**Silents Under the Stars**

*by William Blowers*

August 9th at William S. Hart Park brought yet another wonderful edition of “Silents Under the Stars.” The weather cooperated perfectly as 180 guests plus several volunteers experienced the tradition, now over 20 years in the making, of seeing Bill Hart perform on the silver screen under the stars. The evening’s movie, “White Oak” was accompanied by the organ music of Ray Lowe who creates a unique musical track to accompany each years on-screen performance.

The “New West” trio of Mike Fleming, Raul Reynoso, and David Jackson performed traditional western music as the sun set over another delicious dinner catered by “Rattler’s BBQ.”

A unique highlight of the evening was the entertaining interview of Dennis McDougal by Bill West and EJ Stephens of Friends Of Hart Park and local personalities on SCVTV. Dennis is the grandson of Vola Vale, the heroine who starred opposite Bill Hart in the evening’s movie presentation. The audience listened intently as Dennis related the experience of visits with his famous grandma, telling of her life after silent movies, and her humorous idiosyncrasies.

Friendly competition ensued as guests jockeyed to get in the final bid on dozens of silent auction items. Highlights included a box seat at the Hollywood Bowl, a unique hand carved wooden picture of Bill Hart, and a painting of a fish created using the Japanese traditional method of “Gyotaku” painting. Bidders were kept busy with creative gift baskets filled with such diverse contents as Jack Daniels liquid refreshment, doggie treats, and Trader Joe’s healthy foods. Books by western film stars, Bill Hart, Hugh O’Brien, Harry Carey, and Will James were among the 59 items available for auction.

Deepest thanks go to Sherron Blowers, chairperson for “Silents”, for the tireless effort she put forth to make the evening a success, this the fifth one she has chaired. The evening’s smoothness and ease of flow belied the months of meticulous planning and hard work that created it. As she worked with her committee of dedicated volunteers, Sherron constantly demonstrated her far-reaching organizational skills and creative artistic ability.

‘Silents’ has grown considerably from its origins. The expansion of its silent auction has resulted in major fund raising in support of the park. The move from its original location behind Hart mansion to the patio at Hart Hall has added considerably to the size of its audience and hence its popularity.

To repeat an old adage, “A good time was had by all!”