

# Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society

## Historian

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### President's Message

Recently, my 100 year old mother was talking about when she and my family first moved to Greenbrae in 1951. We were the first house built on North Almenar and I thought we lived there forever because it is where I lived when I went to Greenbrae School, Kent and then Redwood... where I grew up. We were actually only there 8 years before moving to Kent Woodlands but it's where my strongest childhood memories reside. We walked the cattle trails to school, surrounded by wild flowers, slid down the dry grass hillsides in large cardboard boxes, and climbed around the many houses that were being built after the workers had gone. I'm still friends with these classmates and neighbors and even periodically drive by my old house.

Even though I'm still in the "neighborhood," there are some who have returned and raised their families in the very house in which they were raised. It is wonderful to hear some of the stories these long-time friends have to tell about their intertwined lives in the Greenbrae Hills.

Marilee Rogers  
Co-President, 2017-2018

### KGHS Members Meeting October 25

**SAVE THURSDAY OCTOBER 25, 2018**  
**ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING**  
**6:00 - 8:00 PM**  
**KENT SCHOOL MULTI PURPOSE ROOM**

#### **"The Dewey\* and Richard Show"**

The enthusiasm generated at the Community Heritage and History Day for our local history has encouraged us to bring back the "Dewey and Richard Show" for our fall member's meeting. These two local historians have been instrumental in preserving and recording the history of Kentfield and Greenbrae. They will narrate a revised slide presentation of the "heart of Marin." Please save the date and tell your friends. More details in our next newsletter.

\*Dewey Livingston is the author of our book "In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae, published in 2014 at the time of the Kent Centennial.

### Pop Up Store...

Currently our Pop-Up Store in Bon Air has two small exhibits ...the Greenbrae Rod and Gun Club/ Crossley Center on loan from Bob Crossley, and an exhibit of artifacts from the early days of College of Marin and schools in the area on loan from the Marin History Museum. Our problem is that we do not enough volunteers to open the store on a regular basis. If you would like to volunteer for several hours a month to help us out, or if you would like to make an appointment to look more closely at the display, contact us at 415-484-5447.



*Two children's school desks with inkwells ... one from the 1800's and one from the 1900's.*

### KGHS Calendar...

**2018**

August 28: KGHS Board  
Workshop 9:00-11

October 11: KGHS Board  
Meeting 9-11

**October 25: Members  
Meeting 6-8 pm AE Kent**

### Board of Directors

Susan Morrow, Lorelei Evans, Sarah Fletcher, Mary Gilardi, Julie Gondak, Ross McKenna, Sydney Park, Marilee Rogers, Heather McPhail Sridharan, Richard Torney, Marlies Zeisler  
Author: Dewey Livingston

## Community Heritage and History Day

The KGHS and Bon Air partnered this spring to bring the Kentfield Greenbrae family together for a Community Heritage and History day at the Bon Air Center. Over 30 community groups were represented... local historical societies and libraries, local service agencies and politicians, school and environmental groups, musicians, makers and more! Both Redwood and Kent sent jazz musicians while local mariachis strolled the center. A Maker Tent was very busy engaging the kids with activities. Space 196 was filled with student art and science fair projects from Bacich and Kent. Richard Torney shared an updated slide show of Kentfield and Greenbrae history while Mary Gilardi and Rebecca Sylla hosted a video showing of *Visions of Marin: George Demont Otis, American Impressionist*. The stamped "passports" encouraged the kids to visit all of the vendors, being rewarded for their efforts mini ice cream cones (thanks to Gott's) and mini cupcakes (thanks to Susie Cakes).



Such a good time was had by all that we have agreed to partner again next year.

**SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, May 4, 2019  
for our next Community Heritage and History Day!**



## Renewal time!

New KGHS renewal notices were sent out at the end of May. It's never too late to renew or join! If you know of friends and neighbors who are interested in preserving and recognizing local history, please forward this newsletter to them and encourage them to become a member. We have added the option for local Non-Profits to become members at \$25 a year, ensuring that you will get our newsletter and updates about the 2019 Community Heritage and History Day.

DO IT [ONLINE](#) NOW before you forget!

- \$20 - Students & Seniors
- **\$25- Non Profit organizations NEW**
- \$30 - Individuals & Families
- \$50 - Business Membership
- \$100 - Patron
- \$250 - Benefactor \*
- \$500 - Historian \*
- \$500- Business Partner \*
- \$1000 + - Lifetime Membership\*
- \$1000+- Lifetime Business Partner \*

Or you can send a check:  
**KGHS Membership  
Box 236  
Kentfield, CA 94914.**

Please include your name, level of membership, address, email and phone number. If you use a credit card number, please include your CVV code. Included with your membership is the quarterly newsletter and special invitations to member events.

## The Schultz Family Creates a Community in Greenbrae

(excerpts from *In the Heart of Marin: A History of Kentfield and Greenbrae* by Dewey Livingston pages 248-295)

... When the Archdiocese of San Francisco put 725 acres of land up for sale in July of 1945, (Neil Schultz) had the resources to buy and the know-how to develop... From the first, the Schultz family planned for a mixed development including a large residential community on the north part of the ranch, with commercial area, apartment complexes, and waterfront development on the south of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.... Schultz built a small but ornate fairyland “castle” at the entrance to serve as the sales office for the newly formed Greenbrae Co.



from

### THE GREENBRAE CO.

Agents for Greenbrae properties  
Realtors . Insurance . Notary

Greenbrae, California  
461-1550

The first subdivision consisted of 197 lots on either side of La Questa Drive. The Schultzes used mostly Spanish names for the streets... and admired the stately oak and buckeye trees on the property and went to some trouble to avoid cutting old trees, seeking to incorporate them into the design of the community. In a number of instances, a road was designed to save trees on its route, by either creating sharper curves or splitting the road around a particularly fine specimen. The first ten homes were constructed for veterans only... two bedroom homes for \$13,250, three bedrooms for \$14,850 and lots with 70 feet of street frontage from \$2,750. Sub-division No. Two followed adding Almenar Drive, Vista Grande, Corte Anita and other streets. (It is here that the DeVinny, Sarocka and Wallace families built their homes... see next article)

## Three Neighbors: Sue DeVinny, Julie Sarocka Gondak & Tammy Wallace Jackson by Susan Morrow

Although author Thomas Wolfe once famously titled a novel *You Can't Go Home Again*, three Greenbrae neighbors did just that. In fact, they took it one step further: they all returned to their childhood homes and raised their families in the neighborhood they shared as children.

Julie Sarocka Gondak, Sue DeVinny and Tammy Wallace Jackson grew up in the hills of Greenbrae, as neighbors and friends. When reflecting on the ties to these Greenbrae residences that they have been able to call home for most of their lives, they shared memories of decades gone by as well as thoughts about how life has changed from one generation to another.

Sue's family moved to Greenbrae via Chicago in 1959 when her dad “determined that he had no intention of ever shoveling snow again”. Julie's parents left the snow behind as well, leaving Wisconsin for Southern California in 1940. They then moved to New Jersey before settling on Northern California, specifically Greenbrae: they liked the weather and had found a place to raise their daughters. In 1951, they moved into a house constructed by builder Ed Berger.

The Wallace family had a shorter move, explained Tami, but their choice of Greenbrae was no less intentional: “My parents would come to Greenbrae and have picnics in the hills to choose the best spot to build their home.” The custom-built residence, built in 1950, was not a part of the Schulz/Berger development and was unique in its design. They chose the home site because “the weather was the best in Southern Marin” and Greenbrae had great access to the freeway. “They loved the beautiful oaks and views,” shared Tami.

All three women noted that the biggest difference between their school experiences and those of their children was the current-day involvement of the parent community versus the much more hands-off approach of parents a generation earlier. Tami remarked, "I don't remember my mother having a presence on the campus and I was on campus every week while kids attended school." Julie agreed, adding that when her kids were in school "parents were involved from the beginning until they graduated high school".

While all three agreed on the greatly expanded role of parents in the schools, Sue took it one step further: as a schoolgirl, she and her classmates walked to school; now kids are driven to school and to most of their extracurricular activities. "Growing up kids walked everywhere," added Julie. "If I wanted to go to Taco Bell in San Anselmo, my friends and I would walk there and back. [It was the] same for shopping in Corte Madera. My mom would pack lunches for my sister and me in the summer and we were told to go play and be back before dinner."

Opportunities for kids to fill their after-school hours were abundant: Sue cited over a dozen options in the Central Marin/Ross Valley area. A few of the highlighted activities included Rayden's Skating Rink (Corte Madera); a bowling alley near the current Bon Air Center; kite flying in the then-open fields behind Bon Air; a public swim club in Fairfax with seven swimming pools, ping pong and pool tables; and a toy store, pool hall, slot car track and gym in Kentfield. "Today, all of these activities are gone," she said, adding that "kids have few options . . . and it's always made me so sad."

Remembering her own childhood play, Tami shared that there was a "large forest" still without homes where the neighborhood kids would "build forts and make up games. We would play whiffle ball in the middle of the street. We owned the streets and the neighbors expected to encounter us" and adjusted their driving accordingly. (One of her favorite memories is hanging out at the King Henry the 8<sup>th</sup> drive-in in front of Kent Junior High.) Summarizing the differences between her childhood and the experiences of her children, Tami explained: "The first thing that comes to mind is cars and organized sports and activities. When my kids attended Bacich, the parking lot was full of [parents] picking up their children, taking them off to sports or play dates or who knows what else. What is missing for kids now is the experience of figuring out what to do with idle time. We experienced many bored moments but made something of them."

All three homes underwent change, to different degrees. The DeVinny home was massively remodeled. "Very few parts of our original family home remain," said Sue. Julie reported that, while the outside footprint of her home remains the same, the inside is vastly different. "The only thing that remains is my mom's kitchen clock. It will go with me to the next house. My daughter will be getting it later."

Tami's home remains "basically the same structure that it was when I was born into it". While major interior remodeling has occurred, she loved that the garage was still the same, reminding her of her youth. She recounted that her mother gave the milkman a key to the electric garage door opener so that he could put dairy products in the garage refrigerator!

Contemplating how things have changed in the neighborhood, Julie noted that when she was growing up she knew everyone in the neighborhood. "Tami's mom and my mom would have potluck dinners almost once a week. I slept at Sue's house like it was my house. Nowadays, new neighbors don't seem to want to be overly engaged." Tami added, "We walked to and from school and looked out for one another. We would get a ride up the hill from anyone who was nice enough to stop and pick us up. Now, if I offer a kid a ride, they won't answer me."

Yet, even with dwindling neighborhood connections, all three women shared the sentiment expressed by Sue when queried what she likes best about her move back to the old neighborhood. "The most special part about living in my parents' home, close to two old neighbors and friends who both moved back into their parents' homes (Julie and Tami), is that our kids have now grown up together. Both of my daughters babysat for Tami's boys, my son is close buddies with each of her sons. The cycle continues . . . and that is really pretty cool."