



SANTA BARBARA

YACHT CLUB

Elmer M. Awl, 1934

1889-1983

Uncle Elmer, as he was known, was a popular and colorful character in Santa Barbara, and in California history. He was in the U.S. Forestry Service for three years and spent another three years in landscaping in Pasadena – at the Exotic Gardens, the West Indies Gardens, and the ten-acre W.K. Jewitt estate. Elmer moved north to Montecito in 1917 to become superintendent of El Mirador estate of J.J. Mitchell (a relative of Jewitt). “Uncle Emo” was a popular fellow and natural leader. He co-founded the Rancheros Visitadores in 1929 and served as their manager during its early years. He was also active as an officer or director of the Masons, the Shriners, the Elks, the Rotary, and Sons of the American Revolution.

In the late 1930s, Elmer became manager of the Samarkand when it was an exotic and expensive hotel. The Samarkand was owned by the flamboyant Alma Spreckles of San Francisco sugar fame, who then married Elmer (nearly ten years her junior). Alma divorced Elmer after four years of marriage and, after the war, he returned to Santa Barbara and married Alma’s niece, Ulla.

A mighty sailor, Elmer was a commander in the United States Naval Reserve. At the outbreak of World War II, Elmer was called to active duty in the Naval Reserves and served in Central America. In 1922, Elmer and Bill Porter bought the sloop, Active, which won many races throughout the decade in Southern California.