

# THE TATTLER

## JOURNAL OF THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY - COLMA

### GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK



I have a most amazing story to share with you--one that combines the resolve and best instincts of the human condition along with the power and reach of the Internet. Recently we were contacted by a young man in Belgium, Christian Lonneux, who found us through our own web site as well as our Facebook page. He is a most incredible individual who sought us

out seeking information on an American G.I. who spent time in Daly City, was killed in action in 1944 and is buried in an American cemetery in Belgium. I should also mention that he does not know English and got someone to do a very rough translation for him. It turns out that he is tending this soldier's grave despite not

being related nor having any connection to this hero. He discovered that the soldier had lived in Daly City for a time and wanted to know if there was any surviving family still there. He had hoped that the Guild could provide additional information so that he might draw a connection to the deceased rather than simply knowing a name without a story to go with it. The first thing that I did after consulting our own resources and finding nothing was to post the request on our Facebook page. We have over 400 followers and, as luck would

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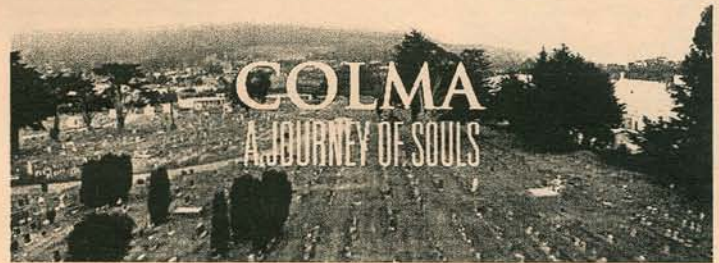
## HISTORY EVENING

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM

KINGSTON MEDIA &

COLMA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

*Present the documentary*



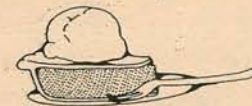
A drone captured breathtaking aerial images of the vast cemeteries throughout Colma. This feature documentary explores the earliest days of Colma, to the eviction and migration of cemeteries from San Francisco, into the birth of a suburban community and commercial area within the backdrop of a United Nations of cemeteries. You will enjoy interviews with Colma notables who are also our Guild members.

**101 Lake Merced Blvd. Daly City  
Doelger Center Café**

### THANK YOU NOVEMBER REFRESHMENT DONORS:

**Pat Hatfield, Rich Rochetta, Sue Figone and Judith Christensen.**

Thank you to our gracious Hospitality Chair **Annette Hipona.**



**Wishing you and your family Happy Holidays and best wishes in the New Year!**



have it, another historical organization--the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County--saw the missive almost immediately and ran with it. They enjoy this type of challenge and have a bevy of resources available to them. After a brief consultation amongst a few of their members, they were hard at work and produced the desired outcome for our new friend in Belgium--Christian Lonneux. Historian Rick Helin, Director Bill Foley and the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County receive full and complete credit for having researched and produced Christ Axel Christiansen's story. Here is what is known of Mr. Christiansen of Daly City.



Christian Lonneux, who currently tends the grave of WWII Daly City fallen hero Christ Axel Christiansen.

Christ Axel Christiansen was born on August 2, 1910 in Moraine, Grand Forks, North Dakota. His father, Magnes Christiansen, was born on March 12, 1877 in Harslev,

Odense, Denmark, and emigrated to the United States two years later. Christ was the namesake of his paternal grandfather, who was born in 1854 and died in 1919. Magnes was a dairy farmer and operated a creamery. He had 11 brothers and sisters and died on February 7, 1971, just shy of his 94th birthday. Christ's mother, Marie, was born in Denmark in 1885, emigrated to the U.S. eight years later and died in 1967. He had three sisters--Dagmar, Marie and Doris. The 1940 census shows that Christ was working as a truck driver on a government sewage project in Larimore, Grand Forks, North Dakota. He was married to Edith Lindquist Christiansen. The couple had two children--Cleo Jean, born 1932, and Charles, born 1934. Apparently, he did not live long in Daly City. Exactly when he moved here is unknown; the family lived at 6925 Mission Street--today the site of Mission Plaza. As a resident of Daly City he enlisted as a private in San Francisco on December 14, 1943, and his Army serial number is #39145234. Private Christiansen served in H Company, Third Battalion, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, 3rd Armored Division. Private Christiansen's division landed at Omaha Beach, Normandy, France on June 26, 1944.

On September 19 he sacrificed his life between Dorff and Stolberg, Rhineland, Germany. He is interred at Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery and Memorial in

Henri-Chapelle, Liege, Belgium. Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery covers fifty seven acres and is the resting place of 7,992 Americans who gave their lives during the advance into Germany during World War II.

It was discovered that Private Christiansen's daughter is still living in the Larimore area of North Dakota. She had four children, who then provided four more descendants. We are not aware of any relatives still living in the Bay Area. While I wish we had more on Private Christiansen's Daly City connection, I'm sure you'll agree that this is an amazing story. Not only is it remarkable that a Daly City fallen hero is still remembered 70 years later, but it is also interesting that all these connections have been made as a result of the Internet and the Guild's website and Facebook postings. If any further information comes to light, we'll be sure to share it with you along with any new stories that come to light over the Internet.

Adoption of American military graves is now a common practice at the American military cemeteries scattered across the European continent. The idea of caring for American graves began not long after the Normandy Invasion. One of the first French citizens to tend the grave of a fallen American soldier was Simone Renaud, whose husband was mayor of the first town liberated by Allied forces. Mme. Renaud became famous when *Life Magazine* photographer Ralph Morse photographed her at the newly-opened military cemetery in Normandy placing flowers on the grave of Theodore Roosevelt Jr. just weeks after the Normandy invasion. After the article appeared in *Life*, Mme. Renaud was swamped with requests from American families asking her to tend the graves of their lost loved ones. That tradition endures today.



Simone Renaud tending the grave of Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. in 1944.



**RAFFLE DONATIONS** are welcomed at member meetings by Raffle Chair Rich Rocchetta. Your new or like-new white elephants raise funds for our Guild.

## HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

**Colma Historical Association** –Colma Historical Association, 1500 Hillside Blvd., Colma. **October 28<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday** at 6:30 p.m. Last Quarterly Meeting featuring filmmaker Brian Kingston talking about the process of making documentary films.

**San Mateo County History Museum** - Admission is free on the **first Friday of every month** at the History Museum, 2200 Broadway, Redwood City. **Saturday, November 15<sup>th</sup>** 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Author Larry Distasi discusses the secret history of Italian American evacuation and internment during World War II. Free with Museum Admission.

**Free Cypress Lawn Walking Tour:** Information:

650-550-8810 or send an email to

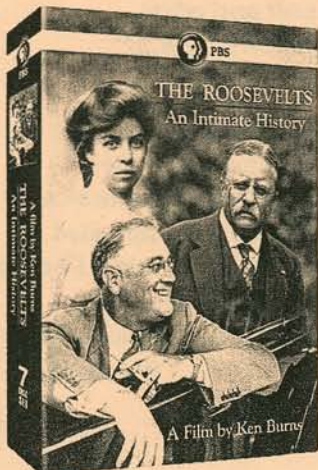
[lenipanopio@cypresslawn.com](mailto:lenipanopio@cypresslawn.com)

**Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>** Michael Svanevik leads “Northern California’s Fortune Builders.” All scheduled tours are held on Saturdays. They start at 1:30 pm at the Noble Chapel (located on Cypress Lawn’s East Gardens).

## DONATIONS AND GUILD NEWS

**THANK YOU TO:** **Annette Hipona** for the donation of a paper shredder; **Mark Weinberger** for donation of vintage Joe’s of Westlake, Daly City matchbooks; **Vaughn Jones** for the donation of a Nov. 1952 Esquire Magazine with Henry Doelger ad for Lord Calvert whiskey; **William and Mary Iracki** for the donation of a humidifier for use in our museum and a WWII artifact produced by the Lions club in Daly City for volunteers to wrap bandages for the war effort; and all our Board Members for ongoing docent duty. We hear that the Pacifica Historical Society is making great progress with their Little Brown Church Museum – hope to share opening news soon.

## THE ROOSEVELTS: CONNECTIONS TO THE BAY AREA AND DALY CITY



You may have watched the PBS broadcast in September chronicling the lives of Theodore, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. This seven-part, fourteen hour film follows the Roosevelts for more than a century, from Theodore’s birth in 1858 to Eleanor’s death in 1962. I watched every installment of the series

and decided to highlight some events from our timeline exhibit with ties to the Roosevelts. – *Tattler* Editor

**1906, Nov 30** - President Theodore Roosevelt publicly denounced segregation of Japanese school children in San Francisco. Later, in 1907 an agreement between Mayor Schmidt, Pres. Theodore Roosevelt and the SF School Board allowed Japanese children under 16 to be admitted to the city’s public schools.

**1908, May 6**, The Great White Fleet, sent by Pres. Roosevelt on an around-the-world voyage, arrived in SF. The fleet left San Francisco on July 7. The Great White Fleet demonstrated American sea power at a time when Japan and Russia were at war. When the fleet visited San Francisco, the city was showing the devastation of the 1906 earthquake. Harold H. Henderson of Partridge Lane, Daly City was one of 46 gobs who made the Navy’s “Great White Fleet” cruise around the world. Henderson spent 36 years as a milk truck driver with a local firm.

**1909 - Feb 27**, Pres. Theodore Roosevelt established the Farallon Islands, 28 miles off the coast of San Francisco, as a wildlife refuge.

**1920 - Jul 6** - The Democrats ended their convention in San Francisco, the first held in the West, with the selection James Cox of Ohio and running mate Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Cox and FDR were committed internationalists and lost the election due to the isolationism of the times.

**1932** - Franklin Roosevelt was elected to the Presidency. A few days before the 1932 election, President Hoover drove through Daly City on his way to his hometown of Palo Alto. Children were let out early from school to view the motorcade. Hoover was jeered and his motorcade pelted by vegetables by some parade viewers who were frustrated with the hardships of the Depression. Roosevelt won by nearly a 4 to 1 margin in Daly City.

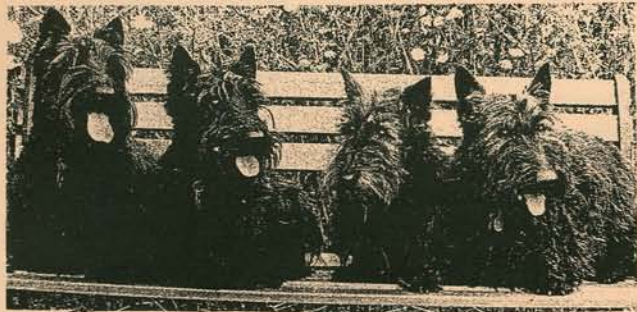
**1936** –The second City Hall is erected on the site of the original City Hall, which was demolished. The new City Hall was a Works Project Administration (WPA) undertaking as part of the national strategy to increase employment during the Great Depression. The WPA was created by order of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

**1975** – Wally (American Kennel Club name “Wally of Haight Ashbury”) moved to Daly City with his human companion Dana Smith. Wally was a direct descendant of FDR’s famous Scottish Terrier Fala. Fala met many famous visitors and entertained them with tricks, including his most impressive trick of curling his lip into

a smile. During the Battle of the Bulge, American soldiers asked one another the name of the President's dog, expecting the answer "Fala," as a safeguard against German soldiers attempting to infiltrate American ranks. Fala's descendant Wally lived to the ripe age of 15.5 years in Daly City and had his own moment of fame when he and his canine family were featured on TV 20.



President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's constant companion, Fala, a Scottish Terrier.



Wally (far right), a canine resident of Daly City, was directly related to Fala, the most famous dog in the world.



### THE 1918 FLU PANDEMIC

In February of 1918, Mrs. Delia Mohr, who ran the moving picture show in Daly City, was foreman for a group of women who built their

own Red Cross Clubhouse to support the war effort. Soon the local Red Cross was mobilized to stop the spread of the 1918 worldwide flu pandemic. October 1918 was the deadliest month of the worldwide influenza, and 2,021 people in San Francisco alone died of the flu. Bacci Rocchetta was a child in Colma at the time and later told the story of the distraught manager of the Italian Cemetery who had to deal with so many burials that he committed suicide. Protective face masks were commonly worn and meeting and events were canceled to avoid large gatherings of people. Of the U.S. soldiers who died in Europe in WWI, half of them fell to the influenza virus and not to the enemy.

### DALY CITY WAS THE EPICENTER FOR A MAJOR EARTHQUAKE

Recent events in Napa, may bring back memories to locals who lived through the March 22, 1957 earthquake of 5.3 magnitude centered in Daly City. It caused extensive damage to Jefferson High School, which later

had to be demolished in 1963. Luckily, no one was killed. A half-mile stretch of the Coast Highway was swept away just north of Mussel Rock where fissures four feet deep and 100 feet long opened causing motorists to desert their cars. The highway was abandoned a year later. Jack Kendree, Doelger Builders, Inc. manager, said about 200 homes in the area showed damage and about 20 were seriously damaged. The Westlake Reservoir, located on a hill above some Westlake homes, developed a four foot leak immediately after the Friday quake. Daly City officials lowered water level on the Westlake Reservoir to one-third level until the crack was repaired and 1,000 residents were evacuated from the danger area by every type of vehicle, (taxi cabs, school buses, delivery trucks and private autos) to Jefferson High school yard.



Fissures and landslides on Coast Highway, 1957 earthquake (Michael Rocchetta scanned and enhanced the photo)

**Note: Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training-** The North County Fire Authority schedules free trainings in Daly City. For registration and information visit online <http://northcountyfire.org/events/> or call 650) 991-8138.

### THERE IS A PLACE WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS...

By Dana Smith

*"There is a place where the sidewalk ends  
And before the street begins,  
And there the grass grows soft and white,  
And there the sun burns crimson bright..."*

—*Shel Silverstein*

I happened to be walking down Third Avenue at the border between Daly City and Colma where the sidewalk suddenly ends. I seemed transported back to a time long ago when I peered over the vine shrouded fence to see an ancient water tower. In my mind, I began reciting the famous children's poem "Where the Sidewalk Ends," by Shel Silverstein, a children's classic published in 1974.

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Photos by Dana Smith

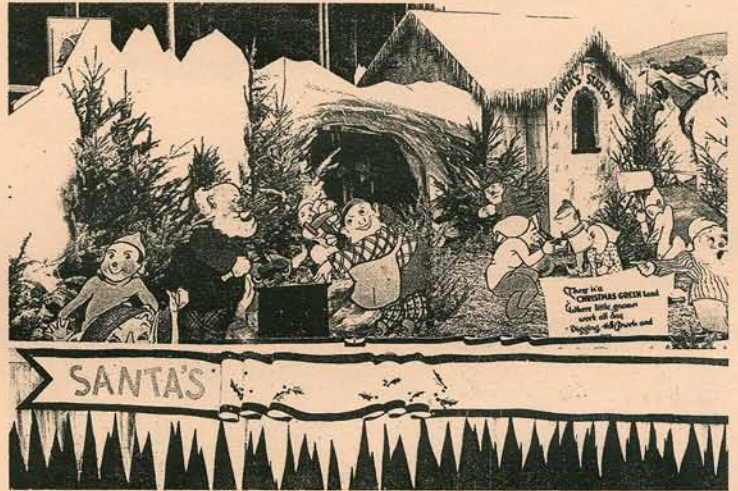
Frank Maffei remembers that the property was farmland owned by a family named Lagomarsino, not part of the Lagomarsinos that own the real estate firm. Rich Rocchetta notes that it's the last area in the neighborhood where there are no sidewalks and looks much like it did 50+ years ago. It was part of unincorporated Colma until 2011 when it was annexed to Daly City in anticipation of development plans. At the time of incorporation it was owned by Callan Properties. In September of this year plans were submitted for a housing development of 50 Townhouses.

**HISTORY QUIZ –**

**Q** - *What famous rock star had his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday at the Cow Place in 1966?*

**A** - In July of 1966 Mick Jagger celebrated his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday as the Rolling Stones played the Cow Palace in front of a crowd of 17,000 young people "decrying contemporary middle class values and shrieking about hypocrisy" (*San Mateo Times* 7/27/1966 "Jagger's Legions Swamp Daly City.")

**CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS – DALY CITY STYLE**



John Marchbank, famous for his gambling houses, racetrack, and as the owner of the largest theatre in town and publisher of the Daly City Record, was also famous for his annual holiday parties for the children of Daly City. His Daly City Theatre was the site of the town's annual holiday party for many years. Westlake Shopping Center's Santa's Snowland was constructed for the winter of 1951 when over 150,000 visitors attended between December 15<sup>th</sup> and New Year. At the time, Snowland was recognized as one of the country's largest holiday displays. The hand painted plywood figures would seem quaint by today's automated 3-dementional decorations, but it was all quite a thrill for kids and adults in the 1950s. Henry Dolger and Santa are shown with Westlake's famous miniature train.





# THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY/COLMA

## DALY CITY HISTORY MUSEUM

6351 Mission Street, Daly City, CA 94014

650/757-7177

Current Hours: Tuesdays and Saturdays from noon to 3 p.m.



Please visit us on Facebook at "Daly City History Museum"

[www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org](http://www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org)

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**



### NOVEMBER & DECEMBER ARE MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

You will find a membership reply card and return envelope in this edition of the *Tattler*. Our programs and all improvements in the museum building are paid 100% by your private donations. You are a valued member of our History Guild family and your continued interest and support of local history inspires our all-volunteer efforts. Thank you!

### HISTORY QUIZ —

**Q** — *When did it snow in Daly City?*



*A* - 1962, Jan. 21, snow fell in the SF Bay Area and accumulated to about 4 inches in Daly City, the biggest snow since 1887. Snowmen sprouted across Daly City and people were skiing on Westmoor Hill. In the evening of December 7<sup>th</sup> of 1972 Daly City saw a dusting of snow and an inch or two fell in February of 1976, but nothing to match the big snow of '62.



### GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

**Mark Weinberger, President** 650/757-7177  
president@dalycityhistorymuseum.org

**Richard Rocchetta, Vice-President**  
**Dana Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President/Museum Director**  
**Judith Christensen, Treasurer**  
**Algis Ratnikas, Secretary**

**Directors: Michael Rocchetta, Marcus Gonzalez**

Ken Gillespie (1924-2011), President-Emeritus  
Bunny Gillespie, Secretary-Emerita  
Annette Hipona, Hospitality Chair

*Board meetings are held as necessary and are open to the membership. Please contact Mark for further information.*

**History Guild of Daly City/Colma is a  
501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization  
Memberships begin at \$25 per year.**



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