



Perris Press Release

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Annual Pioneer Day Honors Warren Family

Bob and Clara Warren opened the People's Store at the end of the Great Depression, a time when the economy was so slow that one day their total receipts amounted to 15 cents—the sale of a single hankerchief.

But the Warren family persevered, welcoming all who came into their store and built a steady clientele over the decades by serving the ranchers and farmers, City dwellers, school children and business owners. Store employees welcomed customers in English and Spanish and made sure the business kept ample supplies of popular sellers like Levis and western wear as well as the latest trend setters.

Bob and Clara Warren's children and grandchildren eventually worked in the People's Store, which became a Perris institution and remained in the family for 62 years. The two patriarchs eventually left the City and returned to their native Texas and died years ago.



Kate Keyes, president of the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association is pictured with Tom Warren, Janet Warren Szekerka, Barry Busch, Robert T. Warren and Perris Mayor Daryl Busch.

But the family



Former Perris Mayor Bob Warren Jr. spent much of his working life at the People's Store at Fourth and D streets in Downtown Perris.

legacy lives on.

The Warrens were honored Saturday (Jan. 28) during the annual Frederick Thomas Perris Day and Pioneer Family Celebration, an event organized by the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association.

The celebration drew more than 100 people and 30 Warren descendants to the restored Perris Depot Building and featured a keynote address by Bob Warren Jr., a former mayor and civic leader in addition to spending much of his working life at the People's Store.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch was on hand to present a certificate to the family. Barry Busch, the mayor's son, represented Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley and also presented the family with a certificate of appreciation.

"What a great day," Mayor Busch said. "We have a great turnout for a great event. The Warrens are a marvelous family who represented the heart of Perris and still do."

Vincent Magana, a member of another pioneer family, told the audience that the Warrens—who opened the People's Store in 1940 and sold the business in 2002—treated all their customers "with a dignity that every person deserves." In doing so, they helped make Perris a City right out of "Norman Rockwell USA."

"I cannot imagine anyone who would not consider the Warren family a special family," Magana said. "We are so grateful that you have been a part of our experience."

Bob Warren Jr., 80, spoke about growing up in the City and attending Perris High School, where he played football on the 1948 Riverside County Championship winner. He later served with an Army MASH unit in Korea and became mayor at the age of 29. His political accomplishments included passing a ballot measure to purchase the current civic center and implementing the city manager form of government now in use in Perris.

Now retired and living near Dallas, Warren said he was pleased to come back to a City "growing and prospering and looking forward to the future."

"Perris was a wonderful place to grow up," he said. "There were less than 1,500 people and no freeway. You could ride a bike and never worry about traffic. Wherever I traveled, I always looked forward to coming back to Perris. You were recognized. People knew you."

Potato-growing season was always the busiest time of year at the store so there were plenty of Levis jeans for sale. The store stocked sizes 0 to t 60, Bob Warren said. The smallest sizes were for toddlers; the biggest were "for larger toddlers," he told the audience. Long underwear worn by field hands during the cold potato season was also popular. When the military requisitioned fabric used to make men's undergarments, Warren said ranch workers donned women's apparel to keep warm.

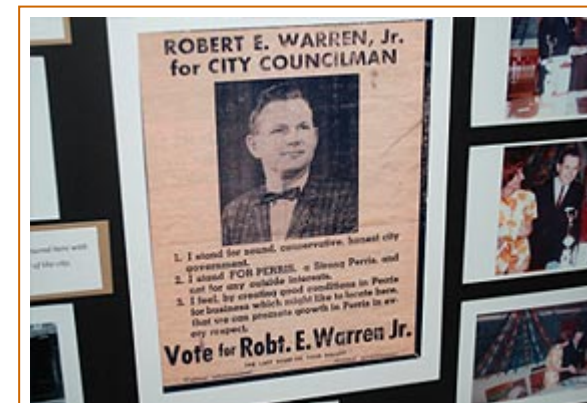
World War II also saw an influx of guest workers to Perris, including several from Jamaica, who spoke perfect King's English with a clipped British accent, Warren said. He said that throughout his long tenure working in Perris, the People's Store became a gathering place for teachers, doctors, ranchers, laborers and business owners, a legacy of which he remains very proud.

Warren's children, Robert T. "Bobby" Warren, Tom Warren and Janet Warren Szekerka, also attended the recent ceremony.

Szekerka called the day "very memorable." She said family members have exchanged stories and photographs since learning they would be honored at Perris Day and Pioneer Family Celebration.

Szekerka lives in Temecula and still drive to Perris occasionally to visit friends and longtime acquaintances. It's always an honor to come to the City.

"It's always very heartwarming to come to town," she said. "When I say that I'm Bob Warren's daughter, faces light up."



Family photos and political announcements like this were part of the historical memorabilia on display to honor the Warren family at the annual Frederick Thomas Perris Day and Pioneer Family Celebration.



A replica sign from the People's Store.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch greets visitors who came to the restored Depot as part of the annual celebration.