

Legend of Adventure, Pete Peralta

From the Bernice and Jack McGee - Jonathan Burbridge Correspondence

Jonathan Burbridge, a friend and employee of Barry Storm in the 1930s, corresponded with the McGees for several years. A part of that correspondence concerned a fellow member of the Legends of Adventure Syndicate. The "Legends" were a group of treasure hunters who were using the Fish-Peralta Map along with their individual research to hunt for the Lost Dutchman Mine.

"Pete" Peralta worked in Production Control for Rohr, a military contractor. Rohr published a company newspaper and Pete appeared in three articles. Two of the articles are not directly related to the search for the LDM but are only included because of the Peralta history and their unusual nature. Pete was a nudist. Bernice McGee even relates the story that Jonathan sent her a photo of Pete in his "birthday suit" and Bernice returned it saying she had no interest in seeing an older naked man. Her response was actually much more colorful than that. The third article speaks to the Legend of Adventure Syndicate's search for the "Peralta Mines" in the Superstitions.

"Pete" Pedro Francisco Peralta was born August 26, 1911 in California. He had an identical twin named "Jim" Santiago Francisco Peralta. Jim died February 13, 1940 in Riverside, California. The reason this is pertinent is the fact that Jim had a daughter, Linda Peralta who is prominent in Dr. Glover's book. Dr. Glover reaffirms in his notes that Pete Peralta was Linda Peralta's uncle.

The question that arises is another chicken or egg question. Did Pete and the Peralta family already have the Peralta stories of the Lost Dutchman mine or did they come from the other members of the syndicate? It does seem to me that Pete's version was somewhat different from the generally accepted accounts?

I have transcribed the articles because they were badly faded in places. Again I have tried to be accurate but mistakes have probably crept in. I do not have the publish dates for all of the articles.

In some instances, the information contained in the articles is probably questionable but perhaps the story will at least prove interesting for some.

Garry Cundiff - December 30, 2007

Peralta Finds Paradise in the Sun

ROHR NEWS, September 8, 1965, Page 3

The Peraltas bear a proud name in the two Californias.

Along with the Pio Picos, Vallejos, the Alvarados, Castros, Forbes, Yorbas, Osunas and Ortegas --- the great land holders, governors, soldiers and statesmen of the Spanish period --- the Peraltas had played their own significant part in the development of Alta California in cattle, spreading ranchos, land grants from the King in the golden years before the Yankees came.

Great had been the lands of the Peraltas, their relatives and cousins --- thousands of acres in Baja California; mines in Arizona, Mexico. Easy going, open handed, generous, they saw their lands dwindle, sold to Yankee developers, speculators.

Thus, today, Senor Pedro Francisco Peralta, collateral descendant of the line of the Dons, onetime cattleman and stockman, has but 11 acres in his "J-P Rancho" in Riverside, part of the old Rubidoux land grant to Felipe Martinez on which he was born. And that at the moment is under lease; he's sold his stock, to take up a more zestful life in the sun in Peralta's paradise at Glen Eden, out Highway 71 toward Elsinore.

Lore of the family

A big, cheerful, deeply tanned and friendly man of 54, we know Senor Pedro Francisco Peralta as Pete Peralta, storekeeper at Rohr-Riverside, in our midst for the past ten years.

But he's steeped in the lore of his family.

"My father J. Peralta was born in 1864 in La Purissima, Baja California, my mother, Guadalupe, in La Paz. My grandfather was Pedro Francisco Peralta, I knew him slightly as a small boy. I can remember him riding in with his horse lathered here in Riverside --- he'd have just ridden up from Baja where he had land, been days on the trail. We owned land on both sides of the line. My father would take mule trains and be off for weeks, seeking gold below Ensenada.

"Some of my cousins still get royalties of 1000 peso a year from the Agua Caliente Race Track, on land owned in the family.

"I have family records going back to 1848, records of old mining properties. My uncles Eduardo Manuel Peralta, Miguel and my brother Ramon, found much gold in Arizona. Let us be frank; he took it from the Apaches. The Indians caught up with him, butchered him and his men, 84 of them. They buried them and their mules in a deep cave, sealed it off. This in my mind is the origin of the legend of the Lost Dutchman Mine. It is a cave with skeletons --- mules loaded with gold. Who will find it?"

It was a barbecue!

A far cry in family and time from Pete Peralta at Rohr.

Peralta joined Rohr in Assembly, working as a plumber on the KC-97 and KC-135 lines, later on the B-52 and in Loft Engineering. He was a crib attendant for 4-years, prior to his present work in PC Stores. Before coming to Rohr he worked for 20 years for Krinard Packing Company in Riverside, was a group Supervisor in their fruit packing operations. Concurrently he maintained his J-P Ranch, raising cattle, sheep, and horses, and throwing some memorable barbecues for friends.

"One we had lasted three days, a birthday party. Two hundred people, mind you. They drank 54 cases of beer, barbecued three animals; it cost me \$700. Never again. A week later I doubt any of the people would know me on the street. No more barbecuing; no more stock raising. I spend every moment I can at, enjoying Peralta's Paradise, living in my camper at Glen Eden."

Peralta's Paradise

Peralta's Paradise is Pete's if you will --- special and beautifully landscaped corner of Glen Eden.

Glen Eden includes 95 acres in the Cleveland National Forest out Highway 71 from Corona. It is a sun club.

In existence for two years, it is, Pete says, one of the fastest growing nudist clubs in Southern California. It currently includes some 350 members, men, women and children under a professional managing director. It is a cooperative undertaking, members themselves own Glen Eden, paying dues and contributing, as does Pete, work to the common cause.

The original property was acquired from Peralta's cousins, the De Lugee brothers --- again in the family. The original site included large olive groves. Many of the trees still remain and form a delightful setting for tents, trailers and cabins in which the sun devotees live. There is a fine heated pool, recently installed, and established this year in the open on Inspiration Point, a non-denominational church. Seventy-five attended the inaugural Easter services, extensively covered in area papers.

There you may see --- and under proper circumstances you may visit Glen Eden as guest --- people and families enjoying healthful outdoor and social activities in the sun. As in the case of many kindred clubs of its type in California, despite the sniggering curiosity of so many, the absence of clothing in its members is really a very secondary and, in the long run, mundane aspect.

Life in the sun

Rules are quite simple, Frank says. No married person may attend without his or her spouse; single persons must prove that fact. Cameras or small animals are not permitted except on leash. Proper conduct is maintained at all time. And each person there is expected to pitch in on his part of the work and maintenance of the clubs facilities.

Peralta himself has been a devotee since 1932. Illness of his wife, since passed away, was incentive to seek health in the sunlight. Today finds Peralta a very robust zestful and tanned 54.

"Most men of my age are starting to fall apart," he says philosophically.

Off work, he can't wait to jump in his Ford truck, surmounted by hood emblem of a horse from ranching days, and tear out to his project at Peralta's Paradise.

His landscaped "corner" includes cacti, succulents and wild plants that a botanical garden would envy. It recently sent him on a trip to Baja California to bring back an impressive Tiki statue of a god from La Paz and a huge iron kettle, used, he assumes, in whaling days, to grace his Paradise. Photographs of his friends in Paradise (photography is permitted at this one spot) show its appreciation and enjoyment by the members.

It's a great life for a man, Pete thinks, all in all. He doesn't mind being a bachelor, likes his own cooking --- on his return from La Paz it included dried turtle meat, lobster, abalone, clams, shrimp, along with tacos, tortillas and steak.

“When I was a kid, my dad taught me to swim out, grab my own turtle, ride his back and guide him into shore. I had a twin brother, Santiago, Jim. We were identical twins. Even our fingerprints, believe it or not.

“I have never been on a train in my life. I got as far north as San Francisco, to Treasure Island during their fair in '39; I have been east as far as Tucson; and I have been to Guadalajara to the South.”

Scroll Describes Peralta's Paradise

Rohr News

A rather lengthy scroll, printed on antiqued paper and charred at its edges, use as promotion literature for Glen Eden describes Peralta at length:

“And if you ever visit California's newest sun club ... you may find one of a fast dying race, an old gentleman of Mexican ancestry, once proud owner of an original Spanish land grant, bearing one of the old names that made history of this part of California. Senor Pedro Francisco Peralta may be basking in the sun, or lovingly tending the remnants of his once great J-P Ranch, whose acres stretched from rim to rim of a valley that long ago was broad and green.

If you wander from the pool you may see his curious collection of antiques and desert plants. Senor Peralta will greet you with a happy sunburned smile and murmur 'Bien Venidos!' Good coming welcome! ... He will lead you through the maguey cactus, tell you how in the old Land South of the Border they slash the spiny stems, set a jug to catch the milk-like juices, make tequila, ... a plow stands at the entrance of his little bit of Glen Eden; a walking plow, perhaps 50 years old, he'll tell you ... “

“I didn't write it, “Pete says modestly. “But it kind of sums up the situation.” And it goes on in imagery of old signs, old lanterns, documents, a Mexican saddle, ollas, a knife that could have been Murietta's and including Pete's 11 plus or minus cats – minus occasionally, the script says, because he likes to give them away.

Peralta Seeks Lost Mines

Rohr News

Lost mines hold a special fascination in the lore of the Southwest, and it was a cinch that Pete Peralta, Production Control Stores at Riverside, would sooner or later go looking for the famed gold mines and treasure cache of his forebears --- the Peralta Mines in the Superstition Mountains of Arizona.

Together with five companions, joined in a syndicate for the purpose, and armed with a copy of an 1848 map drawn by his grandfather, Pedro Peralta, Pete was recently on a four-day trip into the Superstitions to prove their existence.

The six men hiked in from Apache Junction in mid-January, following Park Department trails in the 125,000-acre Superstition Wilderness Area, then by map, followed long-lost trails used by his grandfather's people.

Their specific goal was to find the spot where, legend has it, Apaches surprised and slaughtered some 100 of Peralta's kinsmen and mineworkers, then dumped the bodies together with their mules and gold into a cave and sealed it off.

What the party found was some trace of several of the mines, petroglyph markings on rocks, plenty of rough country and sore muscles --- but no cave.

"Boy I really felt my age after that trip!" Peralta said.

Legend of Adventure

Peralta (who was written up in a recent NEWS for his sun club activity at Glen Eden) was joined on his exploration by William Schaefer of Chino, Jonathan Burbidge from Canoga, Walter Armantrout of Torrance, Darrel Roberson, Konewa, Oklahoma and Myron Brun, Young, Arizona.

The six had formed a syndicate, a joint venture agreement they named "Legend of Adventure," to "seek and prove" that the Peralta Mines were real and do exist." And incidentally should they stumble on a cache, to agree to its division among them, together with setting up a trust fund for helping young people in need of higher education. "This," Peralta says, "we feel will break the Apache curse of the Superstitions."

The group met in Apache Junction on January 13, initially and dating Peralta's map, then spent two days of intensive search in the area.

A common interest

The group itself was not without interest. Burbidge, as example, was a longtime prospector and friend of Barry Storm, Arizona author and specialist in lost mines, and whose book, "Thunder Gods Gold," in which the Peralta Mines are described, Pete carries around in his truck with him like a well-thumbed Bible. Darrel Robertson is a cousin of Dale Robertson who played in the "Wells Fargo" TV series --- and is incidentally himself an Apache. Armantrout has prospected for years and Brun is working a core drill for a mining concern in Arizona.

"Can you imagine a descendent of the Apaches and a descendant of the Peraltas joining for a trip like that?" Pete chuckles.

Nevertheless, the men hit it off well, Pete says, spurred by their common interest.

Found river flooded

It was rugged and forbidding wilderness country they went into, mountains, foothills and arroyos, on their quest, carrying names like Arroyo Colorado, Mesa Negro and Negro el Sombrero—upthrusts and knobs with coal – black rock --- and Weaver's Needle, near which persistent legend places the elusive Lost Dutchman Mine.

They checked the markings on Peralta's map, and cross-referenced them to markings on the black rock of Mesa Negro, and they did locate traces of some of the mines --- chiefly the S. K. Gonzalez and did find additional markings near the river that might have clued the elusive Caverno. But that was about it --- for this trip.

Tradition had it ---

According to family tradition and written records, Peralta says, his kinsmen from Cananea, Sonora, all miners, operated a series of mines in the area, as well as a rock crusher, in the 1840's period. From side references, Peralta feels there were "church mines" belonging to the Jesuits or Father Kino. The miners from Mexico came in '46 and had been highly successful in extracting their gold.

By 1848 activities were at peak and, with American takeover imminent, had stockpiled a considerable quantity in the supposed cave area awaiting transport into Sonora --- lending credence to tradition that, as well as the bodies of men and mules, the lost Caverno could contain as much as up to \$1 million in raw gold. Following the massacre, the nomad Apaches presumably sealed off the opening and subsequent earthquakes, Peralta thinks, added tons more rock covering it.

Pete --- as you'll remember, his full name is Pedro Francisco Peralta--- says the map came from his people in Sonora.

A fragmentary map, a legend, lost gold --- such are the ingredients of the lure of lost mines time out of mind.

Now, mission records

Nevertheless, Peralta points out, members of the "Legend of Adventure" Syndicate are satisfied with the start they've made thus far, may fine down and sift through other locales on future trips.

Meanwhile Pete plans a trip to Cananea, Sonora, birthplace of his mining kinsmen of the '40s, to check further records at the Arispe Mission.

"Every year in September, they still burn 100 candles in memory of the Peraltas who died in the massacre," he says simply.

But undaunted, he plans to have another go at it as soon as he can get away.

Also Included in the Article is a Photo of Frank Peralta On [Black Top Mountain?] With the Following Caption.

LOST MINE? Pete Peralta, Production Store, Riverside, has explored Arizona's Superstition Mountains with a group seeking to locate, verify existence of the Lost Peralta Mines and cavern where, according to his family's traditions, Apaches murdered and dumped the bodies of his mining forebears and their gold.