

You need an appointment to visit 'Pink Lady'

by Lance Igonon

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The “Pink Lady”—the celebrated ghost of Yorba Family Cemetery—made her bi-annual appearance in private Sunday night.

As recent legend has it, the Pink Lady is said to appear between the hours of midnight and 4 a.m. on June 15 during even-numbered years.

The story has become quite popular in recent years and large crowds have gathered to catch a glimpse of the ghost of Alvina Yorba de Los Reyes. While no one actually saw the ghost, dressed in the pink gown she wore on the night of her death in 1910, the event made a good party.

Until this year.

The cemetery officially closes at 10 p.m.—although it has been locked since April 28, 1985 for restoration—and Orange County Sheriff's deputies and county park rangers were on hand to enforce the rules. Gordon Hefner, a Yorba Linda resident, had come with his wife and six children to take part in the ghostly stakeout, but like the rest, was turned away and threatened with a citation if he refused.

“Everybody was real quiet,” said Hefner, explaining that the crowd was well-mannered.

“All of a sudden the lights went out in the park. The sheriffs' came and said the park was closes at 10,” said Hefner, who added that the spectators should have been properly warned about the closure before they trudged out to the 128-year-old graveyard.

County officials said that, unlike two years ago, spectators were prohibited access for two reasons: They cannot restore the historical site with people walking over it and past Pink Lady crowds have left the site covered with trash—mostly beer bottles and cans—and have even carried away grave markers.

“I know what the problem is,” said Hefner. “The people who get to drinking and carrying on make it tough for us.”

With the exception of a brief period a few years ago, the cemetery has been open to spectators by appointment only for many years, said John Mosqueta, supervising park ranger in charge of historical facilities. The park was unlocked briefly several years ago when family members of the deceased complained they had no access to the cemetery.

But when vandalism became an epidemic, the park was locked again in April 1985.

“Over the past four or five years as (the surrounding neighborhood) has built up it's become a gathering site,” said Mosqueda, “and it's continually gone down hill. Since the last closure, no-trespassing signs have been placed on the wrought iron fence.

But Hefner said that unless some sort of compromise is reached, “There's nobody that's going to be able to get up there and see it again.”

This was to be Hefner's first visit to see the Pink Lady, who was said to have been killed when she was thrown from a buggy on Kellogg Road as she and her husband returned from a dance.

Mosqueda said perhaps after the site is restored, which is expected in about two years, a plan could be devised whereby people could sign up for a Pink Lady. He said, however, that there were no specific plans for a special nocturnal tour.

The restoration will include replacing wooden and stone markers from an estimated 350 graves, said Mike Miniaci, park ranger for historical sites.

“If it's done properly and people can just hold off for two years, we'll have a really nice historical site,” said Miniaci.