



## Perris Press Release

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### Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association Honors Clyde Smith

Phil Smith says one of the neatest things about growing up in the Perris Valley in the 1950s was introducing his mom and dad to school friends and visitors.

Their names: Bonnie and Clyde. These weren't the Depression-era desperados who robbed banks and died in a law-enforcement ambush but hard-working farmers who agricultural legacy by potatoes, alfalfa and sugar beets.

Bonnie Smith died two years ago at age 88. Clyde Smith, 89, was in attendance on June 8 when his family was honored by the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association.

A man of few words, Clyde Smith chose not to speak at the ceremony. But his son, Phil, had plenty to say about the values, ethics and legacy of his parents.

Their first names always made good conversation starters. "It was cool," Phil Smith said. "We never got hassled because of their names.

It was just one of those neat ironies." Phil Smith said his parents learned early in life the value of hard work and thrift and passed those lessons to their five children.

Clyde Smith left school after the eighth grade and was working on the farm by the mid 1930s when he was barely a teen-ager.

He came from a farming family. Clyde's grandparents moved to California from Canada. Bonnie Smith was born in Oklahoma, picked fruit as a young woman and came with her family to Southern California.

Their children worked the land too, driving tractors and harvesting the crops—sometimes putting 10 or 12 hours a day. The labor was physically challenging and tiring, Smith said, but looking back on those days, farm life was idyllic.

The youngsters explored the entire Perris Valley, which served as their playground. "We could venture out and enjoy one of the most-beautiful valleys in Southern California," he said.

Phil Smith recalled at least one occasion caught rattlesnakes for fun. He said he learned to love trains after seeing boxcars and locomotives loaded down with tons of potatoes pulling out of Perris to destinations far and wide.

When not working, the family dedicated itself to church work and thrice-a-week services. The Smith children attended Perris High School. Perris historian Katie Keyes said families like the Smiths put Perris Valley on the map and served as models of the American experience.

"They were an integral part of the Perris Valley," Keyes said. "Their hard-working spirit helped build this country." Smith's children said they were humbled and honored to see their dad recognized for his 76 years of commitment to Perris Valley agriculture. "There is nothing that can compare with this," said daughter Marsha Smith-Lyvers. "I would not want to be any other place on this planet."

In addition to being honored as a Perris Valley pioneer, Clyde Smith has been named grand marshal of a July 4 parade in Nuevo. It's only appropriate, son Phil Smith says. "He's earned every bit of respect he's receiving," Phil Smith said.



Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association members Katie Keyes and Midgie Parker present Clyde Smith, 89, with a personalized potato sack during a recent ceremony honoring his family as pioneers of the Perris Valley. Clyde Smith began farming here in 1937.



Personalized t-shirts also were included during the ceremonies honoring the family of Clyde Smith as pioneers of the Perris Valley.



A personalized cap reading "Clyde's California Potatoes" was also part of the June 8 ceremony.