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BHS President ushers in the summer and recalls the Burbank of yesterday and its role in her life.



**P2 / RACING GREATS**

Read about famous Road King alumni plus the club's continued contributions to the community.



**P4 / SAD PASSINGS**

Remembering and missing Connie Worthen and Sandy Dennis -- huge contributors to the museum and the city.



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Can you survive an atomic blast? There are those that think you can.

# ABOUTTIMES

*the newsletter of the Burbank Historical Society*

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SUMMER EDITION



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*“ Welcome summer!! It's sure to be a hot one! ”*

When I was a young girl growing up in Sun Valley, Burbank's northwestern neighbor, my family thought Burbank was the place to shop. We bought our groceries at the Mayfair Market on Glenoaks Boulevard, and my favorite thing in Mayfair was, of course, the Van de Kamps aisle. *Oh, those long drawers of cookies!*

We shopped at the Golden Mall. My grandparents were Burbank residents and one of my Grandma Vera's favorite places to shop was Burcals. For us grandkids, this is where some of our most treasured gifts came from. I got my first pair of Levis from Burcals...*pastel blue corduroy*. We also shopped at Zody's and Toys R Us, watched movies at the Cornell Theater, and my parents bowled at the Marlindo Bowl on San Fernando Road.

When I was a teen, my first 'real job', other than babysitting or cleaning houses, was at JC Penney at the Golden Mall (now Ross). I also worked at Alpha Beta on Hollywood Way and Verdugo (now Smart & Final), where we would get weekly shopping visits from Jo Anne Worley. You remember her, right? Do you remember Rowan and Martin's Laugh-in? And my mother...she worked in Burbank for years at the National Broadcasting Corporation. You know...NBC, long before NBCUniversal.

Anyway, while Burbank wasn't a part of our street address, it was certainly a big part of my childhood and shaped my love for this city.



The St. Louis Browns brought this summer sport to life at Olive Memorial stadium, albeit the spring. Source: The Burbank Historical Society

*“ I find that while not everyone has had the fortune to grow up in Burbank, anyone that's been here has a great story, wonderful memories, and a piece of history worth preserving. ”*

So please remember to preserve your family's history by naming and dating your photos.

I also want to thank our docents for donating their precious time and energy to our museum. Without you, our facility would be nearly impossible to run. And for the rest of you – prior visitors and those who have yet to walk through our doors – come in for a visit and introduce yourself. Come see what Burbank was like then, and then perhaps we can chat about how it continues to change and evolve today.



Sincerely,  
Dianna Briggs  
President



## MOVIES, TV and DRAG RACING?!

Remember *American Graffiti*? There was a scene where Harrison Ford races Paul LeMat. In this street race (spoiler alert!), the Ford character nearly dies, and so does his passenger, played by Cindy Williams.

Or you may remember *Rebel Without a Cause* – the James Dean classic. Dean is in a street race called “chicken” – and Dean’s character lives. I think we all know he didn’t in real life. And that was due to some fast driving in a classic sports car.

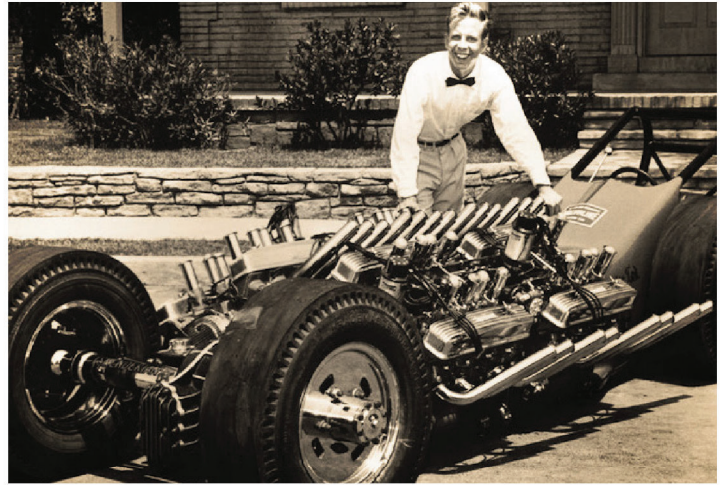
Cars are an integral part of our American life. They define us, tell a story, and are a part of our history. Their creators are like demigods (or maybe devils – eh, John Z. DeLorean?) And they have even greater significance here in Southern California – land of the Great Commute.

If you know anything about drag racing, street racing, hot rodding or funny cars, you can probably thank Burbank. Its nationally-known car club, the Road Kings, is arguably one of the most well-known car clubs ever, and also one of the oldest car clubs still in existence. But perhaps even more amazing is the number of famous members who have come from the Road Kings.

It was in Burbank in 1952 when a young Ralph Marshall and a group of guys started their car club – the Road Kings. The club’s original bylaws stated that their mission was to create interest in various types of hot rod activities, as well as promote good sportsmanship and citizenship among members. The monthly dues were a whopping \$1.00 and they met weekly. The bylaws explicitly stated that good behavior was a must because a “swat” may be given for such sins as cussing and finking! (Remember finking?!)



Ivo's top fuel dragster. Source: The Road Kings



Ivo's 4 engine. Source: The Road Kings

The Road Kings were initially a racing club, but it didn’t take long for its focus to shift towards hot rodding. In the 1960’s, the Road Kings even found their thrills on water driving “drag boats”. We’re talking major thrill seekers. We’ve heard those were some very wild times.

But let’s take a look at some of Burbank’s finest – finest racers, that is. I would be remiss if I didn’t mention Tommy Ivo – aka “TV Tommy” – first.

Tommy, a charter member and native Burbanker, initially gained fame in Burbank’s other big business, show biz. He got his start on stage at age 6, but it was at age 9 that he got his big break co-starring with the world-famous Boris Karloff in a play called *On Borrowed Time*. Movies came next and Tommy made dozens! Some of the most famous include *I Remember Mama* with Irene Dunne. There was also *Belles on their Toes* (a sequel to *Cheaper by the Dozen*) alongside Myrna Loy and Jeanne Crain, plus *Plymouth Adventurer* starring Spencer Tracey and Gene Tierney. Tommy also got to act with the infamous comedy team of Martin and Lewis in *You’re Never Too Young*. But Tommy’s personal favorite of all the films he made was *Treasure of Lost Canyon* starring William Powell. And, remember, these are only a few of the films in Tommy’s cinematic career.

I’m sure you can guess what Tommy jumped into next. Television. (You caught that early on, right? His nickname, “TV Tommy,” is a clue!) Recognize any of these TV shows Tommy was featured in? *The Lone Ranger*, *The Donna Reed Show*, *Leave It to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best*, *Margie*, *Petticoat Junction*, and many more!

But through it all, Tommy loved racing. In the 1950s, Ivo raced a twin side-by-side Buick nailhead-engineered dragster which was the first gas-powered dragster to



break the 9-second barrier – a record! Tommy went on to win race after race, including NASCAR's first National Drag Race. He was a master showman and a beloved one at that. No surprise considering his career in the dramatic arts.

For his lifetime achievements in drag racing, Tommy Ivo was inducted into the Motorsports Hall of Fame in 2005. You could say Tommy put drag racing on the map. He was also ranked 25 in the National Hot Rod Association Top 50 Drivers, from 1951–2000. Today, Tommy – ever the loyal Burbanker – still lives in our town and even in the same house where he grew up.

But now let's take a look at another Road King – one who crewed for Ivo way back when. This not-yet-famous racer raced Ivo in 1963, and both (and ONLY both) owned seven-second Top Fuel diggers. So they raced. That other racer? Don Prudhomme. Don beat Tommy.

You've likely heard of Don Prudhomme, especially if you heard those loud commercials announcing Don, The Snake, Prudhomme. Don was a Funny Car driver who earned the National Hot Rod Association's Funny Car Championship title four times in his 35-year career. He was the first Funny Car champion to exceed 250 mph.

But wait! There's more! Prudhomme's name will forever



Prudhomme's Hot Wheels Funny Car. Source: The Road Kings

be linked to that of another driver – Tom, The Mongoose McEwen. Fans loved watching the rivals fly around the track, Prudhomme in his 1970 Plymouth Barracuda and McEwen in his 1970 Plymouth Duster. In a move that can only be called brilliant, The Snake (Prudhomme) and The Mongoose (McEwen) arranged a deal with Mattel Toys to make die-cast versions of the pair's 'Cuda and Duster for its Hot Wheels line. No longer intended just for children, Hot Wheels models, especially their Limited Edition lines, are immensely popular with serious collectors. The collaboration between the racers and Hot Wheels was among the first of its kind, and deemed a tremendous success.

But we're just scratching the surface. There are many more famous Road Kings -- Jimmy Miles, Bob Muravez, Tom McCourry, and Don Johnson, to name a few. Bob Muravez has an especially fun story to tell. When Muravez was young, his father said he'd disown him if he raced. So Bob and his buddies came up with the clever idea of changing his name to something completely unrecognizable. For four years, dad was none the wiser, and Bob Muravez raced under the name of Floyd Lippincott Jr.! Necessity is indeed the mother of invention!

The Road Kings' accomplishments as a club are also impressive. They started the Friday evening tradition of showing classic cars at the Bob's Big Boy on Riverside Drive; and they've been recognized by the Justice Brothers Spotlight Club, the City of Burbank, and even the U.S. Congress! But the greatest achievement of all? The Road Kings' devotion to giving back. The club has helped support Burbank's worthy nonprofits and causes to the tune of nearly a half a million dollars over the last decade alone.

So the next time you think of Burbank, don't just think of the movie studios and Lockheed, beloved though they are. Think of cars, hot rods and racing, too. And more importantly, think of all the good our Road Kings have done and continue to do!

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Loris Warner\* - Harry Strickland\*

Mary Jane Strickland\* - Don White\*

*\*Deceased*

Marie Dennis/Sue Baldaseroni - Publisher/Editor

Susan Hodgson - Writer/Research Analyst



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**UPCOMING EVENTS:** Our previously announced September Barn Blast has been rescheduled due to multiple event conflicts. Please look forward to a new date and more details in the coming months!!



## SURVIVING AN ATOMIC ATTACK

*Worried about a nuclear threat? Here are tips from 'Survival under Atomic Attack', which was published by the California Office of Civil Defense, Earl Warren, Governor, and distributed in October 1950.*

You can live through an atomic bomb and won't need a Geiger counter, protective clothing, or special training to do so. To survive, you need to know the bomb's true dangers, and know what to do to escape them.

So atom-splitting is just another way of generating an explosion. While an atom bomb is capable of large-scale death and destruction, its total power is definitely limited. Not even hydrogen bombs can blow the earth apart nor kill us with radiation. Thus your chances of surviving an atomic blast may be better than you think.

In Hiroshima, over 50% of the people who were a mile from the explosion survived. In Nagasaki, about 70% of people living within a mile from the bomb lived to share their experiences. The war may have changed their lives, but they're not riddled with cancer, and their children are normal.

SO KILL THE MYTHS. Atomic weapons will not destroy the Earth; double bomb power does not double destruction; radioactivity is not the bomb's greatest threat; and radiation sickness is not always fatal.

So NEVER lose your head, and don't start rumors. While lingering radioactivity following an atomic burst may be dangerous, it's no more to be feared than typhoid fever. YOU CAN SURVIVE!



## REMEMBERING THOSE WHO GAVE US SO MUCH

The museum could not run without its volunteers, as they are truly the lifeblood of our organization. With a heavy heart, we are sad to share the loss of three of our own -- Sandy Dennis in March, followed by Mrs. Connie Worthen in May, and Ray Brown, most recently this July. All were huge contributors to the museum and the community. Ray served faithfully as a long-time docent, as did Sandy, who was also responsible for reviving *Burbank on Parade*, and leading its production for many years. And Connie, widow of Dusty Worthen, the architect of our facility, served alongside him for many years as a dedicated board member. All three will be sorely missed.