

Los Vigilantes stages a number of events besides being the coordinators of parades. The first event to kickoff the Christmas season in Imperial Valley is Los Vigilantes Mistletoe Ball, held at the Barbara Worth Country Club the evening after the El Centro Christmas Parade. Another of their events is the Fall Ball held in early fall each year. This event is limited to members of Los Vigilantes and their guests.

With the produce industry in Imperial Valley, the group also stages a Saladero contest, a Produce Queen contest and a Produce Ball in mid-February at the Barbara Worth Country Club.

A quick reading of the parade activities of Los Vigilantes may be had by listing the following parades coordinated by Los Vigilantes: Brawley Cattle Call Parade, El Centro Christmas Parade, Calexico Christmas Parade, Holtville Carrot Festival Parade, Wild West Days Parade Campo, Pine Valley Days Parade and the El Centro Children's Fair Pet Parade.

### **THE NAMING OF LOS VIGILANTES**

Los Vigilantes was founded in 1945. It was organized to work with the Imperial Valley Roundup that was then being held at Imperial Mid-winter Fairgrounds.

The word Vigilantes comes from the term "Vigilance Committee" which means (according to the dictionary) "A volunteer committee of citizens organized to suppress and punish crime summarily as when the processes of law appear inadequate." A Vigilante is a "member of a vigilance committee."

The idea here was that the citizens were requested to wear western togs during the duration of the rodeo. Those who did not were subjected to being arrested by the group organized to aid the rodeo. They were transported to the hoosegow at 5th & Main Streets by a caged (screened) pickup which was the official vehicle for transporting the transgressors. It was recognized that the law officials would not arrest the culprits (mostly leading business men) for their lack of cooperation with the rodeo people, so it was up to a local group to take over the duty.

From this beginning, the name of Los Vigilantes was chosen to go out and roundup the non-cooperative natives. In other words, "they would punish the criminals when the processes of law appeared inadequate."

The Vigilante badge was to take the place of a law officer's badge. From this humble beginning, the group, sponsored by the El Centro Chamber of Commerce, moved over into more dignified activities such as community greeters and the world's finest parade organizers. Both of the latter duties are still a part of Los Vigilantes major activities. Because of Brawley being recognized as the focal point for Valley cattlemen, the Imperial Valley Rodeo gave way to the now famous Brawley Cattle Call.