



Painting for Patriotism: Keeping the Prado Dam Mural Alive

By Jody Robinson

There's a certain mystique that comes alongside the signs which state "National Register of Historic Places." Even more so, the places which are waiting to be named.

Occasionally in disrepair, like the Prado Dam Mural in Corona, California, these places hold significance to a great many, yet have often yet to be recognized for their cultural and historic significance. Status doesn't matter to Jeff McCabe, owner of One Way Painting, based in Orange, California. Luckily enough, the pursuit of a singular passion has been enough to keep Jeff pushing for a complete repair and repaint of the Prado Dam.

The journey began in 2012, when Jeff passed by the mural on the 91 freeway, but unlike over 300,000 other drivers that see it on their daily commute, Jeff took notice of the state it was in.

"I wanted to repaint the dam after seeing it fall into disrepair," he says. "It was being tagged. As a sign of our patriotism, it felt like people were disrespecting our flag and country."

Jeff, like many others, was born in 1976. A Bicentennial Baby as his mom called him, the mural has always held a special place in his heart. The mural was originally painted the year he

was born, by the students of Corona High School. Part of a school project and contest, Ron and Perry brought 25 of their friends along and over two weeks, painted the mural.

Celebrating America's 200 years of freedom, the unveiling of the mural was part of the Bicentennial celebrations that took place all over the States. "Ten years in the making, with close to 60,000 events planned," reporter Dave Mecham said "it was like the 4th of July on steroids, celebrated throughout the entire year."

After years of attempted connections, Jeff finally made headway with the Army Corp of Engineers. And not too soon. By chance his brother Jim "saw online that the Corp was settling up to strip the mural, and that there was a group of the original artists, now in their 60's, who were trying to save it."

Joining forces, Jeff, Jim, and the former Corona High students formed the Bicentennial Freedom Mural Conservancy, whose sole purpose is to repaint the mural and preserve it indefinitely, for future generations to enjoy.



Jeff McCabe, One Way Painting

Months of stripping with hundreds of hours from volunteers later, the painting begins in just a few weeks.

"I estimate the repainting of the dam will take six weeks, followed by an unveiling, dedication, and ribbon cutting ceremony." A labor of love, like the first time around, the mural is still a symbol of American resiliency, hard work, and dedication. Just ask the moms who fed the original 30 students, or each individual private donation to cover labor and materials, insurance, equipment, worker's compensation, and insurance. Mystique or no, the Prado Dam mural is here to stay.