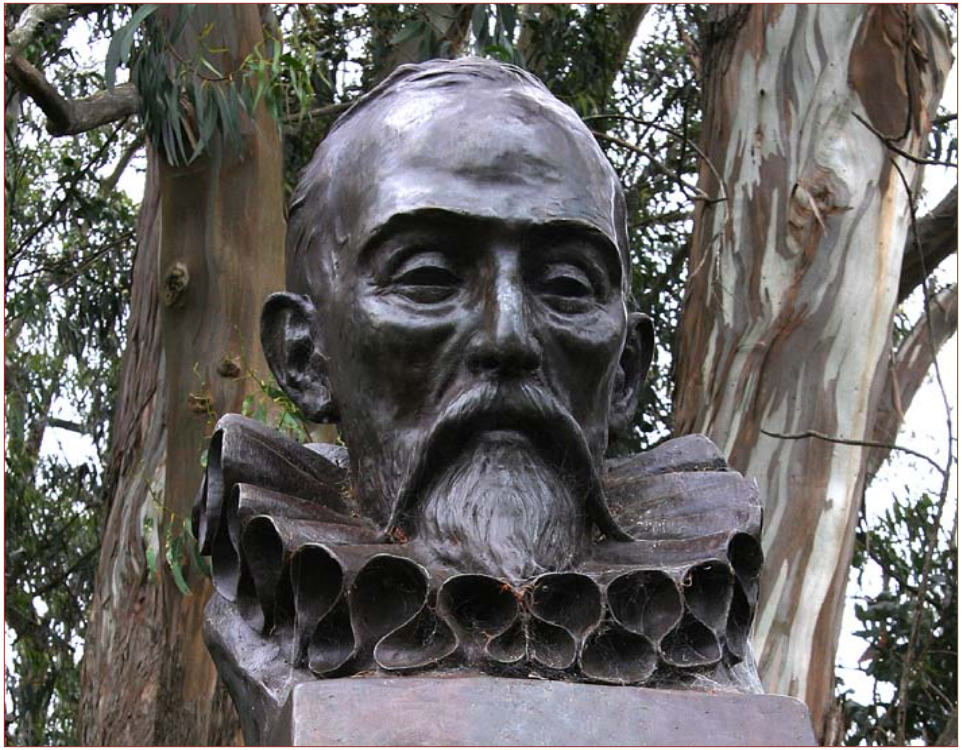

PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY NEWMAN

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Were anyone other than Carl Barks involved, I might be persuaded to wave off this image of Cervantes, which is part of California sculptor J.J. Mora's "Don Quixote Memorial" at Golden Gate Park. But knowing the fondness our favorite cartoonist had for the works of Joseph Jacinto Mora, and The Good Artist's penchant for paying tribute to those he admired through private gags in the panels of his Disney comic book stories, the coincidence between Mora's vision of Miguel de Cervantes and Barks' vision of the Mad Scientist from his tale of "Donald Duck in Ancient Persia" seems suspiciously more than an accidental or unrelated resemblance. You will, of course, have to decide for yourself.

An interest in the works of Carl Barks isn't complete without becoming interested in the works of Joseph Jacinto Mora.

The Homora Story — Part Two

by Joseph Cowles

While a great deal has been reported about the influence of Carl Barks on the works of other artists and cartoonists, relatively little has been discussed about people whose works influenced The Good Artist. In one of my visits with Carl and Garé at their home in Hemet in the early 1960's, Carl told me of an artist he greatly admired—"Homora"—whose actual name I discovered many years later, quite by accident, while researching items of California history at the Palm Springs library. *Homora* is about the way the name Jo Mora would be pronounced in Spanish—the native language of the Uruguay-born artist-sculptor's family.

In retrospect, it seems as if Carl knew more about his Disneyland Popcorn Boy visitor than the unsophisticated teenager knew about himself, as he asked questions for which I had no knowledge — and I would not learn the answers until many years had passed.

The conversation went something like this (me with my timid teenager's voice, Barks with hearing aids in the thick earpieces of his eyeglasses, Garé interpreting for both of us): "Homora studied at the Cowles Art School in Boston. The founder was Frank Cowles. Are you any relation to that branch of the Cowles family?"

"Um, no, I don't think so," I replied. My father was born in Minnesota. I guess that's where my relatives came from."

"That's not very far from Missouri,"

he said. "Are you related to Dr. John Vance Cowles in Kansas City?"

"Probably not." *What,* I asked myself, *could any of my relatives have to do with Carl Barks and Disney Ducks?*

"Well, ask your dad sometime." Barks must have thought me rather ignorant, and he would have been quite correct. It turns out that I am related to both of the gentlemen Carl asked about, but knew nothing of the relationships until 35 years had passed and I became interested in learning about our family's genealogy.

Like following faint traces of an ancient well-worn footpath across desert rocks and scree, through arroyos, alongside seasonal creeks, and climbing into the foothills of snow-capped mountains to take in breathtaking views of the valley floor far below, any journey on the trail of Carl Barks seems filled with switchbacks, box canyons, broad vistas and unexpected discoveries. My search for connections between Barks and Mora has brought forth a long and winding journey, and it ultimately leads circuitously back to myself.

2-C Oakland Tribune, Sunday, July 10, 1949

Before The Gringo Came They Rode The Range

The Cutting Pony

Coleada (tailing the steer)

Lancing Mesteños in Years of Severe Drought

Nuqueando

By NANCY BARR MAVITY Tribune Literary Editor

CALIFORNIOS, by Jo Mora; Doubleday and Co., N.Y.; $3.75.

When a professional writer undertakes to illustrate his book with amateur drawings the project is usually killed at birth, and a good thing, too; if not, the results are uniformly deplorable. The artist turned writer has a better time of it—perhaps because language is a more nearly universal tool of expression than paint.

James Thurber and the late Will James spring to mind as happy examples of dual talent. Jo Mora transcends them in a class by himself. He is a superlative artist, whose paintings hang in museums and whose murals and sculptures adorn many a public building.

He is also a real student of the period and people he loves best—the Indians and hacendados of the Old West, long before the vaquero had given way to the cowpuncher and the hide and tallow trade had collapsed under the gold rush.

In writing of these "Californios," Mora has not merely produced a contribution to the social history of the West Coast, illustrated with drawings; nor yet a collection of superb drawings supplemented with text. His drawings have wonderful verve and immediacy, as if his horses driven blindly over a cliff to save pastureage, his lassoing of wild bears and "tailing" the bull were from living and present models. Presumably their rapid and flowing action is the result of painstaking labor.

His writing has somewhat the same contradictory quality. The substance of his text shows erudition, but his scholarship is concealed in a cloud of dust from flying heels. He is so purposely colloquial that it is hard to imagine him slugging at a typewriter or even giving dictation. He seems to be talking, and even waving his arms as he talks, with a dictagraph hidden somewhere on the premises.

Mora has no feud with the Texas cowboy—so long as he doesn't claim to have come on the western equivalent of the Mayflower. "Gentiles" (Indians) and the Spanish-Mexican "gente de razon" beat him to it by 80 years.

"Five years before the embattled farmers of the Atlantic Seaboard began to carve out a republic of their own (Lexington, 1775) with gunpowder and bayonet, the Hispano Alta California vaquero was taking dallies on range cows by the shores of the Pacific." The cowpuncher of the Wild West stories and the motion picture did not come into the picture until "the great epic of the cattle trail was ushered in after the Civil War."

Having thus established priority for his riders of the range, Mora gives a detailed account, at once vivid, comprehensive and intimate, of the life and times of the vaquero and his place in the economic and social history of California.

The mission fathers had their work cut out for them taming the Indians before turning them loose in charge of herds on the range. They were already expert riders, of course, but they had to be taught the arts of lassoing, branding and riding herd. (Mora has one drawing of a padre, his cassock tucked up to his knees, wielding the branding iron for the instruction of a circle of Indians.)

They had also to be taught the meaning of private property. Cattle, cattle everywhere and not a haunch to eat? It was against nature. But the padres had a way of coping with cattle-thieving vaqueros: they were sentenced to return to the mission and attend school until they had mastered the three R's.

This condemnation to the sedentary life was hard on the happy-go-lucky Californio, who "used his hind legs as a biped only when he danced or was hopelessly stranded out of reach of a horse." Restored to the freedom of the range, the semi-centaur soon forgot his lessons but not the lesson of respect for the mission's four-legged property.

Life on the range was not a matter of all work and no play—or rather, the skills acquired in work were further developed in games; competition in fancy riding, in throwing the 'reata, in corrida de toros ("coursing the bull")—a contest quite different from the conventional bull fight—and in "tailing the steer."

To those was added the quite distinctive and hectic sport in which vaqueros undertook to match their wits and strength against those of the wild grizzly bear.

A good reata and a top cutting pony were the tools they used for this sensational performance. Having flushed their quarry, "dashing up on all sides of that startled critter, swish-swish-swish would hiss those rawhide reatas, and almost before the grizzly knew what it was all about he found himself half choked . . . A reata snapped in two by those powerful jaws, a loop lost from a leg, a roll down a steep gully bank—these were the hazards of his desperate rally."

The next step is to tease the grizzly into charging in the direction chosen by the vaquero, thus to be lured, lunge by lunge, across the intervening miles to the bear pit of the pueblo. There the grizzly would be cared for until his championship fight with a chosen bull—toro vs. oso. In addition there was of course the rodeo, not to be confused with a "round up" or with modern performances in the Oakland Exhibition Building.

Not in the category of games, but nonetheless thrilling was the charge en masse with lances, driving hordes of mestinos over the precipice like Gadarene swine to conserve the limited grass supply of the range in periods of drought. This wholesale slaughter was symbolic of the economic extravagance of the period. No crystal ball gazer foresaw the time when the last remaining herds of wild horses would be sought to be turned into food for domestic cats and dogs.

In that day, too, the development of California's golden wealth of fruits and grain was unforeseen. "The Californios were not great farmers, and if their string of neophyte laborers was small, so were their plantings." Mora tells us. But the ranches themselves were huge, measured not by acres but by leagues. A single one of them might include 15,000 head of cattle, 8000 horses and several thousand sheep, with hundreds of vaqueros in addition to field workers and house servants in attendance.

From these come the first great source of wealth in California, the hide and tallow trade carried on by means of Yankee windjammers. Arrival of the trading vessel was the signal for the hacendado to call his vaqueros to a great matanza, where business and sport converged in the form of a nuqueo—literally a "necking party," which does not mean what you might think.

Six or eight horsemen rushed upon the milling herd with knife in hand to drop the animal with one swift thrust between the neck vertebrae. Soon the cattle began to run in a seething, wildly rushing, undirected flight, the vaquero in full chase to deliver the coup de grace at close range, while running his horse at top speed. The animal would drop in his tracks from a dead run. "If it collapsed to the side of the rider, that pony had to do a mighty quick side step. It was a wild spectacle, let me tell you."

That was the great day of the vaquero. Came the gold rush, bringing a complete social and economic transformation to California and burying the old hide and tallow trade in its advance. Later—a considerable time later—came what we know as the Western cowboy. Later still, the great ranches again came into their own as the primary source of California's wealth, and the ranges where wild mustangs were once driven over the canyon's edge to their death were tamed and cultivated. Out of the earth came a different sort of gold, the living gold of food for a continent.

CORPSE IN KENNEL, IS JUST WHAT | Butler Novel

This review of Jo Mora's book Californios, *published two years after his death, is one of many clippings to be found online at* NewspaperArchive.com. Californios *helped to inspire Carl's story,* Donald Duck in Old California, *as did the Helen Hunt Jackson book* Ramona, *which has been made into an outdoor play and performed annually at the Ramona Bowl in Hemet since 1923. Carl and Garé lived directly below the amphitheater and were involved in its promotion.*

In last issue's article I wrote about finding a copy of Jo Mora's book, *Californios,* while doing some research at the library in Palm Springs, and telling Geoff Blum about the discovery so that he could refer to it in the text he was working on for Egmont Publishing's *Carl Barks Collection*. Later on, while digging through the vast files of *NewspaperArchive.com,* I was able to find lots of information about Mora, including reviews of the book, which saw publication two years after the artist's death and two years before Carl's *Donald Duck in Old California* was released.

Jerry Newman, a good friend from northern California, occasionally deigns to visit us here in the desert—especially if there is a large gathering with plenty of eats and conviviality, such as the Thanksgiving fiestas my wife and I love to host. Jerry's skills with camera brought welcome support (whether volunteered of shanghaied is open for debate), as he agreed to nose around the state and take photos of Jo Mora works from the early years of last century. Jerry sent back images of Jo Mora exhibits in the Monterey Museum of Art, sculptures on the walls of the Monterey County Courthouse in Salinas, the Sarcophagus of Father Junipero Serra at the Mission in Carmel, and public works of art in Los Angeles, San Francisco and elsewhere.

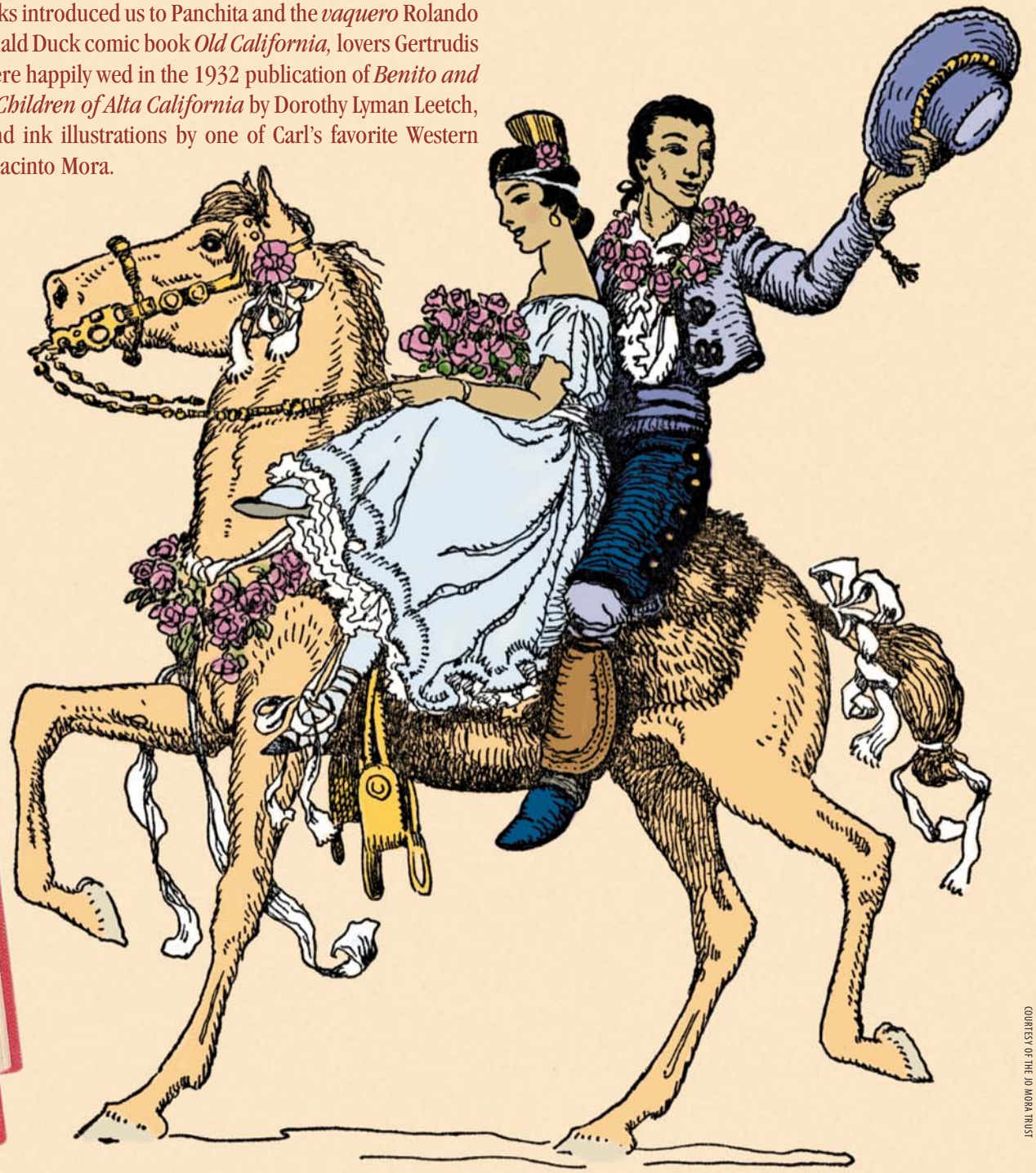
Meanwhile, I had the good fortune of getting to meet—via telephone and email—Peter Hiller, Collection Curator of the Jo Mora Trust. Peter turned me on to other Mora works, including the illustrations in a little book for young readers, *Benito and Loreta Delfin* by Dorothy Lyman Leetch. These drawings provide greater insight into the inspirational sources Carl used for his *Old California* story.

Rather than make this article a long-winded narrative, I'll use the rest of my pages to present a few images of things Mora, along with descriptive captions. Sometime this summer I'll post this article plus links to large format photos and artwork on my Carl Barks website, *www.TheGoodArtist.com.*

John Charles Frémont and his scout, Kit Carson, with their band of "Mountain Men" being welcomed by John Sutter to his settlement in California's Central Valley on March 6, 1844, in this miniature diorama completed for Sutter's Fort State Park in Sacramento shortly before Jo Mora's death in October 1947.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY NEWMAN

Before Carl Barks introduced us to Panchita and the *vaquero* Rolando in his 1951 Donald Duck comic book *Old California,* lovers Gertrudis and Roberto were happily wed in the 1932 publication of *Benito and Loreta Delfin, Children of Alta California* by Dorothy Lyman Leetch, with 22 pen and ink illustrations by one of Carl's favorite Western artists, Joseph Jacinto Mora.



COURTESY OF THE JO MORA TRUST

At right, Justice, *a six by eighteen foot sculpture in concrete adorns the Monterey County Courthouse in Salinas, California. Below,* The Bronco Twister, *a sculpture cast in bronze.*

Left, the memorial cenotaph of California Mission Founder Father Junipero Serra. Photo at bottom right shows the bare feet of the padre, with a California bear cub snuggling up next to them.

Above, Jo Mora's Diamond Jubilee commemorative half dollar. Over 150,000 of the coins were struck at the San Francisco mint to celebrate the 75th anniversary of California's statehood. At left, Mora's first signed sculpture (1908), of a Hopi Maiden, cast in plaster. Could her hairstyle have been the influence for that of Princess Leah of Star Wars *fame?*

ALL PHOTOS THIS PAGE ARE BY JERRY NEWMAN, EXCEPT FOR IMAGES OF CALIFORNIA DIAMOND JUBILEE HALF DOLLAR WHICH ARE INTERNET SOURCED.

If this article has seemed disjointed and rather jumbled, I assure you that I share the same sense of it. It's a sparse collection of puzzle pieces that don't show the whole picture, yet tantalize with their incompletion.

And yes, I did eventually find the old country practitioner Carl Barks asked me about, Dr. John Vance Cowles, listed in *Genealogy of the Cowles Families in America,* compiled by Calvin Duvall Cowles, published in 1929. (From his photo, it appears the doctor and I share a family resemblance—somewhat.)

The genealogy information led me online to discover biographical write-ups regarding the good doctor's Disney connection, which Carl evidently knew about from his own Studio days. Here's a composite adaptation of those bios:

When Walt was struggling as a film producer in Kansas City, Missouri, he frequently received support and advice from Dr. John Vance Cowles, who had long been the Disney family physician, and always liked the young animator. Dr. Cowles occasionally stopped by to see how Walt and Ub Iwerks were doing. When things got really tough, the doctor would take some cash from his wallet and lay it on Walt's animation board, encouraging the young men not to give up. The doctor did not expect to get his investment back. He genuinely cared for the enterprising animators.

Laugh-O-Gram Films got rolling in 1922, on funds Walt and Ub raised from local businessmen including Dr. Cowles and a number of the doctor's friends. The animators hired the doctor's wife, Minnie, to be their company treasurer, and expanded into larger quarters with a staff of eleven. But by July of the following year their funding was depleted and the boys were forced to declare bankruptcy. Walt turned to Dr. Cowles for another $2,500 to cover the company's major debts.

Not being able to pay the rent at his rooming house, Walt stayed with Iwerks for a few weeks and then moved into the Laugh-O-Gram studio where the rent had been paid in advance. For a dime he was able to bathe once a week at the train depot. Walt's credit at the café downstairs had run its limit. One day he was sitting in the studio eating from a can of beans, when one of the restaurant's owners happened to walk in. Seeing the young man's plight, the man invited Walt to come down to the café and eat a "decent meal." Little did he know that beans were Walt's favorite dish.

INTERNET IMAGE

Family tradition claims Dr. John Vance Cowles helped make Walt Disney's fabulous success possible.

As he often did when he was in a pinch, Walt called his brother Roy for advice. Roy was recuperating from tuberculosis in a veteran's hospital near Los Angeles [this was Sawtelle, where my great-grandfather, Micajah Lane, a Civil War veteran, also was there for recuperation at about the same time]. Urging Walt to relocate to California, Roy sent him a blank check, saying, "Fill in any amount up to $30. Walt also raised money doing baby photography and newsreel footage. Then he sold his camera and bought a one-way train ticket to Southern California. He was 21 years old.

Many years later, Walt found an opportunity to repay the kindness of Dr. Cowles and his wife by hiring their son, John Vance Cowles, Jr., an accomplished architect, to help design Disneyland. According to John, the girlfriend of Mickey Mouse was named Minnie for John's mother, the wife of Dr. Cowles who had been the treasurer of Laugh-O-Gram.

And there you have it: *Six Degrees of Separation,* in the style of Carl Barks and a former Disneyland Popcorn Boy.

IMAGE COURTESY OF MONTEREY COUNTY FAIR

Jo Mora artwork from more than sixty years ago has been brought back to help promote the 2010 Monterey County Fair to be held this September. According to the Fair's promoters, "The Fair is in the Air!" refers to all of the wonderful sights, sounds, smells, and tastes Fairgoers enjoy during the Monterey County Fair. The community's anticipation and excitement always builds until "The Fair is in the Air" during Fair week. "Come out and enjoy a feast for the senses, including delicious Fair food and Monterey County wine, outstanding entertainment, the best of local produce and livestock, educational exhibits, special contests, and much more at our beautiful landscaped setting at the Monterey County Fairgrounds." For more information, contact the Fair Administration Office: 831-372-5863.