

Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society

Historian

June 2015 Volume 3, Issue 3

www.kghs.org

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President's Message

"School's out for summer!"

For the last couple of decades, the final day of classes at Kent Middle School has been marked by ceremony and celebration -- and by the graduating class decorating nearby trees with their bright red gym shorts!

In this issue of our newsletter, Mary Gilardi and Patrick Fuller recall an earlier time when fewer homes dotted the Kentfield and Greenbrae hills and summer meant pick-up baseball games, roaming the hills in search of adventure and days spent with family and friends at Paul Daly's Swim Club.

Take time to enjoy the summer: pack a picnic and savor Marin's great outdoors, take a walk along the Corte Madera Creek or sink into a good book on a warm summer afternoon. (May I suggest our very own *In the Heart of Marin: The History of Kentfield and Greenbrae, California* ?)

For students, summer always starts with the exuberance of the 1974 hit cited at the beginning of my message but I love the slide into the lyrics of another summertime hit: "Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer . . ."
Happy summer!

Susan Morrow

KGHS President, 2014-2015

Summer Memories

Patrick Fuller (Kent '61)

I remember playing baseball almost daily on a baseball field we had improvised at College of Marin across from Eat n' Run adjacent to the old gym. We'd all meet down there, mostly my friends and neighbors from Terrace and Stetson Avenues. There were some haystacks out in left field that I assume were used for archery by the P.E. department. If you hit a ball over the haystacks, it was a home run.



A bucolic scene at Kentfield in the 'teens. (Anne T. Kent California Room MCFL)

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Membership Renewals due June 30!

Thank you to everyone who has renewed your membership already! Many of you who joined in time for our Centennial in May 2014 received a renewal notice in the mail. Your annual membership will expire on June 30! We don't want to lose you. We hope that you will remember the Kentfield-Greenbrae Historical Society by renewing your membership at a level that is comfortable for you. DO IT NOW before you forget! ...

www.kghs.org

- \$20 - Students/Seniors
- \$30 - Individuals/Families
- \$50 - Businesses
- \$100 - Patron
- \$250 - Benefactor
- \$500 - Historian
- \$1000+ - Lifetime

You can also send a check: KGHS Membership, Box 236, Kentfield, CA 94914. Please include your name, level of membership, address, email and phone number.

Included with your membership is the bi-monthly/quarterly newsletter, special invitations to member events and an invitation to volunteer on one of our committees. **If your membership expires, this will be your last newsletter!**

We have a lot of plans for the coming year and need your continued support. We are currently developing curriculum for the K-4 students, planning member events and another May Day, and continuing research and oral histories. **Renew now!**

Summer Memories cont'd...

We used to go into Jolly grocery store sometimes for soft drinks. There was a guy named Jaime that worked there who used to get furious with us. First time I heard an adult use serious curse words.

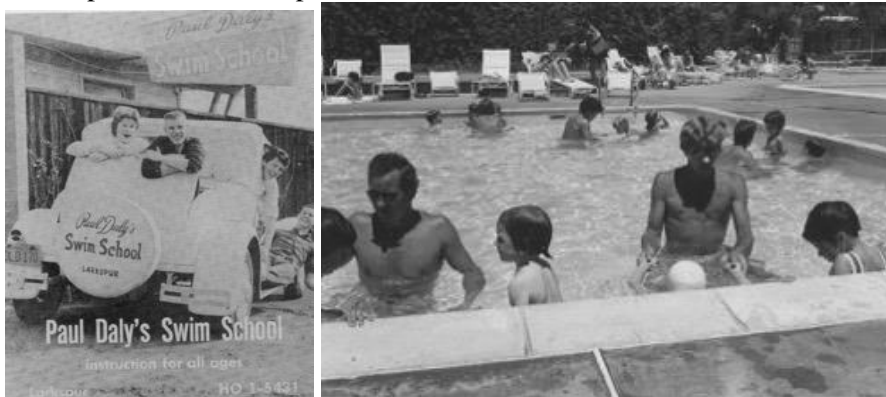
I used to see a Great Dane named Beau sitting by the sliding butchers' door at Guasco's waiting patiently. Sal the butcher would come out and give Beau a bone and Beau would happily trot home. Beau was supposedly friendly but everyone gave him a wide berth.

My friend Don Kruezerberger and I used to go fishing at the creek behind Kent School. We would ride our bikes down from his house in Kent Woodlands in the predawn hours. The tree branches blocked some of the streetlights causing eerie shadows to be cast on the road. That was the best part of our fishing expeditions, riding our bikes down to Kent School while the rest of Kentfield slept.

Patrick Fuller, Kent School Class of 1961.

Summer at the Paul Daly Swim School... Mary Gilardi

I was fortunate to grow up in the country and that is exactly what Kentfield was back in the 40's, 50's and 60's. I had nine brothers and sisters and we lived at 25 Alta Mira Court in a house surrounded by open fields and hills. We had a wonderful big playhouse that we were always fixing up and had a huge empty field on the side of our property. This open space (which today is filled with houses) went all the way from Sir Francis Drake over the hill to Laurel Grove. This was our own wild playground and a place for many wonderful adventures. We spent countless hours on that hill sliding down on cardboard boxes up and down and up and down.



Swimming lessons at the Paul Daly Swim School on Magnolia. (Paula Daly Skov Collection.)

Summer growing up in Kentfield was a carefree time to be outside and enjoy the sunshine. My brothers, sisters and I spent most of our summer days at Paul Daly's Swim Club. It was a local family club and we would ride our bikes down for the entire day. Our dog Mr. Happy would go with us. He followed wherever we went and would sit outside the entrance and wait there for us. When not playing with friends, we would have swimming lessons because my parents insisted that we take every lesson available until we passed junior lifesaving courses. The life guards were very friendly and nice to us. It was a wonderful safe environment for our summer days. We received badges for completing our various swimming courses and we were very proud of our achievements. One pool was for little kids and used for lessons and the other was for everyone else. It had a great diving board where my sisters and I spent hours trying to perfect our swan dives while my brothers worked on making better cannon ball splashes. There were ping pong contests and shuffleboard contests and lots of fun things to do besides swimming at Paul Daly's. There

was a snack bar that sold popsicles and it was a really special treat to be able to have a Popsicle once a week. We have reels and reels of old fashioned family movies of us at Paul Daly's.



On the days that we did not go down to Paul Daly's, we stayed around our house on the hill. We climbed trees, made forts, collected buckeyes for great buckeye wars with the neighbor kids on the next street over. We must have had terrible aims because I don't remember ever being hit or anyone ever being hurt. We planted vegetable gardens, dug holes in order to make our own backyard swimming pool which always turned out to be a big mud hole and then a backyard compost pile. Of course, we always had the required books to read. It seemed like every evening we had a barbeque and every night the sky was filled with stars. On warm summer nights, we slept outside on cots on the front porch where we could see the light that was always lit on the top of Mt. Tam. That light is the very best memory of all. Whenever I see the light on now it reminds me of those good old days.

Mary Clifford Gilardi

Summertime Fun in Old Kentfield

Dewey Livingston

For children in the days before television and video games, the streets and land around their neighborhoods were their playgrounds. While there were many dangers in the Kentfield area-including a deadly third rail on the unfenced electric railway, a wide and sometimes noxious creek, and rattlesnakes in the summer hills-children ran free for long days during the summer. "We had no money to spend in Kentfield," said Alan Best, "so we were always wandering around." Jim Schulze, who grew up in Granton Park, added that "most kids had the rule of being home when the streetlights came on: time to head for home." Georgia Landers and her sister responded to a cowbell.

Much of the summer play centered on the banks of Corte Madera Creek or "the slough" as most called it. "It was a marvelous place to play as a kid," recalled Bob Hough. "We spent most of our time down in the creek or on the creek, we caught pollywogs, we made rafts out of railroad ties that we borrowed from Northwestern Pacific, put three ties together with a cross piece and nailed it up and we could float on the creek."



Boating in the Corte Madera slough. (Mary Clifford Gilardi Collection)

Despite the disgusting water, people of all ages swam in the creek. There was a particularly popular swim spot off McAllister Avenue called Raymond's Hole. The Raymond family had three boys known for their swimming ability, according to Dave Bettega. Many local people learned to swim there and it was a fine gathering place. People even came from the city just to swim, said Bettega: "The little homes around here were summer homes that people lived in mostly because of the slough, that place was full of people swimming. It was dirty, junk used to come in there." At one point, a typhoid outbreak closed the creek to swimming.



The Kelly Family swimming in Corte Madera slough near the Bon Air Bridge, with Wolfe Grade in the background. (Mary Clifford Gilardi Collection)

"We played in the slough around Corte Madera Creek," recalled Corinne Swall. "In the spring it was almost chartreuse pale green, and then darker green, and then blue green, and then it would turn cerise-plum colored; it was a gorgeous place and that's all gone."

-Dewey Livingston from *In the Heart of Marin* pages 168-180

Attractions of Greenbrae

Dewey Livingston

Ask any former or current Greenbrae resident who was there in the 1950s and 1960s about the place, and they will always talk about the fun attractions available in the neighborhood. There wasn't a theme park, but scattered across the southern part of Greenbrae at various times were a bowling alley, a large community swimming pool, a miniature golf course, a sailing center, a go-kart track, and even a trampoline center.



Bon Air Trampoline Center 1960 helping a polio patient. (IJ Collection Marin History Museum)



The Olympic-sized swimming pool on South Eliseo (Greenbrae Management, Inc)

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Attractions of Greenbrae cont'd...

Most early residents remember the Bon Air Trampoline Center, which opened in 1960 but only operated for a few years. "It was right along Sir Francis Drake" near the Bon Air Super, recalled Iyana Leveque. "It was like a big yard, they had big holes underneath and the trampolines were stretched so it was all at ground level." Instructors supervised the activity and taught acrobatic tricks: "People were doing flips and things...I can't believe that no one ever got hurt, it's just amazing to me today."

Greenbrae Lanes opened on March 6, 1959. The blue-roofed bowling alley was open 24 hours a day and soon featured a coffee shop (managed by Don McLaughlin), tavern and child care nursery. "We will always maintain the kind of place a family can enjoy together,"

Seeing that bowling up until then had largely been a man's sport, assistant manager Ron Gurries took on the task of recruiting families to come bowl and form leagues. He started an instruction program for children and women and assisted in the creation of housewives' leagues, making personal calls on people in the community to urge them to join.

From *In the Heart of Marin* pages 276-282

Get Involved!

We have many ideas for the coming year and would like to include you in our plans. In the fall we will establish several working committees. If you are interested, please contact us at info@kghs.org and we will get back to you.

- Events Committee (presentations, May Day...)
- Research Committee (curriculum, oral histories...)
- Membership & Outreach Committee (businesses, alumni...)

Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society
P.O. Box 236
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Send us your stories...

Our next KGHS Newsletter will feature stories about **School Memories...your days at Kent, Greenbrae, Wolfe Grade or Bacich**. What memories stand out when you were in school? Send them to: info@kghs.org with the Subject Line "**School Stories**". Please include the approximate time period in which these activities occurred.

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