



# The Escondido History Center

With the Generous Sponsorship of

Jack Raymond

## 2022 ESCONDIDO LEGENDS AWARDS



### APPLICATION

## RUBEN T. “RUBE” NELSON AWARD COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEUR AND “CHARACTER”

**Explanation of award:** The honorarium will be given to a senior attending a high school in Escondido who has participated in a variety of school activities and has demonstrated leadership throughout his or her high school years. Additional consideration will be given for a pronounced interest in pursuing a career in children’s health, and/or involvement with the restoration of classic automobiles. Volunteering in the community is also important.

Commitment to attend the Honorarium presentation, on January 26, **2022 is required.**

Applications are also available from high school counselors.

**Please complete:** The Escondido Legends application information below and submit your typed responses to the Escondido History Center along with a copy of your current high school transcript no later than **4 P.M. on Friday, December 8, 2021.**

Please include your full name on all pages and deliver finished application:

- In person to the Escondido History Center, 321 N. Broadway or by U.S. mail, P.O. Box 263, Escondido, CA 92033 **OR**
- As an email PDF attachment to [fox@escondidohistory.org](mailto:fox@escondidohistory.org) .

### APPLICATION INFORMATION

1. YOUR NAME AND YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR’S NAME
2. THE HIGH SCHOOL YOU ATTEND
3. SUBMIT A COPY OF YOUR CURRENT HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT
4. TELL US ABOUT YOUR CLASSIC AUTOMOBILE RESTORATION EXPERIENCES
5. DESCRIBE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN’S HEALTH
6. DESCRIBE YOUR ACTIVITIES IN COMMUNITY WORK AND SERVICE
7. DESCRIBE YOUR ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

## Rube Nelson

Reuben T. Nelson, better known as the “Poor Ole Rube” or “The Nebraska Swede,” was born in Nebraska in 1906 and passed away at his home in Escondido in 1991 at the age of 84. He came to Escondido from Norfolk, Nebraska in 1926. During the depression years, Rube drove a bakery route in and around North County. This early introduction to the business world gave Rube the impetus to get into the grocery store business. In 1937 Rube opened his first grocery store located on the southwest corner of Washington and Broadway.

A first store, located at 510 N. Broadway was started by Rube’s brother, Don and was very small; however, it proved to be a big success. Some years later, he partnered with Rube in opening another store at 601 N. Broadway. As a result of this early success, Rube soon realized that it was time to develop his own dream store. He purchased the northwest corner of Broadway and Washington and began building the infamous “Rube’s Country Corner.” When his dream store opened, it was the first real Super Market in Escondido. The new store was a full-service store, equipped with a coffee shop, bakery, liquor department, meat department, produce, and a fully stocked grocery department.

Rube involved many members of his family in his new enterprise. His wife, Blanche, served as the brains behind the venture, daughter Carol worked in the store, his brother, Don, was in charge of the meat department, and nephews Donnie and George also played significant roles as did his niece, Sonja Nelson Cosby.

Rube has often been described as a one-of-a-kind true character. He could often be seen driving all over town in his Model “A” Truck. He often drove to the bank, which he also founded, with his weekly deposits nicely placed in money bags on the front seat of his truck in full view of anyone he passed along the way to the bank. The bank was the Escondido National Bank, which today is Union Bank of California. The original ENB was located on the southeast corner of Escondido Boulevard and West Valley Parkway.

Rube was also known for his smile and for the infamous “trademark” cigar that never seemed to leave his mouth. Rube was also involved in every parade that the town hosted. He could always be counted on to drive one of his antique trucks down the parade route with employees throwing bags of candy to children along the way. Rube also hosted free pancake breakfasts for any and all at his new store, a creative way to draw in potential customers.

Indeed, Rube was a very shrewd businessman. His demeanor often fooled people as he always dressed in big denim overalls with a straw hat and boots, never without his cigar. The old adage, however, “don’t judge a book by its cover,” certainly applied to Poor Ole Rube. Rube was a fair man and he believed in providing a product for a fair price. He was also known for posting all of the bad checks that the store received on a bulletin board, protected by glass, in the front of his store for the public to see. Rube was the genius behind one of Escondido’s most successful grocery stores at the time, and in 1983, he sold his business and property to the Albertson’s chain for \$3.3 million and retired a millionaire. Currently Stater Bros. Market occupies the site.

“Poor Ole Rube,” he was definitely not. His daughter and sole benefactor, Carol Nelson, bequeathed the entire remaining family fortune to Children’s Hospital, which received \$12 million dollars upon her death.

We would be remiss if we failed to share one more tidbit about Rube’s Famous Country Store. Rube searched here and there for the larger-than-life farm animals and State of Liberty he had mounted on the

roof of his store. These colossal sized monuments became the talk of the town and soon the entire San Diego County. Once again, this shrewd business man had created a unique feature that brought potential shoppers to his store, just to see this creative display for themselves. Even his grocery bags featured a photo of the store, complete with all of the colossal figures and, of course, Rube, himself, all decked out in his Sunday-best denim overhauls, boots, hat and cigar.

*Prepared by Don Anderson, Escondido Legend Committee.*