

CHATSWORTH PAST & PRESENT

By Ann Vincent

January 2009

The Los Toros Restaurant is our featured business in this issue of the Smoke Signal. If you drive down Devonshire any evening, you will notice that it is the busiest place in town. And it has been a landmark in adding to the history and culture of Chatsworth.

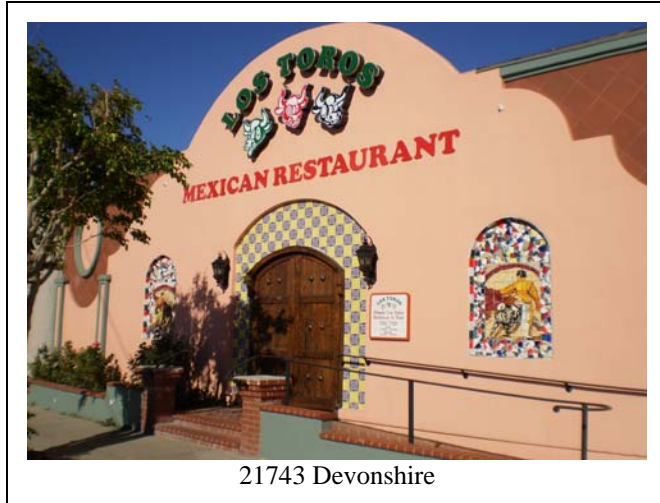


Through the years, demand resulted in the growth of the restaurant and occupied many of the other establishments on the block. Those businesses included The Red Room (now the main bar), H&R Block, a typewriter

repair shop and Colleen's Dress Shop.

Nick remembers long hours at the restaurant as a kid and working weekends with the family. It paid off, as the outside and inside of the building has an authentic colorful Mexican decor with tile artwork inside and out. The front of the building along Devonshire lets you know you have arrived, and the back --- where the entrance is located --- includes valet parking and a corral should you arrive on horseback.

Los Toros has become famous for their House Margarita and bean dip, however you will enjoy choosing from the menu which includes specialties named for patrons over the years.



21743 Devonshire

The current owner of Los Toros is Nicolas (Nick) Montañó III, who runs the family business that was originally started by Nicolas Montañó II (Nick Jr) and his wife Dolores in 1967.

The original restaurant was located further east on Devonshire, which is the current location of Devonshire Preschool (across from Taco Bell). They began by serving tacos, hot dogs and hamburgers, and business grew.

In 1971, Nick Jr. purchased the Magdalena Mexican Deli owned by Joe Flores at 21743 Devonshire, which became Los Toros' current location. They started small, with a kitchen, café style counter top and six tables (photo below). They were the first sit-down patio in the Chatsworth area. Other eating establishments close by were Tony's House of Eggs and J.R.'s Roundup (now the Cowboy Palace).



The Montañó family has participated in our Chatsworth community supporting Chatsworth Little League for over 30 years. Nick now serves as the Kiwanis Club President and they currently meet at the Los Toros restaurant.

In addition to other community service, Nick's special effort in resurrecting the Chatsworth Parade has continued the long history of this event. The parade used to be a summer event scheduled in June or July back in the 60-70's, but was then discontinued. For the last 14 years it has been held in December and continues to draw large crowds and promotes community involvement.

Nick Montañó was recognized as Chatsworth Citizen of the Year for 2004-2005. Business owners such as the Montañó Family have helped shape our community and are now a part of our rich Chatsworth history.

Chatsworth Historical Society – January 2009



The sign above advertises homemade Mexican food, ice cold beer and wine, air conditioning and a Beer Garden Patio. The sign mentions that parking is in the rear.

That's no Bull! Nick Montano always there to serve

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Nick Montano, Owner of Los Toros restaurant in Chatsworth
Provided by: Patrick Murphy

Contributed by: [Patrick Murphy](#) on 4/11/2008

BEHIND THE SCENES

The people working to make our community better.

As I sat across the table from **Nick Montano**, I recognized that youthful smile he had when I first met him some 17 years ago. There he sat in his smart-looking blue-and-gold Army jersey and I was reminded of that day long ago when his father, **Nick Sr.**, had brought him to a Kiwanis meeting.

Nick Sr. or "Papa" Nick and I were both members of the Canoga Park Kiwanis at that time. "Papa" Nick believed strongly in community service and belonged to two clubs - one here and one in Tijuana.

When I asked the younger Nick why he is so involved in the community, he said he learned it from his father. He told me that "Papa" Nick had always said, "Take care of the community ... and they will take care of you."

"Papa" Nick is no longer with us, but his love of community lives on in his son, who is now in charge of the family business, Los Toros Mexican Restaurant. Nick is a savvy businessman, a U.S. Army veteran, a true patriot, and a community leader.

But most importantly, he is a loving family man with a beautiful wife, **Lucia**, two sons, **Nick** and **Eddie**, and a daughter, **Alex**.

Nick Montano, Los Toros, and the Chatsworth Community are almost synonymous. Nick and his restaurant are a Chatsworth treasure.

Not only do they serve the best chili rellenos but they sponsor youth teams in the area and hold an annual golf tournament that benefits the schools in the Chatsworth area. Chatsworth High School, Cleveland High School, Chatsworth Elementary, Superior St. Elementary, Germain Elementary, Lawrence

Middle School, and CSUN are among the learning institutions that have benefitted from this fund raiser and Nick's commitment to community.

Nick is more than a successful restaurateur and caring father. He recently retired from the U.S. Army reserve after 23 years of combined service to our country. FirstSgt. Nick Montano spent 13 months in Iraq with the 137th Quartermaster Company.

You may ask, "what did he do there" and my answer is "what else... Nick provided service."

I'm sure that as a person that lives and breathes service to others that it was a perfect fit for Nick and for the Army. Nick was in charge of four units that were tasked with supplying our fighting men and women with laundry services and hot showers.

They also repaired uniforms and participated in some troop transporting. Nick saw these services as helping to build or maintain troop moral. He was proud that he was able to provide some basic comfort to the tired and dusty warriors.

Now safely back home and after being feted as a hero with a gigantic banner that was draped across the outside of his restaurant by adoring patrons, Nick has settled into coaching a flag football team that Eddie plays in, being president of his Kiwanis Club, and playing a weekly game of golf.

Not that he's slowing down or anything like that. Nick is still the driving force behind the Chatsworth Holiday Parade that he resurrected about 14 years ago. The Chatsworth Chamber had previously sponsored the parade for several decades, but had been unable to put on the parade for a couple of years when Nick stepped in.

Somehow Nick also finds the time to volunteer at St. John Eudes Church and he recently co-ordinated an effort to help the Kids Drama Company by replacing the stage curtains in the auditorium at Chatsworth Park South.

The new curtains were installed just prior to their production of "Grease."

Nick's service with the Kiwanis is impressive and it is also a family tradition. Nick joined the Canoga Park Kiwanis shortly after his first visit. Back then, we "nick" named him "Little Nick," in difference to Papa Nick.

Little Nick left that club to become the founding president of the Chatsworth Kiwanis. He went on to serve as Lt. Governor, a position where he was over a zone full of Kiwanis clubs and was recognized for his exceptional leadership when he was designated a "distinguished" Lt. Governor.

Nick has told me that he was greatly inspired and influenced by long time Canoga Park Kiwanians like **Howard Shirley**, **Don Stout** and **Leo Sommers**. Nick was awed by their energy and their unending commitment to making the community better.

I believe the future will produce at least 3 more examples of the Montano family's commitment to community. Alex, now 25, has started managing the restaurant while Nick, 15, and Eddie, 11, help their father on fundraisers and events.

I'll let the food critics extoll the gourmet qualities of the

Montano family business. However, whenever I crave good food presented by really good people, I'll head straight to Los Toros and order the 19th Bull and that's no bull!

Note: This is the second in a series of articles to highlight the good people in our community that truly are making a difference. If you know someone like Nick Montano and you would like to see them recognized for their hard work, please write to me in care of this publication or contact me at A1blarney@cox.net

Music programs at Chatsworth, Cleveland and Kennedy High Schools have received monetary awards for their performances in our Holiday Parade. The Chatsworth Kiwanis Foundation and Los Toros Mexican Restaurant are committed in being the reason our kids stay in school and are able to aspire to be the best of the best.

On January 8, 2009, Szone joined the Chatsworth/Porter Ranch Chamber of Commerce @ the 2009 Installation Dinner & Member Recognition Gala. The outgoing president, William F. Powers, Jr. got ROASTED by Councilman Greig Smith, Mitchell Englander, Gloria Pollack, and Dick Pearson. Following the roast we welcomed the installation of the 2009 Board of Directors including incoming President Les Himes. 🤖

Two Presedent's Awards were given out by Mr. Powers. One went to Nick Montano of Los Toros Mexican Restaurant for outstanding contributions to the Chatsworth Community. The second went to SZone for "2008 Outstanding Member of the Year" in apperciation of deducated enthusiasm. 😊

Together Los Toros Mexican Restaurant and Chatsworth Kiwanis Foundations work hard in meeting the needs of the community. Music, Sports, After School Programs and other activities essential to our children for their cultrial growth. Without these programs our children stand to lose the cultural growth that will allow them to find those gifts that these programs bring. In addition, thoase wonderful people that help our children learn and appreciate these programs will also be lost. The men and women who give so much of their time for the benefit of our children need our help. In the past years the Chatsworth Kiwanis and Los Toros have awarded numerous scholarships to our community's children so our children can accomplish their dreams. Our children are our future and need all the help they can get to become tomorrow's leaders. Through the CKF local school

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