



History of the RHS Hoot By: Sue Ellen Cooper

Like so many other things, our first Hoot kind of just happened. The Fabulous Founders decided to venture farther afield than usual for our September outing; we would take the train to San Juan Capistrano, about 40 miles from Fullerton, and spend the day poking around the boutiques and antique shops and, of course, having lunch. It occurred to us that there could well be other new Red Hatters in the area who would like to join us, so we sent out an email, inviting them to do that. Since we would be taking the train ourselves, and it would be stopping several times along the way, we suggested that other sisters just hop on the train as we passed through their areas. We would be able to connect with some of them on the train, others on

the streets when we arrived. What we discovered we couldn't do was lay out the logistics of how many would get on the train at which stops, how many would want to eat lunch together, how many reservations we would need, and which restaurants would have room for however many of us there would turn out to be. An overwhelming challenge loomed.

So, since we considered ourselves a disorganization, and since we don't want to work, we told everybody to just show

up and hang out – no head-counting, no formal

lunch arrangements, just casual fun. This was going to be easy – no worries at all....until the "Today" show called and asked if they could send Florence Henderson and a film crew to join us! Even if we had wanted to start making formal arrangements, it was far too late for that. This was either going to be a fabulous triumph or a humiliating disaster. Now I like to think positively, but I have to admit that I had a poor night's sleep the night before the big event, full of dreams of an empty train pulling into endless empty stations, arriving in San Juan Capistrano to be greeted by one lonely lady in a red hat, softly clapping her red-gloved hands.

But, thank goodness, what a joyful, fun-filled day it turned out to be! The mayor of our town saw us off at the Fullerton train station and every subsequent stop found scores of Red and Pink Hatters boarding the train amid cries of excited greetings. When the train pulled into San Juan Capistrano we were amazed to behold a huge crowd of cheering Hatters in glittering regalia, waving welcoming



signs and banners. We later learned that some of them had made the trip from other states to be a part of this day! Florence Henderson donned a red hat and spent the day with us; the TV segment fully reflected the playful events of the day, and the RHS grew as a result. One of the best parts about it was watching groups of Hatters in the streets, chattering with new friends, sharing laughter and hugs. That day will forever stand out in my memory as representative of all the best qualities and characteristics of the women who join the Red Hat Society.

Some time later, as we discussed the event, my husband described the day as "a Hoot!" It didn't take us long to appropriate that name to describe any event that is kind of planned and unplanned at the same time. It's become another valued tradition we can all share with little effort. All we need is spirited, friendly Hatters and a place to meet; the fun follows automatically. So, perhaps some of you would like to try this in your area, wherever you are. Worldwide Hoot Day this year is June 13. I know you don't have much time – but you don't need it! Just pick something fun and spread the word. While you're playing that day, be aware that there are other Hatters in many parts of the world, doing likewise.

I can't resist throwing in this bit of information: there's a fad (which began in Japan and is spreading) called "owl cafes." Basically these are coffee houses featuring live owls, sitting around here and there; you can drink your coffee with an owl perched on your head or your shoulder, perhaps an incredibly adorable baby owl peering up at you from a tiny ruff of feathers. If you want to see serious cuteness, just Google owl cafes. So...if you happen to have an owl café near you, you can gather for a REAL Hoot! Otherwise, you'll have to get creative (rarely a problem for Red Hatters).

