

# GOOD BYE JOPLIN YOUTH CENTER

**1956 - 2019**

## How Joplin Began

Andrew B. Joplin headed West after the Civil War, got married, and had a daughter named Vera. He then established the 320-acre Joplin Ranch which was used to raise horses and bees. After he died, Vera lived on the ranch along with her husband until she sold the property in 1955 to the County of Orange for \$30,000.

A year and four Quonset huts later, the Joplin Boy's Ranch began under the leadership of Ray Stripe. Ray was an elder at the nearby Trabuco Canyon Community Church and also an evangelist. A chapel was eventually built on the property and Ray would teach the bible and was known to baptize new converts.

Ray ran the facility as a working ranch with chickens, cows, sheep, turkeys, rabbits, and pigs. There was a garden and many orange trees that made the property almost self sufficient in its early years. Ray used the boys and staff to build the facility starting with the dorm, dining room, and kitchen. He drove to Juvenile Hall every week and interviewed every youth before they came to Joplin.

The facility name was changed to the Joplin Youth Center at the retirement of Ray Stripe in 1980 and became a correctional facility instead of a ranch. The directors after Ray were Don Hallstrom, Harold Cook, Joe Salcido, Robert Rangel, Jeff Corp, Don Beasley, and Jeff Corp again.

## Chaplain Steve Lowe's Memories

The Joplin Youth Center reminded me of Verdmont Boys Ranch where I first served as a chaplain in San Bernardino County. Around 1980, the chief of probation felt that Joplin was too much of a Christian program and with Ray Stripe's departure, the new director began to change things.

I started as chaplain in 1981 and the changes being made caused some tension with the new director. Later we became friends and I performed his marriage. At that time, a person from the community was assigned to handle the church services at Joplin and Mark Wheel, from a church in Fullerton, was leading the weekly bible studies. It was difficult trying to supervise volunteers who I had not recruited.

Jim Schultz was my first chaplain assigned to the Joplin Youth Center from 1982-84. The chapel had large glass windows behind the pulpit distracting the audience with a spectacular view of South Orange County. The chapel was eventually torn down because it was considered structurally unsafe.

Jim had met Jesse Frey at his church in San Clemente (Believer's Chapel) and invited Jesse to assist in the ministry. When Jesse retired from the phone company, he came on staff with Pacific Youth and took Jim's place. Chaplain Jesse faithfully served at Joplin for over a decade and was also the chaplain for Los Pinos Forestry Camp. A few years after Jesse retired from ministry, Chaplain Rick Johnson was assigned to Joplin in 2003.



### How I Remember Joplin

The first time I went to the Joplin Youth Center was around 1990. I lived in Modesto but went to Orange County to visit the rest of the Pacific Youth staff at least once a year. My first stop after arriving in town was to meet Chaplain Jesse Frey at Joplin for the Thursday evening church service. I drove out to Trabuco Canyon and made the two mile drive up to the camp passing horse pens along the way. At almost 1800 feet above sea level, I immediately noticed the impressive view when exiting my car.

The next time I went to Joplin was in 1993 right after I moved to Orange County. Chaplain Jesse had a church group putting on a Saturday afternoon concert on the basketball court. I had attended Victory Outreach in Modesto and was told to visit the one in Santa Ana. Finding where the church met was impossible until I spoke to one of the guys at Joplin. "Where do you go to church?" Gerardo asked. "I want to check out Victory Outreach but can't find where it meets" I replied. "Guess what? The youth pastor just sent me a flyer and I think it has the address." Gerardo went to his locker, pulled out the flyer, and the next day I attended Victory Outreach Santa Ana.

When Chaplain Jesse retired, we only had bible studies at Joplin for a while. In 2002, I began a church service on Monday nights since I had it open but later moved it to Tuesdays to coincide with the Catholic Ministry's bible study.

When I became the assigned chaplain in 2003, I also began sponsoring special outreach activities. They were a Christmas Outreach, an Easter Outreach, and Bible Jeopardy (see photos). We also had a few field trips. As the years went by, I had developed a core group of guests who loved going to Joplin. Every time I had an outreach, they would always respond to my email invitation.

In 2013, I had found out that some of the Protestant youth were going to the Catholic Church service because it was held on Sundays. I asked to move our service to the same time and was given permission.

### Attendance Totals

#### 1984 to Present

<u>Church Services</u>	<u>Bible Studies</u>
8850	9287

### Closing Joplin

For years everyone has been wondering when Joplin might close but I was still shocked the day I found out. I arrived at the Youth Guidance Center for a bible study in January and was told by one of the supervisors. He showed me a copy of the letter sent out by the chief deputy to all probation staff and I read it thinking about what I will miss about Joplin.

In the weeks that followed, I have adjusted to the news and am happy that more youth will now be sent to YGC. I will miss the camp setting that Joplin has and the favor our ministry has experienced there. Bible Jeopardy has been a highlight of the year.

For the past 20 years I have met with many youth at Joplin and wondered if any of them never got arrested again. A month ago, Christian connected with me on Facebook and said he had been thinking about his time at Joplin and remembered me. We met a few days later and I found out that he never got in trouble after leaving Joplin the last time. He co-owns a website design business and has taken his two sons to Harvest Christian Fellowship.

The Joplin Youth Center will officially close on May 24<sup>th</sup>. Pray for a smooth transition to YGC for the staff and youth. Everyone is hoping that the probation department will hold some type of closing ceremony.

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