

# A Collection of Carlsbad Curiosities

**An odd 9 things you might not know about our city.**

Written By **WENDY HINMAN**

In 20 years of exploring Carlsbad's latitude and attitude, we at Carlsbad Magazine have discovered some cool curiosities. "That happened here?!" is the usual reflexive response. Some of this amazingness is well known and we have told the stories in depth: Carlsbad, Chestnut Avenue in particular, was the birthplace of Tom Morey's Boogie Board. The head coach of the Minnesota Vikings, Kevin O'Connell, hails from here. Carlsbad was the well-spring of Judi Sheppard Missett's Jazzercise. Black Hill (El Fuerte) in La Costa was the nexus where Bahne decks, Tracker Trucks and Cadillac Wheels were perfected and the skateboarding industry exploded. Here are some lesser-known idiosyncrasies of Carlsbad.



photos courtesy of the Hoffman family

## Chickens

Chickens. Carlsbad doesn't have an official city bird, but if it did, we'd lobby for chickens. Most Carlsbadians today remember the four plaster chickens on the corner of Elm Avenue (now Carlsbad Village Drive) and Carlsbad Boulevard. But the Twin Inns, famous for its chicken dinners, had many chicken iterations in its long history beginning in 1919. And The Country Store on El Camino Real had a giant chicken on its roof. The store was at Marja Acres and Marja Acres was an egg ranch, so the chicken made as much kitschy advertising sense as the Twin Inns chickens. It's not really kitsch if someone is not sentimental about them and we were. We loved our chickens on either side of town.

## Shipwreck

The palm tree down slope at Turnarounds is the X that marks the spot to find Carlsbad's shipwreck. Sean Cullinan was stand-up paddling on a sunny winter day when all the right elements came together. A rough winter had shifted the sand. The water was gorgeously clear. The tide was perfect. Cullinan thought he saw something weird so he ran to Carlsbad Pipelines for a mask. All owner Witt Rowlett had was a Minion mask, but it worked. Cullinan came back and told Witt, who called our publisher, who called me, who called archeologist Micah Hale, who looked it up. Within a few hours of Cullinan's find, the story of the Glen Mayne came back to life.



photo by Anthony Mata Jr.



photo courtesy of Carlsbad City Library Carlsbad History Collection

## Ski Flag

Agua Hedionda Lagoon never had flamingos, but it was where the Jet Ski was researched, developed and raced in the '70s. But in the '50s and '60s waterskiing ruled the waves. Many a Carlsbadian owes their waterskiing prowess to the late mayor and CHS history teacher Buddy Lewis's waterskiing summer school classes. There was so much activity on the water that the Carlsbad Police Department had a patrol boat to manage any maritime mischief. The late Harry Walton said, "Ed Urbanski and I became very worried about the safety of skiers" who fell into all that traffic. So they devised a plan for every boat to raise a flag when they had a skier down. What is now standard in the world of waterskiing owes its origins to our little lagoon.

## The Palms of Royal Palms

Speaking of palm trees, the Royal Palms Inn used to be where The Carlsbad Inn is now. It opened shortly after World War II, and like the Twin Inns, Hollywood celebrities would pop in occasionally. When scouting locations for the Marines to land in "The Sands of Iwo Jima," someone must've thought, "Why don't we land the Marine actors where the real Marines practice landings?" The landing was filmed on Camp Pendleton, but the set needed a lot more greenery to make our semi-arid Mediterranean climate look like a tropical South Pacific island. The palms of the Royal Palms were dug up and replanted on Camp Pen, then when filming was done, replanted back at the Royal Palms.



photo courtesy of Carlsbad City Library Carlsbad History Collection

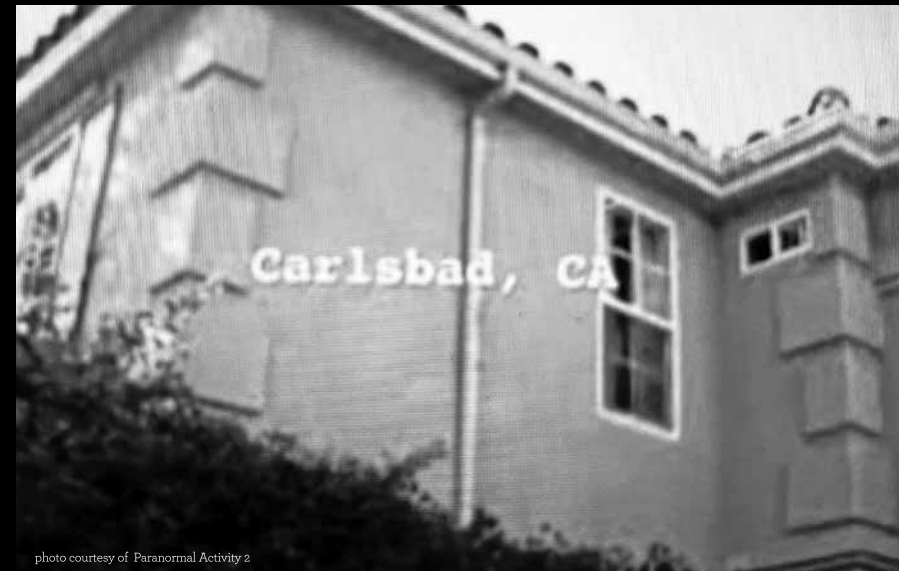


photo courtesy of Paranormal Activity 2

## "Paranormal Activity 2"

There is a creepy house in Carlsbad and part of the creep is that it looks like all the others. It's that ordinariness, and a filming style like a home movie, that made "Paranormal Activity 2" a simply scary success. The house looks oddly familiar, but we're not sure why. And the Rey family of the movie seems fairly like us, too, which makes your hair stand on end watching it. It's not a rundown mansion on the top of a hill. It looks like the house next door. And for a couple of families in Carlsbad, it is.

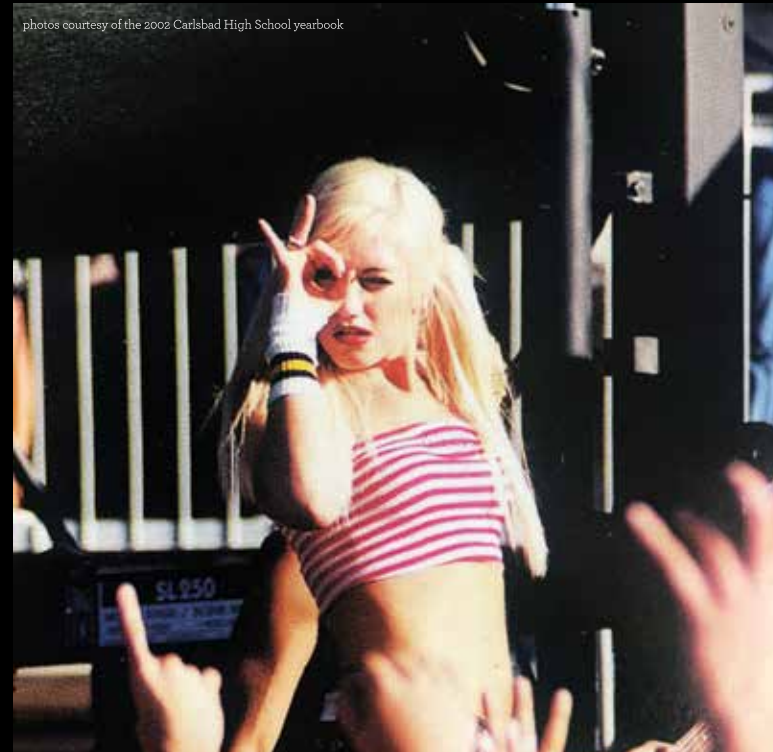
## Flamingos

And speaking of a tropical look, the Buena Vista Lagoon used to have flamingos. Important to the Pacific Flyway, Carlsbad hosts hundreds of migrating birds depending on the season, but in the '70s the pink flamingos were a year-round befuddlement to bird watchers. People remember the original five flamingos, usually spotted in the center of the lagoon, but no one knew where they came from. The San Diego Zoo insisted they weren't missing any. And though obviously non-native, they were there and included in the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. As are, by the way, our current Carlsbad parrots.



## The Chipped Bear

The Chipped Stone Bear, found on Allan O. Kelly's property off Cannon Road, has become the Official State Prehistoric Artifact for all of California. Found in 1985, the meta-volcanic rock is 7,000-8,000 years old. That this scraping tool was also fashioned as a bear gives it iconic significance. And for those who knew the renaissance man that was Allan O., and knew about his personal collection of arrowheads and grinding stones, once the archeologists started digging on his land, Kelly's strong will seemed to manifest a great find.



## No Doubt

One Friday afternoon in 2001, a CHS student was watching the clock, waiting for his weekend to begin. He looked out those weird horizontal windows the school used to have and thought the beautiful blond walking by looked like Gwen Stefani. She popped her head through the window and said, "Hey, what's up?" And the whole class stopped. MTV had set up a concert stage on what was always just called the blacktop and surprised CHS with an afternoon jam sesh by No Doubt. Working with the school administration, No Doubt was the best faculty prank in CHS history. And that kid in chem class? He knew undoubtedly it was going to be a great weekend.

## Dragmaster

In the '50s there used to be what looked like an ordinary auto repair shop on the end of State Street where there were a few service garages. But Dragmaster was different. Jim and Tom Nelson and Dode Martin were "artists in metal." They built dragsters for those looking to burn rubber and were internationally known. Tom was the mechanic, Jim was the engineer and Martin was the driver. The late Tom Nelson said, "We might finish a car around midnight and test it on Beech Street, which was just a dirt road back then." In the drag racing world, Carlsbad meant Dragmaster and their celebrity creators, the Nelsons and Martin.

