

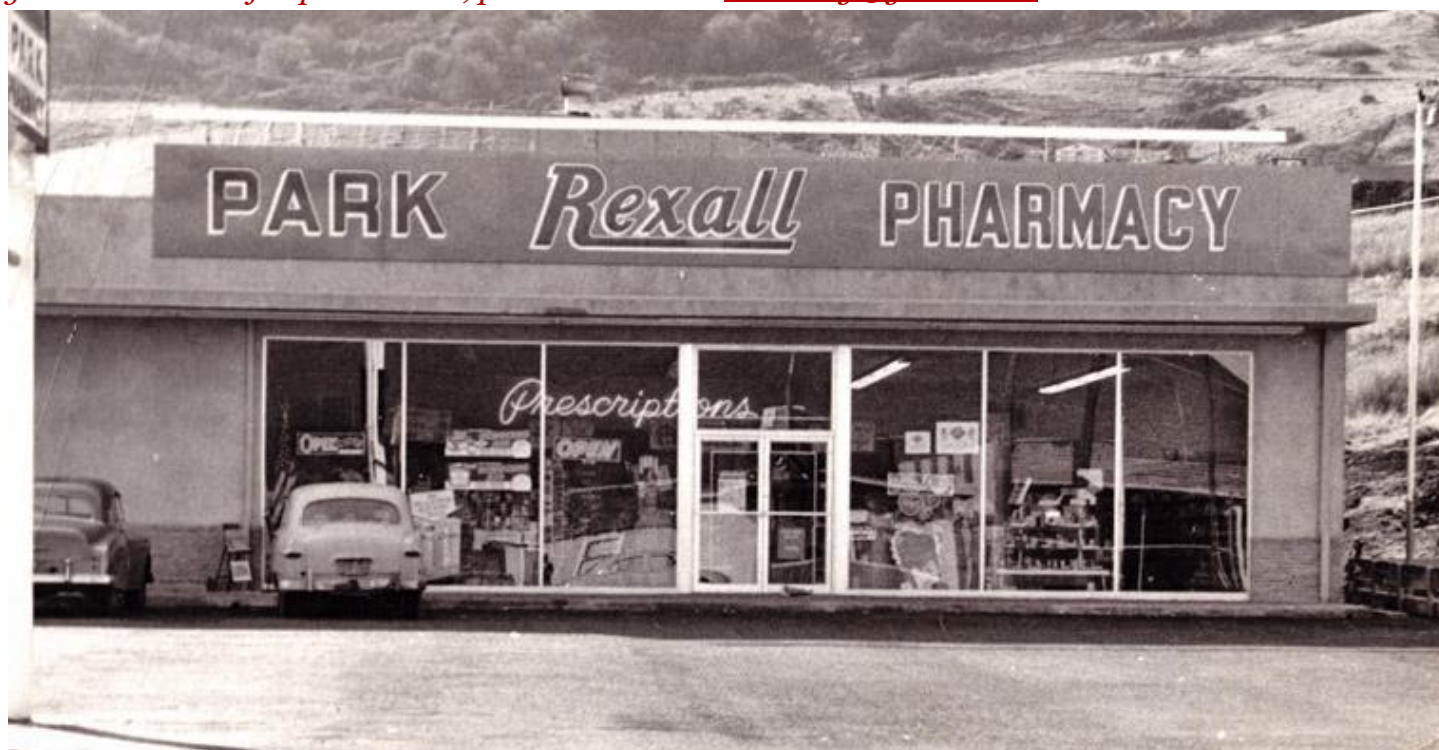
THE LEFTOVERS

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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. Thanks!



Another El Sobrante Icon Bites the Dust *Above: The Park Pharmacy in 1961*

As most of our readers know by now, the Park Rexall Pharmacy, in downtown El Sobrante, closed permanently last month. Founded in 1956, it was one of the oldest continuously operating businesses in our community. For 60 years, always in the hands of the Jeha family (El Sobrante pioneers) the pharmacy provided old-fashioned personal service of a kind only rarely seen today.

The original pharmacy was opened in a small annex attached to the Park Theatre. The theatre was built and owned by Richard Jeha. While the theatre opened in 1949, the annex was constructed in 1956, and housed not only the pharmacy, but a barber shop, operated by a man named Aaron Jones. The pharmacy officially opened on the weekend of September 15-16, and featured “specials” and “free gifts for everyone in the family.” The Herald article indicated that “While the store will carry a complete line of drugs, sundries, and cosmetics, and in addition maintain a complete photo service, Jeha proclaims that in his store is ‘Where pharmacy is a profession-not a side-line.’”



This was obviously a lot to promise for such a small space (*at the left we can see the wall of the theatre, with the annex attached. The barber shop takes up fully half the available space*). But the business did well, and just 5 years later, Bob opened his new facility in its present location, 3718 San Pablo Dam Road, several hundred feet to the west, just to the right of the Louis Store (later LoRay). Attached to **that** building was the Mary Ellen Casual Fashion Shop, which offered an “exclusive-but not

expensive-type of women’s apparel store catering to teens, young adults, and with stylish offerings for women of all age groups.”



New Park-Rexall Pharmacy Opening, February 16, 1961. Bob Jeha is 4th from left

As the size of the operation increased, so did the staff, which now included five “cosmotologists,” two pharmacists (including Bob), and a delivery driver (to deliver prescriptions directly to the customer’s home). According to the *Herald*, “Orchids were presented to ladies at the Grand Opening on Thursday, balloons to youngsters and drawings were held every hour for the many prizes being awarded.” The opening of “The community’s largest and most modern drug store” was a very important event, a defining moment in the growth of El Sobrante.



The Park Pharmacy Delivery Vehicle

In 1987, Bob Jeha retired from the business and his nephew, David Jeha, took over. He was also a pharmacist. It was David who continued to run things until the decision was finally made to close the facility late last year.

According to a Facebook posting by David's sister, Carol (who also worked in the store), "insufficient reimbursements

and delay in payments from the insurance companies" made it impossible to sustain the business. This article will end with a quote from Carol's Facebook posting:

For almost 60 years you've counted on us to be there for your families and we are so grateful to have had the opportunity to serve our community and provide a level of customer service that is unmatched. . . . We have grown up with all of you, watched your families grow and sympathized with you as you lost your loved ones. Park Rexall Pharmacy is the kind of place where you feel comfortable, familiar, safe . . . and in this cyber world it will truly be missed.

A Celebration Of Life for Keith Willard Bee aka Glenn Willard

March 26, 1916 to December 24, 1999

Contributed by Ron Bee.

(Keith Bee was a music teacher at De Anza High School; for over 20 years he led the orchestra, marching band, and jazz band. The following article has been edited to fit the space we have available. The full piece may be viewed at: <http://www.yosemitemusic.com/jan100.html>).

On Christmas Eve 1999, Keith Willard Bee, also known as Glenn Willard, closed the curtain on his life's performance. From the many people whose lives he touched, he is now accepting an extended standing ovation. Keith was 83 years young.

Keith started playing the ukulele and the banjo at an early age, practicing for hours in the family bathroom. At age 16, when his family lived in Seattle, he auditioned for and received his first music

job on the H.F. Alexander, a cruise ship that steamed between Seattle and San Francisco. When the boat arrived in San Francisco in 1933, both speak-easys and the depression were in full swing. The company that owned the cruise line went bankrupt while the ship was moored near fisherman's wharf. From that time on, Keith made his music, his home, and his family in the San Francisco Bay Area.

As a teenager Keith sang ballads in the speak-easys of San Francisco, then found mostly right off Union Square. He joined the Local 6 Musicians union in 1933. He married and had his first son, Keith Austin Bee, on April 4, 1935 who now lives in Sherman Oaks, California. Keith's first wife died tragically in 1939 of tuberculosis. In the 1930s and early 1940s Keith played in many big bands, including Jess Stafford, Ellis Kimbal, Jay Brower, and Sid Hoff. He sang, played rhythm guitar and tenor saxophone. Keith performed under the stage name, Glenn Willard, a play on Glenn Miller, the famous band leader of the late 1930's.

After World War II, Glenn Willard's musical career flourished. He sang on KFRC Radio alongside Merv Griffin, and was featured on the nationally broadcast Fitch Bandwagon with Don Ameche. He was also on the staff of KSFO and broadcast several times daily and appeared many times with the Bud Moore orchestra at the Golden Gate Theater. In 1947 when Frank Sinatra sang at the Golden Gate, Glenn was asked to play rhythm guitar in his band eight shows a day for a full week of concerts. He also performed in a cooperative combo called The Noteables in which all members sang and played instruments. This group broke new ground, and was considered very modern for its era like the group The Four Freshmen but before the Four Freshmen.

While pursuing his musical career, Keith went to school at night to gain his high school diploma and his bachelors and masters degrees from San Francisco State University. He then took classes toward a doctorate at UC Berkeley. He taught music, orchestra, marching band, and jazz band at De Anza High School in El Sobrante for over twenty years. One of the many highlights of this period



De Anza Marching Band, 1961. Picture taken from 1961 De Anza Yearbook. Mr. Bee is at the far left... Editor. was when his marching band was accepted to participate in the Pasadena Tournament of Roses ("Rose Parade") of 1965. While at De Anza, and later at Pinole High School, Keith initiated a set of guitar courses which led to the creation of a unique orchestra of guitars which later became known

as a "guitar ensemble." Using the classical technique, Keith taught students how to read and play classical, folk, and jazz guitar. The end purpose of this training was always a public performance, usually together with a nationally renowned guitarist once again drawn on from Keith's many contacts in the music business.



JUNIOR HIGH ORCHESTRA — MR. BEE

Picture also taken from 1961 De Anza High Yearbook Mr. Bee is at upper left. . . Editor

When Keith's high school music education career ended, he described it wryly as "not retiring from high school teaching, but rather graduating to community college." For the last seventeen years, Keith has taught beginning and advanced guitar at the Diablo Valley Community College (DVC). The techniques he developed in high school were applied to community college with great success. The DVC Guitar Ensemble has performed at least twice a year during this 17-year stint, and, we hasten to add, to sold-out houses. The guitar ensemble has been featured with such artists as Laurindo Almeida, Charlie Byrd, Joe Pass, Herb Ellis, George van Epps, Ron Eschete, Howard Alden, and Frank Vignola.



Mr. Bee with Mr. Gray, another music teacher at De Anza High....Editor.

Keith has two siblings, Austin Bee, who lives in East Sound, Washington (Orcas Island), and Shirley Boren, who resides in Springfield, Oregon. He is survived by his beloved wife, Virginia C. Bee, and three children, all of whom are proud of their parents' accomplishments: Keith Austin Bee, a

mortgage banker and accomplished alto saxophonist, who lives in Sherman Oaks, California; Ronald Bee, an author and senior analyst at the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, UC San Diego; and Terry Bee, co-owner of Blue Streak Piano Moving Company, located in Sugarland, Texas. Keith and Ginny have six grandchildren, and four great grandchildren. They have lived in Danville since 1965.

In all walks of life he chose, Keith touched many lives. He considered Your success as his success, too. Whether on radio, on stage, in the classroom, or in person, his infectious smile, boundless enthusiasm, and wry sense of humor always left its mark. That mark lives on in the people who were privileged to know and learn from him. Bravo, Keith, Bravissimo.

Remembering: Steve Jarrett

Donald Bastin



Steve Jarrett passed away on December 14, 2016, and the young age of 67. For over 30 years he worked, along with his brother and business partner, Jim, at Larry's Tires, on Pitt Way in downtown El Sobrante.

Personally, I have bought my tires at Larry's for well over 20 years, and have always been impressed by the fair prices and speedy work that the brothers offered. Even without an appointment, I was always fitted in to their busy schedule.

I only found out about Steve's death a couple of weeks ago when I showed up with a leaky tire that had to be fixed. Only Jim was around to handle the business on this rainy day. A flier on the window briefly announced the passing of brother Steve. Jim courteously fixed my tire and, as usual, only asked for a token payment of \$20. Tentatively, I expressed my condolences, and

asked Jim what his plans were. He looked a little lost, but made it clear that he planned to continue doing what he was doing, as it was what he knows and what else would he do?

Here's hoping that Larry's Tires continues to operate as one of El Sobrante's original and priceless businesses.



The California & Nevada Railroad, which ran between Oakland and Orinda in the 1880s and '90s, passed right along the south side of present-day downtown El Sobrante. The tracks passed through the property that later became Larry's Tires.

El Sobrante Herald

BEE-PRESS

60 Years Ago
From the Pages of the
El Sobrante Herald

January 10, 1957:

De Anza High to Head America's School Designs

De Anza High School will be the sole representative of American public high school design at the 20th international Conference on Public Education this summer at Switzerland.

Selection of the local school by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare for conference viewing and study was disclosed to the board of trustees of the Richmond Union High School District by architect John. C. Warnecke.

Warnecke said designation of the De Anza school as an example of American design was a "great honor" not only to the school district but to his architectural firm as well.

Built on a 52-acre site adjacent to the De Anza Vista subdivision, at a cost of \$2, 571, 182, the 45-room facility opened in September of 1955.

January 24, 1957:

New Sobrante Freeway Link Opens Monday

Opening of the new Eastshore Highway 40 Freeway link into the El Sobrante area on Monday was announced by the State Division of Highways in San Francisco.

The 2.8-mile six-lane section of the highway extends from Roosevelt Avenue in Richmond to a point 800 feet south of County Road 24 near Rollingwood.

The new link benefits local traffic, including El Sobrante areas and subdivisions such as Rollingwood and College Highlands. Through traffic on Highway 40 will be diverted from the freeway to San Pablo Avenue at Roosevelt as before.

It cost \$5, 107,922 to build the strip of highway with its interchanges and overpasses.

January 24, 1957:

Joint Grand Openings Due For Postoffice, Variety Shop Here

A three-day "grand opening" celebration for Lee's Variety store on Dam Road will be observed beginning Friday, January 31, it was announced today by the proprietor, Claude Lee.

The observance will follow the scheduled opening next Monday of El Sobrante's new branch post office, adjacent to the variety store and built for lease to the Postal Department by Lee, enterprising El Sobrante businessman.

Plans for the occasion at the new streamlined store include giving away numerous prizes and free balloons for the kiddies. In addition to the variety shop's multiple lines of modern merchandise, the store offers name brands of jewelry, silverware, watches and services under the banner of Woulf and Ury, long established firm of Richmond jewelers.

Postmaster Gust Allyn, of Richmond, announced that the branch post office here will open for business starting Monday morning to handle the area's postal business and be the center of mail collection and distribution here.

Note: Lee's Variety is now the site of the Elks Lodge; The post office building now houses Wadsworth Glass Company.

February 7, 1957:

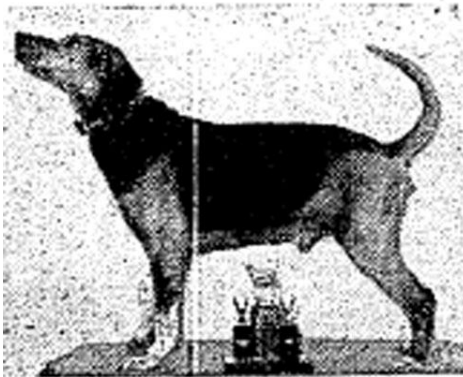
Sobrante Houndsmen Stage Wild Coon Hunt On Coldest Night Here

On Saturday night, January 27, one of the coldest nights we had this winter, the Western

Houndsmen Association put on a competition wild coon hunt with 11 packs of dogs entered, most of them from El Sobrante.

It was a bad night for everyone except Floyd Johnson and his hunting partner, Bill Franklin who won first place by catching two coon alive.

The contestants had to enter their dogs by 3:30 Saturday afternoon. They could hunt anywhere in California as long as they could get back to El Sobrante by 10:00 a.m. Sunday morning with their catches.



The W.H.A. is staging a state champion hunt this month in Auburn, California.

No mention is made of what was done with the live Raccoons~Editor.

February 21, 1957:

Council Backs Reservoir Use For Recreation

A resolution backing the use of the San Pablo Dam Reservoir as a state park and recreation area has won the unanimous approval of the San Pablo City Council.

At a meeting Monday night, the Council recommended the use of the reservoir facilities for recreation to include public boating and fishing. City Manager Kenneth B. Williams asked the action on the grounds this part of the county has been deprived of such a facility.

Assemblyman S.C. Masterson has been a leader in the state legislature in seeking legislation for such a project.

Creation of a public park to make usage of the reservoir long has been a major goal of El Sobrante civic interests.

The San Pablo Reservoir finally opened to the public in 1973. Ed.

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.

Visit us on **Facebook**.

Mission Statement

To promote the awareness and appreciation of El Sobrante Valley history through preservation and education, and chronicling of the community's heritage for current and future generations.

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: www.eshist.org
Questions, Comments, and
other communication? Send to:
ESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM