



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!

LETTER FROM EVERETT TOLTON

Former El Sobrante resident



A very young Everett Tolton in the front yard of his Appian Way home. On the opposite side of Appian Way and to the far left is the approximate location of today's El Sobrante Fire Station. On the crest of the hill is Santa Rita Road. A pretty sparse landscape compared to today. C1940

My father built our home beginning in 1937 and finally completed it sometime in 1940. He worked on it on weekends and after work and drafted members of our family to help him when they could. One of his uncles, Paul Dussau, was a pretty fair carpenter and a local carpenter also helped him with things he couldn't do. I went by there in 1978 while they were doing some remodeling work on it to prepare it for becoming a State Farm office. It has since been torn down and is a vacant lot now, I believe.



Everett (Bob) Tolton, father of Everett, working in front of the new home that he built at 4595 Appian Way.

Things were tough during the depression, as they were for everyone, and when he finally landed a good job driving a truck for the Paraffin Company that manufactured Pabco Paints out of Emeryville, one of the first things

he did was to purchase two acres of land at 4595 Appian Way in El Sobrante. He loved it out there. Up until then they had been living in Berkeley in a rented house on Belvedere Avenue.

Dad was into horses and bought two of them; one for him and one for my sister Beverly. He built a corral in back of our house and a small shed for tack and feed and a few garden tools. When it rained the gray clay dirt would become a mud hole and the horses would slide down the hill and into the fence at the bottom. One of the horses cut open his chest on the barbed wire because of this and dad doctored it with chewing tobacco in the cut. It worked and healed up perfectly. Both of them, my father and sister, rode over every square inch of that land and never tired of it, but sadly my mother made him sell the horses when I got old enough to crawl into the Corral. She was afraid I would be injured. I spoke to my sister recently and she told me that riding her horse across those hills is one of her most cherished memories.



Everett's sister, Beverly, now 87, riding her beloved horse, one of her cherished El Sobrante memories.

Dad also hauled cannons out of the Benicia arsenal and oil out of Tank Farm Hill. One of the guards at the gate of the Paraffin Plant was a one-armed fellow named Rolleigh Marr, who

used to smuggle ice cream out to me. He later went on to become Sheriff of Lake County.

Dad was a union man to his core, a Teamster and a lifetime Democrat. He, like so many others, believed in FDR and fairness for every man. I have tried to keep his teachings at the forefront of all my decisions regarding politics, but on one or two occasions I may have made an error. Thank God we live in a country where even when we choose wrong, the system still seems to work for us.

During the War years everyone either had someone in the military or knew someone who was and it made us all part of the same family. Air Raid Wardens would come around and knock on your doors and inform you that you had to turn out all your lights so the Japanese wouldn't be able to find you when they flew over. It seems they did fly over San Francisco at least one more time after Pearl Harbor, and couldn't find it because of the blackout. I can remember huddling with my mother in a corner of our house after the Wardens told us to cut our lights.*

Somewhere up in the hills behind us was a watch tower and every family had to take their turn manning that tower to watch for enemy planes. I used to play at the bottom of it while my father took his turn. In several of your El Sobrante Historical Society (Facebook) comments you show and discuss Fowlers, or Vogel's Store, as it used to be called. I remember the original Vogel's Store which was catty corner across the street from its current location. Where the Appian Way ends at the curve in front of the store, if you went straight instead of making the curve toward Pinole, and went about a block or two, it was on the right hand side of the street. It was an old fashioned country store with a screen door and wood floor. The butcher had his area in the far right hand corner and the checkout stand was in the middle of the room, close to the back wall. A young girl who had a boyfriend in the War that

she intended to marry, worked there as a checkout girl. Every time we went in there my mother or father would check to see how her beau was doing. She kept us up on all of his doings. I don't know if he made it home, or not, but I sure hope he did.

My sister used to ride me on the handlebars of her bicycle when we went to the store. The new Vogel's market was built when I was three or four years old and I remember going in there and Mr. Vogel gave me a blue wooden jeep with a star on the hood that I kept for a number of years. My father and I would often get a hankering for ice cream in the middle of one of our favorite radio programs and he and I would have to make a quick trip to Vogel's and back before the next program came on.

There used to be a Barber Shop on the south side of Appian Way, about two hundred yards west of our house. It was in the back of the Barber's house. He gave me my first haircut and all the rest of them until we left. Further down Appian Way to the west was an Ice Cream Parlor that my mother used to take me to. We would walk so she could talk to everyone along the way. She knew everybody. Somewhere close to the Ice Cream Parlor was another grocery store, and as I said before, there was a small store at the bottom of La Paloma at the intersection with Appian Way.

My father joined the Volunteer Fire Department not long after he moved there. He was Assistant Chief up until we left. I have enclosed a photo of me wearing his Assistant Fire Chief hat. He ran for Chief against Charlie Matteson and was defeated. He loved the Fire Department and the camaraderie. We lived close to the Spafford's and the O'Brien's and the Roland's, and across the street from the Head's. Not too far to the west of us lived the families of the Brussie's and the Low's. I can't remember all of them, but I do remember my folks talking about several families as close

friends. Dad was also a close friend of the Metropolitan Life insurance Agent at the time, a fellow who lived further to the east of us on the Appian Way, not too far from Vogel's. On the south side of Appian Way and a little further to the east of us, lived Bill and Betty Brown and their children, George and Janet. My folks were close friends with them and my mother used to like dressing George and I alike and sending us to church or school that way. We lost touch with them many years ago. Someone told me that George used to work for the Fire Department, but I never followed up on it, life kind of gets in the way.

At right, Bob Tolton as a member of the El Sobrante FD, 1942.



Young Everett Tolton proudly wearing the hat of his father, then Assistant Fire Chief in El Sobrante's Volunteer Fire Department.

with the Appian Way. I think it was called Tom's Tavern or something like that.**

We went to the movies over in Orinda as often as we could, and I saw my first film there. We were part of a big family in those days, with branches of it living in Alameda, Oakland, Berkeley and Redwood Valley and all of them made it to our house quite often because we were out in the country and they needed an excuse to get out of the city.

One of my cousins, Ed Dussau, who died recently at age 92, used to call me every year around Christmas time to talk about our family. It was his opinion that the War separated us and we never seemed to get the old closeness back again. His grandfather was also my dad's grandfather, and his name was George Paul Dussau. He was a Structural Engineer from Nimes, France who was involved in the construction of the Statue of Liberty and he brought our family to this country when he was sent to reconstruct it on Bedloe Island which is now Liberty Island. He moved the family to California in the latter part of the nineteenth century, from New Jersey. Market Street was a dirt road when he got here and the mud from the street used to suck the shoes off of my grandmother's feet. He had an office on Market Street when the earthquake hit in 1906.

My sister married Bill Ostrander in 1945. Bill came from a large family of twelve siblings who also lived in El Sobrante. They had two children, Mike and Pattie. Bill joined the Marines in the early part of the War and went completely through Boot Camp before they discovered he was only sixteen. They kicked him out and a year later he joined the Navy. He went all through the war on Destroyers, I believe, and two of them were sunk out from under him. Bill spent thirty years or so working for the Arabian American Oil Co. in Saudi Arabia. They married and divorced twice. Sis is 87 now and not in too good of shape, but I keep in touch with her. She fell recently and broke a bone in her lower back and her son has been caring for her. I spoke to her earlier this evening and she had just put away a steak and potato, so she isn't doing bad.

In 2007 I took her back to see all the old places in El Sobrante and she remembered so many of them. We also drove up on the hill in Pinole where we both went to school. We both remembered the Eucalyptus trees that

encircled the grounds and gave off their strong and familiar smell. She later went to Richmond High and later to Business College and worked for the Bank of America close by. She spent many years working for a fellow in Santa Rosa who bought failing automobile dealerships and turned them around and sold them at a profit. Sis would manage them and turn them around for him. She spent many years as a bookkeeper and still keeps books for her son's businesses and lives in Folsom. I retired from Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company after forty years in the insurance industry.

I could go on and on about this, but I may have talked too much already. I am sure that you will not be able to use all of these photos, but use what you can. I can't get enough of looking at old photos of your little town. You are to be commended for the work you are doing with the Historical Society. You don't know how much we old timers really appreciate it. God Bless.

Everett Tolton

Fort Smith, Arkansas, January 22, 2015

Editor:

**Although there were several instances of jittery home guardsmen firing at what they thought were enemy planes, there is no evidence that Japanese aircraft flew over San Francisco during WWII.*

***Tom's Liquors became Rancho Liquors in 1961.*

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

We continue encouraging you, our readers, to share your memories of growing up and living in El Sobrante. The above letter was received recently along with terrific old photos, too numerous to publish here. Our sincere thanks go out to former El Sobrante resident, Everett Tolton, for taking all of us back in time and breathing life into some faded memories.

Let us hear from you!

Historic Marker Installation Proceeding---Slowly

As you all know, the downtown area of El Sobrante has endured months of construction as new sidewalks are put in. As part of the project, the El Sobrante Historical Society has designed and contracted the creation of twelve historic markers to be placed at strategic locations along the new walkways. We had expected that the job would be finished by now, but much work remains. No markers have yet been installed, but several diamond-shaped openings in the new sidewalks, meant to accept the 2' square markers, can now be seen.



Here we see a marker place-holder in front of the Pedaler bike shop (which was originally the first bank in town). Below, on the opposite side of the street, we see a similar place-holder by the Hill View Center, El Sobrante's first little strip mall (opened in 1960).



We don't know for sure, but we expect that the markers will all be installed pretty much at the same time, when the sidewalk construction is finished. We have been promised that we would be informed when the first marker is to go in, for a photo-op! Hopefully, by the time our summer newsletter goes out, all the markers will be in place.

Who Was Martha Sheldon?

Sheldon School is the oldest continuously operating school in El Sobrante (though the buildings and sites have changed over the years). Opening in 1880, the school was named after Martha Sheldon, who, along with landowner Burkhardt Amend, granted a parcel of land near San Pablo Creek (near present-day Sherwood Forest) on which to build a small school to serve the local children. Other than the name, we knew nothing about Martha. Her name does not show up on any of the various El Sobrante land grant maps that were published between the late 1800s and 1909. That changed recently, however, when we were contacted by Jeanne and Peter Jeffries, who represent the "Sheldon Family Association."

According to the Jeffries, the Sheldon Family Association was founded in the 1800s with the purpose of researching the ancestry of people with the Sheldon name. They meet yearly, and this year they are meeting in Sacramento. Noting on our website that El Sobrante is home to a Sheldon School, we were invited to give a talk to the group about the school's founder. It turns out however, that the Jeffries already knew more about Martha than we did, and, with a little research, came up with some additional tidbits.

Turns out that Martha was born in Massachusetts in 1827. She married Nicholas Sheldon of Rhode Island, who was a descendent of John Sheldon, who came to

Rhode Island in the 1600s. Nicholas and Martha had three children, a boy, named William, and two girls, Miranda and Martha. At the time of the school's founding (1880) Martha was a widow, her husband having died in San Francisco in 1865. Martha was living with her son William while in Contra Costa. She lived on until 1898.

Daughter Miranda married a man named Lewis, and they had a son, named Wilmarth, born in Alameda. He graduated from Yale, and served in the army in World War I, and in the OSS in World War II. He married, but had no children, and died in Connecticut in 1979.

That's all we know at present, but the Jeffries promise to send more information as it turns up. There are still many unknown details and unanswered questions (why was Martha here? And why does she not show up as a landowner on the El Sobrante grant maps?) But we know more than we did, and for that we thank the Jeffries and the Sheldon Family Association.

April 15--150th Anniversary of Lincoln's Death



Abraham Lincoln died in the early morning hours of Saturday, April 15, 1865, in a hotel room across from Ford's Theatre, where he had been shot the night before. That he lingered that long is a testament to his robust constitution and great physical strength. But

given the gravity of his wound, nothing could be done to save him.

The next day, Sunday the 16th, at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, cannons boomed every half hour from sunrise to sunset. All work on the yard ceased until the following Thursday.

A few years before, such important and sad news would have taken weeks to reach the Pacific coast. However, on October 24, 1861, the Atlantic and Pacific Telegraph Line was completed. From this point on California and her sister states were linked in a way as strong as the railroad link to be completed eight years later. All during the war, Californians could read up-to-date accounts of the battles taking place in the east. The world had changed forever—it was the first glimmering dawn of the electronic age. Californians were able to share their grief with their brothers and sisters at the other end of the continent, at the same time.



This photograph of Lincoln was taken on March 6, 1865, and is the last known good-quality image of the 16th President.

Remembering . . .

Robert Fahey

January 14-February 7, 2015



Bob Fahey was a 1962 graduate of De Anza High School, and a member of one of the founding families of El Sobrante, and of the St. Callistus Catholic Church.



Bob was preceded in death by his older brother **Patrick**, who graduated from De Anza in 1961.

George Coles

June 21, 1922-January 20, 2015



Just about everyone in Richmond and El Sobrante knew George. An anthropology professor at Contra Costa College, he touched many lives and was a leader in the preservation

and protection of California Native American heritage. He will be remembered as a kind and gentle man, who always had time for his friends, many of whom were his students.

Aurora Apodaca

July 21, 1922-January 12, 2015

Aurora “Doris” Apodaca was an El Sobrante resident for 65 years. She was a devout Catholic and attended St. Callistus Church regularly. Like many El Sobrante residents, she migrated to the Bay Area during World War II to work in the shipyards. Like many of her sisters, she was a welder.

Sammy Lico

October 20, 1916-December 26, 2014

Sammy Lico was a very well-known local musician (accordion player). With his family, he moved to Richmond at the age of 13, and remained there for the rest of his long life. He worked in the Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond during World War II, and with his orchestra played for many events at the yard and for the USO. His band was a headliner throughout the bay area and San Francisco. He was a long-time member of the Galileo Club and many other social organizations. For over 70 years he was a member of the Musicians’ Union, Local 424.

Did You Graduate from De Anza High School in 1965 or 1966?



If so, you are invited to join a reunion celebration, taking place on August 15 of this year. The

place is the Concord Crowne Plaza Hotel, in Concord. The hotel is offering special rates if you want to spend the night. For more information, contact Paula Barber, at: Paula_Barber@yahoo.com.

You can contact the reunion committee at:
De Anza Class Reunion
c/o 5834 Sherwood Forest Drive
El Sobrante, CA 94803.
Or Call: 510-223-4777.

You can also find out more information at their Facebook group “De Anza High School Classes of 65 and 66”

New Acquisitions:

Recently received, from Steve James, a collection of De Anza memorabilia from 1959 through 1962. Most of the items are related to the activities of his brother, Mike, who played football.



Included are two colorful football schedules (see above), a booklet detailing De Anza's football teams, dated 1960; an issue of "The De Anzan," highlighting popular and prominent seniors (1962); a ceramic trophy from the Babe Ruth League, dated 1959; and a collection of sports certificates issued to Mike James. These ephemeral materials are a treasured addition to our collection. Thanks Steve!

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 <https://sites.google.com/site/elsobrantehistoricalsociety/>

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.

Send questions or comments to: ESHHistory@gmail.com