**Elmer Stoner Script**

**10/27/2013                                                                                     By: Don Williamson**

     Good Afternoon and welcome to the Stoner Family burial plot.  My friend, Elmer Stoner is buried here. He was the only son of Jacob and Ida.  The Stoners moved their family from Missouri to South Riverside, just a few years before the town voted to change the name to Corona.

Jacob Stoner was a successful businessman and there remains one wonderful souvenir of his life here, the family home.  That old house remains as beautiful today as it did when it was new in 1892.  It's located on South Main, just a block down from Ontario and the current owners have added bronze statues of children playing in the front yard.

     Elmer's father Jacob passed away in 1909, leaving him with a considerable inheritance.  Elmer remained in Corona, never married although he was quite the ladies' man. He also had quite a few run-ins with the Corona PD for vehicular infractions. (mostly speeding)

He died alone in the family home in 1943 of natural causes at the age of 64...However, I know you stopped by today to hear about the biggest event in Corona history, the Road Races around our Grand Boulevard.

     In the early teens, there was a lot of discussion among Corona business people about ways to promote this town.  With a population of about 4,000 people and acres and acres of citrus trees, convincing folks to come to Corona with no other attractions was going to be a tough sell.  At this time, automobiles were gaining popularity and racing them was one of the world’s most popular sports.  A group of Coronans got together to propose and then promote a Road Race around our Circular Grand Boulevard.  On September 9, 1913, our first Road Race became the most successful event ever held in Corona, with over 100,000 people traveling here to watch drivers lap the Circle in less than two minutes.

     The most famous and best drivers from all over the country racing were here.  There were also a few Southern California men filling the field.  They wanted a chance to win prize money too.

That's when I came into the picture: My name is Charles Lowry Newcombe; of course, everybody called me Charlie.

 When I met Elmer, I was in my mid-twenties and had a lot of experience racing cars.  My race car was a Pope Hartford that, though it did not have as large of an engine as some, had won a few important races.  Besides, in our time a race was as much about a car’s endurance as it was speed.  Did you know only three cars went the entire distance in the 1913 Corona Race?  I felt I had as good of a chance as anyone.

     The entry fee to race in 1913 was $250.  Good drivers did not need to sponsor themselves and so Elmer decided to help sponsor me. We felt lucky that the Race Committee accepted our application, others were denied.

     Please allow me to tell you more about my life:

     Born in South Dakota in 1885.  My uncle was a taxidermist and this was fascinating to me.  My uncle taught me the trade secrets and I became something of a taxidermist artist.

      When my family moved to Los Angeles in 1900,  I got a job teaching the craft at Los Angeles High School as well as working for the Los Angeles County Museum.  In 1908, I became very ill.  My doctor told me that the arsenic soap that was used in the taxidermy process was killing me! I decided to leave that profession behind right then.

      I  moved to his parents' ranch in Buena Park.  Today this land is part of Knott’s Berry Farm.  While living there I learned to become an automobile and airplane mechanic and received the 86th pilot’s license ever issued in the United States.

I had worked all over the country as a stunt pilot and dare devil, which eventually led me into auto racing and to the Corona Races.

     The week before Corona’s big race, we were feeling confident and rarin’ to go.  A couple of days before the race we took the Pope Hartford out for a test run on the Boulevard.  Misfortune struck!  We were crushed to discover that when the car broke down it was because the connecting rod had flown through the crankshaft.  There would be no time to get it fixed.  The Pope-Hartford never made it to the starting line of the Race.

    Elmer and I remained friends and when another contest was scheduled in Corona for 1914, we signed up again. The Race organizers would not allow us in this time.  It was not because of anything we had done, but since everything turned out so well in 1913, more of the top foreign drivers were coming here in 1914.  We were very disappointed and that ended my business with Elmer Stoner and the Corona road races.

     I did continue to fly, even doing stunts in a D.W. Griffith movie in 1916 called “The Flying Torpedo”.  Then when the U.S. joined the “Great War”, which you call “World War I”,   I was an instructor and aircraft inspector in the Army Air Corps. When the War ended, I left as a Second Lieutenant.

My wife Laura and I settled down in Corona in 1920, my dare devil days over.  But I was the only Race celebrity who ever returned to live here. We a built a great little house at 337 East Olive, which is still there.  We lived there with our only child, Robert or “Bob” for over 40 years.

Worked as a mechanic and an electrician in town for a time but luckily for me, taxidermy changed so that it was safe to return to my favorite past time. I received commissions from all over the world including singer Bing Crosby.  The Corona Public Library still has some of  my masterpieces in their collection.

    If you ask me, I had a wonderful life.  Nevertheless, time catches up with all of us and this old daredevil made it to 82 years old.  I died of natural causes in 1967 at the Corona Hospital on Main Street. I was buried in the Loma Vista Memorial Park in Fullerton but couldn't resist coming here today to visit my friends.

  Thank you all for stopping by and listening to my tale of Corona’s connection to that 1913 Road Race.  Stop by again, anytime.