

# THE LEFTOVERS

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*This newsletter is issued quarterly, as part of the mission of the ESHS, to preserve and publicize the history of the community of El Sobrante. If you would like to comment on this newsletter, or submit your own article for publication, please do so via: [eshistory@gmail.com](mailto:eshistory@gmail.com). Thanks!*



## 60 Years Ago

The New Year's greeting above was taken from the front page of the El Sobrante Herald, dated December 31, 1953. At the time, one of the items of most concern was the proposed annexation, by Richmond, of 6,660 acres of land adjoining El Sobrante, El Cerrito, and San Pablo. Then, as now, annexation to Richmond was an issue that severely exercised the local population, who greatly treasured their independence. The El Sobrante Improvement Club was hosting a meeting at which new officers would be elected. Membership in this club, advertised as one of El Sobrante's "oldest chartered organizations," had, unfortunately, dwindled to the point that rent would have to be charged to all organizations using the clubhouse, a necessary measure "if its clubhouse is to be maintained for public use." The paper also noted the approval, by the County Planning Commission, of the Montera subdivision to be built along Hillcrest Road.

Those familiar with the history of local developments will recall that many homes in this development were destroyed or suffered significant damage when winter storms caused a series of mudslides in 1956.

On the following page is a reproduction of the new year's wishes from 60 local businesses. Only three are still operating under the same name: Oliver's, Manor Market, and Ed's Place. Tom's Liquors changed its name to Rancho in 1961, and the El Sobrante Chevrolet Service is still an auto service facility, now operated by brothers Lyle and David Miller. The other businesses are gone, but many of the buildings remain, housing very different enterprises. Louis Store is now a Goodwill outlet and the Park Theatre now is now a church; Friend Barber Shop is Sam's Dog House while Shangri-La Cleaners is Micro-Easy Computer Repair. Much has changed but much remains.

# HAPPY NEW YEAR

from the Friends & Merchants of El Sobrante

<b>EL SOBRANTE PHARMACY</b> 425 Melrose Road Phone BEacon 2-0418 Prescription Specialists	<b>EL SOBRANTE LUMBER</b> 2318 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-0732 Gordon Sperry-Pete Woodcock	<b>HORSE SHOE CAFE</b> Appian Way & Sobrante Ave. Phone BEacon 4-2022 TOM and VIC	<b>MINNEY'S REAL ESTATE</b> 451 Appian Way Phone BEacon 4-2574	<b>PETE'S SHOE REPAIR SHOP</b> 3727 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-0218 PETE KRIZEVICH	<b>BENINGER BUS SERVICE</b> Dam Road & Road 28 Phone BEacon 2-0187 RUSSELL BENINGER
<b>TOM'S LIQUOR</b> 2812 Dam Road Phone BEacon 4-0287 PETE and MINERVA	<b>EL SOBRANTE FEED</b> 4838 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-2802	<b>PARK THEATRE</b> Hillcrest & Dam Road Phone BEacon 4-7767 DICK JERA, Manager	<b>CARRINGTON'S GARAGE</b> 3025 Appian Way Phone BEacon 3-0203 BUD CARRINGTON	<b>TRIO CLUB</b> 2970 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-0770 IRA and DOROTHY	<b>HILLTOP SERVICE</b> 402 Appian Way NORM DEAN
<b>MODEL LAUNDRY</b> 4020 Dam Road Phone BEacon 4-0300 MR. and MRS. MORGAN	<b>MANOR MARKET</b> 539 Manor Road Phone BEacon 2-7502 PEE'S and GENE'S	<b>BENNETT'S PHARMACY</b> 4100 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-6122 We Give 54K Green Stamps	<b>PETE'S CLUB</b> 4081 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-2002	<b>FRIEND BARBER SHOP</b> 3017 Dam Road ALBERT and AL OLIVA	<b>HILLTOP MARKET</b> 4800 La Paloma Phone BEacon 2-1053 DICK LUTZ
<b>EL SOBRANTE POULTRY</b> 3270 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-0252 ANGELO RIGGIO	<b>EL SOBRANTE CHEVROLET SERVICE</b> 4040 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-1224 Jim Swanson - Ken Henderson	<b>OLIVER'S SERVICE</b> 4071 Dam Road Phone BEacon 4-4202 BILL OLIVER	<b>FERRELL'S SERVICE STATION</b> 4082 Dam Road Phone BEacon 4-2026 CARL FERRELL	<b>RAY'S MARKET</b> 4078 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-0931	<b>LEE'S VARIETY</b> 3005 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-0281
<b>LAUNDROMAT</b> 4104 Appian Way Phone BEacon 2-0255	<b>SHANGRI-LA CLEANERS</b> 2801 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-5800 "BUBBLE" JONES	<b>GRISSE MARKET</b> Appian Way & Sobrante Ave. Phone BEacon 4-0648 ERNIE FRENCH, Mgr.	<b>EL SOBRANTE SERVICE CENTER</b> Appian Way & Sobrante Ave. Phone BEacon 4-0738	<b>FOSTER FREEZE</b> 3716 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-1776 MR. and MRS. CORYELL	<b>ADA'S WHITE HOUSE FOUNTAIN</b> 3750 Dam Road Phone BEacon 4-0502 ADA and PAT HOWARD
<b>RICHMOND FARM CREAMERY</b> 4100 Dam Road	<b>IVANART PAINT LOCKE HARDWARE</b> 3017 Dam Road Phone BEacon 4-0064	<b>EL SOBRANTE FOUNTAIN</b> 4114 Appian Way Phone BEacon 4-2371 JOHN MACHETTA	<b>LOUIS STORE</b> 2728 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-0706	<b>WILLIAMS BROS MEAT</b> 2720 Dam Road (Levitt Store) Phone BEacon 2-0704	<b>STAR LIQUOR</b> 2720 Dam Road (Levitt Store) Phone BEacon 2-0706
<b>LOVE'S VARIETY STORE</b> 2720 Dam Road (Adjacent Levitt Store) MR. & MRS. LOVE	<b>MOORE'S AVIARIES</b> 600-22nd St.-Richmond BE. 4-4576 BE. 2-4123	<b>G &amp; G PET SHOP</b> 4081 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-6532	<b>RANCHO FEED</b> 4815 Appian Way BEacon 4-0474 Mr. and Mrs. Beall	<b>JOHN J. PIERCE</b> 907 Woodland Ave. Richmond, California	<b>GREENDALE'S GARAGE &amp; ASSOCIATED SERVICE</b> 1551 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-0247 ED & KEITH GREENDALE
<b>RALPH'S BODY &amp; PAINT SHOP</b> 3551 Dam Road Phone BEacon 4-7709 RALPH FARRAR	<b>CLAAR'S CHEVROLET</b> 400 - 22nd Street BEacon 4-0422 Richmond, California	<b>BERT'S TEXACO SERVICE</b> 2800 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-8808 BERT POTTS	<b>SAN PABLO MOTOR MOVIE</b> Highway 40 & Dam Road BEacon 2-4300	<b>IVAN GOYAK</b> Supervisor 2500 Woodland Avenue Richmond, California	<b>GARDEN CRAFT</b> 4888 Appian Way BEacon 2-1100
<b>POOR NELSON</b> Builder of Better 340 Burgers 2635 Dam Road	<b>OVA'S BEAUTY SALON</b> 2875 Dam Road OVA BISHOP	<b>HOWARD BIELE CONSTABLE</b> Center Ranch Road BEacon 2-2125	<b>EL SOBRANTE HARDWARE</b> 4838 Dam Road ELMER SAWUSCH	<b>RALPH'S SHOE CORRAL</b> 4100 Appian Way BEacon 2-2845 Ralph White	<b>EARL &amp; JIM'S SHELL SERVICE</b> 3021 San Pablo Dam Road BEacon 4-0771 El Sobrante
<b>EL SOBRANTE HERALD BEE PRESS</b> 2875 Dam Road Phone BEacon 4-0804 ED GALLI	<b>TRAVALINI FURNITURE COMPANY</b> Woodland at 15th St. RICHMOND	<b>ACME TRANSFER &amp; STORAGE</b> 2602 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-2285	<b>ED'S PLACE</b> 5228 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-6287 EDGE, JOHNNY, ED	<b>J &amp; A HARDWARE</b> 2430 Dam Road Phone BEacon 2-3720	<b>JAY'S</b> 706 Woodland Ave. Phone BEacon 2-7229



## The California Historical Radio Society

*Donald Bastin*

As a board member of the Contra Costa County Historical Society, past director of the Richmond Museum of History, and one of the founding members of the El Sobrante Historical Society, I thought that I was pretty familiar with the historical societies in our area. But I had never heard of the California Historical Radio Society, just a few miles away, in Berkeley. I first heard about it from Larry Drees, who lives along Wilkie Creek and who has been very helpful in assisting our creek restoration group, SPAWNERS, which has been creating a small instructional park near his property. Larry, it turns out, has been volunteering for years at CHRS, along with a dedicated group of (mostly) guys who love old radios and have a deep appreciation and affection for local radio history. I learned that they are a non-profit educational corporation, formed in 1974 “to promote the restoration and preservation of early radio and broadcasting.” In addition, their goal is to “enable the exchange of ideas and information on the history of radio, particularly in the West, with emphasis on collecting, preserving, and displaying early equipment, literature, and programs.” Sounded great to me, and I had to wonder that, being a history buff myself and having lived in the bay area all my life, I had never heard of these guys. In any case, Larry generously offered to take me on a tour of their museum/facility, which I happily accepted.



Larry and I met, in early September, at the society's home, which, appropriately enough,

happens to be the historic KRE radio station, built in 1937. The building is located at 601

Ashby Avenue in Berkeley, at the south end of Berkeley's Aquatic Park (if you get lost, just look for the tall broadcasting tower).



*Larry Drees, right. At left is Jim Bradt, expert cabinet restorer.*

The old radio station, I learned, was one of the first facilities built in California specifically for broadcasting, and has been transmitting AM signals for over 75 years. It was featured in the movie “American Graffiti” with radio personality “Wolfman Jack.” The Society has been raising money for years to buy the old station and was hopeful of closing the deal recently, when, sadly, it was learned that the owner had other ideas. Thus a new location must be found. More of this in a moment.

CHRS began as a place for those who love old radios and radio equipment to share their knowledge and to repair and restore old sets. However, it has become much more. Around four years ago, the group merged with the Bay Area Radio Museum and its Hall of Fame. In the words of President Steve Kushman (right), this merger brought to CHRS “thousands of audio clips and the bios and histories of our local radio personalities and the stations in which they worked.” In addition to the BARM archives, CHRS has acquired the assets of The Society of Wireless Pioneers (SOWP), an organization that represented telegraphic operators from the 1890 through the 1980s. Thus, CHRS has



become much more than a society of radio set collectors. It is **the** source for the local history of radio (and television) related information in the bay area.

But it is the old radio sets, lovingly restored, that captured my immediate attention. The radios are everywhere. The building is broken up into many small spaces and everywhere I turned there were more beautiful sets.

In addition to the old sets, the society has collected rooms full of written material, technical and cultural, spanning the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century.



thousands of tubes and other radio parts, available for the restorer to use.



The expertise of the volunteers is also available.



The fellows in this picture are participating in a radio repair clinic. From left: Larry Drees, Cliff Farwell, Scott Robinson (V.P.), Seth Arp, guest, Stephen Hampel. Both members and non-members of the Society are free to bring in their old sets to work on and to receive expert guidance. Cliff Farwell is the winner of the 2013 radio restoration contest, while Scott Robinson is a guru of radio technology history.

Not only is the history of radio covered, but television as well (in fact there are several rooms set aside for old TV sets).



This is a tremendous resource for the radio collector and researcher. In addition to the written material, the society has collected

For anyone interested in the history of broadcasting in the Bay Area, a visit to the California Historical Radio Society is a must. Even though their lease is up on their current site it may be possible to arrange a tour within the next few weeks. To get up-to-date information, take a look at their website, at **[californiahistoricalradio.com](http://californiahistoricalradio.com)**. The Society is currently negotiating for a lease on a building in Alameda (they had considered a building in El Sobrante, but it turned out to be unsuitable). As soon as they are up and running in the new site, we will let you know.



## Remembering . . . Karen Mason



As many of you know, local resident and long-time teacher at De Anza High School, Karen Mason passed away just shy of the new year, on New Year's Eve. Karen graduated

from De Anza in 1964 and went on to teach there for 35 years, making a huge impact on many of the students she mentored, and earning for herself the title of "Mother De Anza." She had an amazingly busy career, teaching English, journalism, debate, drama, advised the Rotary Interact Club, and, as part of the "Close-UP" program, chaperoned students on trips to Washington D.C. In her honor, the West Contra Costa School District named the De Anza High language arts building Mason Hall.

On January 9, the West County Times honored Karen as a "Hometown Hero," for her contributions to the El Sobrante community. The following is a quote from Karen:

***"I like to think the Lord gave me the gift of a loving heart, so that's what I can give back to the world. I used to tell my students, 'you have choices every day. Are you going to look for your best attitude?' It's really not hard to step across the path to kindness. What everyone gives back is the great gift."***

A celebration of Karen Mason's life will be held at El Sobrante United Methodist Church, February 15, at 11 a.m. The church is located at 670 Appian Way.

## ESHS SPONSORS TIME CAPSULE

*Maurice Abraham*

El Sobrante Library's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary time capsule is being proudly sponsored by your Historical Society. The Society funded the purchase of the \$150 transparent time capsule using proceeds from the sale of member Donald Bastin's book, "El Sobrante, a Photographic History" published by Arcadia Press and available through the Historical Society, several local merchants, Barnes and Noble and Amazon .com.

The Historical Society is gathering a wide range of items for the capsule that are representative of El Sobrante in 2013. Because the time capsule will not be opened for 50 years, the changes in El Sobrante should provide a dramatic contrast. Included are ads and restaurant menus from local businesses, the El Sobrante photo history book, a 2013 Historical Society calendar, various organization newsletters and other local print material and a USB flash drive loaded with a few hundred community photos. We can't help but wonder if technology in 2063 will be so far advanced that people will have to research historic data just to figure out what the flash drive device is.

The Contra Costa County Library system celebrated its anniversary with events throughout 2013. The El Sobrante library began in 1938 as a small "station" library in the home of Blanche Burg. When Mrs. Burg took on a war job in 1943, the library was without a home until 1949 when it reopened in the Mitchell Building at 449 Valley View Road. The current full-service library at Appian Way and Garden Road opened in 1961. Current Librarian, Ian Richards, sought the Historical Society's sponsorship because of the organization's past involvement in the anniversary celebration, including producing a video presentation of the County Library system history.

Once filled, the transparent time capsule will be placed on permanent display in the library, to remain sealed for the next 50 years. We can only imagine how today's El Sobrante will be perceived by its future residents a half-century from now.

## AN AMAZING E-BAY PHOTO FIND

*Maurice Abraham*

My monitoring of the ebay auction site proved unexpectedly successful recently, not only for the El Sobrante Historical Society, but for me personally. I periodically do a global "El Sobrante" search on ebay.com watching for items of possible interest to the Historical Society, and have come up with a few interesting finds. However, I could never have foreseen this most recent find and the ironic path that led me to it.

On this particular day I had logged onto ebay in search of classic auto parts. Like all on-line consumer sites, ebay tracks visitor interests and alerts the visitor of anything that might relate to those interests. This visit was no exception. A pop-up ad suggested I might be interested in a wooden El Sobrante sign. Although I wasn't specifically interested in the sign, I was curious if it was made by a local sign company I knew of, so I 'clicked' on the ad and was taken to a page that showed listings of numerous other El Sobrante related items.

Among those items was a group of five vintage photographs with the seller's caption, "Pinole, CA House, John Street, El Sobrante Children". Curious, I opened the seller's page to view the photos, wondering if they'd be of interest. When I saw the second photo, one of four young boys and a home behind them, I was in disbelief. I thought, "that looks like our old house, but this says Pinole CA House". My next thought was, "Maybe it just looks like ours". On closer examination though I realized

that, in fact, it was the Santa Rita Road house I'd grown up in! Now, there was absolutely no doubt in my mind.

I also discovered that the same seller had twelve more photos listed under the caption "El Sobrante, CA Houses, Family, Boys, Girls, Car, Fisherman". I immediately purchased all the photos using PayPal, and was notified they were shipping the very next day. Two days later I received the shipment and hurriedly opened the package. I still did not realize the full extent of this find.

As I browsed the old photos, all dated between 1946 and 1948, I was shaking with excitement, then flooded with disbelief. Of course, the photo of the old house was the first I went to. Turning the photo over I saw written on the back the names of the four boys in the photo. Realizing they were all kids I grew up with only added to my state of disbelief! One was my best friend in those days, Frank Ketchum!



***Santa Rita kids at play, ca. 1948. Top down, Frank Ketchum, Terry Pickett, Skip Ketchum (left) and unnamed (right). The home in the background surrounded by the white picket fence is the home I grew up in. All three of the homes in the photo have since been demolished and replaced by newer homes.***

Frank was three years ahead of me, played varsity football for De Anza and was in its first graduating class, 1957. (Incidentally, he is also in the Archery Hall of Fame...an interesting story in itself, but one for another time.) The other boys were Frank's brother, Skip, a neighbor, Terry Pickett, and a third unnamed boy I recognize, but whose name I don't recall for certain. I believe it is Larry Brockett.

I continued browsing through the remaining pictures, all of which had person's names and all of whom I remember clearly; other young friends and acquaintances as well as the mother and aunt of Frank. Frank lived next door to us, so I knew the entire family. Some of the photos had houses I recognized, many which still exist, but have changed over the decades with renovations and additions.



***El Sobrante girls, Loris Gifford (L), Sharon Picket (C) and Maureen Ketchum (R), at the corner of Samuel and John Streets in Pinole, CA, just downhill from their K-8 school, Pinole-Hercules School No. 1. ca. 1949***

When I shared the photos with my sister, Glenna, she was equally in awe and disbelief, not just about the photos themselves, but by the circuitous way I had found them. It still

seems quite eerie, as if some invisible force was in play bringing us together with those 65-year old photos.

From writings on the photo backsides, we determined the photographer was probably Frank Ketchum's cousin, Barbara Shaw, also a Santa Rita neighbor. I was very curious how the ebay seller came to possess these photos, so decided to contact him. Adding to my curiosity was the fact the seller, whom lives on the San Francisco Peninsula, has the last name Powers, the same as a family that in the mid-50s and 60s lived in the Shaw's former house. I learned that Mr. Powers was not related to the local Powers family and wasn't sure where he got these specific photos, probably at a garage sale or flea market. He did recall that they were in an album that appeared to be that of a young girl, and expressed his gratification that the photos would become part our Historical Society archives.

After the distraction these photos caused me, I never did find out who makes the El Sobrante sign. Oh well, next time.

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### **New Acquisitions!**



One of the reasons we decided to form the El Sobrante Historical Society is to provide a place to donate El Sobrante memorabilia. Without a historical society, a community

loses those bits and pieces of its past, which link together to form a comprehensible story. Without a historical society, we probably would

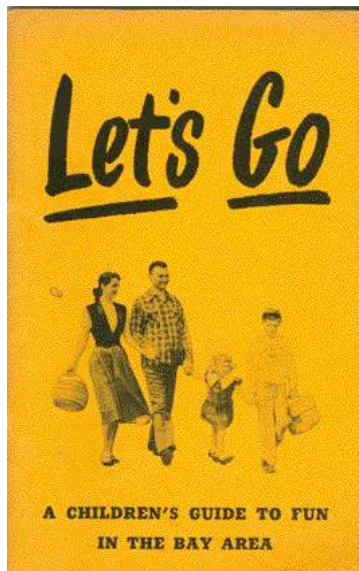


have lost not only this photograph of El Sobrante Fire Chief Charlie Matteson, but, more importantly, his dress hat, seen here.



This hat was donated by **Dennis Palmer**, who now lives in Pinole, but grew up in El Sobrante. His father knew Chief Matteson and gave him the photo and hat, he guesses, sometime in the early or mid 1950s. A close examination of the photograph establishes beyond a doubt that the hat that the chief is wearing is identical to the donated item. This is an example of “provenance.” The two items together work to establish the authenticity of each. Happily, Dennis found our website and contacted us to make the donation. We are very proud to receive this rare artifact, something that is very special to the history of our community.

**Lyle Miller** donated this copy of a local recreational guide, dated 1952. It is full of interesting information about recreational opportunities at the time, as well as illuminating the state of mass transportation in the age before freeways. A reference to our own La Honda Bowl is included.



### *Additional donations from:*

**Judy Brown White:** A copy of the book, *El Sobrante Recollections*, published by the El Sobrante Rotary Club in 1984.

**Dwayne Bressemer:** Numerous family photos; photos and memorabilia of his father, John V. Bressemer, Jr., a volunteer fireman and later a full-time member of the department, including his 1950 membership card and a bowling league trophy.

**Dennis Anderson:** Several class photos from the late 40s and early 50s from Pinole-Hercules School #1 and El Sobrante Elementary School. He also donated an early El Sobrante road map from 1950.

**Carol Johansen Garcia:** Two ES Monopoly board games plus a Whitecliff Homes brochure from the late 1950s.

### **Thanks to all!**

*The El Sobrante Historical Society is an informal nonprofit organization, dedicated solely to the preservation and display of the history of the community of El Sobrante. We depend on our members and local residents for the information, artifacts, and photographs that make up the society's collection. Become a member and help out! It's free and simple. Just visit the website, at **ESHIST.ORG**.*

### **We're On Facebook!**

#### **ESHS Steering Committee:**

- 1. Maurice Abraham:** Administrator, Facebook Page; Historical Researcher and Writer.
- 2. Donald Bastin:** Administrator, Website; Newsletter Editor; Historical Researcher and Writer.
- 3. Steve James:** Membership and Communication Secretary;
- 4. Lyle Miller:** Community Liaison and general support.

Visit us on-line at: **ESHIST.ORG**  
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other communication? Send to:  
**[ESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM)**