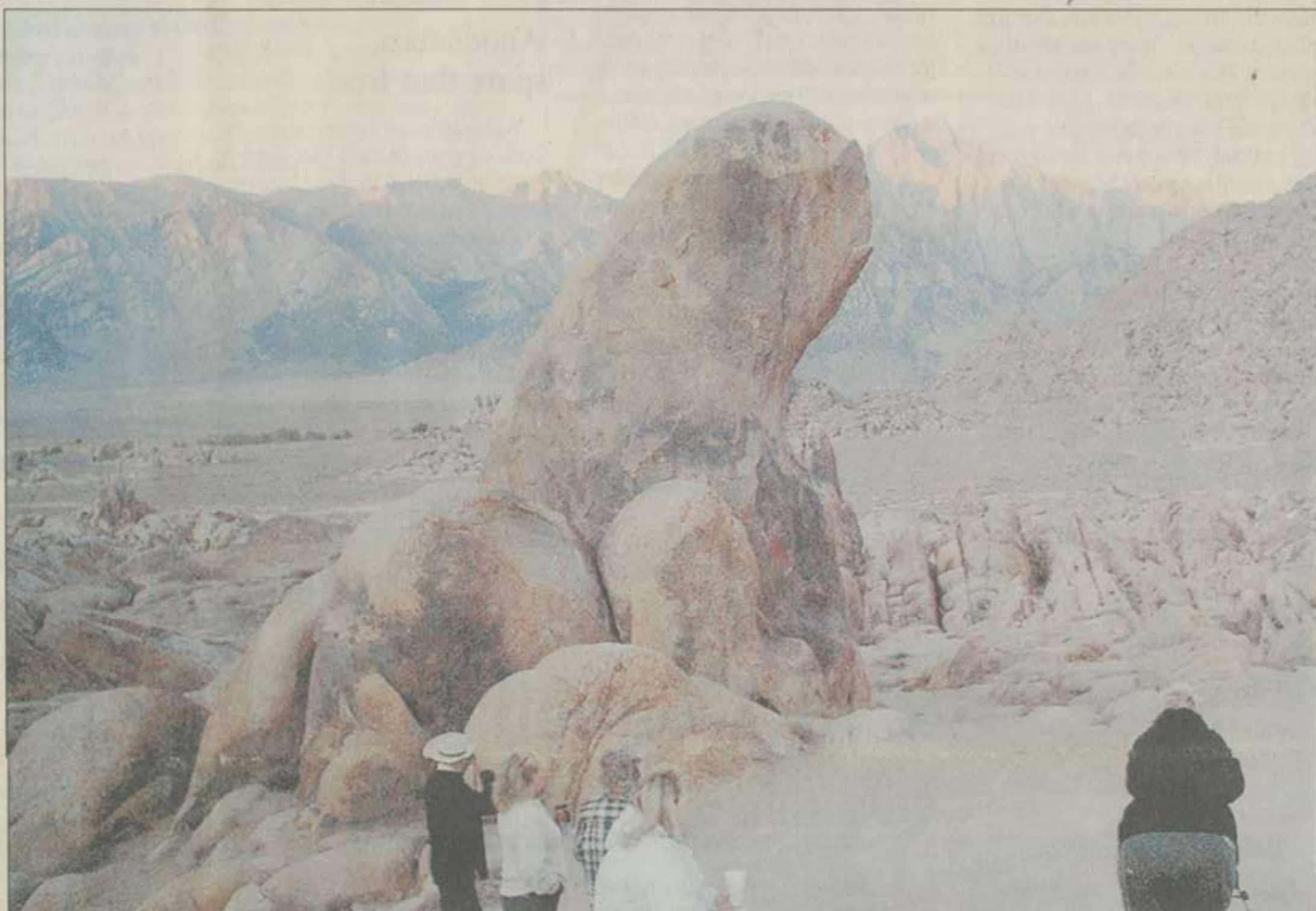
The Lone Pine Film Festival, I was to discover, is one of the nation's most focused film festivals because they only show movies made there and they only invite stars who worked there. My guess is that right now you're scratching your head wondering what movies you saw that were filmed in Lone Pine? Well, if you're a baby boomer and you watched Saturday morning TV, you'll recall the continuing adventures of Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. However, if you're a little past the boomer era, you probably saw Gregory Peck draw down in "The Gunfighter," Clint Eastwood get even in "Joe Kidd" and Kirk Douglas' brilliant performance in "Along The Great Divide." All these series and movies were filmed in Lone Pine plus about 400 others.

Why Lone Pine? Because they have something no one else has — the Alabama Hills, which lie between Highway 395 and the eastern Sierras. They're a low range of granite hills that time and weather have sculpted into spectacular and bizarre shapes, many of which have served as an outlaw's hide-out or an Apache tribe's stronghold.

Because of their photographic appeal, the Alabama Hills have fascinated Hollywood since the 1920's. One of the first films made there was "Fox's Riders Of The Purple Sage" with Tom Mix, and more recently Mel Gibson starred in the remake of one of my all-time favorites, "Maverick."

We arrived at our motel on the outskirts of town a couple of hours before dusk. The Star Wrangler picked us up in the Star Van and drove us to the historic Dow Hotel. Errol Flynn stayed at the Dow while making Gunga Din and John Wayne and Henry Fonda occupied rooms there as well during filming.

The Dow Hotel was built in 1923. By then several



This odd looking rock jutting out of the ground in the Alabama Hills near Lone Pine was a popular spot for photos in the morning hours during the recent Lone Pine film festival.



An original poster from a movie in which Tehachapi local Jack Palance starred in.

movies had already been made in the Owen's Valley and there were more in the works. Hollywood was smitten with the snow-capped Sierras, the ancient Alabamas and the rushing creeks and clear blue lakes. Movie sets were built on Big Pine Creek and on the upper lakes. Lone Pine was at the center of it all and so was the Dow Hotel, which was built by a forward thinking entrepreneur to house the movie people.

The Dow was packed with stars, star-watchers and look-a-likes. I felt like I'd stepped back into time, to about 1870. Not a cell phone in sight! The men were out-fitted in 10-gallon hats, chaps and spurs. Most were packing iron and all were swapping lies. The women — well, they looked right purty all got up like school marm, soiled doves and señoritas. The noise level was akin to a shoot-out — down right deafening.

Out on the patio, under a pale blue sky, the Lone Ranger hunkered down next to Jack and introduced himself. I found Elaine talking to Al Frisch, the man who provides many of the guns and props to the motion picture industry. Seems Al had brought along the original holster Jack used in *Shane* and wanted to see if he remembered it.

On our way to dinner I met Bob Brown. Bob is 91 and tall and straight as a Ponderosa pine. His hand shake darn near pulled me off my feet. Bob's strength comes from being a leather carver. His card says, Western Artwork In Leather. In the early days of western movie making, Bob supplied all the stars' rigs — that's the lingo for a gun-belts and holsters.

Later, at a private dinner party in the heart of the Alabamas, Al got his chance to show Jack the *Shane* holster. He pointed out that some fool had carved it up and pretty much ruined it. "It was me," Jack said. "I did it because I couldn't get the damn gun out fast enough." Al turned an interesting shade of red, then slowly backed into the shadows of the room.

Early the next morning I wandered outside to take pictures of the Sierras and stumbled into the legendary

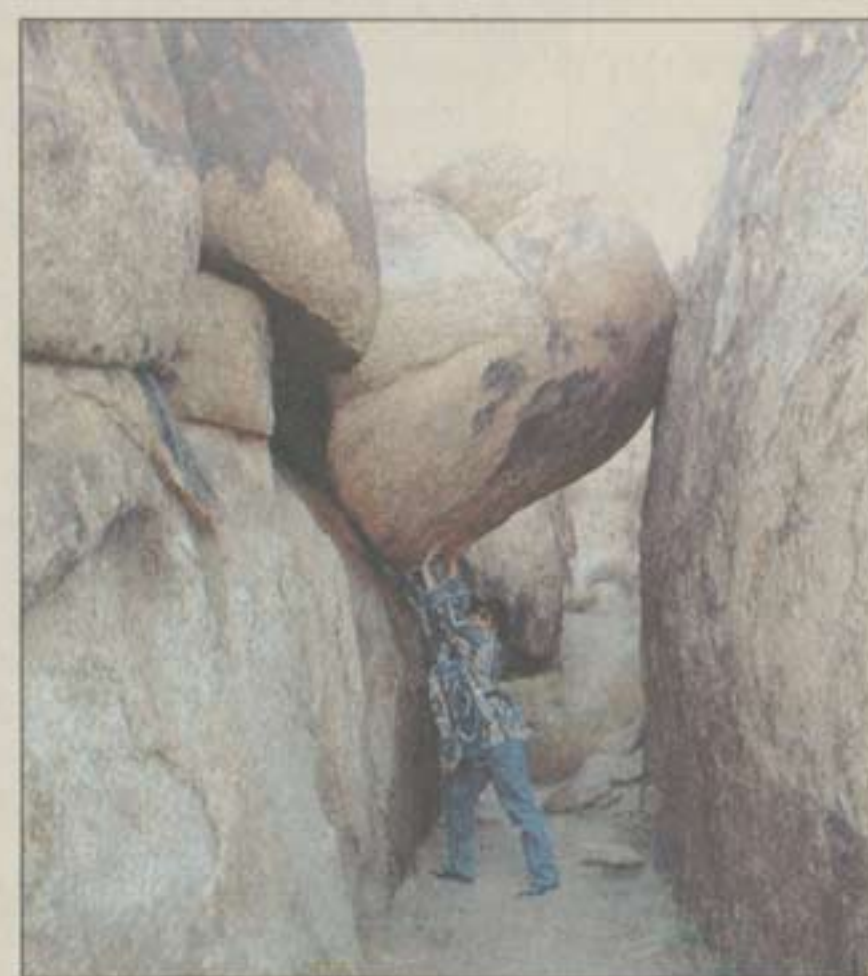


A scene made popular in four different movies all filmed in 1939 is seen along with a plaque noting the popularity of this location in the Alabama Hills of the Lone Pine area.

singing sensation, Kathryn Grayson, who made such movies as "Kiss Me Kate" and "Showboat." Dressed in a red hat and embroidered rose blouse, she looked every inch the cowgirl she'd once portrayed. Though she no longer acts, she is still working, teaching voice.

In preparation for the panel discussion, Jack and the other stars gathered in the "Green room" at the high school. I sat down next to Dale Robertson of "Tales of Wells Fargo" fame. There were 282 tales, he told me. I said I think I've seen just about every one of them. His raspy voice brought back wonderful memories of stage-coach robberies and horse chases through hostile territories. Across the room Ben Cooper ("Johnny Guitar," "The Outcast") was demonstrating his quick draw and some fancy gun slinging to a cameraman. Ann Rutherford, who played in "Gone With The Wind" and who co-starred with John Wayne and Gene Autry in "Lone Pine," sat munching a bagel, watching Ben entertain the green horns.

A huge crowd gathered on the school campus to hear
 See HILLS / Page B8



Elaine Palance performs a balancing act with a large rock in the Alabama Hills during the recent Lone Pine Film Festival which the Palances attended. The festival featured a movie which was filmed in the Lone Pine area and starred Jack.

The Lone Pine Film Festival is one of the nation's most focused film festivals.

Hills from page B1

the panel discussion. Dave Holland, author of *On Location in Lone Pine, A Pictorial Guide To Movies Shot In And Around California's Alabama Hills* and *From Out Of The Past, A Pictorial History Of The Lone Ranger*, moderated. Dale Robertson told an amusing story of one of his films. "Well, there was this young fellah from New York,"

he began. "I asked him if he could ride a horse and he said yes. I said good because you're gonna have to get out of town in a hurry in that one shot. I said we can't rehearse it 'cause about the second time you run at that horse he's gonna be leaving town and you're gonna be chasin' 'im. I told 'im we have to get it right the first time and suggested we walk it and when he felt comfortable, we'd shoot it. So we walked it four or five times and he was finally ready. Everything was goin' as planned. He blows the safe inside the bank, comes out and throws the saddlebags across the horse, jumps up and tries to ride 'im out of town. That young fellah only forgot one damn thing," Dale said, shaking his head and laughing. "He didn't untie the horse from the hitchin' rail."

The other panelists concurred that in those early days actors would do or say just about anything to get a part. Ann Rutherford said, "Back in the golden era there wasn't a lot of money back of each picture so they couldn't afford to waste time with someone who wasn't prepared. You had to know everything you said you knew. I had reached the point when they asked me my age, I'd say how old do you want me to be?" After inter-

viewing for a Gene Autry picture she read the script and realized she was going to have to ride a horse. "I didn't know anything about riding horses so I went to the closest stables and paid sixty cents for an hour's lesson. It's all I had money for."

Peggy Stewart talked about the make-up room at Republic Pictures. "There were these wigs with our names on them, one for Dale (Evans), one for Ruthie (Ruth Terry), one for me and a few other cast members. Down at the end was this gorgeous fall, a foot long, with big beautiful waves. I would have dyed my hair to have worn it! I asked the make-up girl who it belonged to but she didn't know. Then she walked over to it, started to comb it out and beneath it was the name — Champion!"

Throughout the three-day event, which drew more than 4,500 movie

buffs, movies were shown continuously in the school auditorium and buses took fans on tours into the Alabamas to see Hoppy's cabin, Gene Autry Rock and the Lone Ranger ambush site. Ironically, Gary Cooper, Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn and Randolph Scott made movies within just feet of each other but made them years apart.

Elaine, Lily and I braved the cold for a sunrise tour of the Alabamas and witnessed a duel between Zorro and Charlie Chaplin, sword versus cane. On our way down out of the hills we paused at the pass where in 1935 John Wayne was headed for an ambush in Westward Ho. Since Lily was documenting the festival for his film class, Elaine and I decided to do a little role-playing to help her out. Elaine took the right side of the pass and I took the left. At Lilly's signal we charged forward and when we met, Elaine gunned me down and I fell dead. We did this without realizing that someone besides Lily was watching — Glen Ford's son. Somehow, I don't think either of us will be getting acting jobs any time in the near future.

So, would I jump at the chance to go to another film festival? You bet I would and next time I'll be packing iron.



FAMILY ALBUM

Anderson, Brunner wed



Mr. and Mrs. Karl Anderson of Tehachapi announce the wedding of their daughter, Megan Anderson, to Jason Brunner of Tehachapi.

The couple was married on July 29 at the Los Angeles Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. A garden reception was held in their honor at the home of the groom's grandmother, Louise Cain.

The bride is the daughter of Karl and Jill Anderson of Tehachapi.

The groom is the son of Tom and Shirley Brunner of Tehachapi.

The couple plans to reside in Tehachapi.

Jason and Megan Brunner



SELLING YOUR HOUSE by Chris Walters

Renting Your Property

Do you want to rent your home or another one of your properties? You'll want to take some precautions before putting an advertisement in the paper. First, confirm with the city zoning department that you are allowed to rent the property. If the rental is permissible, do a thorough inspection before potential tenants come for a look. Make any necessary repairs so that the home or apartment is in good to excellent condition. Put in working smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. Check that there is safe egress in case of an emergency.

You should document the condition of the apartment and furnishings in case of any future damage. Take photographs and videos of the rooms, furniture and décor. Then walk through the property with the tenant, mentioning any areas of particular interest indoors and out. Make sure that the lease contains a damage provision for other than ordinary wear and tear, as well as a security deposit. Finally, check with your homeowner's insurance company regarding additional liability coverage.

Presented as a service to the

CHRIS WALTERS
REAL ESTATE
661 822-1555
20412 Brian Way, Suite 3A

Let's Do Lunch at The Ritz



Available exclusively at
Radio Shack at Kapy's Electronics
20354 Valley Blvd. • 822-4512
Bring in this ad for 10% discount

Sammis promoted to Senior Foreign Service

John F. Sammis, son of local resident John C. Sammis, has been promoted into the Senior Foreign Service. (This is roughly equivalent in state department terms to being promoted to brigadier general in the military.) Only about 10 percent of all foreign service officers are accepted into the senior level. Sammis achieved this level five years sooner than the average time for such promotion.

John is a graduate of the University

of California and obtained his master's degree in international economics from Fletcher Institute. He is fluent in Chinese, German, and Spanish, and has served in Beijing, Mexico City, Berlin, and the former East Germany. He is currently in charge of the economic section of the Berlin Embassy.

Mary Lou Priest of Tehachapi recently visited with John at the Berlin embassy.



Mary Lou Priest and John F. Sammis at the Berlin Embassy.