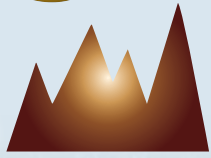


SUMMIT LIFE

VOLUME 4



SEPTEMBER 2013

THE SUMMIT'S STAFF GETS READY TO ROLL SEE PAGE 2



Summit's long-time groundskeepers are on the job every weekday at 8 a.m. You can set your watch by them. Pictured with their new truck are Julio Lazo at left and Rodolfo Aguilar on the right. Standing in the truck bed from left are Carlos Mejia and Ernesto Villatoro.

Larry LaCom/Summit Life Photo

WHEN IT COMES TO PLANTING A BUSH OR TRIMMING A TREE, THE PARK'S HARD WORKING GROUNDSKEEPERS SAY "SI, SI."

From Page 1

BY GARRY WORMSER

It's over 2,000 rugged miles between El Salvador and Los Angeles. The Summit's four groundskeepers have made the trip more than once, traveling through jungles and drug dealer territory by bus and on foot. They've come here to earn a Yankee dollar, always sending a small percentage of their earnings back home to support their families. Their goal is to retire with dignity in the Salvadorian cities and villages where they were born.

The acknowledged leader of the group is Rodolfo Aguilar, 47, a powerful man with an easy smile who

has worked in the park for 13 years. Second in command is Julio Lazo, 38, who has worked here for 6 years. They both speak English, a valued asset in America. Carlos Mejia, 35, and Ernesto Villatoro, 32, round out the four-man team. The pair have worked at the Summit for a combined total of 9 years. The men will tell you that the gift of steady employment year after year more than compensates for their modest salaries. They work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., five days a week, and will occasionally show up at dawn and on weekends when the job requires it.

It's hard labor maintaining the brush and trees that cover the park's

rustic 59-acres. Ernesto recently climbed the branches of an ancient pine wielding a chain saw. He hung on for dear life as he slowly cut the ailing tree to the ground (see photo caption below). When the four-man team is not caring for the grounds, they repaint homes and help keep the park's infrastructure up to snuff. "The owners pretty much leave us alone," said Rodolfo. "They know that we know our jobs. We appreciate that."

There's a cadre of insects and varmints, however, that don't leave the men alone. Coyotes and rattlesnakes are often under foot and the hills are covered with poison ivy. And then there's a constant summer battle with yellow jackets. The bite of the insect creates a debilitating fever that puts the men out of action for several hours at a time." But doctors are for "Temor's" or sissy's," the foursome say. "We take a short siesta and then go back and kill the yellow jackets, burning their in-ground nests with gasoline."

The men look forward to working with Mike Medina, the Summit alternate night manager, in landscaping the park's new recreation area and children's playground scheduled for completion next year. Medina's landscapes are adding a fresh, botanical look to a park already improved by its dedicated groundskeeping crew.

The question becomes, what could make life a little better for the groundskeepers? Well, there's a Spanish word that will help. It's called "generoso" or being generous. The next time you want some work done after hours, whether it's brickwork, or planting or brush clearing, be on the generous side with your remuneration. In some small way, you'll be helping make that last redeeming trip back to retirement in El Salvador a reality. ❖



CHAINSAW HANDIWORK: Ernesto Villatoro proudly sits on pine bench that he fashioned with a chainsaw from a dying tree. Its base will live on, allowing residents to sit and relax in a Summit park and children's play area scheduled for completion in mid-2014. Ernesto is one of four staff members who help maintain the park's 59-acre site. *Larry LaCom/Summit Life Photo.*

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

TRAVEL AGENT FAMILY UPGRADES TO JET PLANE VIEWS AT THE SUMMIT



The Burgos family is shown on the view deck of their mobile home purchased in May. Orlando Burgos is at left with daughter Cynthia, wife Elizabeth and daughter Erika. Orlando and Elizabeth have been in the wholesale travel business for 35 years. *Larry LaCom/Summit Life Photo*

“Where can we go where there are no bugs?” That’s a question that Orlando and Elizabeth Burgos hear often as wholesale travel agents who specialize in Latin America.

The couple and their two daughters, Cynthia and Erika, recently moved to the Summit from a small rented house in Box Canyon. Orlando arranges special tours from a marketing office in his new home while his wife and daughters run Sagitar Travel, a Ventura Boulevard firm that supports retail travel operators throughout California, Oregon and Washington.

“After 35-years in the business, we can tell you that the American traveler is not like the European traveler,” the couple explained. “Americans want everything to be perfect while the Europeans are more easy going. If travelers from Europe wind up in a place where there’s a lot of rain, they’ll take off their shoes and go wading in the puddles. Then they’ll go to the bar, have a drink and dry off. Americans tend to sulk in their rooms and blame the lousy weather on the travel agent.”

Orlando and Elizabeth were born in Costa Rica and met as students in Los Angeles. Orlando holds an A.A. degree from L.A. City College. Elizabeth graduated from the Art Center School of Design. “We were taught as children that the U.S. was where we were going to hang our hats and that we’d better be prepared to get by on our own,” Orlando explained. At first, the couple operated a body shop and then sold it to start their first travel agency.

“The travel business has changed a lot since we helped our first customers,” the couple noted. “Today

you can go on-line and book a trip to Las Vegas without an agent. But don’t dare try it when going overseas. For the few dollars you save in travel agent fees, you could wind up stranded in a bad situation without a knowledgeable person to help you out.”

“Which brings us back to bugs,” said Orlando. “Not to mention rattle snakes and coyotes,” explained Elizabeth. “That’s what we were faced with at the small house we rented in Box Canyon.” We needed an upgrade. So we rebooked to the Summit and can’t get over the jet plane views,” they said. ♦

SUMMIT LIFE

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