

Beatty



Museum

and Historical Society

Vol.4 No.1

NEWSLETTER

JAN. - FEB. 98

FRANK (SHORTY) HARRIS
1857-1934

HALF CENTURY WITH A GREAT LITTLE MAN

Memories of life and adventure by one of the best known prospectors who for fifty-four years has probed the wastelands for Nature's riches.

Follow Shorty's story from his birth in Rhode Island on July 21, 1857 to his last big strike at Skidoo, Death Valley. His life story begins in the Bullfrog Mining District History Section.

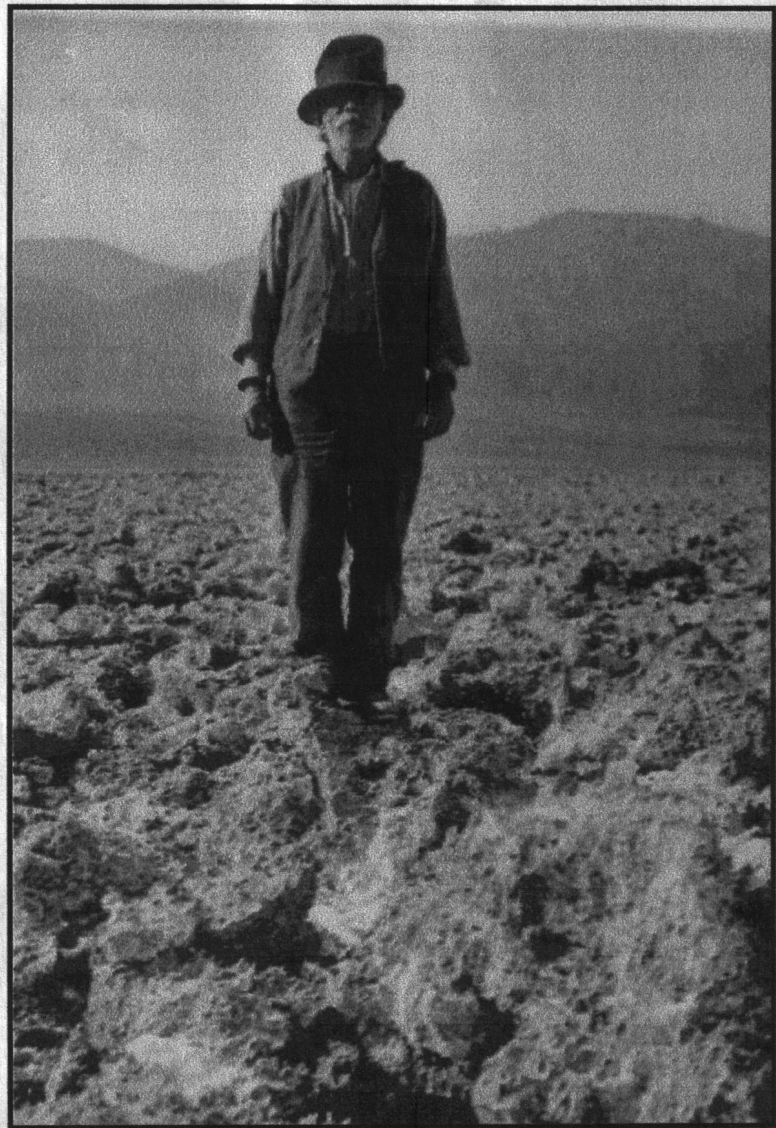


Photo courtesy of David Wright



A Message from the President Claudia Reidhead

Hi Folks: I hope the holidays were good to you and that turkey day was filled with lots of food and friends and Santa brought you all the wonderful things you wanted. Time to update you on some of the things that have happened here. First, I want to say thank you to some special people. Clint and Ellen Boehringer, who hit the ground running on their return from Oregon, as they do every year. We sure miss them when they leave and really appreciate them when they come home. As Clint says, they leave home to come home. Also a big thanks to all the people who helped us with our clean up and repair on workday November 15th. Riley McCoy, Clint Boehringer, Kanna Lingard, Vonnie Gray, Chloe Lisle, Candy and Brian Gray, Vanessa Coffee and Cornell Thomas. These wonderful people gave their time and energy to help us fulfill our contract on the building. Also our thanks go to Paulette Dawson and her daughter, Clint and Ellen Boehringer, Kanna Lingard, Allan and Sandra Baltazar for their help and participation with the float for the Homecoming Parade. The week before the Burro Races, one of our oldest members, (time wise) Gil Schmidtman of Mentone, CA visited our museum. Gil missed being a Charter Member by two weeks. Thanks for visiting us Gil. The first week of November brought another long time member, Robert Rufer, to visit our museum. It is so nice to visit with members when they come through. Thanks to you also Robert. Sue Boschert, one of our local supporters, gave the museum a huge amount of bottles from her collection. Thank you Sue. We had some other visitors from out of town for the Burro Races. Always great to see Bill and Zettia Miller, Lynn and Ellis Vance and the Piatts, Roger and Barbara, who brought their nephew Charley and his friend Lori. They were a welcome addition to our visitors the last couple of months. Received a letter and photo from our member in Belgium, Karl Jordeans. Also a letter from Pat Schoffstall. Pat, like me, grew up here. It was nice to hear how much she appreciates our newsletters. Also she gave me some information that I'll probably use later in one of the history items. We had nominations at our November meeting. Nominated for President was me again. You don't need a bio on me since you have put up with me since the inception. There were no other

nominees. For Vice President, Mary Revert. You also know that she has served in this office since the beginning. This lady is the backbone of our organization, working tirelessly on all of our projects, contributing time and energy to everything she does and her list of accomplishments is endless. Again, there was no other nominees. For Secretary/Treasurer, Vonnie Gray. She also has held this office since the beginning and also works tirelessly on our many projects. Also nominated for this office was Cindy McPherson, who declined the nomination. Peggy Johnson was nominated after the nominations had been closed. Peggy has been filling the last year of Gloria Shearrer's two year directors term and very competently. Pastor Jeff Taguchi was nominated for One Year Director again. He has held this office since the beginning also. A charter member, Pastor Jeff always comes through when we need him on any project. One Year Director-Beverly Coffee. Bev has served for two years in this capacity. A staunch supporter, who is a willing worker on most projects. One Year Director-Kanna Lingard. Since learning of our organization, Kanna has volunteered any time he was asked. Since joining BMHS, he has worked on clean up, manned the museum and filled in wherever needed. He is well qualified for his position, having a multitude of ideas and talents. Two Year Director-Andy Gudas. Andy has belonged to our organization for two years, attends most meetings, (he lives in Amargosa) works on all of our large projects and is devoted to the history of our area. The ballots will be included in your newsletter. You will find a write in line if you feel that someone else will fill these offices more productively or just want a change of faces. **MORE IMPORTANTLY--PLEASE VOTE!**

"RIBITS" from the editor....

Bullfrog Billy



Happy New Year! As we begin Volume 4, you will notice a new front page format. Also, some of the internal pages are printed two sides to conserve supplies and cut down on postage costs without sacrificing content. Our great cover photo was contributed by David Wright and leads us into Part One of the life of "Shorty" Harris. I received a copy of this great story many years ago. Our "Who's Who" feature will return later this year. All the other regular items are here as well as the new "Welcome New Members." Hope you enjoy and until next time....."RIBIT"

Bullfrog Mining District History

The Life of Frank (Shorty) Harris

by

Frank (Shorty) Harris

Ballararat is a long way from Rhode Island, and a lot of strangers that come through these parts think it's queer that I should have strayed so far from the place where I was born. But even a maverick jackass can go a long way from his home range if he starts out for better grass, or to find a place where there ain't no danger of someone putting a rope and a pack saddle on him.

Anyhow, it was on the twenty-first day of July, 1857, that the baby who was to be Shorty Harris first opened his eyes in New England. My father, Richard M. Harris, was an Irishman who had started to work in Providence as a shoemaker, and finally built up a shoe factory. My mother was Scotch, but I didn't inherit much of her ways, or I wouldn't be living in this old adobe today. I don't remember much about them -they both died when I was seven years old, and I was adopted by my aunt, Alice Cooney. She was very poor, and father lost all he had before he died; so I had to go to work when I was eleven years old. I got a job in a calico mill dipping cotton into dye, and my wages were nine dollars a month.

There were several of us orphans in that mill, and we used to get together sometimes of an evening, and plan how we might

go some place else where we could earn more money and not have to work such long hours. I had only one pair of shoes and wore them to church on Sunday; the rest of the time I went barefoot.

A kind old priest, whose name was Father Andy Gibson, took pity on us boys, and we went to his house two hours a week, where we learned how to read and write. That was the only schooling I ever had, but it was enough; for I got fitchered up on big words, and could read the newspapers like anyone else.

When I was fourteen years old, I ran away from my aunt's home, and turned my hand to different kinds of work in Massachusetts and Connecticut--farm work, section work, and anything else that I could get. Then I went to firing boilers in a factory, and after I had saved up about eighty dollars, went to Philadelphia to see the Centennial Exposition. This was in 1876. But my little stake did not last long, and jobs were scarce, so I shined shoes and sold papers on the streets. After a few months of this, I got the notion to go west. I started out, beating my way on trains, and stopping for a day or two to work when I got too hungry to keep going.

One day, I got off the train at a little town in Kansas--Dodge City--and found that I was really "out West." Around the station were piles of buffalo hides as big as houses, and down by the railroad yards were thousands of cattle that the cowboys were loading into cars. There were saloons and dance halls a-plenty, and they did a rushing business day and night. Those cowboys from Texas, who drove the cattle across the plains were a wild lot. They were all mighty quick on the trigger, and most of their arguments were settled with bullets. Hardly a night passed that there wasn't a man laid out cold after the guns got through popping. But at that, they were all big-hearted fellows, and would split their last dollar with a man who was down and out.

I soon made up my mind that I didn't want to stay in Dodge City. There was too much lead flying around of an evening; and besides, I kept hearing wonderful stories about the rich mines that were being found farther west by fellows who were just ordinary punks like me. Here, I thought, was a chance to make my fortune; so one night I climbed on the rods and started out. Between keeping the cinders out of my eyes, dodging brakemen,

and rustling food, I was plenty busy on that trip. Finally I wound up at Yuma, where a big husky brakeman told me about plenty that would happen if he found me on his train again. I walked down by the river and took a long nap under a cottonwood. When I went back to the station there was a big crowd on the platform. I gathered from what they were saying that a train was coming through with General Grant and his son. Pretty soon there came the whistle of a locomotive, and the crowd let out a cheer that sounded like a war-whoop. The train rolled in, and stopped. General Grant was on the hind platform, and gave a short speech. While all this was going on, I found a good place to ride under the General's car, and when the train pulled out that crowd waved goodbye to Shorty as well as General Grant!

The next day, when we got to Colton, I was as dirty as a coal miner and as hungry as a wolf. Walking along the platform, I bumped into the General and Fred; they were stretching their legs and talking to each other. I told Fred that I had come west on his train to make my fortune, but my luck had not been very good so far. He could see that I was telling him the truth, because I looked like a scarecrow. I braced him for a road stake, and he gave me seven dollars! That was a lot in those days of schooners and free lunch.

Los Angeles was just a small

place in '77. There were no pavements like those in Philadelphia, and most of the people in the streets were farmers and cowboys. I worked at different things for several months, and then decided that I'd better go somewhere else. At this time, news was coming in of big strikes in Colorado, so I hopped the trains again, and beat it to Leadville. Here I got my first experience in mining--and the life of a mining town that was a rip-snorter!

It was easy to get a job, and pay was good. A man got four dollars a day for working in a dry mine, and five dollars for working in a wet one. Most of the deep mines, or shafts, were wet, and the tunnels were dry. Here I made the first real money that I had ever seen in my life, but I did not keep a dollar of it. The other miners showed me how to gamble and spend, and believe me it didn't take long to learn how to do it! Every Saturday night when we got our pay, we would buy a few rounds of drinks at a saloon--and there were more saloons than anything else in Leadville.

In the past fifty years I have visited most of the mining towns in the west, including Tombstone and Bodie. Those two places were pippins, but they couldn't hold a candle to Leadville in '78. Shooting scrapes and killings were so common that nobody thought anything about them. I remember one night when I was

in Charley Lambsdorf's saloon, a bunch of Cousin Jacks and Irish got to quarreling. The Irish were always great fighters with bottles, billiard balls, or guns; the Cousin Jacks were great knife throwers, and one of them could pick a man's eye out clear across the room. Well, those fellows got to wrangling, and pretty soon one of the Cousin Jacks yanked out a knife and flipped it at one of the Irishmen. It didn't get him in the eye, but glanced off his forehead. Then out came the guns, and hell popped. I threw myself down on the floor, and wriggled along like a snake, between their legs.

It seemed like an hour before I got to the door, with those fighters stamping around me, and the six-shooters banging away. Finally I made it, got out into the street, ran back of a building and peeped around the corner, where I could see the show without being made a lead mine. Through the door of that saloon the air inside looked like a blue fog, with the lamplight shining through the powder smoke. When it was all over, I went to the door and looked in. Three men were lying on the floor, and several others were hurt pretty bad, but able to stand up. It seemed strange to me that of all the shots fired, so many could have missed.

In fights like this, the Short Man always had an advantage over the big fellow. More than once, a bullet has gone right over my head, and I'd have stopped it sure

if I'd been a foot taller. I learned plenty that night about saving my hide in a battle, and it wasn't the last time that I went down on the floor, and crawled away like an eel to a place that was safe.

Another time, I was in the Texas House--one of the biggest saloons in Leadville. A miner by the name of John Kelly sat in a poker game with a professional gambler who cleaned him for fair. Kelly knew that the fellow was double crossing him, but he couldn't catch him doing it. Finally he banged his fist on the table and said to the gambler:

"Now get this straight: if you don't give me a square deal, your light will go out!"

A few minutes later, Kelly saw the tin horn pull a card from the bottom of the deck, and he went for his gun. But the gambler was quicker. Out came the six-shooter, and Kelly got it right through the chest, staggered backward through the door, and fell on the ground outside. Then the gambler went after him to finish the job, and Kelly, who was lying on his back, raised his pistol and made a dead-center bulls-eye the first shot. When the boys got to them, the gambler had passed in his checks, and Kelly was about gone.

"Did I get him?" he asked.

"Yes," said one of the miners. "He's fixed his last deck!"

Kelly drew a deep breath and smiled.

"Now I'm happy. All I wanted was to live long enough to kill

that-----!"

In those days there were many robberies in Leadville. I think that the hardest and toughest men from all parts of the States made their headquarters there--at least for a while. They'd drift into town, raise plenty of hell, and then drift out again when it got too hot for them. We used to give newcomers the "once over" very carefully, and try to decide what their game was. Usually, when several showed up together we'd pass the word, "bury your money, boys, there's a bunch of strangers in town!"

But after a while the law-abiding people got might sore at what was going on, and formed a strong vigilance committee. When they got to going good, it didn't take them long to catch a bad actor and string him up to a telegraph pole. And after several plays like this, the old town quieted down so much that we hardly knew the place. It almost made me think of a village in Rhode Island!

For a long time, I couldn't save a dollar from one week to the next. On Saturday night, I'd draw my pay, and by Sunday morning I didn't have the price of breakfast. Then I'd go to the dance hall and hit the little girl up for some change. In those days the girls came through quick--they knew it was their money when I got it again the next Saturday night.

One day, I got to talking with a couple of friends,

Fred Bell and Johnny Graham. They told me of a district where not much prospecting had been done, and where we ought to locate some rich claims. None of us had any cash to buy an outfit, so we decide to save enough to get one. After several weeks, we had several burros, pack saddles, and grub to keep us going for quite a while. I was a rank tenderfoot, but I soon learned how to fix up a pack and throw the diamond hitch.

Then we started out, going through several valleys and over some high mountain passes, until we got into some country that was as wild as any I have ever seen. When we found a place that looked like there might be good formations, we'd make camp, and start looking around. Sometimes we searched the stream beds for placer or "float," and again we'd climb over the cliffs like mountain sheep and look for ledges or veins of ore.

Our "strike" was made several weeks after we started out from Leadville. It was a good surface showing of silver-lead that looked like it carried good values, so we staked out our claim, and went back to record it. The assays showed that there was plenty of silver in that ore, and we got in touch with a promoter who wanted to talk business. When he had seen the property, he made us an offer; and after quite a little dickering we agreed on a price of \$7500. This was divided equally among the three

of us, and I had my first real money. Well, that meant a good time while it lasted, so I went to Denver and put on a party that made them all sit up and take notice. There were plenty of joints in Denver that were in the business of showing a man a good time if he had the jack, and those joints plucked Shorty. In six weeks I was stone broke, and ready to go back to the mines for a job.

I soon decided that I'd rather prospect than work for wages. No one ever got rich working for four dollars a day, and there was plenty of country that had not been hunted over. I had heard some wonderful stories about the Coeur d'Alene district in Idaho, and took a notion to go there. When I had saved up a small stake, I left Colorado to try my luck in the new diggings. It was late in the fall when I got to Wallace, and plenty of snow lay on the ground. I got acquainted with a couple of men who were going to start out for Thompson Flats, and the three of us decided to go together. We made some sleds out of barrel staves, and hauled our outfits more than sixty miles. It was tough, and several times I wished that we had burros to do it.

A man always takes a big chance when he goes prospecting. He may spend months or years without finding anything worth looking at; so when we found a man who had some good ground to lease, it looked like a good way to clean

up some ready money. It was a placer proposition, and after six weeks' work we had washed out about 400 in gold apiece. But when the snow went off, I got restless and made up my mind to try my luck in Montana. The other boys figured that they'd better stay on the Coeur d'Alene, so I went out alone. For nearly a year I prospected and worked for wages around the Montana camps without getting much ahead; then a letter from one of my Idaho partners told me that I had left too soon--they had found some claims that showed wonderful pay ore, and sold out for a fortune.

Good reports were coming in from the camps in Utah, and I went to Tintic to look things over. There was plenty of work in the mines, and I put in about two years there and at Frisco, which was a live place if there ever was one. I hear that Frisco is a ghost town now--abandoned, and the buildings falling to ruin. That is what happened to many of the towns where I worked in the early days but nobody then would have thought it was possible. Even now, it's hard for me to believe that owls are roosting over those old bars where we lined up for drinks; and sagebrush is growing in the streets.

In '85, I went from Frisco to Tombstone, and she was a beauty in those days. I've read quite a bit lately about some of the old timers going back there and staging some of the exciting

things that were pulled off forty-five years ago. They would have to go some if they made it as lively as it was then, for Tombstone was almost as hell-roaring a place as Leadville. The boys were all decorated with six-guns, and believe me, they knew how to use them. The handiest on the draw stayed in town, but those that were too slow made a one-way trip to Boot-Hill. Killings were so common that the *Tombstone Epitaph* didn't have much to say about them--just a short paragraph for each one. And the streets had names that sounded interesting--there was Toughnut Street and Trigger Alley, and both of them were good places to make a start for Boot-Hill. That camp had plenty of musicians, men who could play mighty well on the Winchester violin--a fiddle that can be tuned up damn quick!

Most of the country around Tombstone was plastered with claims, and I didn't find anything worth staking out. Miners from California and Nevada told me of the big strikes that were being made there, and of the Lost Gunsight, the Lost Breyfogle, and the Lost Pegleg, and other lost mines that were sure to be found sometime. They told me of other places like Tombstone--wide-open camps that never slept, where fortunes were taken out of the ground everyday. After I had heard those stories, I made up my mind that was the country for the Short Man, and I was on my way. (Continued next issue)

BEATTY MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY MINUTES

October 27, 1997 - Meeting called to order 7:15 p.m. Minutes read and approved. Attendance-Kim H., Laurel H., Dan Kump, Kanna, Clint & Ellen B., Norma H., Vonnie G., Claudia R., and Gloria S.

Treasurer Report - September Deposits-\$475/October Deposits-\$118/Expenses-\$160.36/Balance-\$7347.73

Museum Report - September-Visitors-38/Volunteer hours-55/October-Visitors-69/Volunteer hours-52

New Business - Ross Productions T.V. documentary will air July 1998 on the History Channel. Share pictures donated by Maxine and the Exchange Club. Public T.V. Productions: Co-Sponsor Celebration '49's in 1999. The Museum will be available for history and people reenactments. Voted on to accept Co-Sponsorship. Clint moved to approve, Norma seconded. February will be Elections of Officers. Museum Work Day: November 15, 1997 from 9-3. We need to check with the water company to check the electric power.

Old Business - Railroad Days discussion.

Motion to adjourn 8:15, all approved.

November 24, 1997 - Meeting called to order 7 p.m. Minutes read and approved with corrections. Attendance-Cindy, Mary, Claudia, Kanna, Andy, Bev, Clint, Ellen, Suzy, Riley, Peggy, Vonnie, and Linda Green.

Museum Report - November-Visitors-80/Volunteer hours-140.5

New Business - Correspondence was read. We discussed writing a letter to the county commissioners for county insurance. We will remain autonomous. Vonnie will draft a letter to submit by the January county commissioner meeting. Linda Green asked for permission to host the Rhyolite Days in conjunction with the Railroad days. After discussion, Vonnie motioned to share the weekend with Rhyolite. Weather was one of the main reasons for the switching of the date. We also discussed the advertising needs for Railroad Days. Beatty Railroad Days and the Rhyolite Festival will be June 5-7, 1998. We also need to order more mugs. Was agreed to reorder one case half with black imprints and half with green. Claudia will address the Park Board for needed help according to their by-laws. It was suggested that Jeff Taguchi call Roger in regards to the Railroad Display for Railroad Days. Claudia shared with us that she got the National Registration for Historical Buildings. She's making a list of all the buildings to place upon the Beatty National Building Registry.

Nominations - Board of Directors: 1 year term-Bev Coffee / 1 year term - Jeff Taguchi / 1 year term - Kanna Lindgard. 2 year term - Andy Gudas. President - Claudia Reidhead. Vice President - Mary Revert. Secretary/Treasurer - Vonnie Gray.

We adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

SPECIAL NOTE

Beatty Lions Club donated a living Christmas tree to the town. It was planted by the Beatty Chamber office and decorated by the town children.

DONATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Beatty Post Office-Beatty, Nevada-Oil painting by Alleon.

Sharon Boehringer-Eugene, Oregon-Sheet music "Panamint Daisy, the Indian Wells Valley Song" by Irene Rupprecht 7-12-49 and Death Valley Relief Map.

Sue Boschert-Beatty, Nevada-475 Beer, Whiskey and Wine bottles from early 1900's.

Chuck Botos-Beatty, Nevada-2 large display shelf units.

Delbert & Verna Lewis-Sacramento, California-Photo of Louis Morrison, 1966 1st place best western costume winner Beatty Burro Races, also trophy & ribbon & 1967 ribbon.

Ralph & Chloe Lisle-Beatty, Nevada-One sterling silver commemorative spoon "Tonopah High School 1909."

Dorothy Lubow-Goldfield, Nevada-Extensive newspaper clipping collection from Scotty's Castle and book.

Bill & Zettia Miller-Long Beach, California-Video tape "Ghosts of the Golden West."

Bob & Mary Revert-Beatty, Nevada-Kerosene lamp stove & wood burning parlor stove

Don Workman-El Cajon, California-\$5.00

COMING EVENTS

Jan 26th - BMHS meeting - 7 p.m. Beatty Community Center

Feb 23rd - BMHS meeting - 7 p.m. Beatty Community Center

June 5th - 6th - 7th

TWO GREAT EVENTS - ONE GREAT WEEKEND

BMHS PROUDLY PRESENTS

THE 2nd ANNUAL BEATTY RAILROAD DAYS

&

FRIENDS OF RHYOLITE PROUDLY PRESENTS

THE 7th ANNUAL RHYOLITE FESTIVAL

"Please call the Beatty Chamber of Commerce for details on these and other events"

702-553-2424

MAILBAG

November 11, 1997

Dear Claudia- Have I ever told you that of all the organizations I belong to and all the newsletters I get, the BMHS Newsletter is the best looking and the most informative? The history articles are fascinating and well researched and the newer news is always fun to read. You guys do a really good job and it is always a pleasure to sit down and go through the whole paper, front to back. In the membership records, please change my area code from 619 to 760. The telephone company has expanded again. In the latest newsletter, in the reproduction of the 1908 Rhyolite Daily Bulletin, in the lower right hand corner of the first page, is a mention of "Mr. Fairbanks of Greenwater." Mr. Fairbanks was Ralph Jacobus (Dad) Fairbanks. He was Ralph Lisle's Grandfather and Frances' and my Great-Grandfather. He had several daughters so I don't know which one would have been with him, but Ralph or Chloe may know. It is always fun to run across things like this. Thanks again for the wonderful newsletter - not just this issue but all of them. Pat Schoffstall

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Alan Baltazar
Las Vegas, NV

Sandra Baltazar
Las Vegas, NV

Emily R. Manus
Las Vegas, NV

Jason D. Manus
Las Vegas, NV

Don W. Workman
El Cajon, CA

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO!

Mike Feuerstein Jan 12th

Lori Taguchi Jan 20th

Jon Gateman Jan 22nd

Robert Revert Jan 30th

Jim Gould Feb 8th

Ardel Henrichsen Feb 10th

Bobby Hammond Feb 23rd

Joanne Medlock Feb 23rd

BMHS OFFICERS

Claudia Reidhead
President
P.O. Box 393
Beatty, NV 89003
(702) 553-2351

Mary Revert
Vice President

Vonnie Gray
Secretary/Treasurer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Beverly Coffee

Jane Cottonwood

Peggy Johnson

Robert Revert

Jeffrey Taguchi

NEWSLETTER STAFF

William Miller - Editor
5120 E. 28th Street
Long Beach, CA 90815
(562) 429-8331
e-mail: Bullfrog B@aol.com

Zettia Miller - Publisher
5120 E. 28th Street
Long Beach, CA 90815
(562) 429-8331

Mike Feuerstein-Graphic Arts
6002 Turnergrove
Lakewood, CA 90713
(562) 920-0282
e-mail: Digitaledg@aol.com