

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

February 22, 1960

Los Pastores Relived

We have not been able to forget the delightful evening spent just before Christmas at the chapel in Fort Ord when we viewed a production of "Los Pastores" an old-time Christmas play which in the early days of Monterey was given in our old Royal Presidio Chapel. So we must write once more of that charming story of the annunciation, the birth of the Christ Child and the arrival of the wise men, the shepherds and the worshipers.

As the narrator, Col. W. J. Schalles said that evening:

"One of the objectives of the "Los Pastores", 1959 version, that it would not only attempt to keep its authenticity, but also add a modern tinge without detracting from the sacred drama." This was accomplished by using the pipe organ exclusively as accompaniment throughout. Even the laughter of "El Diablo" was heard clearly. This was done by use of the foot pedal with its many diverse stops.

In days of old Monterey many of "Los Pastores" participants would shout their lives out on the beach. Thus they prepared for the presentation. Even while practicing they would amuse people and an audience was quickly obtained – perhaps it was a bit more encouraging, knowing they had more than seagulls, seals and fish as onlookers.

Looking back we found a report on olden times dated Jan 5, 1915: "For the first time since 1840 the old biblical drama "Los Pastores" introduced by Spanish Franciscan Padres, was presented in Mission hall Sunday afternoon."

The latter took place with many local old times who were members of the Junipero Serra Club. Under the direction of Father Ramon Mestres "Los Pastores" was portrayed in English translated from Spanish. A reviewer stated: "The music alone was a rare treat, as it was rendered by an orchestra."

Some added bits of information that made "Los Pastores" at Fort Ord interesting were that some of the religious "objects of art" of Father Serra's era were present. Among these were the "Christus" and crib and a brass censur. Needless to say they added immensely to the impressiveness of the presentation.

The choir composed of the Knights of the Altar, John, Louis and Thomas Bristol; Donald Evans, Robert Griztmacher, Robert Gunter, Kin Howell, Stephan Jaurequi, Daniel Juraschek, Rene Matos, Thomas O'Dea, Bruce O'Neil, Robert Tearse, Jon Weeler. The Catholic Youth Organization members: Ramona Boyd, June Cargle, Barbara Deyo, Diana DuBois, Janice Erdesky, Marietta Mangini, John Morgan, Richard Wheeler and Arthur Vick. Their music was all sung in Spanish. The onlooker had a program in hand with the English along with the original Spanish.

The entire "dramatic personnel" outdid themselves especially in the first performance. The infant Jesus (Ann Marie Morgan) whimpered as if she were cold and hungry, only to again be peaceful upon hearing Balthazar's lullaby sung by Richard Vaughnes. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Pamela Kelly; St. Joseph by Dennis King; Angel Gabriel, Robert Gunther; St. Michael, Dwight Schalles. The angels were robed in flowing garments and with Napoleonic head gear and gold breast work – stately indeed!

The two other Magi were: Melchior, William Howell, and Gaspar, Harry Frank. It was on these persons that richness and finesse was clearly visible, especially the Father Serra mementos in hand which they offered to the Christ child.

Tradition usually portrays the Devil as a masculine figure but "El Diablo" at Fort Ord's "Los Pastores" was "ella" or a she. Her role was excellently portrayed. Many a child hid as she did her "baile infernal!" Congratulations to Miss Carmen Zavala!

We mention last "Los Pastores" or shepherds led by Hila who represented good, Chris Zavaka; and Bartolo, the lazy, old shepherd, who had seen better days, enacted by Thomas Morgan. He was followed by the other shepherds played by Micheal Spears, James Byron Benjamin, Dean DuBois, Rose Mary and Wanda Marie August.

Perhaps it is folly to have mentioned all the above, but truly these young people played a very important part in keeping something very dear, ancient, and most pertinent to our beloved Monterey.