

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

Boyle, Bogert touted Palm Springs to nation

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Ten years into the despair of the Great Depression, Frank Bogert and Johnny Boyle were traversing the country in a woodie station wagon, driving from town to town promoting Palm Springs.

Bogert and Boyle would set up a BBQ and throw some steaks on to draw a crowd. The two bona fide cowboys would then put on a small western show, with Boyle singing in a luxuriant baritone accompanied by his guitar.

The men conjured up the allure of the wide open desert way out west. Bogert would extol the virtues of his hometown where cowboys and tourists alike enjoyed exceptional hospitality. At the end of the evening they showed a short film, passed out literature, and encouraged folks to make the trip, despite the economy.

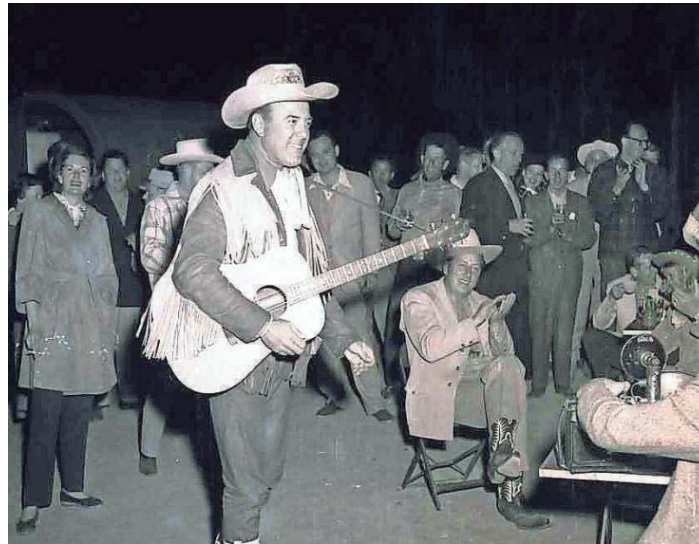
The Chamber of Commerce commissioned Boyle and Bogert to go on a nationwide tour to promote the village. Traveling town to town together, they literally put Palm Springs on the map for those whom attended their show. Long before Palm Springs was known as an atomic-age, rat-pack, mid-century hangout, it was defined by horseback riding and real roping cowboys like Bogert and Boyle.

Boyle grew up riding and roping on a huge ranch in what is now Carson.

Heartbroken over a lost love at age 20 in 1931, his parents sent him to Tahiti to recover. There, he learned to play the ukulele and guitar and began to sing.

He returned to California in 1935 and landed a job at the Desert Inn in Palm Springs, entertaining at breakfast rides into the canyons, and moonlight steak dinners out among the sand dunes.

His trip to the paradise of Polynesia had been formative. He married an Ha-



Johnny Boyle entertains the crowd — including Ray Ryan, owner of the El Mirador Hotel — at an evening western party.

COURTESY OF THE PAUL POSPESIL COLLECTION/PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

waiian singer and dancer. Known professionally as Tani, Bertha and Johnny Boyle began to perform together. Soon their three children joined them in staging luaus and western events.

By the end of World War II, Palm Springs and the Boyle family were prospering. Johnny Boyle was well-known around the country having traveled so much of it, and he was well-established in the desert as a popular attraction at Thunderbird Country Club, La Quinta Hotel, Deepwell Ranch, Smoke Tree Ranch and the White Sun Guest Ranch. (He was also the official singer for the Rancheros Visitadores, a prestigious riding club for the oldest of California ranch families. He had a regular gig at the Opera House in Central City, Colora-

do, and played at Estes Park for six summers, escaping the desert heat.) Often heard were wistful regrets by departing hotel guests who could not take the music home with them.

"Now on wax! Johnny Boyle and Tani whose typical western songs have delighted Villagers and Visitors for many years, are now delighting many more homes. Their music has been recorded on a long-playing record. Famous 'Cowboy Gulch' ... moviedom's renowned intersection at Sunset and Gower, had only one authentic singin' cowboy on its curbs two weeks ago as a very frustrated and city-bothered Johnny Boyle chomped at the bit while waiting for Studio and Artists Recorders to begin making a special record, featuring the

songs Palm Springs most loves to hear him sing. Johnny and his charming wife, Tani ... left their beloved desert retreat at the crack o' dawn to drive into hurly-burly Hollywood for the recording ... to be released next Easter week under the title of 'Songs of the White Sun.' (The non-breakable long-playing platter will be sold privately through the White Sun Ranch and interested Boyle devotees should contact Johnny ... order direct ... as only a limited number are being pressed ..."

The announcement of the disc made the paper, which noted the record's A side featured solos like, "Who Shot the Hole in My Sombrero," "The Mopsie Song," "Bed Feathers," "Papio," "Little Cowboy" and "Cool Water," Boyle's biggest hit. The B side had two duets, "Tani" and "No Beauty" along with a delightful series of foreign folk songs.

Through the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, Boyle made many records for the tourist trade. His most popular and enduring tunes were "Cool Water" and "The Place Where I Worship."

"Cool Water" imagined welcome relief from the hot desert sands and "The Place Where I Worship" was a paean to the desert's vastness and the cowboy way of life.

Unbelievably Boyle cut two records, with 5,000 copies pre-sold, the day before his untimely death in 1977 at age 66. He had been suffering with a debilitating progressive paralysis but died of an unrelated heart attack. Palm Springs Life magazine appropriately quoted Boyle's old friend Frank Bogert reflecting on the sad event, "They played him singing at his own funeral, 'The place where I worship is the wide-open spaces.'"

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