



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Joe Haakenson  
JUVE Creative, Inc.  
(714) 841 9600  
joe@juvecreative.com

### **TRADITION CONTINUES WITH EL VIAJE DE PORTOLA RIDE**

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, Calif. (April 4, 2014) -- Ride cowboy, ride.

They celebrated 50 years with last year's Ride, and Friday, the "El Viaje de Portola" riders began their second "half-century" with their ride at Rancho Mission Viejo, part of a three-day celebration that included the Empty Saddles Ceremony at Mission San Juan Capistrano, honoring members who have passed on.

The goal of the eight original riders more than 50 years ago was no different than the 300-plus who are associated with the ride these days -- celebrate the American West, California history, "The Code of the West," and "The Cowboy Way."

"We used to ride at the Irvine Ranch, when it was still a ranch, and here (Rancho Mission Viejo)," said Tony Moiso, a member of the Mission Preservation Society Board of Directors and President and CEO of Rancho Mission Viejo. It was Moiso who offered the riders continual use of his 40,000-acre ranch in the early 1970s, and the tradition continued with the ride at his ranch Friday.

"The first ride was in 1964 and we rode from the El Adobe in San Juan Capistrano to the Saddleback Inn, which was a hotel in Santa Ana," Moiso said. "So it's become a tradition in Orange County."

Moiso told the story from 1969 when the caterer quit on the eve of the scheduled ride at Bommer Canyon in Irvine.

"So now we're stuck out there and we've got nothing going," Moiso remembered. "There was another fellow out here, Gilbert Aguirre, and Gilbert and I decided that we better start paying attention to making this thing last. And it happened. We're proud to host it."

And along the way, El Viaje de Portola has raised thousands of dollars that have been donated to the Mission and the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society.

The Portola riders don't do it for the recognition, but they'll get it anyway. They will be honored at Mission San Juan Capistrano's event of the year -- the annual Romance of the Mission Benefit Gala Concert and Dinner on Friday, Sept. 12.

"They're very thoughtful, to cook up this idea of honoring the horseback riders," Moiso said. "Monsignor (Arthur) Holquin said the day they presented it, that the check from the ride has been consistent and always there, he could always count on the riders of the Portola ride.

"And there is a genuine caring and love for the Mission by the people on the ride. It's a pretty good call for the Mission to say thanks, publicly, to this group."

Moiso, however, knows he and many of those who were there at the beginning aren't getting any younger. The original eight riders all have passed on, so Moiso is focused on making sure the torch is passed successfully to a younger generation.

Tony Gregory II is part of that younger generation, and currently holds the title of "El Presidente" of the El Viaje de Portola riders. It is Gregory who will personally accept the award at the Mission Gala in September.

"It has become a great fraternity of really good guys," Moiso said. "The next generation of those guys, we've turned it over to them. It's a coming together of people who are associated with the ride in one way or another. It's a time to where you create this opportunity for all these guys to come together in one place, and they all have the same values and share the same philosophy."

**About Mission San Juan Capistrano:**

*Known as the “Jewel of the Missions,” Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that boasts of quality permanent exhibits featuring original artifacts as well as traveling and temporary exhibits on a wide variety of topics.*

*The site itself serves as a living outdoor museum with original buildings constructed by Native Americans in the 18th century including the Serra Chapel, Great Stone Church, and the original padres’ quarters of the South Wing.*

*The Mission was founded on November 1, 1776 by Padre Junipero Serra as the seventh in the chain of the twenty-one California missions established by Spain, and is Orange County’s only mission. Every year, over 50,000 students visit the Mission and engage in an inspirational learning experience via the Mission Matters programming, as part of their State required California history studies.*

*Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and is supported by the Mission Preservation Foundation, which is comprised of business and community leaders committed to ensuring the long term preservation and viability of Orange County’s only Mission. The Mission receives no funding from either the Church or the State of California and charges admission funds as a means of providing public access.*

*Mission San Juan Capistrano is located at 26801 Ortega Highway, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. Open Daily 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Good Friday afternoon. Admission is \$9 adults; \$8 seniors (60 years or over); \$6 children (ages 4 to 11); and children ages 3 and under are admitted free. Free audio guide with senior and adult admission. For more information, call (949) 234-1300 or visit [www.missionsjc.com](http://www.missionsjc.com).*