THE HISTORY OF THE KINNELOA IRRIGATION DISTRICT

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IN THE BEGINNING

Our neighborhood, sometimes known as Villaloa, has its own water company. The Kinneloa Irrigation District is called the KID by its 550 customers.

The KID is a relative newcomer to the group of water companies that dot the local foothills. It came into being in 1953. However, there was water in the neighborhood long before that.

Early settlers, people with names like Rhoades, Cogswell, Kinney, Vosburg, Shaw, Wilcox, and Osborn all tried their hand at growing stuff. Back in the 1880's people in Southern California got rich from growing oranges. Even before that Leonard Rose made a buck or two from the wine his 700 acres of vines produced.

The early "ranchers" (they didn't start calling themselves "growers" until the 1920's) in our neighborhood planted mostly citrus but there were also grapes and some avocados. And, everybody also had a few fruit trees growing in their yards.

THE WATER TUNNEL

To grow trees and grapevines, water was necessary. Nobody knows who got the original bright idea to go to the side of a mountain, start digging a tunnel slightly upwards and keep digging until you found a fault line. If you dug far enough you would find a fault about half the time. Far enough could be a very long way. This smart guy reasoned that any water from rain or snow would eventually seep into the ground and then would flow downhill, beneath the surface, until it reached a fault line. It would accumulate in the fault where it would be carried along almost like being in a pipe. If somebody poked a hole into this "pipe" at that point the water would be diverted and then it would continue to flow out the slightly downhill floor of the recently-dug tunnel until it reached the light of day. The amount of water produced from these tunnels varies. The KID owns a dozen of these tunnels and best was around 60 gallons a minute until the drought caused it to decrease.

Not too far from the mouth of the tunnel the rancher would build a reservoir to contain the water trickling out of the mountain. Then, having located the reservoir, the rancher would plant his trees or vines in downhill parallel rows that started at the reservoir and fanned out like the spokes on your bicycle's wheels.

The rancher dug trenches between the rows of the trees or vines and with a system of wooden gates at the reservoir he could cause the water to run between whichever rows of trees he wanted and thereby water the always thirsty plants. This is a desert, right?

All the way from Pasadena to San Bernardino on the north side of Foothill Blvd. in the 1880's, people were growing things. And the water for most of that growth came from water tunnels, usually owned by the guy who owned the ranch. In addition, there were some windmills pumping water out of below the ground wells, but not as many wells as there were tunnels. Digging a well was as expensive as digging a tunnel but one had less chance of being lucky and finding water in a well. Besides, you couldn't count on the wind blowing in the summertime when you needed the water, but gravity never failed.

The KID traces its roots directly to those ranchers. They all had several, or more, water tunnels to provide irrigation for the substantial number of acres of citrus and grapes they had planted in Kinneloa and in Sierra Madre Villa.

Most of the water tunnels were dug by Chinese laborers. A "Chinaman" was hired through a labor contractor to dig into the mountain side with a short shovel. The tunnel he dug was no bigger than he wanted to dig it. It was usually just big enough for him to crawl into and to have a little room to dig farther. Using a rope he'd pull a small cart (the KID has the remnants of one of these old carts somewhere) into the tunnel behind him and begin to fill it up. When it was full, an accomplice outside at the tunnel opening would pull the cart out with another rope tied to the back end of the cart and empty it. Then, the digger would pull it back in and proceed to fill it again.

You can't imagine how back-breaking and dangerous it was to dig these water tunnels. Nowadays, it's against the law to go into a tunnel unless the tunnel has been "shored" to protect the people inside should the tunnel cave in. There was no shoring in those good old days. The dirt through which the Chinese

dug was decomposed granite. Such soil is as slippery and as prone to slide as dirt gets.

It's estimated between Pasadena and San Bernardino, tunnels were dug by the hundreds. About half the time, water was not discovered. There is no record of all the times that a tunnel caved in, blocking the exit of the digger trapped inside, who slowly starved or suffocated in the pitch-black confines of a tunnel too short to stand up in, even if you are only five feet tall. Think of the terror for that poor, unfortunate fellow.

I went into a water tunnel once, over in the east side of the Mira Loma, on hands and knees. Actually I was only on one hand with the flashlight gripped like grim death in the other. I doubt if I went farther than 100 feet. Many of the tunnels were a quarter of a mile in length; quite a few were longer. By 20 feet, the opening of the tunnel to the outside had disappeared from sight and the tunnel became absolutely black. No daylight. None. Most of the time as I crawled forward, my elbows rubbed against the walls on either side of me and I constantly banged my head on the low ceiling above me. At any moment I expected the beam of the flashlight to reveal the presence of those that I suspected lived in there: The last family of grizzle bears in California? A 200-pound mountain lion? A nest of 300 rattlesnakes?

After a very short period of time, I decided I had seen all I needed to and backed out. An experience not for the claustrophobic, I assure you.

THE EARLY HOME BUILDERS

There were relatively few houses in Villaloa. Most of the early houses were built on Sierra Madre Villa Avenue, or on streets that branched off it. Until 1945 there was only one house on Kinneloa Mesa, there were none in Kinneloa Canyon and a couple on the Kinneloa Ranch.

Those who did build houses had to buy their water from the fellow or the group of fellows who owned the nearest water tunnel.

Since the late 1800's until late in the 1920's, in the Kinneloa neighborhoods, the owner of the water was Abbot Kinney. He ran into fiscal difficulties and sold his Kinneloa Ranch property, including the water system, about 1929 to the Lockhart brothers. Nobody knows when or to whom the Lockharts re-sold the Kinney water system.

What is known is that in the early 1940's Messrs. Arnold Eddie and Raimond (correct) Johnson were the owners of the Kinneloa water system. When Caltech needed water for the rocket project in Kinneloa Canyon, it bought it from them.

It's not known if Eddie and Johnson bought the Kinneloa water system from the Lockharts or if there were one or more interim owners.

Home owners in Sierra Madre Villa purchased water from one of a half-dozen different water companies, depending on where they lived.

THE WAR YEARS

During the second world war Caltech's Rocket Project was located in Kinneloa Canyon. Originally on the Caltech campus it was hastily relocated in 1942 to Kinneloa after an accident on campus took a life and almost wiped out San Marino.

With amazing speed, several administrative buildings and a dozen assembly areas were constructed. No stinking environmental impact reports required.

If you have ever seen WWII movie footage of ships firing banks of rockets, maybe 12 at a time, time after time, every one of those rockets was built in Kinneloa Canyon.

To this very day, details of the rocket project are mostly unknown. Nobody knows for sure how many people worked at building rockets. Estimates suggest a work force of around a thousand people working around the clock, 7 days a week.

Concerned about employee rights? If you worked at the Caltech Rocket Project, it was against the law to tell anybody where you worked or what you did. "Anybody" included your spouse. You think it's your right to call the sitter a couple of times a day and ask how the kids are? You think it's your right to call your spouse at work and tell him or her that little Jimmie just passed the razor blade he swallowed? Think again. There were no personal phone calls to or from the rocket project. Only a few people had the number.

THE HOUSING BOOM

About 10 minutes after the Japs (as the newspaper headlines of the day called them) gave up in August, 1945, the order came to dismantle the rocket project. Overnight the buildings on Pasadena city property were leveled. The Lockharts, owners of the land on which other buildings were located, asked that a few be left. Lockhart intended to rent them to people to live in, but that idea failed and he soon leveled those buildings also and divided the land into half-acre lots.

All that exists of the rocket project today is several concrete bunkers that were used to store explosives. One is off to your left as you approach the entrance to the Kinneloa Ridge development at the top of Kinclair

and another forms a small part of the KID's office. During the war there were seven such bunkers sprinkled about at the higher levels. These buildings were constructed so that if one went bang in the middle of the night the force would go up, not out. Out would have been bad if you lived in Altadena.

Following the Lockharts' example, owners of other parcels of property in Kinneloa Canyon and Kinneloa Mesa sub-divided the land into lots and people bought them and started building houses. The same thing began on Sierra Madre Villa. Many of these newcomers were returning servicemen who got cheap loans to buy their lots and even cheaper construction loans to start building. Why not?

The new houses in Kinneloa were served water by the remains of Abbot Kinney's old irrigation system. Those in the Sierra Madre Villa area got water from a series of private owners and water companies with names like the Vosburg Water Company, the Shaw Ranch Water Company, the Osborn Water Company, the Canyon Mutual Water Company and the Mira Loma Water Company.

By 1952, the water available to those who had settled in Kinneloa wasn't sufficient to allow further growth. Nor was the flow of the water that was available dependable. That meant in the morning when you were in the shower, covered with soap, the water might stop running. Accepted practice was to hop in your car, drive to the service station at the corner of New York Drive and Altadena Drive and use their restroom to get the soap off. The man who ran the gas station had towels available.

Things weren't much better in Sierra Madre Villa, but most residents decided to live with it. However, there were some complete neighborhoods like Old House Road and parts of others that defected from the County and had their property annexed to the City of Pasadena, for the sole reason of getting an inexhaustible supply of Pasadena water. During the time annexation talks were continuing, feelings pro and con ran high. There were several fist fights, and lots of neighbors never spoke to each other again.

BIRTH OF THE KID

Kinneloa, mostly through the efforts of a half dozen men, Mervin Grizzle, Larry Dietzel and Neil Batterson being sort of the leaders of this group, investigated the ways available to form a water company to serve their needs. They decided against the common method of forming a stock company, similar to Mira Loma, Lincoln Avenue, El Prieto, Las Flores, Rubio Canyon, etc. and agreed on recommending to the residents that they form an Irrigation District. The residents voted and agreed.

A law firm, Burris, Lagerlof, Senegal and Swift which specialized in water law was retained. They remain as KID counsel. A civil engineering firm, Alderman, Swift and Lewis, was selected to design the new KID water system. They too remain the KID's engineers of record.

The money to put all this into place came from a bond issue which the residents repaid in annual assessments over a 20-year period. But, make no mistake, regardless of where the money came from to get started, the State owns the KID, lock, stock and funnel. Anytime they wish, they could take over the KID and do anything they want with it, like establishing and enforcing water rationing, as they once threatened.

So, in 1953 the KID water was up and running (pun). The KID bought the Kinneloa Water Company from Messrs. Eddie and Johnson (for \$50,000) installed water pipes to the vacant lots that didn't have them and things were good for the residents of Kinneloa Canyon, Kinneloa Mesa and the Kinneloa Ranch. Neil Batterson was hired to be the KID general manager. Neil was one of the first few guys to buy a lot after the war, build a house and move his family into Kinneloa Mesa.

Neil was a very thrifty fellow and hated to spend a buck to fix anything that wasn't badly broken. As Neil aged, sometime in 1970, he hired another early settler on the Mesa, Gene Burt, to work part time as an understudy for the time he would retire. In 1974 Neil did retire and Gene took over as KID general manager. Gene had a more modern philosophy of management which included the concept of keeping equipment in good shape by performing routine maintenance so it would last longer.

At any time about half of those on the board of directors subscribed to the "don't fix it until it's broke" concept. The other half preferred the "if the book sez put oil in it every three months we ought to" method. This made for some relatively lively board meetings.

Gradually, Gene won over most to his point of view and today the KID's plumbing, mechanical and electrical systems are well-maintained. It's an interesting question which of the two methods in the long run has cost more.

THE MIRA LOMA WATER COMPANY

Over the years the Mira Loma Mutual Water Company acquired the assets of the other small water companies in the neighborhood and eventually became water provider to all the residents in election districts 4 and 5, which are shown on the accompanying map.

In the early 1950's, about the time the Battersons and the Burts were moving into their new houses, John Griffin and his wife had already finished building their house in the Glen and John was employed to be the general manager of the Mira Loma water company. It was a part time job at first and John was the only employee. Among his many duties, he was the person who added the chlorine to the water, who sampled the water for purity, who fixed the leaks when they occurred, who rebuilt the motors and the pumps when they failed, who read the meters, who sent out the bills and who kept the records.

In about 1956 John hired Virginia Rogers to take over the administrative chores of the office including the billing, collections, banking, filing the required health reports, etc. Very much the same duties Shirley Burt later performed for the KID. Virginia kept this job for 18 years until the Mira Loma and the KID merged.

John Griffin did a good job and he was creative at problem solving, though he was always limited by the amount of money he had to spend to keep the water running. The Mira Loma was always strapped for funds and it didn't take much of a leak to upset the delicate balance of money in and money out.

John employed others part time to assist in tasks he hadn't the time to perform by himself. One such part-timer was his own daughter, Marlene. When she was a little kid, her dad hired her to read the meters. He paid her a penny for each one she read. Other part time Mira Loma employees included Ralph McMullen and Dave Wallace, each of whom worked as required for many years.

John had planned for the time he was to retire, and had set a date: December 31, 1970. But that was not to be; he died just three days before. Ben Rogers, a full-time LA County Sheriff, was pressed into duty to replace John as general manager. This was an appropriate appointment; Ben's grandfather, Arvil Shaw, had once owned the water companies that later became Mira Loma. Ben, Ralph and Virginia kept things together until the Mira Loma and the KID merged three years later.

Every property owner that was served by the Mira Loma owned one or more shares of stock in the company. Nobody else could own a share, just a property owner.

When John died, some of the reservoirs and many of the pipelines in the Mira Loma were in need of major repair. After all, some of it was almost a hundred years old. When you are a hundred you are probably going to need some repair also. So, the owners of Mira Loma tried to find ways to solve the problem. An effort, mostly on the parts of Ben Rogers and Phil Saurenman, suggested several alternatives, all of them requiring us property owners to dig into our jeans and come up with the money to fix our leaky pipes.

A proposal was made to the stockholders of the Mira Loma. Among the alternatives suggested, we voted to merge with the Kinneloa Irrigation District. That meant we first had to borrow money to fix our water system. The KID made it clear it wasn't going to marry a girl who needed dental work and an abortion. Then, we would sell all our stock back to the Mira Loma, then the Mira Loma would transfer all that stock to the KID and thereafter we'd be one big happy family. That all happened. Thirty years later, as this is being written, the money we borrowed has just been repaid.

It was a good marriage. Each party brought something to the table. Gene Burt was retained as the full-time general manager. The combined water rights from Mira Loma and the KID assured that we'd have the legal right to provide as much water as we needed for all our customers at that time. No other water company in southern California had as much water as it needed. Every other water company in Southern California had to buy from the Owens River or the Colorado River. Not the Mira Loma and KID combination . . . until this year.

DEVELOPMENT POLICY

By the time Mira Loma and the KID had merged, most of the buildable property in Villaloa had a house on it. But there were still a few large parcels left. The first sizeable amount of vacant property to be developed after the merger was White Pastures.

That was a learning experience for the KID. What we learned was that in the future a developer will play by our rules, not theirs.

The rules we established include: A developer has to pay 100 percent of the expense of bringing water to his project and that he also has to pay to increase the size of the KID's water production facilities to provide this water.

The money required to do all this work is paid to the KID up front by the developer.

The KID's engineers design the improvement to our facilities and the system to distribute water to the project, not the developer's engineer.

The KID approves the selection of the contractor employed to do the work.

The developer pays the KID's expenses to inspect the work in progress during construction. The KID causes work to cease if it begins to vary from the design.

Some would-be developers have complained about the severity of these rules. Too bad. We wish we had the foresight to insist on them before White Pastures came along. Better late than never.

RUNNING THE KID

The KID is an Irrigation District, and under the State's rules the KID must be operated, with a considerable degree of autonomy, by a democratically elected board of directors.

All of the property served by the Kinneloa Irrigation District, which is mostly lots with houses on them, except for Dove Creek which is lots with condos on them, is divided into roughly five equal voting districts. If that's not confusing enough, within two of those five voting districts there was also a water improvement district. These three districts are all different.

Each of the five voting districts represent about the same number of parcels of property: about 110. There is no limit to the number of people residing on those parcels who are entitled to vote provided they are registered voters.

Each of the voters on those 110 parcels may vote for one person to represent them on the KID board of directors. Thus, the KID is governed by five elected board members. The board establishes KID policies and employs a general manager to execute those policies. The board elects a chairman whose job is to convey the policies of the board to the general manager and to see that those policies are effected. All very democratic.

THE KID BOARD

The KID board has been composed of dedicated people who are neighborhood residents and KID customers. Nobody else is eligible to serve as a KID board member. Generally speaking, these boards have been fiscally conservative. Perhaps not as thrifty as Neil Batterson would have liked, but thrifty nevertheless.

Among the board's obligations is to operate the KID in a fiscally proper manner. That means we don't spend money we don't have. This is a refreshing concept ignored by most other governmental agencies. The board has the authority to set the water rates to assure the balance between income and outgo.

One way the board has been thrifty is in the appointment of new board members. If a sitting board member moves out of the neighborhood, dies or just quits the job, then the board has the authority to fill the empty seat for the remainder of the seat's term. When a vacancy is to be filled, the KID announces the vacancy to the residents in the voting district. If any person wishes to run for the opportunity (?) he or she completes an application form from the County Registrar, gets the signatures of 10 other registered voters in the affected voting district and the person then is qualified to be a candidate. Usually, only one candidate files and that person is appointed to fill the vacancy without the necessity of election.

Sometimes in the past there have been two or more persons competing for the same board position and the existing board has urged them to decide between themselves which will be the candidate. If agreement was reached among themselves, one person would be selected and the others would drop out and the KID would be relieved of the expense of the election.

But if ego, political agendas or neighborhood hatred prevail and the candidates can't decide between themselves which is to be the representative, then the names of the two or more stubborn candidates appear on the ballots of all those registered voters within that voting district. Sometimes a special election is required with no other issue on the ballot except the KID board opportunity.

When the dust settles, the registrar sends the KID a bill for conducting the election. How much is that? Whatever the county says it is. Would you believe it was once \$15,000 for an election in which only 32 people bothered to vote? The chairman of the board at the time (me) proposed that in the future the cost of a contested election would be paid by the loser. I would have entertained an amendment to the motion that the cost be shared by the losers and the winner alike. Our learned counsel suggested that such a requirement might not be legal. I then suggested we can the learned counsel and find someone with common sense.

The original KID board had three members. When the Mira Loma and the KID were merged, it became a five person board. Those who served as board members worked long hours, made decisions with far-reaching implications, and for the most part received no recognition. They were and are:

Election District number 1

Larry Dietzel Lee Carmichael Loren Lutz Robert Brain Election District number 2

Gil McCann Charles Briscoe Ray Anderson Jay Stock

Election District number 3

Roy Hoffman Jay Davis Scott Medling Russell Shattuck Melvin Matthews Robert Barkhurst

Election District number 4

Ben Rogers Roger Wilcox Amy Brown Stephen Schindler Maurice Pickard

Election District number 5

Chuck McReynolds Steven Sorell

THE GENERAL MANAGER

After Neil Batterson retired in 1974, Gene Burt became the general manager of the KID, and he was responsible for shaping the organization into the water company we all enjoy today. He selected his wife, Shirley, and their son, Chris, to assist in the daily operations. Shirley was responsible for the office duties of billing, banking, required reports, etc., and Chris assisted Gene in all things mechanical.

The three of them made sure that the customers got a dependable supply of good, clean water and that when any problem occurred to disrupt this service it was attended to quickly and efficiently. The Burts seldom all left the neighborhood at the same time and one would usually hear one of them answer the 'fone no matter what hour of the day or night or day of the week somebody called.

During the years I worked with Gene, I came to admire his patience and the tact he had when dealing with customers. I never once saw him be rude or abrupt with an unreasonable customer and there were some of those from time to time.

Gene was methodical and he had a long-range plan to constantly improve the "average" condition of the water company into a modern and top-notch facility. Whenever something failed, such as a broken pipe, an over-heated motor, a stuck valve, whatever, Gene tried to repair it so that it was better than it was before it failed, thereby reducing the chance of a problem with that part again. Over a period of time, the KID's equipment and water distribution system kept getting better and better.

Thanks to Gene. And to Shirley and Chris. We were all fortunate to have them working for us.

After Gene retired, the KID board of directors hired two different men to serve as general manager. Neither lasted very long. The KID might not have survived if either of those had retained the position.

Finally, the KID board hired Mel Matthews who has the following credentials neither of the others had: First, he lives in the neighborhood. Like Neil Batterson and Gene Burt. This is a good idea. If anything goes wrong, help is close at hand. I remember one cold night after a party, driving past about midnight, seeing Gene Burt standing in a hole full of muddy water, trying to turn the valve off. The water was above his waist and he had to stick his head under when he bent over searching for the onner-offer. I thought about whether to stop and help or to continue on home and get in my nice warm beddie-bye. I should have stopped. That would have been a better excuse to have given my wife than the one I invented.

Second, Mel has neighborhood experience in operating a utility.

Third, Mel is not unfamiliar with trying to fix things himself. The previous two guys were desk-bound.

For those who don't know, many years ago Mel, his dad and his brother Bruce owned and operated the neighborhood TV cable company. They approached Gene Burt wanting to rent part of the KID's property to put up the giant antenna that was required. Gene agreed, they settled on a rental fee and the Matthews began construction. Very soon our neighborhood had cable TV. We were one of the first in the Pasadena area to have it.

The Matthews ran a tight ship and provided a good cable service. If your cable stopped working in the night, help was on its way. The same was true if you had a water problem in the night. A call to Gene brought help in minutes.

I remember one night maybe 11 p.m., seeing a light in the front yard. The rain was coming down in buckets. The wind made it go sideways every few seconds. All three of the Matthews boys knew how to climb a pole without getting fried or falling off. Or both. This particular night, high up on the pole was Bruce Matthews, soaking wet and cold, trying to fix somebody's TV cable. He came down, I wanted him to

come in, get dry, have a spot of brandy. He said he couldn't, there was still a problem down on Fairpoint Street.

This is the kind of personalized service I would expect KID customers to get under Mel's guidance just as when Gene was the general manager.

Bruce later quit the cable bid'ness, moved to New England to raise trees and hasn't been back.

Years later, Mel had a deal to sell his cable company to Charter. The morning the deal was to be signed, the fire ripped through the neighborhood and the signature pen was poised in the air when Charter said the deal was off until it could be determined if the cable system had suffered any damage. It had. Major. Plus the cables, Mel's house burned to the ground.

Charter eventually did buy the Kinneloa Cable System and Mel worked for them until he came to the KID.

LOOKING AROUND AT 50

The KID is 50 years old. Where are we? Will we live another 50?

Generally speaking, the KID is in good shape. We usually continue to have just enough water of our own for all of our customers and some years we have extra water to sell to others, like the city of Pasadena, who need more. However, recently, we did not have enough and had to buy some from Pasadena. Low flow amounts from the tunnels caused by the drought were mostly responsible for the shortage.

Our pipelines, reservoirs and pumps all require routine maintenance, but none are about to blow up. We think.

After two turkeys, we have a competent general manager and an experienced and knowledgeable staff.

Best of all, the taste of our water remains superb. Our water is as pure as it can be and is tested frequently to assure that some of its distinctive flavor doesn't come from somebody's cess pool.

The biggest cloud on the horizon is there aren't enough clouds. Pasadena has been in drought conditions for seven years. At the time of this writing it recently rained in large amounts, but we still need more. Use your common sense: Despite the recent deluge, if the rain quits and the drought continues, what'll happen to our wells?

Worst-case scenario is for a big earthquake in Lodi to knock down all the levees in the Delta, for all the wells in Southern California to run dry and for the citizens of the great state of Arizona to vote to stop letting California have any more Colorado River water. Were this to happen, the state would seize all water sources and cause them to be operated under strict rationing guidelines.

There would be plenty of water for people to drink (when was the last time you actually drank a glass of water?) but forget your orange trees and your front lawn.

We estimate that today, in the KID, about 90 percent of the water that's purchased is poured onto your yard. Under rationing that number could become 0 percent.

In the meantime, KID customers will continue to have half acres of lawn, every lot will be covered with all kinds of trees and shrubs, every third house will have a lovely rose garden and we will all continue to let the water we used to wash our car with run into the gutter.

The author wishes to acknowledge the following persons who proof-read the draft of this text, and were responsible for verifying facts, clarifying muddy thoughts and deleting profanities, political incorrectness and possible libelous statements.

The author is solely responsible for spelling and grammar and, as usual, they are perfect.

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